Telling the Human Tale: Gender, Stewardship, and the Construction of Holocaust Memory for the Third Generation

By

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Abstract

In the 21st century, Holocaust history and testimony narratives can no longer be created anew. Instead, the ongoing project of commemoration now falls to fiction. In the United States, both popular and literary culture ensure that Holocaust memory narratives maintain a sense of urgency and vitality for the third generation and beyond. For this "post-memory" generation, however, as Marianna Hirsch calls it, the question of who remembers and how becomes enmeshed with the anxiety of remembering "correctly," a phenomenon that leads to gendered dynamics of memory-keeping and archive creation. "Telling the Human Tale" argues that American novels about the Holocaust frame the responsibility of keeping and conveying memory as the duty of women and girls. I contend that this assignment of stewardship arises from the generally patriarchal gate-keeping traditions of historical institutions, which further divides the private sphere from the public, and consequently forges an unavoidable connection between gender, Holocaust trauma, and its narrativization.

This study begins by exploring how perceptions of real life figures, like Anne Frank and Elie Wiesel, contribute to gendered views of Holocaust trauma and memory. The images of Frank and Wiesel as "murdered innocent" and "wise survivor," respectively, not only rely on classical divisions of mind and body but reify the role of patriarchal control in the creation and dissemination of Holocaust narratives. Using texts by Art Spiegelman, Lois Lowry, Jane Yolen, Louise Murphy, Jonathan Safran Foer, Thane Rosenbaum, Nicole Krauss, and others, I argue that American literature about the Holocaust separates memory-keeping and make-shift archive curation from large scale institutional history and endorses it as the purview of women and girls. The results are mixed, with this seeming naturalization of memory-keeping sometimes leading to a misplaced sense of appropriation and bodily violence. Ultimately, however, my research comes to show that the private sphere of memory can function as a source of agency, empowerment, and self-determination for those who do not occupy positions of power.

Introduction:
The Sage and The Martyr: Setting the Stage for Holocaust Memory Narrativization

One of the most well-known and highly regarded narratives of familial Holocaust memory transmission, *Maus* (1980) is, in many ways, a quintessential father-son tale, rife with familial love and conflict. Art Spiegelman relies on the comics format to build a text that is both survivor testimony and second generation memoir. Famously depicting Jews as mice and Germans as cats, Spiegelman tells his father Vladek's story of surviving the Nazis as well as his own story of surviving his father. Yet when we unravel the frustrations at the core of Art's relationship with his father, it becomes clear that much of their conflict has its roots in not only mutual grief over the absent figure of the wife and mother, Anja, but more directly in Art's anger over Vladek's destruction of Anja's diaries, an act that forever bars Art from accessing the memory archive his mother sought to keep and leave behind for her son. In this way, *Maus*, a foundational text of the Holocaust literature canon, demands that we acknowledge the role that gender plays in Holocaust memory keeping and transmission. This dissertation argues that, in much of contemporary American fiction about the Holocaust, the roles and responsibilities of memory fall to female characters, a dynamic fueled by conventions developed in testimony and memorial writing over the years. The practices of this genre, I contend, have led to a naturalization of the stewarding and transmission of traumatic memory as somehow feminine.

The first volume of *Maus* is titled, "My Father Bleeds History," but it is Art's mother who bleeds memory. Vladek tells his story when asked but he is not the curator of the archive; that duty was Anja's. Although she committed suicide, thereby recusing herself from the project of familial memory transmission, Anja did so only after completing her diaries, which were intended to keep memory in her stead and convey it to her child when he was ready to access the archive: "I wish my son, when he grows up, he will be interested by this" (159). When Art learns

of what he has lost—access to the memories his mother kept specifically for him to know—his anger with Vladek boils over: "God DAMN you! You—you murderer! How the hell could you do such a thing!!" (159).

Alison Mandaville relates Art's charge of "murderer" very specifically to the violence that Vladek inflicts on Anja by destroying her diaries and, by extension, her ability to narrate her own story. The violence carries a "gendered dimension," with Anja's story censured "first within the male-dominated landscape of Nazi Europe and later by her husband" (Mandaville 219).[1] In exploring how gender and patriarchal violence impact narrative framing, Mandaville reads *Maus* as a story that is "highly self-conscious of its own framing, of the violent pressures that play in and around any narrative shaping" (245). By destroying the archive and co-opting her experiences into his own narrative, Vladek "violently sears from the frame and so silences" Anja's story (231).

Knowing that Anja left behind a carefully curated archive specifically for him to read amplifies the grief and guilt that Art feels over her suicide. Although rooted in his own grief over Anja's death, Vladek's actions mirror the way in which large scale practices of institutional history bulldoze over and erase the "smaller" makeshift archives kept by those who do not occupy positions of power. In his violent destruction of Anja's diaries, the memory she bleeds, Vladek solidifies his experiences as history; his narratives become objective truths while Anja's become barely recalled second hand stories, unclear and burned away forever. While *Maus* is

[1] Critics read the destruction of Anja's diaries in a number of ways: as a "specter" haunting the story, "psychoanalyzed as a mother-abandonment motif," an anomalous "matter of one man's family and relationships," and even, as the result of Vladek's "unconscious desire to be punished"—that is, as "anything but an example of the violent pervasive effects of structural sexism that persists, permeating and shading every human relation" (Mandaville 219). Mandaville cites various critics in her synthesis of *Maus* scholarship, including Victoria Elmwood, Michael G. Levine, Nancy K. Miller, and Dominick LaCapra

ostensibly about Vladek's experiences, the narrative itself begins and ends with Anja. During Art's first interview with Vladek, he prompts him to begin by saying, "I want to hear it. Start with mom…Tell me how you met" (12). The process of memory transmission between father and son can only begin with Anja and Art is endlessly frustrated anytime Vladek's story veers away from her for too long. In the end, while neither Art nor the reader gains any access to Anja's memories, the lost mother and her destroyed archive guide the organizing principles of the narrative.[2]

In interrogating texts like *Maus* and other personal accounts of Holocaust experience, victimization, and survival, as well as public and scholarly perceptions of those accounts, we can begin to see how the work of Holocaust memory keeping becomes a gendered task. While Vladek gets to see his story transformed into a historical, albeit nontraditional, document through the critical and commercial success of his son's work, *Maus*, Anja's story remains a private memory. Such representations of testimony—with Vladek's story big and public, while Anja's remains small, private, and incomplete—mirror the way memory-keeping is approached in fiction. In this study, I investigate how gender and the work of narrativization intertwine to

[2] Victoria Elmwood claims that *Maus* "cannot make a satisfactory space for Anja, whose presence in the narrative is fragmentary and double mediated" (692). It is true that Anja comes to us only through Art's telling of Vladek's story, but I would argue that her presence in *Maus* is actually all encompassing, that Anja is the frame that brackets the story's telling. Father and son agree that there is no narrative, no memory to be shared, without Anja to frame it. Vladek concludes his story at the moment when he is finally reunited with Anja after the war. Exhausted in his bed, Vladek tells his son: "More I don't need to tell you. We were both very happy, and lived happy, happy ever after" (136). Along with his destruction of her diaries, the fundamentally false insistence on their happiness, of having lived "happy ever after," erases what is to come (Anja's suicide) and persists in the notion that Vladek gets to control and shape his story. This conclusion also frames the narrative as a closed circle, encompassed not by chronological history or the various milestones of Vladek's life, but by Anja.

create a particular tradition of memory-keeping in Holocaust literature which naturalizes domestic, make-shift archive creation as the duty of women and girls.

Before continuing on with this project's intended focus on the shape this naturalization takes in works of fiction, we must first come to terms with how such tropes and rituals of Holocaust narrativization have become established through testimony. In looking at the stories of some of the Shoah's most famous voices, such as Elie Wiesel and Anne Frank, along with cultural and scholarly responses to survivor memoirs, we can clarify the role that gender plays in our perception of Holocaust trauma and the telling of its memory.

Gender in Holocaust Studies

In 1983, Esther Katz and Joan Ringelheim convened the "Conference on Women Surviving the Holocaust." This marked the first time that gender received direct scholarly focus in the field of Holocaust Studies. This event was not without conflict, as some objected to what they saw as an unnecessary influx of feminist theory and thinking into the study of genocide and ethnic cleansing. There were concerns that a gendered approach would eclipse the overall horror of the camps and "diminish the importance of the Holocaust as a singular cataclysmic event and thereby add to the banalization and trivialization of the Holocaust" (Ofer and Weitzman 12). Others feared, justifiably, that a focus on gender would lead to a hierarchy of victimization, a strangely moralistic competition about who suffered more or behaved better.

The latter fear is not unfounded. Rooted in traditional heteronormative socialization, the lives and deaths of women in the Shoah are seen through a gendered lens, namely as mothers, wives, caretakers, and keepers of the hearth. As such, Jewish women's experiences in the ghettos, camps, and beyond are filtered through existing assumptions about their caring natures,

proclivity for selflessness, and drive to sacrifice for the collective good of others, especially their families and communities. We can trace the establishment of this view of Jewish women's roles back to Emanuel Ringelblum's Warsaw Ghetto diaries, first published in English in 1958. Socialized to see and think of women in a certain way, Ringelblum went out of his way to honor the domestic and personal sacrifices they made for their loved ones: "The future historian would have to dedicate a proper page to the Jewish woman during this war. She will capture an important part in this Jewish history for her courage and ability to survive. Because of her, many families were able to get over the terrors of these days" (380).[3] While Ringelblum's accounts are limited to the ghetto in Warsaw, similar sentiments of selflessness and domestic caretaking have taken root in women's testimonial narratives and critical responses.

When it comes to Jewish women's wartime experiences, there is an overwhelming focus on their seemingly innate ability to put gendered domestic skills and identities to work in service of both individual and collective survival. In their seminal work on women in the Holocaust, Esther Katz and Joan Ringelheim declare that, "Men were demoralized and women went right on nurturing" (172). This strikingly essentialist phrase may be a relic of second wave feminism, but it is nevertheless a telling commentary on how scholars initially responded to women's narratives. In her 2003 study, Nechama Tec describes interviews conducted with Holocaust survivors in which she asked them to specifically consider the effect of gender on their experience. In the interviews, both male and female survivors refer in some form to a belief that women had it easier or were more likely to survive because "Women know how to suffer" and "In a way, the men gave up" (133). In Tec's overview of survivor responses, women are

[3] Quoted by Sara Horowitz in "Gender, Genocide, and Jewish Memory" (182) from: Ringelblum, Emanuel. *Diary and Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*. Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1992.

presented as more adaptable and resilient, as physically weaker but more capable of undergoing prolonged starvation, with a greater reservoir of emotional strength (130-137).

Tec and others seem to take this essentialist perception of women's caring natures for granted, specifically emphasizing their resilience, commitment to collective survival, and overall ability to persevere through the most dehumanizing and degrading experiences. Ultimately, many early narratives, both testimonial and critical, rely on existing assumptions about gender, depicting women as self-sacrificing angels who were able to easily and "naturally" band together in order to survive, while men, emasculated and demoralized, disconnected from their fellow (male) sufferers, gave up and waited for death. Myra Goldenberg displays a deep investment in translating "traditional" gender roles to Holocaust survival:

> Most women describe situations in which they confronted their new reality and devised strategies that actively engaged them in fighting for their survival. Essentially, as women cleaned their surroundings, sewed pockets into their ragged clothes, created menus to mitigate their hunger, nursed and nurtured one another, they created the illusion of taking some measure of both control and responsibility for their well-being. In these efforts, they worked collaboratively and, in doing so, imparted a sense of being needed by others. Indeed, they created the illusion of actively improving their chances for survival while most men conveyed a sense of passivity and defeat. (87)

Such simplistic and overly optimistic perception of women's survival strategies adds to the unnecessarily competitive rhetoric of suffering and survival in these early studies. Even the title of Goldenberg's work, "Lessons Learned from Gentle Heroism: Women's Holocaust Narratives" implies that gentleness—and by extension, care and nurturing—is the sole purview of women.

This essentializing frame, which assumes that all women are by nature gentle and nurturing, writes over individual experience and implies that caring about women's lives requires them to first meet some moral standard of behavior.

Such readings very much confirm Lawrence Langer's fears about the trivialization of the Shoah through the formulation of an obscene hierarchy of suffering. One of the loudest critics of gender as a framework for studying the Holocaust, Langer argues, "Given the unspeakable sorrow with which all victims were burdened, it seems to me that nothing could be crueler or more callous than the attempt to dredge up from this landscape of universal destruction a mythology of comparative endurance that awards favor to one group of individuals over another" (362). Although he grants that certain biological realities, such as the ability to be pregnant and bear children, did have an impact on women's experiences during and after the Holocaust, Langer takes particular umbrage at the simplistic and essentializing readings of women's "superior" survival abilities: "There may be a valid text about small communities of women who survived through mutual support or some strength of gender, but it exists within a darker subtext emerging in these testimonies. To valorize the one while disregarding the other is little more than an effort to replace truth with myth" (355). Langer's concerns are entirely justified when we only consider the scholarship examples cited above, but he misses the point by blaming the possible trivialization of Holocaust memory on the inclusion of gender as a framework of study. This focus obscures the real issue, which Langer touches on when he denounces the preference to valorize female experience as an "effort to replace truth with myth." It is this tendency to mythologize memory, to bulldoze it into some sort of canonical capital "H" History, that shapes how women's stories have been written and responded to in both public and critical settings.

The narratives that women write of their own lives, and the ways in which the public then responds to them, are crafted from within specific cultures and contexts; the emphasis placed on the "caring ethic" of Jewish women's survival, alongside their seemingly endless capacities for selflessness and communal bonding, comes out of a long tradition of rigid expectations about women's identities and behaviors. Thus, even when those experiences do not fit within the confines of social gender roles, they are nevertheless presented in such a way as to conform to existing cultural assumptions: "Testimonies are not spontaneous outbursts of information, but come from the careful representation of experience, or the perceived 'appropriateness' of experiences for publication" (Waxman 128). In order to be heard, women must moderate what they say so that the world might listen. Although they experience any number of situations and feelings that go against pre-assigned gender roles, "The identities of women are constructed on the basis of roles such as 'mother,' 'caregiver,' 'daughter,' and testimonies are often selected to reinforce those pre-existing ideals" (Waxman 150). In this way, women's narratives of Holocaust trauma are moralized and turned into palatable lessons of feminine goodness blooming in the midst of depravity.

The outcome is an unnecessary valorization of suffering that re-inscribes gender roles and covers up real experiences with myths. "The problem," James Young argues, "is that the actual experiences of women—as told by the women themselves— are often converted into symbolic significance almost immediately on being regarded or are hardly regarded at all" (1779). We do this because it is comfortable, both for those conveying their memories and for their audiences. Anna Reading argues that maintaining gendered norms in testimonies of Holocaust trauma is vital for ensuring social cohesion within a "post-Holocaust Jewish community" (66). The stories that already support "a particular set of gendered cultural values are more likely to become part

of our collective memory than those that are not" (58). The narratives that "question, challenge or disrupt present gendered structures and roles are more likely for some time to be marginalized, left unarticulated, or only covertly expressed in cultural mediations of traumatic events" (Reading 58). Zoë Waxman reads the palatability of normatively gendered narratives as part of what contributes to projecting an "easy comprehension of the Holocaust" for readers (124). Both to ensure a sympathetic audience and out of a personal need to adhere to shared cultural values, women's Holocaust narratives have largely reaffirmed existing gender roles within normative culture.

The resulting narrative tradition is the basis for the phenomenon of gendered memory keeping that I explore in the following chapters. When the expectations of culturally constructed gender roles frame the way we read testimonies of trauma, certain behaviors, emotions, and responses become assigned alongside perceived gender lines. Thus, women's narratives come to mean "gentle heroism" in the form of selfless bonding and caring while men's narratives are seen to depict physical strength coupled with emotional isolation. Even physical suffering and victimization are depicted differently in gendered narrative traditions; women's pain appears more tangible, more tied to the realities of the earthly body, while the pain of men is seen as psychic, connected far more overtly to the loss of God and self rather than bodily trauma.

Such gendered approaches to Holocaust experience and suffering are seen through many narratives, but the distinction is clearest when we consider the Holocaust's two most famous voices: Anne Frank and Elie Wiesel. These two figures exist on a continuum that stretches from martyr to sage, from murdered innocence to moral wisdom. I use the terms "sage" and "martyr" very purposefully here because I believe that they function to rhetorically classify Wiesel and Frank in two distinct modes of gendered Holocaust narrativization.

Gendering Anne Frank and Elie Wiesel

Wiesel's formidable public persona, as well as his relative longevity, has cemented his position as the ultimate survivor, a voice for the voiceless. For Peter Novick, Wiesel is "the most influential American interpreter of the Holocaust" (201), Naomi Seidman calls him not just a survivor but "*the* survivor" (3), and Ellen Fine describes the purposeful, driven manner in which Wiesel takes upon himself "the entire destiny of his people from beginning to now and assumes the function of *le moi-somme*, or collective spokesman" (8). Along with his works of personal testimony and fiction, Wiesel's commitment to keeping Holocaust memory alive and relevant marked him as a kind of communal elder, a public sage and wise man from whom knowledge and moral authority flowed.

On the other end of the spectrum, stands Anne Frank. Where Wiesel is the wizened sage, Frank is the innocent martyr. From the popular and best-selling diary to the plays, films, and television productions that have brought her to life for countless audiences around the globe, Frank's popularity and name recognition might actually surpass Wiesel's in certain circles, especially among children and young adults. Oren Baruch Stier suggests that we look at Frank as "a key access point for Holocaust remembrance and reflection" (102), while Alvin Rosenfeld calls the diary "paradigmatic of the American reception of the Holocaust" (61), and Hasmida Bosmaijan argues that as a text it is "the prototype of those narratives that have contributed to making the Shoah bearable to the reader" (138). The tragedy of Frank's death alongside her youth and vivacity, combined with the universalizing way in which the diary was "sold" to the public, helped to transform Frank into a stand-in for all the dead innocents of the Holocaust.

By analyzing Wiesel and Frank, we can map the process through which gender infiltrates the telling of trauma, first through testimony and then through fiction. There are any number of differences between Wiesel and Frank, both as writers and as individuals, but I would like to focus on two distinct points: narrative control and reception. First, there is what I see as the fundamental difference between Wiesel and Frank—the simple matter of being in a position to take charge of one's story. Through his long life and productive output, Wiesel has enjoyed an ironclad control over his image and voice; for the most part, he has always been able to choose the manner in which he and his ideas have been presented to the public. Frank's death, on the other hand, ensures that her work filters down to us only through intermediaries like Otto Frank.

Second, narrative control ties in to marketing and reception. Wiesel and Frank's popularity and impact is so encompassing that their cultural roles expand beyond their individual identities, making them into not only historical entities but symbols and metonymic figureheads. Wiesel was able to maintain ironclad control over his story and image while Frank was molded by others, a fact that confirms the long-standing Western tradition of male authors wielding full narrative control while female authors are mediated and formed by external forces. Like *Maus's* Vladek, Wiesel shapes every facet of the story he presents publically, and Frank, like Anja, is mediated to us through the voices of others and has no real control over the framing and dissemination of her narrative. Through the differing reactions to their works, Wiesel comes to speak for all survivors while Frank stands for the lost victims. We can see similar tropes in works by other survivors, but it is Wiesel and Frank, as the representative sage and martyr, whose meaning to and within the cultural landscape cements the gendered traditions of Holocaust memory keeping and telling.

Anne Frank: Gender and Narrative Agency

As the quintessential innocent of the Holocaust, Anne Frank is the blank slate upon which we project whatever we need to see. Unlike Wiesel, Frank did not survive to moderate her image or control the path of her narrative in the public sphere. She and her writings are presented to us through various filters, all of which minimize her agency, downplay her death at the hands of the Nazi machine, and place her in the role of a martyr. Despite the purpose with which Frank wrote her diary, actively revising and rewriting for future publication, both the journal and the girl are seldom allowed to exist on their own terms for audiences.[4] Instead, the diary is treated as an ideal vehicle "for teaching or reading about the Holocaust while not actually dealing with its horrors" (Waxman 130). Frank died of typhoid fever in Bergen-Belsen and, as far as is known, did not leave behind any writings about her experiences after arrest and deportation. The diary illustrates the stress and hardships of hiding but stops well before the terror of the camps. This narrative framing allows the diary to be separated from its historical context and co-opted for other cultural purposes.

Gender is a large component of what makes it possible to use Anne Frank—as writer, historical figure, and symbol—for purposes beyond Holocaust testimony and memorialization. Primarily, the diary is relied upon to be a source of identification for young readers, to allow children and especially girls to connect with Frank as a fellow child. It is often marketed and read as a feminine coming-of-age story about a young girl's struggles with puberty, bodily changes, and a strained relationship with her mother. Susan Bernstein describes the reception of

[4] Francine Prose calls the diary a "consciously crafted work" (5) and writes extensively about the evolution of Frank's writing and revision processes: "No one can determine what Anne's final draft might have been like, but to ignore the time and energy she put into version 'b' is to deny her own ideas about what she wanted her book to be, insofar as we can know them" (154).

the diary as an object and story that functions as a childhood rite of passage: "In many cases, women reported first receiving *The Diary of a Young Girl* along with their first diary from mothers, aunts, or grandmothers" (145-146). By tying the diary to a long line of generational transmission between women, the very complicated Anne Frank is condensed down to the roles she is made to play within gendered frameworks of girlhood.

The historical horror takes a backseat, surfacing mostly to emphasize Frank's image of purity and innate goodness. These are gendered qualities assigned to Frank because of her youth, female identity, and the symbolic manner in which she exists in the public sphere, not because the diary itself is especially invested in proclaiming belief in the goodness of humanity. Such tropes of feminine spiritual purity, as seen in previously addressed survivor narratives and critical responses to testimonies, valorize women's Holocaust experiences over men's and contribute to the establishment of needlessly damaging hierarchies of suffering. It is not a coincidence that Alvin Rosenfeld credits Frank as the figure that "helped to break the relative silence within American culture about Jewish fate under Nazi tyranny" (61). Frank made Holocaust tragedy accessible for a large subset of the population by connecting it to a figure—a young girl—that has long represented innocence and purity. Even now, "For millions of Americans, the Holocaust is first made known and is vividly personalized in the image of Anne Frank" (Rosenfeld 61). That image is tied implicitly to her victimization and symbolic innocence; it ensures that Frank is seen not as an architect of her own narrative but an icon and martyr.

In his study of Holocaust icons, Oren Baruch Stier describes how knowledge and public meaning are created "through the use of iconic symbols" even when "the distillation process that produces these icons strips out much of the historical context and specificity of each icon" (3).

The ability to assert metonymic connections is what transforms the "mere symbol" into an icon. Thus his reading of Anne Frank as an icon is particularly potent in light of the lens of gendered victimhood through which she is viewed. Frank "has served and continues to serve as a primary symbol of identification with the victims of the Holocaust because of her unique persona, situated as it is between the ordinary and the extraordinary," Stier argues, "And due to her particular story, which is uniquely accessible and translatable to a global audience" (101). Frank's global accessibility hinges on the feminized tropes of innocence that tie into her depiction as a Holocaust martyr.

Visual representations play an extended role in forming Frank's public image of young feminine innocence and contribute to her sanctification as a Holocaust martyr. Marianne Hirsch describes the feelings of viewers toward images of Anne Frank as a combination of affiliative and protective impulses (165-166). With photographs especially, but also as audiences for cinematic or theatrical depictions, viewers tend to feel both a sense of identification with Frank and the urge to rescue and protect her. "This coexistence," Stier insists, contributes "to her iconicity, by establishing a tension between the reader/viewer's identification with her and his/her desire to protect her, a tension that can only enhance an imagined and deeply engaged relationship with her. This imagined relationship, in turn, reinforces Frank's iconicity, because it is decontextualized and highly accessible" (136-137). Frank is removed from her actual life and death and emphasized instead as a universal saint-like figure.

This sanctification arises due to her lack of agency, the co-option of Frank's words and image, and ultimately the "illusion of [her] childlike innocence" (Stier 145). These three factors are, I contend, implicitly tied to her gender. Anne Frank's narrative is bracketed by Otto Frank's benevolent patriarchal control. As the photographer, the giver of the initial diary, and the

eventual curator of its contents, Otto Frank has ensured that Anne's entry into the public sphere is moderated by others, especially himself. Anne was a committed editor of her own work, invested in its survival and public value. She rewrote and edited her own entries, ending up with three distinct drafts, which are separately presented and outlined in *The Critical Edition* of the diary. This is purposeful work, indicative of a self-aware memoirist and writer. The revisions may have traded "immediacy for clarity, raw emotion for reflection, but they are nearly always better *written*—more condensed, descriptive, fully dramatized, and evocative" (Prose 136). Anne was clearly maturing and evolving, developing a distinct voice and style. As Otto collected and compiled the entries for publication, he necessarily had to make editorial choices. At times he resorted to restoring "some of his daughter's earlier and unrevised, and often more emotional, passages," subsequently, "Otto Frank not only turned back the developmental clock on his daughter, but also undid a good deal of her emotional growth" (Stier 118).

The infantilization of Frank's narrative through Otto Frank's editorial choices may be understandable in light of his fatherly grief, but it nevertheless removes agency from Anne herself and places her in a strange liminal space, both divorced from the events of the Holocaust and beatified as its ultimate victim. Such limited perceptions of Frank write over her intentions and dismiss her work as an active steward of memory. Despite her young age, Frank very much intended to use the diary as a tool of memory keeping and transmission. In a May 11, 1944 entry, Frank wrote, "In any case, I want to publish a book called *Het Achterhuis* after the war. Whether I shall succeed or not, I cannot say, but my diary will be of great help" (61). Starting that spring, she began to edit and rewrite her diary entries from the very beginning, adding and updating the document even as she revised the earlier portions (Prose 10). Frank was not writing for herself but was actively engaged in crafting a memory narrative that she fully intended to be read

publically; her final months "of relative freedom" were spent "desperately attempting to make sure that her wish might some day be granted" (Prose 10). Although Otto Frank's curation of the diary was fortunately much less destructive than Vladek's approach to Anja's diaries, there is a similar sense of narrative violence, with surviving men shaping the stories of dead women. In the end, despite the great pains Frank took to control her narrative as a memory-keeper, the gendered and violent dynamics of narrative formation erase Frank's agency in favor of symbolism.

Elie Wiesel: Mind vs. Body

While Anne Frank had no real say in how her work and image are consumed by the world at large, Elie Wiesel stands at the opposite end, wielding almost total control over his writing and public persona. A giant of Holocaust memory and its representative moral authority, Wiesel is what Peter Novick calls the "emblematic survivor" (273). Much of that stature is due to his sheer longevity and productivity as a writer, teacher, and philosopher. Wiesel's image, however, is not accidental but a product of carefully cultivated intentions: "His gaunt face, with its anguished expression, seemed to freeze time—to be staring out from a 1945 photograph of the liberation of the camps" (Novick 273). That "gaunt face"—both as a literal book jacket photograph and as a symbol—is the visage of patriarchal authority. Wiesel's age and hard-earned survival grant him the wisdom through which he enacts near endless authority over the Holocaust narrative. "For both Christians and Jews," Novick claims, "Wiesel has been, and remains […] the most influential interpreter of the Holocaust as sacred mystery" (274).

This kind of positioning has two implications: first, it enshrines the Holocaust as a religious, mythical event (a "sacred mystery"), and two, it places Wiesel into the role of a priest, the wise philosopher-survivor through whom the Holocaust is understood and contextualized.

For Wiesel, the context through which his experience filters is tied in to his religious upbringing and male identity. As a Jewish boy steeped in the gendered rituals and requirements of orthodoxy, the destruction of faith is more encompassing and complete than physical suffering. Thus the trauma Wiesel experiences most cogently is psychic in nature; the pain of losing God and faith permeates his work far more deeply than the physical destruction of the body, which appears to be secondary to the destruction of the soul.[5]

All through *Night,* Wiesel is driven to convey his experience of trauma as psychic more than physical. It's not that he doesn't experience excruciating bodily pain and suffering, but that he subsumes the physical trauma into a "larger" philosophical loss. By insisting on a separation between physical and psychic trauma, Wiesel reaffirms old classical and gendered divisions of body and mind (*sophos* and *telos*), with mind as male and body as female, and situates physical suffering as feminine. Elizabeth Grosz describes this division as arising from inherently misogynist impulses:

> Relying on essentialism, naturalism and biologism, misogynist thought confines women to the biological requirements of reproduction on the assumption that because of particular biological, physiological, and endocrinological transformations, women are somehow *more* biological, *more* corporeal, and *more* natural than men. The coding of femininity with corporeality in effect leaves men free to inhabit what they (falsely) believe is a purely conceptual order while at the

[5] "Never shall I forget those flames which consumed my faith forever. Never shall I forget that nocturnal silence which deprived me, for all eternity, of the desire to live. Never shall I forget those moments which murdered my God and my soul and turned my dreams to dust. Never shall I forget these things, even if I am condemned to live as long as God Himself. Never" (Wiesel 32).

> same time enabling them to satisfy their (sometimes disavowed) need for corporeal contact through their access to women's bodies and services. (14)

I explore the feminization of suffering further in my third chapter, but the privileging of mind over body appears in many works by male survivors as a precursor to its iteration in fiction. When it comes to looking at foundational Holocaust memory narratives, Wiesel's unquestioning investment in the mind/body duality establishes the larger tradition of men writing through their trauma in such a way as to distance their "inner selves" from the limiting corporeality of their bodies.

Wiesel's narrator very much resents having to occupy his starving, brutalized body. The daily pain and hunger ground him in a physical reality that he cannot escape, not even through prayer. Used to a nimble life of the mind, of words and prayer, Eliezor struggles to identify with the sluggish, earthly matters of a body in pain.[6] Life came to a standstill and "The stomach alone was aware of the passage of time" (50). During the death march, "I was putting one foot in front of the other mechanically. I was dragging with me this skeletal body which weighed so much. If only I could have got rid of it! In spite of my efforts not to think about it, I could feel myself as two entities—my body and me. I hated it" (81). Wiesel keenly wishes to separate what he sees as himself, his mind, from what traps and drags him down, the body. By seeing the mind as his true self and the body as its prison, Wiesel taps into the dichotomous thinking which "hierarchizes and ranks the two polarized terms so that one becomes the privileged term and the other its suppressed, subordinated, negative counterpart" (Grosz 3). The self is fractured by physical

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[6] "Physical pain does not simply resist language but actively destroys it, bringing about an immediate reversion to a state anterior to language, to the sounds and cries a human being makes before language is learned" (Scarry 4)

suffering and can only retain its sense of wholeness by investing in the distinction between body and mind, which must then "expel [the body] in order to retain its 'integrity'" (Grosz 3).

Night does exactly this, subordinating the pain of Eliezor's starved, battered body in order to privilege the vast, practically sacred and psychic pain of lost faith. The outcome, I would argue, is a permanent rift between the narrator's sense of himself as *sophos*, mind, and *telos*, the body which betrays the mind through its suffering. Although he continues his story in other works and memoirs, *Night* ends with this image of mind/body duality stamped permanently into the narrator's consciousness: "One day I was able to get up, after gathering all my strength. I wanted to see myself in the mirror hanging on the opposite wall. I had not seen myself since the ghetto. From the depths of the mirror, a corpse gazed back at me. The look in his eyes, as they stared into mine, has never left me" (109). The sense of detachment between "my body" and "me" reads here as permanent. Because mind and body are already gendered concepts, Wiesel's adoption of this duality in his narrative contributes to representations of bodily trauma as feminine in Holocaust memory rituals and commemorative structures.

Gender, Faith, and Memory

The crisis of faith is the (cracked) bedrock upon which Wiesel builds the narratives of his experience, expanding the personal outward into the public through an over-arching attempt to enact control over Holocaust commemoration through his role as the ultimate survivor. Yet women grapple with the loss of faith and God in their writing as well, so why do we not associate their voices with these "larger" psychic traumas in the same way that we do men's? In large part, this is due to the gendered nature of Jewish orthodoxy and conservative congregations. In traditional religious observance, men and women quite literally occupy

separate spaces of worship. The gendered divisions within the synagogue are reflected in the different ways in which men and women are permitted to enact the rituals and ceremonies of Judaism. Culturally, the everyday practice of faith—sustained study and prayer—played a much more central role in the lives of Jewish men than women, who were more likely to spend their days dealing with earthly matters of domesticity and commerce.

This separation between the religious and the domestic in the lives of Jewish women contributes to the narratives they produce about their experiences. We can therefore contrast Wiesel's representation of the all-encompassing catastrophe of the loss of faith and God with the works of female survivors, who focus much more intently on the body. Gerda Weissman Klein, for example, concludes her testimony by placing her own sense of faith not in God but in the "marvel of creation" that occurs through her body's ability to bear children, the "chain of generations" imbued with "the divine" (253). When it comes to belief, she turns to the body, writing, "To close the gap of what was left uncompleted, to create an existence that was meant to be denied represents a triumph over evil. I realize with wonder and gratitude that in my body reposed some part of shared ancestry with those deprived of life and that I was given the privilege of being a link between generations" (253). Klein sees the divine in the gendered biological processes of the body, not the traditional patriarchal God of her murdered brother and father, but the miracle of reproduction in the aftermath of starvation, amenorrhea, and other physical traumas.

Wiesel's foregrounding of the loss of God, compared to the relatively minor role that faith plays for Klein, for example, emphasizes how gendered socialization replaces religious observance with memory keeping for Jewish women. The testimonies and memoirs of female survivors are, I contend, often less concerned with the so-called "larger" questions of psychic

trauma rather than physical trauma at least partly because there is so little space for women in traditional religious observance. Ruth Kluger addresses this in her memoir, which cleverly fluctuates between emotional poignancy and acerbic wit. A voracious reader, Kluger writes bitterly about being denied the chance to read about her namesake in the Bible as a child. When she asks her great-uncle for help in understanding a passage, he takes the book away instead. "It was a holy book, not for entertainment," Kluger writes, "I tried to explain that I had all due respect for its holiness and only wanted to learn about my name, humbly and reverentially. If I had been a boy, he would have treated me differently, that I was sure of" (50). Although Kluger does not come from an observant home, the patriarch of the family nevertheless imposes traditionally gendered rules of worship on her reading habits.

Kluger's bitterness about Judaism's patriarchal regulations come to a point in her discussion of the difficulties that Jewish women face when it comes to mourning and commemorating their beloved dead. Because the kaddish can traditionally only be said by men, Kluger finds herself even more disconnected from her father, who was already distant even in life. Being forced to stay outside the strict gendered lines of observance destroys Kluger's ability to rely on ritual for comfort or memorialization and makes mourning especially fraught. "Celebrations and ceremonies are not my thing," she explains, "I suspect them of mendacity, and often they strike me as ridiculous. Nor would I know where to start" (30). Her friends point out that she doesn't have to remain bound by traditional Judaism, that she too can say the kaddish if she wishes: "Who is keeping you from saying any prayer you please? my friends ask. But it wouldn't count, couldn't be part of a prescribed communal ritual, so what would be the point?" (30). For Kluger, the words of the prayer themselves are secondary to their role in an established, communal ritual to which, by virtue of her gender, she can never gain access.

This gendered divide between who can say the kaddish and who cannot, who can mourn publically and as part of a "prescribed communal ritual" and who must do their grieving in private, is the foundation upon which the trope of the female memory-keeper is built. Camila Loew describes how Jewish women are barred from "producing and emitting discourse" during times of mourning and are instead "relegated to secondary, marginal roles such as food preparation or decorating the table" (110). Loew refers to these domestic duties, upon which the spiritual work of mourning relies, as the "Kaddish of the Daughter," which, "cannot be learned in the temple; it is as homemade as gefilte fish or other dishes for which women exchange recipes in the kitchen (the space marginal to the central—discursive—action that takes place during mourning), while the men satisfy their spiritual needs through prayer" (110). But these unmet spiritual needs must go somewhere; if not through the kaddish ritual, then perhaps grief can be funneled through a ritual of memory-keeping. After all, "recipes for gefilte fish are no recipe for coping with the Holocaust" (Kluger 30). Bitter as horseradish, Kluger identifies how being barred from the actions and rituals of faith contributes to the differences in understanding and conveying trauma in male and female survivor narratives.

In these texts, we find that Jewish men are able to rely on religious traditions and on the sense of belonging to a community of faith to guide them through making sense of Holocaust trauma and experience. Even when that faith is ultimately destroyed, its absence means something; faith felt through its lack is still, in some sense, faith, after all. Thus, if men are to be the keepers of faith—even when it is lost, as Wiesel illustrates—then women are the keepers of memory (which is, perhaps, a different kind of faith altogether). The lack of access to Jewish theological thinking and practice, in conjunction with the separation of *sophos* and *telos*, which privileges the "masculine" mind over the "feminine" body, positions physical suffering as

feminine. The memory of that suffering, I argue, as well as its keeping and telling, is thereby feminized as well. Thus, what we might call "lowercase" memory—not large-scale public museums and memorials but makeshift archives, private collections, and family stories—becomes the purview of women, a trope that is then taken for granted, naturalized, and recreated over and over again in fiction.

Methodology and Archive:

The boundaries of my study are very specific, centering on contemporary American novels about the Holocaust, a sub-category that purposefully excludes stories of non-Jewish victims, as well as rescuers, perpetrators, and bystanders. My research also excludes the more general subset of WWII-set novels, such as mysteries, thrillers, and romances that only use the Holocaust as a background for otherwise unrelated or only tenuously connected plots. Thus, it is difficult to articulate the exact parameters of the search terms used to delineate the limits of my archive. Although my research is heavily indebted to the archives of countless scholarly databases, I have decided to rely on popular and easily accessible platforms, like Amazon and Goodreads, for quantitative information on primary sources. I do this because my project is concerned with those texts that are most visible, most read, and therefore, most influential and relevant in Holocaust fiction. In my findings, even a cursory glance through the results of an Amazon search or a compiled Goodreads list confirms that women and girls are at the center of Holocaust memory keeping in American literary fiction about the Holocaust.

For the purposes of analysis, I have divided these primary texts into three main categories: 1) novels for adults, 2) novels for younger readers, and 3) memoirs/biographies. Thus, of the 22 novels for adults in the top 50 or so titles featured in a Goodreads list for so-

called "Well-Written Holocaust Books," half (11 texts) are about non-Jewish Nazi victims or bystanders, rescuers, and perpetrators; although many of these novels focus on women, they are not relevant to my specific study (there's much that could be said about gender and memory in works like *The Reader* though, for example). Then there are five texts that I consider to be "general" WWII novels and not "novels about the Holocaust." These works use the Holocaust/WWII/Nazi Germany setting as a backdrop but do not necessarily engage with the themes of the Holocaust, as in Mary Ann Shaffer's epistolary novel, *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society*, Anthony Doerr's *All the Light We Cannot See*, and the *Edelweiss Pirates*, Mark A. Cooper's historical fiction series about patriotic but rebellious German youth opposed to the Nazi regime. The works that do take place in the camps and ghettos, Leon Uris' *Mila 18* and Tadeusz Borowski's *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen*, are concerned less with characters and more with painting a broader picture of the experience, so I consider them to be part of the more "general" subset of WWII novels as well.

This leaves six novels, all of which are deeply invested in representing Holocaust memory-keeping as the responsibility of women. Two are "disqualified" from my study by virtue of being Australian (Marcus Zusak's *The Book Thief*) and French (Tatiana de Rosnay's *Sarah's Key*). The plots and themes of both novels rely on the roles that women and girls take on as Holocaust memory-keepers but since they are not written by American authors, *The Book Thief* and *Sarah's Key* are outside my research parameters. The four texts left are the three novels featured in chapter 2, Louise Murphy's *The True Story of Hansel and Gretel,* Jenna Blum's *Those Who Save Us,* Jonathan Safran Foer's *Everything is Illuminated*, and Jodi Picoult's *The Storyteller*, which did not make it into my study but which nonetheless depicts female memory

stewards through its focus on a third generation Jewish woman who eventually finds herself seeking memory and information from her Auschwitz-surviving grandmother.

Next, there are six works that are intended as novels for younger readers. Two of these texts, John Boyne's *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* and Jerry Spinelli's *Milkweed*, have boy protagonists but four are specifically about girls. These are Han Nolan's *If I Should Die Before I Wake,* Jane Yolen's *Briar Rose* and *The Devil's Arithmetic,* and Lois Lowry's *Number the Stars*; the latter two are covered in depth in chapter 1. Although I chose not to include it in my study due to the fact that the main character was not Jewish, Nolan's work is especially notable. A time-traveling story that borrows its conceit from *The Devil's Arithmetic*, *If I Should Die Before I Wake* also seeks to teach lessons of memory by sending an American girl back in time to be reformed of her neo-Nazi ways through the lived experience of a Polish Jewish girl in WWII.

Finally, the list also contains 17 texts I would categorize as memoirs or biographical accounts, which include *Schindler's List*, *The Pianist*, and memoirs by Elie Wiesel, Primo Levi, and Victor Frankl. Most interestingly, ten—well over half—of these works are by and about women. Along with Anne Frank's own diaries, there is also Miep Gies' story of hiding Anne and the rest of the Franks, as well as memoirs by survivors like Livia Bitton-Jackson, Judith Kerr, Alicia Appleman-Jurman, Gerda Weissmann Klein, Jennifer Roy, and Johanna Reiss. The list also features Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, discussed above, a second generational memoir that is ostensibly about the author's father, but the narrative trajectory of which relies heavily on the figure of Anja, Spiegelman's mother, as an absent memory keeper.

Ultimately, after taking the more general WWII novels and works about non-Jewish victims/bystanders/rescuers/perpetrators out of consideration, we can see that 20 out of the top 29 texts left are either by and about female survivors, feature women and girls as protagonists, or

otherwise support the notion of gendered memory keeping practices through secondary and peripheral female characters. The Goodreads list is of course limited by its compilers' desire to feature only "well-written" works, but its emphasis on including only the most popular and well-known texts is mirrored by search results on library catalog databases and, more interestingly, Amazon's results for "best-selling Holocaust fiction."[7] The findings obtained through Goodreads and Amazon thus consist of the most popular, most marketable, and, therefore, most read books about the Holocaust.

Of the top 50 or so results of Amazon's "best-selling Holocaust fiction" list, most already appear on the Goodreads list; of those that do not, most are memoirs and general fiction largely concerned with non-Jewish characters set against the backdrop of WWII. There are several notable additions that are worth mentioning with some depth, however. When it comes to novels for either children and adults, there are a number that are concerned with the memories of boys and men, such as Dana Fitzwater Cornell's *My Mother's Ring*, in which an elderly Jewish man finally recounts his wartime experiences on his deathbed, or Morris Gleitzman's middle grade *Once* series, which chronicles the survival and adventures of a Polish Jewish boy over the course of several books. Yet it is a particular subset of novels for adults, which feature female memory keepers, that is especially relevant to my study.

[7] One of the potential limitations of this study is that it requires me to rely on lists crafted by a company whose criteria is not necessarily made clear, although it is likely based on numbers sold. Should this study be transformed into a book, I would seek out a much more thorough, complete understanding of publishing statistics and Amazon's curatorial practices. For my current purposes, relying upon Amazon's list for "best-selling Holocaust fiction" is useful because the list reflects real world practices of the way readers engage with Holocaust fiction. At this moment, after all, Amazon is arguably the most easily accessible, widely used, pluralistic venue for seeking out texts.

We must acknowledge a particular trend within Holocaust fiction where older female characters, often survivors, look back on and convey their memories to the next generation, usually young women, who come to them for knowledge and access to memory transmission. In the Amazon results, six separate works fit into this highly specific subgenre. In Paulette Mahurin's *The Seven Year Dress*, an elderly Auschwitz survivor tells her story to the young woman renting a room in her home. In her graphic novel, *Hidden,* Loic Dauvillier shows a grandmother bypassing an adult son to tell her survival story to her young granddaughter. Sarah McCoy's *The Baker's Daughter* features a young female journalist come to interview an elderly German Jewish woman about her bakery, only to be granted access to the woman's wartime memories as well. Ray Kingfisher's *The Sugar Men* and Ronald H. Balson's *Karolina's Twins* both depict female Holocaust survivors living in America who, in their old age, decide to finally share their secrets with their families and take steps to reconcile with the traumatic memories they have been keeping. Unlike the Goodreads list, the Amazon results also include Cynthia Ozick's *The Shawl*, a powerful work that strongly exemplifies the sense of rot that might fester in a closed-off memory-keeper's life.

Of the several more memoirs, children's books, and fictionalized survivor narratives that appear in Amazon's results, two are especially worth mentioning in the context of my study. Lisa Goldstein's young adult fantasy novel, *The Red Magician*, is particularly interesting because it serves as a kind of foil to the early portion of Wiesel's *Night*. In Goldstein's text, a magician appears to warn the Jews of a small Hungarian town about what is to come, but he is only believed by a thirteen-year-old girl, similarly to how Wiesel's Eliezor is the only one to believe Moshe the Beadle's foretellings. Spanish writer, Antonio Iturbe's, *The Librarian of Auschwitz*, features an overly literal interpretation of girls-as-memory-keepers, a story that could easily be

dismissed as unrealistic if it was not actually based on the experiences of survivor, Dita Kraus. In Iturbe's work, a fourteen-year-old female Auschwitz inmate is tasked with protecting the eight precious volumes that have somehow been smuggled into the camp. While not exhaustive, my general overview of popular contemporary Holocaust texts confirms that a majority of American novels about the Holocaust depict memory-keeping as the responsibility of women and girls.

Chapter Outline

Although not every work can be studied with the depth and detail that it deserves, the small cross section on which I focus my study is a solid stand-in for larger tropes and literary practices. In the first chapter, I analyze how canonical and well-accepted texts by authors like Jane Yolen, Lois Lowry, and Livia Bitton-Jackson contribute to normalizing the depiction of girls as Holocaust memory keepers. From typical calls to remember to the fantastical tropes of time-travel, the girls in these stories are charged with memorial duty no matter its hardships. My study of children's Holocaust literature considers the impact of gendered divisions of memory keeping in order to demonstrate the role of Holocaust history and narratives in American ideology. Myth-making is a necessary component of ideological production and the creation of a national imaginary, hence the importance of stories for children. My work argues that the Holocaust and its memorialization, as well as the myriad of subsequent narrativizations, plays a crucial role in American myth-making and ideological production, a duty that typically falls to women and girls, who are themselves often excluded from full participation in the nation. This fact is then both reflected and reified by the emphasis placed on women and girls as protagonists and memory-keepers in Holocaust literature for children.

Chapter two explores what happens when the time-traveling girls of Holocaust "kid lit" grow up. I consider how novels by Louise Murphy, Jenna Blum, and Jonathan Safran Foer rely on female characters that are either forced into or willingly take up the mantle of memory stewardship in both personal and public ways. The tradition of the woman or girl as keeper-of-memory, as established in the first chapter, continues through the actions and characterizations of adult women who create memory archives both within their minds and through a more literal stewardship of objects. I consider the legacy of gendered divisions of labor, especially in the domestic sphere, focusing on the question of whether traumatic memory is an extension of the domestic/family space. I conclude with an extended analysis of makeshift archives and the manner in which gendering mnemonic responsibility naturalizes Holocaust memory as the duty of women and girls, either as survivors or their second and third generational descendants.

Chapter three continues to explore the role of gender in archive-creation, this time concentrating on how the body itself becomes part of the Holocaust memory narrative. Using primarily Emily Prager's *Eve's Tattoo* and Thane Rosenbaum's *Second Hand Smoke*, I demonstrate how the gendering of Holocaust trauma combines with the naturalized belief in gendered mnemonic labor to produce appropriative and harmful consequences. Through my reading of these novels, I contend that the effect of essentializing Holocaust memory as the unquestioned purview of women leads to an unhealthy sense of ownership over memories and bodies that do not actually belong to the individual in question. This possessiveness over Holocaust memory morphs into a drive to physically etch trauma, memory, and history onto the body. The female memory-keeper, convinced at last of her stewardship duties, expands upon this responsibility by either becoming a physical archive herself or by inscribing that archive onto the bodies of her children.

As I trace the ubiquity of the female memory-keeper trope through its various appearances in American literature about the Holocaust for children and adults, I become more and more convinced that fiction is the best possible "laboratory" for this kind of study. Literary representations not only illuminate the existing complexities of the roles that women and girls must play in order to keep and steward memory but point to the way in which these depictions also work to create memory for readers. "One reason that literary texts come to constitute a special category within studies of the Shoah," Sara Horowitz argues, "Is that, more than other forms of narrative representations, literature foregrounds its own rhetoricity. In fiction and poetry, language is acknowledged and explored not as a transparent medium through which one comes to see reality but as implicated in the reality we see, as shaping our limited and fragile knowledge" (17). Aside from being an especially prudent argument for the necessity of fictional representation, this notion of language shaping reality helps clarify the connections between literary representations and contemporary memorialization practices. Ultimately, fiction does more than recreate and reflect; taken far enough, literary tropes themselves shape the cultures that produce and imbibe them, affecting everything from stereotype formation to societal mores.

Chapter 1:
"A Galaxy Out of the Chaos:" Gender, Memory-Keeping, and American Ideological Production in Children's Holocaust Literature

Jane Yolen's *The Devil's Arithmetic* (1988), begins with twelve-year-old Hannah announcing to her mother that she's "tired of remembering" (3). This declaration sets the tone for Hannah's ongoing struggle against the prescribed responsibilities of memory and her eventual acceptance of that memory as her natural duty. While there is nothing innately gendered about the act of remembering, one trope emerges most consistently in fictionalized representations of Holocaust memory. In contemporary American novels the figure that stewards memory and creates the makeshift archives to which others seek access is often depicted as female. I argue that Holocaust fiction, from children's books to literary novels, naturalizes memory keeping as the duty of women. In this chapter, I will explore how the gendering of mnemonic labor has become an accepted given that ultimately contributes to the political uses to which children's Holocaust fiction is put in the United States.

The over-arching premise of my argument can be conceptualized in three parts. First, I contend that myth-making is a necessary component of ideological production and that the telling of stories, especially for children, helps create the national mythos. Second, I propose that the Holocaust and its stories—that is, its memorialization and narrativization—plays a crucial role in American myth-making and ideological production. Finally, my analysis shows that we see this myth-making duty typically fall to women and girls, who are themselves often barred from full participation in the project of the nation. This chapter, therefore, will explore what happens as a result of the ubiquitous depiction of women and girls as keepers and stewards of Holocaust memory, particularly in literature for children. In looking at the intersections of gender and nationalism, I argue that such representations not only naturalize Holocaust memory-

keeping as the work of women but actively contribute to the Holocaust's use in American ideology and citizenship formation.

To return briefly to Yolen, taken alongside her contemporaries and successors, her work highlights a particular tradition within the sub-genre of Holocaust children's literature. In addition to Yolen's other work, *Briar Rose* (1992), novels like Lois Lowry's *Number the Stars* (1998), Leanne Lieberman's *Lauren Yanofsky Hates the Holocaust* (2013), Cherie Bennett's *Anne Frank and Me* (2001), Han Nolan's *If I Should Die Before I Wake* (1994), Thane Rosenbaum's *The Golems of Gotham* (2002), Judy Blume's *Starring Sally J. Freedman as Herself* (1986), and Livia Bitton-Jackson's *I Have Lived a Thousand Years* (1997), along with many others, create fictional worlds that insist that the role of the memory keeper is ultimately gendered. I will explore this trope primarily through *The Devil's Arithmetic*, *Number the Stars*, and *I Have Lived a Thousand Years*.

Although it is just one of many Holocaust narratives geared toward children, *The Devil's Arithmetic*, a fable of magical-realism, introduces the Holocaust to the child reader as a large-scale historical trauma. By emphasizing the lasting effects and repercussions of survivors' experiences of the Holocaust long after its conclusion, *The Devil's Arithmetic* places the act of remembering and the work of memory-keeping at the center of the story. The novel then continues to insist that this work must be done by women and girls. Initially ambivalent about memory and reluctant to participate in its keeping, Hannah must learn to take up her responsibility the hard way. The unexplained *Deus ex Machina* of time travel forces Hannah to experience life, imprisonment, and death under the Nazi regime for herself. I will return to *The Devil's Arithmetic* with more detail later in this chapter, but the depiction of Hannah's transformation from ambivalence and reluctance into conscious and purposeful stewardship is

exemplary of the female memory-keeping trope I identify in American children's literature of the Holocaust.

My interest in this phenomenon is sparked by the comparative prevalence of female main characters in Holocaust children's narratives, which is especially noteworthy in light of the overall dominance of male protagonists in children's literature. Disregarding works about non-Jewish characters, fully half of the top twenty results in Amazon's list of "Bestsellers in Children's Holocaust Fiction Books," feature texts centered on girl protagonists.[8] These are characters that are either actively surviving the Holocaust, reflecting on their experiences after the fact, or participating in familial lines of memory transmission with female relatives. One work, Lauren Tarshis' *I Survived the Nazi Invasion, 1944* (2014) focuses on a brother and sister surviving together and three, Meg Wiviott's *Benno and the Night of Broken Glass* (2010), Eve Bunting's *Terrible Things* (1989), and Jennifer Elvgren's *The Whispering Town* (2014), are picture books that seek to explain the Holocaust more generally to younger readers. Out of these twenty results, only six feature a boy protagonist at the center of the story.[9]

This is especially remarkable considering that stories for children so often center boys in the first place. Various studies of gender representation in children's books over the past few

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[8] As I discussed in the methodology section of my introduction, I am very intentionally using search results from Amazon because I am primarily interested in investigating the texts that are actively being read, marketed, and purchased by the general public.

[9] Texts with female protagonists: Lois Lowry's *Number the Stars*, Jennifer Roy's *Yellow Star* (2006), Jane Yolen's *The Devil's Arithmetic* and *Stone Angel* (2015), Patricia Polacco's *The Butterfly* (2000), Ruta Sepetys' *Between Shades of Gray* (2011), Judith Kerr's *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit* (1971), Han Nolan's *If I Should Die Before I Wake*, Loic Dauvillier's *Hidden* (2014), and Elissa Brent Weissman's *The Length of a String* (2018).
Texts with male protagonists: Carol Matas' *Daniel's Story* (1993), Michael Spradlin's *The Enemy Above* (2016), Tony Johnston's *The Harmonica* (2002), David Chotjewitz's *Daniel Half Human* (2004), Aaron Seth's *The Yellow Star Shines like a Candle in the Dark* (2016), and John Boyne's *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* (2006).

decades confirm the prevalence of male protagonists. A 1989 overview of books published in the U.S from 1900-1984, with information collected for 2,216 books, found that "males outnumbered females in all categories—titles as well as central characters" (Grauerholz and Pescosolido 116). A 1993 update on earlier studies by Weitzman et al. (1972) and Collins et al. (1984), looked at 125 non-award picture book and 25 Caldecott winners and runners-up published between the 1940s and 1980s and "found significantly more male characters than female characters in every category, with the exception of titles and central role figures of Caldecott winning books. Even in these two categories, however, males out-numbered females 2:1" (Kortenhaus and Demarest 224). A 2006 study focusing on top-selling books from 2001 and a seven year sample of Caldecott award-winning texts, for a total sample of 200 books, found that female characters continue to be under-represented in contemporary children's books (Hamilton et al 763).[10]

Gender and Nationalism

The popularity of girl protagonists in children's Holocaust fiction is thus not only uniquely noteworthy but directly tied to the larger political work that children's Holocaust fiction is called to do. Along with gendering Holocaust memory keeping, these texts function as part of the process that seeks to transform the child reader into an ideal American citizen. The girls of Holocaust "kid lit" are called upon to do the work of national myth production that mirrors the

[10] "Our data indicate that this claim is true not just for prize-winning books, but also for other books that today's children and parents are likely to purchase In our sample of 200 popular books, close to twice as many books had male title characters as had female title characters (75 versus 42) and had male main characters as had female main characters (95 versus 52). There were also close to twice as many male as female adult characters overall per book (means of 2.34 and 1.33, respectively)" (Hamilton et al 763)

reliance on women—both literally and metaphorically—as producers and creators of nations. Despite her famous declaration that, "As a woman, I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world," Virginia Woolf goes on to note the difficulties and contradictions of loving and belonging to a nation that refuses to see her as a full citizen (129).[11] As tempting as it might be to shake off national affiliation—especially if one is not allowed full involvement in said nation's social and political life—the complexity of the relationship between the state and the individual precludes such action. "Nations provide an 'identity' beyond the self, a sense of belongingness, and connectedness," Zillah Eisenstein contends, "This space beyond the 'private' self is the domain of the 'public' nation. The individual, their connection to others, and their sociality, are crucial to the construction of the idea of 'nation'" (37).

This idea of the "nation," what Benedict Anderson calls an "imagined community," is bound, at least in part, to the manner in which gender enters the discourses of nationhood, contributing especially to the rhetoric through which it is built up into a succinct whole of borders and demarcated space. "Excluded from direct action as national citizens," Anne McClintock claims, "Women are subsumed symbolically into the national body politic as its boundary and metaphoric limit" (61). It is no coincidence, then, that when we speak of our countries, we do so in gendered terms, thinking fondly of "the motherland," for example. In the United States, it is "Lady Liberty" who stands tall at the mythological borders of the nation. In her reading of the Statue of Liberty as an icon of what she calls the "National Symbolic," Lauren Berlant proposes that, "Now fully saturated by a century of collective fantasy, the 'Lady'

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[11] "How could women be nationalists when they did not have equal rights? How could women not be nationalists when they loved their country, people, and home?" (xii) – West, Lois A. *Feminist Nationalism*. Routledge: New York, 1997

provides an exemplary study in how the fantasy-work of the National Symbolic aims to produce American citizens" (17).[12] The statue's overt gendering goes hand in hand with its ability to imagine and confer citizenship. The "Lady's" passivity, her "immobility and silence are fundamental to her activity as a positive site of national power and fantasy" (Berlant 21).

Thus, while women rarely get to participate in its construction, gender's role in imagining the nation is overpowering. Commenting on Woolf, Eisenstein claims, "Women do not belong to a nation. They instead construct the mythology of nationhood" (42). The work of imagining and mythologizing falls to women; the nation is created not only directly, through women's literal ability to reproduce, but indirectly through metaphor. "Because 'the' nation fantasizes women in a homogenized, abstracted familial order," Eisenstein continues, "women become a 'metaphor' for what they represent, rather than what they are […] As symbolizations, they become static and unchanging like the constructions of timeless motherhood. Their representation, as the nation, defines them fictively, and reproduces the fiction" (43). Women's ascribed gendered roles and identities are therefore both defined by the nation and are then themselves put to work constructing the nation in return.

The myth of the nation is rooted in the feminizing rhetoric of exploration, conquest, and empire. The land is coded female—fecund, virginal—open to masculine conquest and penetration, drawing on what McClintock refers to as "a long tradition of male travel as an erotics of ravishment" (22). She continues:

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[12] Berlant defines the "National Symbolic" as "the order of discursive practices whose reign within a national space performs, and also refers to, the 'law' in which the accident of birth within a geographic/political boundary transforms individuals into subjects of a collectively-held history. Its traditional icons, its metaphors, its heroes, its rituals, and its narratives provide an alphabet for a collective consciousness or national subjectivity that attains the status of natural law, a birthright" (15).

> As European men crossed the dangerous thresholds of their known worlds, they ritualistically feminized borders and boundaries […] Explorers called unknown lands 'virgin' territory. Philosophers veiled 'Truth' as female, then fantasized about drawing back the veil. In myriad ways, women served as mediating and threshold figures by means of which men oriented themselves in space, as agents of power and agents of knowledge. (24)

Thus even before we consider the literal reproduction of the nation that occurs through motherhood, the conflation of nation and gender can be seen in the very beginnings of national myth and metaphor. The vulnerability and fertility of what is first land and then nation, as well as the anxiety surrounding its permeable borders, serves as the foundation for an ongoing gendered rhetoric of nationalism.

What I am especially interested in is the manner in which this rhetoric has become naturalized in nationalist discourse. The language of naturalization comes up again and again in reference to women's roles in producing and maintaining the nation. In their introduction to the collection *Women, States, and Nationalism*, Sita Ranchod-Nilsson and Mary Ann Tétreault refer to the way in which feminist scholars, such as Kumari Jayawardena (1986), McClintock (1993), Claudia Koonz (1987), and others, "highlight ways in which gender differences are 'naturalized' as codes guiding processes of constructing and reconstructing nations" (11). Later in the same collection, Zillah Eisenstein, referencing Greta Slobin's 1992 work, writes, "Women are the procreators and not the citizens. The female/maternalized body becomes the site for *viewing* the nation. It is an imaginary site that is wholly naturalized through the symbolization of the female body" (43). Again and again, the gendering of nationalist roles and duties is reaffirmed through

language and metaphor, as well as the persistent need to equate the body of the woman with the body of the nation itself.

A main component behind the equation of female bodies and national bodies is the matter of reproduction. By and large it is women who bear children, thereby reproducing the next generation of citizens for the state (Ranchod-Nilson & Tétreault, Gaitskell and Unterhalter). Along with literal reproduction, the role of motherhood often means that it is also women who reproduce culture as part of their child-rearing:

> Under heteropatriarchal conditions, women not only bear children but also are expected to rear them. Especially within the family, women are assigned the primary responsibility for inculcating beliefs, behaviors, and loyalties that are culturally appropriate and ensure intergenerational continuity. This cultural transmission includes learning the "mother tongue" – the codified meaning system—as well as the group's identity, symbols, rituals, divisions of labor, and worldviews. Research indicates that from an early age, children are aware of and identify specifically with a "homeland" (Peterson 66).

Cultural and national education thus begins in the gendered domestic space, as early as the nursery. The naturalization of these duties—reproducing the nation literally through birth and child-rearing, as well as figuratively, through a gendered rhetoric of national borders and space—leads us, I believe, to the naturalization of memory-keeping. In short, I argue that in the same way that the language of nationalism naturalizes gender roles, so does it naturalize the divisions of mnemonic labor, assigning the responsibility for stewarding and disseminating memory to women and girls.

Regarding Holocaust memory in the United States, in particular, much of that naturalization process occurs through literature, especially in the stories and narratives geared toward children and young adult readers. I begin by outlining the continued American fixation on revisiting and representing the Holocaust in our culture, education, and entertainment. As I argue, the United States is especially invested in using Holocaust memory to design and inspire a particular sort of patriotism in order to groom children for an adulthood of participatory citizenship and national pride. Along with that, I posit that this ideological, nationalistic use of Holocaust memory relies—at least in part—on representing women and girls as memory-keepers, turning the gendering of memory-stewardship into an unquestioned norm of Holocaust memory narratives.

The Holocaust and Citizenship in the United States

In an afterword to *The Devil's Arithmetic*, titled, "What is True About This Book," Yolen writes, "Fiction cannot recite the numbing numbers, but it can be that witness, that memory. A storyteller can attempt to tell the human tale" (169-170). These words seem like a justification for fictionally representing the Holocaust. The afterword in general—which seeks to clarify that, aside from the time travel component, the events of the novel are true and the characters are amalgams of real survivors—sends its own message about the purposes of the text. While the overall need for an informative historical afterword to follow a work of children's literature depends on the reader's age, maturity, and prior knowledge of the Holocaust, the fact that Yolen intentionally seeks to ground her story in historical fact tells us that *The Devil's Arithmetic* has a function beyond entertaining.

Like many other works in the popular subgenre of Holocaust literature for children, Yolen's novel aims to provide child readers with a historical and moral education about the events of the Holocaust and their continued reverberations. It highlights the importance of remembering and insists on keeping memory alive for the second and third generations and beyond. Although the presence of traumatic histories within children's narratives is not new, I argue that the context surrounding it and the framework within which it is enmeshed, particularly in regards to stories from and about the Holocaust, has developed a more pointed objective in the last few decades. Within the United States, children's Holocaust literature is relied upon to instill a specific ideological mindset for the child reader. The constant emphasis on heroism and rescue, along with prominent depictions of the United States as a savior and a place of refuge, ensures that, within these texts, the U.S becomes synonymous with moral uprightness. It also matters that works like Lois Lowry's *Number the Stars* (1989), Yolen's *The Devil's Arithmetic*, Livia Bitton-Jackson's *I Have Lived a Thousand Years* (1997), and even the non-fictional *Diary of Anne Frank* (1952), as well as many others, present these heroics through the viewpoint of young, female, memory-keeping protagonists. This early introduction to Holocaust memory through a gendered emphasis on mnemonic labor is a key component in the overall use of Holocaust-literature-as-nationalism in the United States.

While the aforementioned texts form only a small part of the Holocaust "kid lit" canon, they introduce child readers to the sense of patriotism and righteousness that contributes to the child's eventual induction into the United States' model of citizenship, one in which "civic meanings are both exceptionally weighty and exceptionally plastic—shifting and changing as our technologies, political terrains, and economies fluctuate" (Abowitz and Harnish 679). Traditionally, as laid out by John Jay and The Federalist Papers in the eighteenth century,

national identity required shared ancestry and a shared experience of major events (Delbanco). However, this was never truly the case, not even at the dawn of America, and, especially now in the 21st century, citizenship and national identity are complex, multifaceted experiences (Delbanco, Malin). For the purposes of my work, I define citizenship following Abowitz and Harnish: "Citizenship, at least theoretically, confers membership, identity, values, and rights of participation and assumes a body of common political knowledge" (653). Alongside these characteristics, an American citizen identity is also "a form of social identity" and "through association and participation, individuals come to name themselves as members of a group, and shape their role in society according to that association" (Malin 56). In the United States, the prevalence of children's books about the Holocaust, as well as the emphasis placed on Holocaust education in schools and its general presence in popular culture and entertainment, ensure that it contributes to shaping the child's role in society as he or she matures into adulthood and a full participatory citizenship.

The historical and geographic distance of World War II, along with its reputation as a "just" war (at least for the allied countries), have made the Holocaust the ideal event for the United States to use to demonstrate righteousness before its citizens. This is what Michael Berenbaum calls the "Americanization of the Holocaust," the use of catastrophe to advance national standing and inspire a specific ideology:

> In America we recast the story of the Holocaust to teach fundamental American values. What are the fundamental values? For example—when America is at its best—pluralism, democracy, restraint on government, the inalienable rights of

> individuals, the inability of government to enter into freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, freedom of religion, and so forth. (56)[13]

We depend on representations of the Holocaust to demonstrate American moral superiority, to throw up the foil of Nazism against which we can then appear as noble rescuers. The U.S Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C, for example, alongside its commemorative mission, functions as part of the state's educational mechanism for the production of ideal citizenship. "The museum, then," Philip Gourevitch explains, "is meant to serve as an ideological vaccine for the American body politic. A proper dose of Holocaust, the thinking goes, will build up the needed antibodies against totalitarianism, racism, and state-sponsored mass murder" (56). This immunization of the population against the disease of totalitarianism subsequently implies that the "disease" is not only known but external. The body of the nation, then, is not only itself a healthy one but one that carries the power, the incentive, and, most tellingly for America's perception of itself, the *duty* to heal others who are not so lucky. In this same regard, the education that the state aims to impart on its citizens—in order to create enthusiastic supporters of its ideology, citizens who will whole-heartedly believe in the American dream of freedom and democracy for all—can be felt most keenly through the uses to which the Holocaust is put in children's literature.

The Holocaust in American Children's Culture

Fictional Holocaust narratives geared toward young readers in the United States are tied to the propagation of a national ideology of heroism, rescue, and, above all, the righteousness of

[13] Quoted in: Gourevitch, Philip. "Behold Now Behemoth." *Harper's Magazine*, 287.1718 (1993): 55-62.

the nation at large. In telling stories that present American values through the lens of a foreign tragedy, these narratives create memories for the reader:

> Much of the focus of adult literature on the Holocaust is "to remember." The invocation of memory has at least two purposes: to memorialize those who died so ignominiously and who were cremated or buried in pits or otherwise unremembered at the time of their death. Secondly, the memory is intended to forestall such mass slaughter, such racial hatred from recurring. With child readers, however, memory is not being invoked; it is being created. (Baer 380)

For the child reader, the memory that is created through American Holocaust narratives occurs in a specific context. Distant trauma becomes intertwined with national pride and American identity comes to be conflated with the work of rescue and other noble heroics. These stories then contribute to the upkeep of a culture that privileges the traits and values that are most useful for a child's understanding of and belief in American citizenship and ideology.

Children are in themselves very potent symbols. In her study of racialized innocence in nineteenth century American literature, Robin Bernstein describes the "political usefulness" of the white child's innocence, which is "transferable to surrounding people and things" (6). Although I am not looking at race, the "political usefulness" of the child-as-innocent-victim in American Holocaust narratives is similarly transferable, signaling an explicit identification with morally superior American ideology through the experience of empathy. Regarding the red-coated little girl of *Schindler's List*, for example, Mark Anderson describes her "orphaned journey" as "the film's visual and emotional leitmotif for the essential inhumanity of the Holocaust" (10). He goes on to note that it seems necessary, for American audiences, to see a child in the position of victim or survivor; in order to process and, in fact, consume the narratives

of the Shoah as a form of entertainment, "the figure of the persecuted child turns the Holocaust into a moving and accessible story with religious and mythic associations" (3). Further, although the child-as-symbol is not always female, they are placed in positions of powerlessness that can then be read in the same manner as the perceived weaknesses and vulnerabilities of femininity. In this way, their victimization—although tragic and heartbreaking—is also somehow acceptable to the audience, which gets to feel a sense of righteous indignation over the suffering of the weak and innocent, thereby imbuing that suffering with the necessary "religious and mythic" undertones.

In many ways, there is nothing especially mysterious about the reason why children—both real and fictional—are so often used to represent the tragedy and loss of the Holocaust. One of the most well known images, for example, that of the small boy standing with his arms raised in the Warsaw ghetto, clearly illustrates the chaos and destruction of those years.[14] There are other people nearby but the boy stands off to the side, entirely alone. He has done nothing wrong—an innocent—but faces imminent, violent danger. Ultimately, there is the backdrop of history: we know what happened to the Jewish children of Warsaw. The perceived innocence and vulnerability of children carries a dual meaning for Holocaust history and narrative. "Because children are imagined as innocent, they are figured almost iconographically as the ultimate victims of trauma," Katharine Capshaw Smith claims, "Alternately, because children are imagined as innocent, they are also figured as the survivors of trauma, those who can offer adults spiritual advice in how to triumph over pain through simple, honest, essential values like love, trust, hope, and perseverance" (116). The naïve perception of the suffering child's preternatural

[14] "Jewish Boy Surrenders in Warsaw." *Time*, http://100photos.time.com/photos/jewish-boy-surrenders-warsaw. Accessed 3 May 2018.

wisdom dominates much of American literature and media, which depicts symbolic children both as victims and survivors.

Such a view of the child victim has made it so "that children's literature is the most rather than the least appropriate literary forum for trauma work" (Kidd 120). Drawing on the works of Bruno Bettleheim, Kenneth Kidd goes on to note that the figure of the traumatized child of psychoanalysis ultimately merges together with the dead/wounded child of the Holocaust to form a figure that exists at the intersections of trauma and psychoanalysis within children's literature: "For better and for worse, psychoanalysis and children's literature have been mutually enabling, alongside and through academic trauma theory, which rewrites the 'crisis' of representation in signal ways" (120).[15] This "crisis" of representation, in the context of trauma theory, "kid lit," and psychoanalysis, is rewritten to signify a new kind of moral and historical education necessary for the child's eventual induction into American citizenship and adulthood. In the United States, participatory citizenship requires the individual to be simultaneously capable of contributing to political life and falling in line. The complexity of the relationship between the individual and the state, as well as the "success" of their interactions, depends at least in part on an early childhood education that subtly promotes the ideological aims of the state—in the case of contemporary America, this is often done through a children's literature of Holocaust atrocity and trauma.

Children's narratives are of particular use to a society that depends on its citizens' docility, faith in the nation's moral and ethical righteousness, and ultimate sense of duty toward civic participation. Stories about the Holocaust help to mold the child reader into an ideal American citizen, for "if children's fiction builds an image of the child inside the book, it does so

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[15] Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment*, 1976.

in order to secure the child who is outside the book" (Rose 2). Part of what spurs development and maturation is reading about trauma. "Trauma makes a certain kind of mature adulthood possible," Eric Tribunella argues, "To be mature is to be wounded, so maturity is a state of injury that is valued and valorized" (xiv). While no one is advocating for an increased presence of atrocity in the lives of children simply for the purposes of maturity, fictional representations of trauma in literature are a vital component of a mature, aware adulthood.

Exposure to a wider, more global understanding of the traumatic best fuels the sort of maturation process that Tribunella espouses: "If children are to be made subject to a higher authority, if they are to be brought into a national community of citizens, if they are to be trained in order to function as proper and productive adults, they must first be disciplined" (xv). Thus, if the child is to be brought up into adulthood as a citizen of the state, if they are to become agreeable subjects who believe in their nation and government and give in to the demands of power without complaint, then they must learn something about pain through fictional representations of trauma. A child properly socialized to be aware of loss and traumatic experience in the world outside of themselves is more likely to empathize with others and is better suited for membership in the state's ideological regime upon adulthood. Empathy coupled with a solid belief in the righteousness of the nation to which one belongs creates a dedicated citizen. Power requires docility, yes, but it functions far more smoothly when enacted by motivated citizens who, empowered by a sense of their country's righteousness, operate in such a way as to un-self-consciously promote their nation's ideologies both within the borders of home and beyond.

Holocaust themed children's literature is particularly well suited for providing this "inoculation" of global trauma to American children. The Holocaust-as-subject officially entered

educational institutions with Jimmy Carter's 1978 President's Commission on the Holocaust, which recommended that "the study of the Holocaust become part of the curriculum in every school system in the country" (Wiesel). Yet the importance and popularity of the Holocaust as a subject in children's literature has continued to soar, reinforced through the awarding of literary medals, such as the Newberry or the Caldecott, and other forms of public recognition, which drive sales and visibility (Miller). By being both a required topic of study and a popular subject of entertainment, the Holocaust also becomes a contributing component of American ideology production.

The outcome of such intense focus on Holocaust education, as well as the insistence on its total distinctiveness, is, as Peter Novick finds, that this sense of uniqueness and exceptionality simultaneously increases the sense of American heroism on the European front in WWII *and* diminishes similar current occurrences of genocide, ethnic cleansing, and any number of other conflicts: "Apart from the Holocaust's alleged uniqueness, its extremity, which made it so potent a rhetorical weapon, also meant that compared to the Holocaust, anything else looked not so bad. The comparison, by raising the threshold of outrage, could easily desensitize" (Novick 255). If the Holocaust was uniquely horrific and there can be nothing *like* it, then the United States can avoid any moral or ethical obligation to get involved in contemporary conflicts without losing its credibility as a moral rescuer of the oppressed and displaced in the eyes of its citizens. Overemphasizing the Holocaust therefore allows for a constant reiteration of heroism and rescue that reinscribe the justness of the United States in the child reader's mind without mentioning any of the nation's problematic actions and conflicts.

Gender and Ideology in American Children's Holocaust Literature

In the introduction to *Number the Stars*, Lois Lowry writes that ten, the age of her character, Annemarie, is also "the approximate age of most of the book's readers" and "is an age when young people are beginning to develop a strong set of personal ethics. They want to be honorable people. They want to do the right thing" (i-ii). Lowry may be making a general statement here about the way in which literature helps mold personal ethics, but in the reality of our particular context—contemporary America—these personal ethics develop alongside deeply nationalistic intentions. In American life, the Holocaust, while constantly invoked and represented, nevertheless appears in a very limited manner. Often divorced from its historical reality, it is presented as a way to encourage children to become rescuers and, to borrow Lowry's words, "honorable people" doing the right thing.

At this point it is imperative that gender—which has always been part of the foundation of Holocaust memory and narrativization—becomes an acknowledged component of the conversation. In light of the role children's literature plays in ideology formation, the importance of gendered identity becomes especially relevant when we consider the individual characters at the heart of the stories that children read about the Holocaust. While there are many texts with all sort of different protagonists—boys and girls, Jews and gentiles, survivors, victims, bystanders, and American children looking back from the 21st century—the most popular and beloved are arguably Wiesel's autobiographical *Night*, Yolen's *The Devil's Arithmetic* (as well as *Briar Rose*), Lois Lowry's *Number the Stars*, and Anne Frank's non-fictional diary. Of this set, *Night* is the only work to feature a male protagonist; it is also the only work actively concerned with depicting the horrors of the Holocaust and survival in the camps as they occur. Although *Night* is often paired with Frank's *Diary of a Young Girl*, a truer companion would be Livia Bitton-Jackson's *I Have Lived a Thousand Years*, to which I will return again soon, which describes a

girl's survival of the camps and mirrors Wiesel's fraught father-son relationship with a similarly difficult mother-daughter connection. It is also worth noting that Bitton-Jackson's work ends with the protagonist's arrival in America with her family, while *Night* concludes more ambiguously with the liberation of Buchenwald. *Night*, therefore, doesn't lend itself as easily as Bitton-Jackson's work to the production of American ideology among its readers.

In looking specifically at Yolen, Lowry, and Bitton-Jackson as representatives of the Holocaust "kid lit" canon, we can see certain tropes and roles emerging. Main among these is the tendency to assign the duties of memory-keeping and narrative formation to female characters. The responsibility for memory is most overt in *The Devil's Arithmetic*, which tells the story of twelve-year-old Hannah Stern. Ambivalent and grumpy about her family's history, Hannah opens the door for Elijah during a family Seder and is magically sent back in time to experience life and death in the Shoah for herself. Lowry's *Number the Stars* takes a different approach, telling the story of Annemarie, a Danish girl who, along with her family of rescuers, helps ferry the Jews of Denmark to safety in Sweden. *I Have Lived a Thousand Years* is a fictionalized memoir of Bitton-Jackson's wartime experiences and survival in Auschwitz and after.

Once established in memory-keeping roles, the characters and their stories are put to work in the production of American ideology. One of the main ways in which this happens is through the framing of rescue work as an especially American value and behavior. Although it does, of course, empathize with victims and survivors, children's Holocaust literature produced in the United States is particularly focused on heroes. While rescue in the context of *The Devil's Arithmetic*, for example, looks very different from the kind of rescuing that happens in *Number the Stars*, both texts ultimately reassure the reader that the imperative to rescue is the norm rather than the exception.

Most of *Number the Stars* revolves around the actions of Danes who selflessly put their lives on the line as rescuers, while Jewish characters are featured only briefly and passively, as victims and recipients of aid. Although my study is generally concerned with Jewish characters and fiction, the overwhelming popularity and resonance of *Number the Stars* demands an exception. "As a story of the 'righteous Gentile,' in which non-Jews undertake enormous risks to rescue imperiled Jews, *Number the Stars* tells of people who are faced with a powerful ethical dilemma," David L. Russell contends (270). Yet none of the novel's characters seem to feel any actual inner conflict about helping the Jews. There is a very legitimate fear of death and punishment, certainly, but still, no one ever considers abandoning the work of rescue. Children encountering the Holocaust through *Number the Stars* likely find its narrative to be not only powerful but empowering, encouraging a bravery many may not be able to imagine but would certainly like to claim. The ready identification that the child feels with Annemarie relies heavily on her belief in her ordinariness and the trepidation and doubt with which she experiences her own courage. As the occupying Nazis begin to tighten their hold over the country, closing Jewish businesses and dismissing them from their jobs, Annemarie connects the duty of the Danes to protect their Jewish countrymen with the story of the king riding through the streets without a bodyguard, safe in the knowledge that all of Denmark would be his bodyguard. "Now I think that all of Denmark must be bodyguard for the Jews," Annemarie tells her father and he responds, "So we shall be," the matter decided as simply as any other minor domestic decision (25). Being a rescuer thus seems less a matter of choice and more of an inevitable action, one taken up as a matter of course by the good and the just.

In the novel, it is largely the two main female characters of the novel—Annemarie and her mother—who are shown to be rescuers. Men like Henrik, who ferries the boat across the sea

to Sweden, and Peter, who organizes and provides vital supplies, do their work in the background. The novel's focus remains squarely on Annemarie and, to a slightly lesser extent, her mother. In fact, it is gender that makes it possible for the two to operate so effectively under the noses of the German troops. When the plans go into motion, Annemarie's father insists on coming along to Henrik's, but Mrs. Johansen understands the suspicions he would inspire merely through his presence. "If only I go with the girls, it will be safer. They are unlikely to suspect a woman and her children," she tells her husband (51-52). They agree that he must go to work as usual while she takes the children to visit her brother out in the country. A man accompanying his family on what is largely a leisure trip in the middle of the day would no doubt arouse suspicion; a woman traveling with her children to visit family in the middle of a working day, however, easily fits cultural expectations. Mrs. Johansen's actions thus show a shrewd understanding of how the assumptions behind gendered tasks and behaviors can make or break the plans of the resistance.

Similarly, Annemarie's gender, as well as her age, allows her to pass the inspection of German soldiers and protects her, at least physically, from their hostility. When it is discovered that something very necessary has been accidentally left behind (a handkerchief permeated with a powder meant to temporarily destroy the sense of smell of the Nazis' dogs), Annemarie becomes the only person who can deliver the package in time to ensure the safety of the Jews hidden in her uncle's boat. In this moment, responsibility passes from mother to daughter. Not only is it impossible for Mrs. Johansen, with her broken ankle, to make the trip, but it is also safer to send Annemarie. "If any soldiers see you, if they stop you, you must pretend to be nothing more than a little girl," her mother tells her, "A silly, empty-headed little girl, taking a lunch to a fisherman, a foolish uncle who forgot his bread and cheese" (105). She will be kept

safe due to the particular qualities of immaturity and childishness that are so often ascribed to girlhood. When she is stopped by bored soldiers—who proceed to tear apart the package she is carrying more for their own amusement rather than out of any genuine suspicion—Annemarie hides beneath their perception of her identity. Channeling her younger sister, she petulantly stamps her foot, cries, and whines at the soldiers in a perfect display of the empty-headed innocence expected of little girls.

Annemarie and her mother are able to use the perceived and performative attributes of their gender to carry out the work of rescue directly under the noses of occupying German soldiers. While they are not creating archives or stewarding memories directly, the depiction of rescue performed by a woman and a female child centers the importance of women's contributions within the Holocaust narrative. Their representation can then be tied not only to the persistent trope of female memory keepers but to the ideological force driving the popularity of texts like *Number the Stars* for young American readers. One of the consequences of Lowry's decision to limit the novel's narrative focus to non-Jewish characters is that the largely Jewish trauma of the Holocaust fades into the background, superseded by a far more traditional story of sacrifice, bravery, and patriotism. Admitting that the novel is not actually about Jewish experience or trauma allows us to consider what its concern with the actions of ordinary people in extraordinary times might mean to the contemporary American child reader.

Along with building empathy for Jewish victims, what the novel really does is invite the reader to identify with Annemarie and her family of rescuers. It does this by establishing a parallel between the social and familial world of the American child reader and the fairly typical and normative Johansen family. Even though Annemarie and her family are not American, they are presented as very familiar figures, a narrative choice that effectively "Americanizes" them to

the reader. The Johansens appear as easily recognizable and valorized representations of the ideal American family unit. The traditional nuclear structure—a working father, a homemaker mother, an adorable but "bratty" younger sister—are so customary to the child reader as to be completely unremarkable. Papa goes to work as a teacher, Mama knits mittens, Annemarie and Ellen play *Gone with the Wind* with their paper dolls, and little Kristi yearns for "a big yellow cupcake, with pink frosting"—they are the family next door (Lowry 9, 18, 27).[16] There is very little about the Johansens that seems explicitly foreign or Other in any way. Despite being set in Denmark, the novel's social and cultural signifiers—perhaps because it is written in English, by an American author, for an American audience—ensure that the representation of the characters differs very little from American characters in works set in the United States. Their commitment to rescue therefore reads as an affirmation of American values and ideals. In this way, *Number the Stars* creates a normalized example of rescue for the reader to admire and claim as part of their own developing identity as a citizen of the United States.

The emphasis on acts of rescue performed by women continues less overtly in *The Devil's Arithmetic*. Yolen's novel deals with the experience of Hannah Stern, a young Jewish girl living in 1980s New York. Bored and sick of listening to family stories about the Holocaust, she opens the door during a Passover Seder to let in the prophet Elijah and is transported into another time and identity. Though she retains her knowledge of who she truly is, Hannah becomes Chaya, a Jewish girl in 1942 Poland. Despite knowing what is to come, Hannah/Chaya is eventually rounded up along with the other villagers and sent to a concentration camp. Once there, she becomes a rock for the others. In many ways, Hannah is burdened by her temporal displacement—dropped in a time and a place so removed from her own—yet she is also

[16] Truly, what is more American than *Gone with the Wind*?

privileged by her knowledge of the future. She can avoid succumbing to despair and strives to keep hope alive even as she walks toward certain death. “In the end, in the future, there will be Jews still,” she tells the other girls, “And there will be Israel, a Jewish state, where there will be a Jewish president and Jewish senate. And in America, Jewish movie stars” (156). These stories of hope are Hannah’s work of rescue.

The lives of the Jewish girls cannot be saved but in seeking to comfort them, Hannah undertakes a kind of rescue of the soul, so to speak, a rescue that is coded in very specific ideological terms. “Let me tell you a story,” Hannah says to the crying girls as they walk to the gas chamber:

> It is about a girl. An ordinary sort of girl named Hannah Stern who lives in New Rochelle. Not Old Rochelle. There is no Old Rochelle, you see. Just New Rochelle. It is in an America where pictures come across a cable, moving pictures right into your living room and…” She stopped as the dark door into Lilith’s Cave opened before them. “And where one day, I bet, a Jewish girl will be president if she wants to be. Are you ready, now? Ready or not, here we come… (159-160)

Hannah can’t help ferry them to safety like Annemarie and her family could, but she can create an idea of a future for the Jewish people at large. The future she describes exists (where else?) in the United States. America becomes part of the very fantasy of hope that Hannah weaves for her companions and “At a moment of unspeakable darkness” Hannah “invokes American civic opportunity as a symbol of hope. It is a strange juxtaposition, and just one small example of the tangle of tragedy and patriotism that constitute contemporary young adult literature on dark historical subjects” (Eichler-Levine 116). This mix of tragedy and patriotism forms the foundation of many Holocaust texts that American children encounter, either as students or

independent readers. Not only are they able to identify with Hannah—who is, after all, a child much like themselves, displaced yet very much American—but her rescuing actions, though not as traditional as Annemarie's, nevertheless reaffirm American values and ideology through an overarching emphasis on American "goodness."

For Jewish children reading the novel, the "Americanness" of Hannah's hopeful story has additional meaning. Whether they have experienced anti-Semitism or not, Yolen's text functions to reaffirm the Jewish child's perception of themselves as American, strengthening the notion of the United States as an open, welcoming, righteous nation. In *The Devil's Arithmetic*, "while American forgetfulness is criticized, Americanness itself—the idea of American equality and upward mobility—is held up as an ideal. Hannah/Chaya presents Jewish acceptance and integration in America as an example of a future utopia and a near fairy-tale for her companions" (Eichler-Levine 121). American ideology is thus doubly reaffirmed for Jewish child readers through the utopic depiction of the United States as not only a nation that actively performs rescue but which also readily welcomes the rescued to their new home.

In stressing the connection between the United States and a sense of moral goodness, Holocaust narratives for children conflate survival and the promise of a better life with American citizenship. Novels like *Number the Stars* and *The Devil's Arithmetic* obviously depict tragedy and death but tend to end on a positive note of survival and liberation. Annemarie's story, while set in Denmark, nevertheless appears familiar through its depiction of the Johansens as a typical American family. The novel concludes with a sense of satisfaction about the success of the resistance and the rescue of the Jews. In Americanizing the Johansens, the novel aligns rescue with Americanness. Hannah's journey ends not in the gas chambers—though her alter-identity, Chaya, does perish there—but in a Bronx apartment. Livia Bitton-Jackson's harrowing

autobiography, *I Have Lived a Thousand Years*, ends long after her liberation, in the moment when she and her surviving family (a mother and brother) arrive for the first time in America: "My heart is brimming. I look around. The deck of the refugee boat is full now. A mass of faces, full of awe and anticipation, focused on the Statue of Liberty as the boat chugs past it. The grande dame of our dreams now rises resplendent against the first rays of the sun" (216). After many pages of pain and suffering in a foreign land, Bitton-Jackson concludes her tale with "resplendent" Americana.

At the conclusion of WWII, Jewish refugees and survivors created new homes for themselves all over the global diaspora, forming vibrant communities everywhere from South America to Australia. Most of the Holocaust narratives published in the United States, however, end with the survivor's arrival in America, the ultimate place of rescue, a land of freedom and righteousness for which they are, at least in the narrative moment, wholly, uncomplicatedly grateful. This subset of children's literature of the United States is unabashedly invested in promoting patriotism. Through these texts, the child reader learns what the state intends all its citizens to believe: that America means refuge and that simply being part of this nation equates to being a rescuer. In Bitton-Jackson's memoir, Elli says, "Let's be among the first," as they prepare to disembark at the end of their journey (216). America waits and Europe, with its darkness, languishes an ocean away. The effects of the Holocaust do not end, but the story does. The happy conclusion acknowledges loss peripherally but emphasizes the hope and optimism of America.

Similarly, *The Devil's Arithmetic* dismisses the immediate tragedy of Jewish girls on their way to certain death in favor of a more resonant hope in American Jewish survival. In doing so, Yolen's work provides a striking representation of the way in which Holocaust narratives in

the U.S privilege individual (i.e.: American) heroism over collective Jewish catastrophe. The emphasis on individual heroism ties in to supposed American values and the ideological myths of our honor-bound, world-protecting exceptionalism. In inviting the child reader to identify with a heroic, American rescuer, the narrative sidelines and lessens the impact of characters that are not able to engage in heroic rescue themselves:

> Young adult fictions support the heroic survivor through their emphasis on a central and resourceful character who often speaks in the first person. She or he always survives with individuality intact and thus is implicitly a role model for the young reader […] Such an existentially defined and heroically gestured central consciousness receives less the compassion than the admiration of the implied and actual reader. Subtextually, however, there is the subtle implication that those victims, whom the camp world debilitated so much in body and spirit that they became indifferent even to being gassed, are somehow less than the central consciousness of the narrative. (Bosmaijan 143)

The reader remembers and applauds Hannah for her bravery and individuality, but does not come away with nearly as much awareness of the crying girls who accompany her into the gas chamber. Unsurprisingly, the narrative focus remains on Hannah, the character with whom American children are most likely to identify.

It matters that the character the child reader is invited to identify with most is female. Just as the perceptions of gendered identity allow Annemarie and Mrs. Johansen to undertake rescue and resistance, so too does Hannah's gendered identity situate her investment in and responsibility for the Holocaust memory narrative. On the way to Passover dinner, Hannah tells her mother: "All Jewish holidays are about remembering, Mama. I'm tired of remembering" (4).

Rebelling against having to uphold her role in memory keeping, Hannah is far more interested in her Christian friend's jellybeans, resenting the fact that her identity as a Jewish girl requires her to forego the sweetness and ease of Easter candy in favor of bitter horseradish. Because she initially refuses to take part in the accepted rituals of memory and is tired of the very imperative behind them, she must go back in time to quite literally create those memories for herself.

Hannah is the strongest, most overt example of the many fictional female children burdened with the task of memory keeping. Whether it is a matter of punishment or a lesson, the fact that the novel insists on employing the fantastic trope of time travel tells us something about how ingrained and naturalized gendered mnemonic labor practices are. As she travels back and forth through time, "it is suggested that Hannah comes to understand that the Holocaust is not an event one simply survived but an event that the survivor continues to live through" (Martin 321). In the process, Hannah finally understands the way in which survivors continue to re-experience their traumas and comes to terms with her duty as a memory steward. Because Hannah returns to her present with a personally lived experience of the past, Holocaust memory keeping is no longer an abstract concept to sit through during boring family dinners but a vital component of her own identity.

Having personally lived through the Holocaust, thanks to the convenient plot device of unexplained time travel, Hannah accepts the burden and duty of memory as natural. Following on my earlier discussion of the naturalization of gender roles within nationalism, I argue that we must come to see the gendering of mnemonic labor as an outgrowth of the gender roles insisted upon in nationalist discourse. If the job of women is to reproduce the nation, literally and metaphorically, but the military and political duties of citizenship are coded as male, then perhaps the coding of memory-keeping as female reinforces that divide by presenting these

separate duties—depicted as masculine and feminine—as the somehow equal and "natural" conclusions of gendered identity. Thus, although the prevalence of female protagonists in memory-keeping positions may not be conscious on the part of the authors, it is nevertheless a reflection of how American culture defines particular attributes and behaviors in gendered terms. Even though no fact of biology obligates them to do so, it is the girls of children's Holocaust fiction who take on the responsibility of memory-keeping for themselves and their families. These actions, aside from making them stewards, insure that their stories become part of American attempts to advance its ideology and train up children into citizenship.

Chapter 2:
"Her Life Was a Book of Photographs:"
Gender and Mnemonic Labor in Holocaust Fiction

If children's novels about the Holocaust construct a method of memorial narrativization that depends on the female child's responsibility for protecting and reconstructing the memories of the Shoah, what happens, then, when these fictional girls grow up? In the novels that I discuss in this chapter, the tradition of the female as memory-keeper is continued in the actions and characterizations of adult women intent on recovering or protecting Holocaust memory, both on a personal and collective level. Louise Murphy's *The True Story of Hansel and Gretel* (2003), Jenna Blum's *Those Who Save Us* (2004), and Jonathan Safran Foer's *Everything is Illuminated* (2002) are all built on the duties of female stewards of Holocaust memory. Though their roles are diverse and complicated, and their relationships with memory are far from straightforward, the girls and women of these works are tied to historical and traumatic memory in a fashion that implies a responsibility that exists on a larger scale, far beyond personal reminiscence.

This chapter examines these three novels to demonstrate the trajectory along which female memory stewardship progresses for these fictional women, from the initial assignment of memorial responsibility to the ultimate internalization of memory-keeping as an inherent duty. The path of gendered mnemonic labor begins with the female child. In Murphy's novel, Gretel is pushed by various circumstances into taking on the mantle of memorial responsibility. That duty then passes on to adult women, a phenomenon traced through the characters of both Blum's and Foer's works. These women then actively work to solidify their positions as keepers, whether by seeking access to private memories or by establishing themselves in more official capacities. My overarching argument, to be explored further in subsequent chapters, is that these fictional representations are both a mirror of real-world attitudes about memory-keeping and contributors

to a context that normalizes the expectation that the duties of memory will fall along gendered lines.

Gender and Memory Keeping

Whether we call the memories kept by the female characters of these three novels private or public, the fact remains that these women do not remember for themselves alone. The process of keeping and stewarding memory also happens within the context of an existing society, requiring community, either through its presence or its loss. As Maurice Halbwachs explains, "It is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories" (38). This process is also inherently gendered, as Marianne Hirsch and Valerie Smith argue: "Gender is an inescapable dimension of differential power relations, and cultural memory is always about the distribution of and contested claims to power. What a culture remembers and what it chooses to forget are intricately bound up with issues of power and hegemony, and thus with gender" (6).[17] This assertion rings especially true in the context of the division of mnemonic labor of Holocaust memory.

In the United States, Holocaust memory is ubiquitous, insinuating its way into educational policies, cultural entertainment, and the national mythos itself. Regarding what Michael Berenbaum calls the "Americanization of the Holocaust," Philip Gourevitch writes,

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[17] "Our own understanding of the term *cultural memory* is indebted to Paul Connerton's notion of an 'act of transfer' (1989, 39), an act in the present by which individuals and groups constitute their identities by recalling a shared past on the basis of common, and therefore often contested, norms, conventions, and practices […] Always mediated, cultural memory is the product of fragmentary personal and collective experiences articulated through technologies and media that shape even as they transmit memory. Acts of memory are thus acts of performance, representation, and interpretation. They require agents and specific contexts." (Hirsch & Smith 5)

"We recast the story of the Holocaust to teach fundamental American values, […] pluralism, democracy, restraint on government, the inalienable rights of individuals, the inability of government to enter into freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, freedom of religion, and so forth" (56). In the preceding chapter, I discussed how, despite the geographical and growing temporal distance between the United States and the events of the Shoah, Holocaust memory remains pervasive in American culture, education, and entertainment. Whether due to the sheer indelible horror of it all or a lingering pride in the notion of the United States as a "rescuer," American fixation with Holocaust memory shows no sign of abating.

However, as the third generation picks up the mantle, there emerges an uneasy self-consciousness about this seeming inability to let go. In the generation of what Hirsch refers to as "post-memory," the questions of who remembers and how they remember become enmeshed with the anxiety of remembering "correctly" and the moral duties of those carrying the burdens of memory. The effects of gender on mnemonic labor practices thus become particularly pronounced, especially when examined through the lens of fiction. Building on the notion of elaborate divisions of labor in modern societies, Avishai Margalit argues that "the division of mnemonic labor is elaborate too. In traditional society there is a direct line from the people to their priest or storyteller or shaman. But shared memory in a modern society travels from person to person through institutions, such as archives, and through communal mnemonic devices, such as monuments and the names of streets" (54). Margalit's reading of how divisions in "real" labor inform those in mnemonic labor is incomplete, however, overlooking as it does the inherent role of gender in these divisions. The "priest or storyteller or shaman" is a historically and traditionally male figure, but as I show in this chapter, when it comes to communal and shared Holocaust memory, it is women who invest in the keeping of memory archives.

Margalit does not explicitly acknowledge the divide between public memory—monuments and street names—and private, that which "travels from person to person," because he conflates individual and institutional transmission, assuming that the former must eventually lead to the latter. Although occasionally true, I argue there is no straightforward or guaranteed path from private memory to public archive, especially when we consider the gendered component of memorialization. Publically, male participation in large-scale acts of memory is the norm. Yet, as I demonstrate in this chapter, the roots of these displays and actions lie in the private, familial memories and makeshift archives that are so often kept and created by women. The difference between the grassroots archive versus the public behemoth is what make the gendered division of mnemonic labor visible.

In looking at the contemporary American novels analyzed in this chapter, I will argue that the work of collective memory ultimately takes place along gendered lines. Men may seek access to the knowledge and narratives of the past, but these archives of memory are understood to be kept by women. The keeping of memory—as a personal reminiscence and as a collective record—is depicted as both a gendered and highly individualized duty. The form that this "keeping" takes is varied. In the context of the novels at which this chapter looks, memory keeping ranges from a private collection of knowledge (of one's familial history, for example) to obstinate silence, an active urge to curate and disseminate information, and, finally, to an internalization of a makeshift archive itself. "Humanity is not a community of memory. Someday it may evolve into one, but today, as a matter of fact—a significant fact—it is not," Margalit tells us, asking, "So who should carry the 'moral memory' on behalf of humanity as a whole?" (9). Leaving aside, for the moment, the question of what a community of memory might look like should it ever come to exist, the answer to Margalit's question is inescapably gendered. Whether

they "should" do so or not, the fact remains, it is women and girls who carry the 'moral memory' forward, who shape and curate its meaning and accessibility. The analysis that follows will show that fictional representation mixes with real world ritual to produce and reproduce an implicitly understood protocol for Holocaust memory that designates women as its keepers and stewards.

Forgetting, Remembering, and Memory-Keeping in *The True Story of Hansel and Gretel*

Louise Murphy's novel, *The True Story of Hansel and Gretel* (hereafter referred to as *Hansel and Gretel*), bridges the pathway between the time-traveling girls of children's literature and the female stewards of memory in contemporary works geared toward adult readers. Because it takes place in the midst of the Shoah, *Hansel and Gretel* depicts memory as it is being formed. Unlike Blum and Foer, whose characters look back as survivors, Murphy's work constructs memory narratives and their contexts as they occur. As a fairy tale retold in the midst of World War II, *Hansel and Gretel* tells the story of two Jewish children trying to survive in the Polish countryside. After escaping the ghetto in Bialystock, the children are left on their own by their father and stepmother, separating so that all might have a better chance to escape the pursuing Nazis. Above all, *Hansel and Gretel* is the story of what happens to those who are forced to assume the burden of keeping memory safe. Each character exhibits some duty toward memory, but it is the women—the Stepmother, Magda, the old woman who takes in the children, and the girl, Gretel—who truly bear the brunt of the responsibility, risking their own survival in the process.

The narratives of the memory keepers circle within themselves, interlocking and fitting together like intricate nesting dolls. Magda, the witch—as she is called and calls herself—stands as the bookend of the story. Beginning and ending the novel, she creates the larger loop of

memory within which all else circles. Magda is not Jewish—though she does have Gypsy blood, which casts her in a position only slightly less precarious than that of Hansel and Gretel—but because she is the one who is entrusted with the care of two Jewish children, she takes upon herself the foundation of memory keeping. In ensuring that these Jewish children live, Magda's actions reverberate outward into a larger context, ensuring that Jewish Holocaust memory lives as well. Stewarding a life may not translate directly to stewarding memory, but it is what I would call a stewarding of *possibility*. Magda's safeguarding of young Jewish lives is the ultimate expression of duty and commitment toward the possibility of the continued life of memory. In a quite literal sense, by keeping Hansel and Gretel alive, Magda contributes to the continued existence of a Jewish future, a living composite of memory.

Magda's role, as steward of lives and, by extension, memories, is anticipated by the Stepmother, who first sets the two children onto the forest path. Hansel and Gretel's story begins in the midst of a slow motorcycle escape, with the pursuing Nazis close behind. In order to make the motorcycle lighter and easier to navigate, as well as to draw attention away from the children so that they might escape, Stepmother convinces the father that they must leave the children behind to hide in the forest. The father is upset and reluctant, but it is the only way for any of them to survive. Without the children, the adults can hide with the partisans in the forest. Without the adults, the children can pretend to be Polish orphans and seek refuge in some village. Stepmother convinces the father of the importance of separating and they split up, leaving the newly renamed Hansel and Gretel alone in the forest, dropping breadcrumbs on their way to the witch's house.

The stepmother of this *Hansel and Gretel* is not the cruel woman of fairy tales. She cares for her husband's children as much as she can in the difficult circumstances of their lives. Over

and over again, she is the one who makes the necessary decisions, who faces their troubles head on and does what her husband cannot. “Your children will be dead if they catch us,” she screams at him, “They’ll shoot us beside the road” (3). He howls “no” in response, “the shouted word giving him back for a moment his life that was lost in the whispering years of submission and hiding” (3). The father’s anger makes him volatile, incapable of making the necessary decisions for his own and his children’s survival. He is consumed by the “unfairness” of his suffering; how could all this happen after he had rejected “the sidelocks of his father” and embraced “new knowledge for new times and new people,” only to have “the world of intellectual talk and scientific study” explode, rendering him just as lost and victimized as the old Jews back in the shtetl (2).

The rage the father feels is emblematic of a particular theme of emasculation in Nazi persecution and antisemitism. After having to rely on his first wife’s silver to help them escape in “a peasant’s cart,” he still can’t protect her from falling bombs. Then, while he is able to smuggle his children and new wife out of the Bialystock ghetto before deportation, he cannot actually get them to safety and they end up helpless and exposed in a rickety motorcycle in the middle of a dirt road, minutes from being caught. Robbed of the ability to protect his family in the traditional sense, the father gives up and it is Stepmother who must take charge of survival (2-3). Stepmother is the one to provide the children with their most crucial tools: new names to replace their obviously Jewish ones. While her husband is too caught up in his grief and anger to act, Stepmother performs the renaming magic necessary to keep them all alive:

> The boy took his sister’s hand and moved toward the woods. “Who are we?” he called back.

> The Stepmother moaned and slapped her face viciously. The man got on the motorcycle and they moved off slowly so the wheels wouldn't catch on the ruts.
>
> Slamming her fist against her head, their Stepmother shook loose an old memory.
>
> "Hansel and Gretel," she screamed over her shoulder at the children who were now almost hidden in the trees. "You are Hansel and Gretel. Remember." (4-5)

In exchanging their never-spoken Jewish names for "Hansel" and "Gretel," Stepmother weaves a kind of protection spell—however flimsy—to safeguard the children in the woods and beyond.

In that split-second decision, while the father guns the engine of the motorcycle forward and does not look back, Stepmother saves the children's lives, thereby saving their capacity to hold on to memory and contribute to a larger narrative. It matters that these characters, the Stepmother and Magda, who safeguard and name—are female. In doing what her husband, the children's father, cannot, Stepmother assumes a distinctly gendered role in regards to the children; like the mother who birthed them, Stepmother gives Hansel and Gretel life through new names and the resulting new identities. Her last call to them, to "Remember," is a double-edged command. Practically speaking, Stepmother demands that Hansel and Gretel remember their new names and do all they can to slip into the Polish orphan subjectivities these names confer upon them. The call to remember, however, also echoes the mnemonic labor divisions/commemorative duties to come in the years after the Shoah. Remember not only your new names, Stepmother implies, but remember the truth beneath them as well. It is in this moment that Stepmother passes on the duty of memory to Gretel. For Hansel, the new names are a kind of game: "'Who are we?'

The boy smiled. It was interesting. He wouldn't be himself" (4). Hansel doesn't see the loss in having a new name: he is interested, excited by the possibility of being someone else. But Gretel understands and although Stepmother speaks to both children, it is clear that Gretel will be the one to carry their real Jewish names—their real Jewish selves—in some buried space of private consciousness while ensuring that the new names are what she and her younger brother will remember publically.

Thus, the torch passes to Gretel and she becomes steward of the memories of life before Magda and the forest, starvation and the Nazis. Because Hansel is only seven, he remembers less—the bulk of his memories are created in the context of the Nazi reality and he is too young to recall the comfortable, loving life that existed before. Eleven-year-old Gretel, on the other hand, remembers various small details: a room full of books, a happy home, a doting grandfather. Hansel settles into his new identity with greater ease because he has less to hold on to from his "true" self. This difference is starkly evident in the children's responses to the fake baptism pictures and certificates created to reinforce their false identities:

> "My shoes are beautiful."
>
> "Those aren't your shoes." Gretel was angry.
>
> "Yes they are." Hansel was complacent. "I remember them."
>
> Gretel stared at the picture of the girl. It was her but it wasn't her. The girl had blinked and her face was a tiny bit blurred. You couldn't say how old the face was, but the body—
>
> "I was never like that." Gretel frowned.
>
> "Yes, you were. I remember." Hansel picked up his picture and cradled it in his arms. (47)

For Hansel, what he sees in the pictures is what he remembers—not because the memories are real, but because the visual nature of the image reaffirms the narrative he's been taught to believe. The fiction of his origin is so powerful that it supplants the reality. "You weren't born then," Gretel tells him. "I remember," Hansel replies (47-48). Whether he lived those memories or not does not seem to matter in light of the visual proof before him. And so, Hansel remembers shoes that never existed, a body his sister never had. Without a firmer foundation in his actual history, Hansel's memories are conjured out of made-up external facts, not any internally known truth. This is safer for their survival, but it reaffirms for Gretel that remembering must be her duty alone.

Murphy's decision to create an older sister/younger brother dynamic is a conscious recreation of the gendered divide in Holocaust memory keeping. While Hansel bears more than his fair share of the burden at times, it is understood that his load is temporary and that although he must take over for Gretel while she is incapacitated, she is the one meant to resume the stewardship role when she is able. In fact, much of Gretel's frustrations lie in the difficulty of maintaining the accuracy of their memories. Very quickly, both her own and Hansel's true names slip away from her as the pre-war past grows dimmer and dimmer. As time passes and the two children become more entrenched in their lived lives and fabricated identities, the truth of who they are understandably fades. For Gretel, however, that unavoidable fading carries with it the guilt of failure. In the absence of parents or other adults familiar with the past, Gretel knows that if she does not remember, no one will. This sense of guilt for her failing memory spurs the breakdown Gretel experiences when she is raped halfway through the novel. It is only when deeply traumatized—physically, mentally, emotionally—that she is able to simultaneously abandon her "duty" *and* slip into the space of memory.

Alone in the forest on a bright, frozen winter day, Gretel comes across two strange men who chase down and assault her. As they rape Gretel, one tells her in his heavily accented Polish, "Be good. We not kill":

> But Gretel knew he was lying. They would kill her. She was dead now, and she knew it. Her own death filled her mind and everything else was driven out. Her mind became an empty hole with no memories, no words, just the gun and the bullet that was going to kill her. She didn't try to think anymore. There was nothing in her head but space and sunlight and the glitter of ice. (133)

Then, at the moment when she does not just expect death but accepts it, when she allows the memories to fade from her mind, shots ring out and the rapists fall dead to the ground. The unthinkable trauma of the rape is followed by another unthinkable event: survival. Though Gretel is unexpectedly saved from death by Stepmother—who is herself shot in the process, dying before she can get back to the partisans and tell her husband that the children are alive—the damage has already been done.

The physical trauma of the rape, along with the accepted certainty of death, causes a break in Gretel's mind, fracturing her hold not only on the memories to which she is bound, but to the responsibility for that binding as well: "She lay there for a long time, but her mind had become a single, light-filled room that kept her very still. After a while, she remembered Magda and then Hansel, and that seemed to be enough. And she began to remember things from the past, the distant past, but all the months and hours were blank except for the names of Magda and Hansel" (134). Something interesting happens here—after letting go of the memories she was straining to keep in preparation for her death and then *surviving*, Gretel loses her hold on the

present. She remembers Magda and Hansel, but no more. Gretel retreats into the past, the old dim memories of her previous life grow brighter and become her reality.

In those first moments after the rape, with the two men dead or dying on the ground nearby, "The child half-lay on the tree and sang and never wondered where the men had gone" (134). When she finishes every song she knows, Gretel hums, and the crisp winter sun is transformed into a different light as her mind carries her back into a different memory:

> It was lovely. The bright sun. the flowers all around her. She was in the garden and it was warm. He opened the gate and came in, smiling at her […] She watched while he put a perfect orange into her hand. He leaned forward and his white beard, smelling of sweet tobacco, tickled her check and she accepted his kiss smiling. Her Zayde. (134-135)

Peeling the invisible orange given to her by a long dead grandfather, Gretel now inhabits those memories to the extent that she loses her hold on the present and can no longer articulate the memorial narratives *as* narratives, that is, as information to be known and conveyed to others, especially Hansel.

Interestingly, while Gretel begins to live the past as if it is her present, one fact escapes her; she still cannot remember her true name. It is when she asks Hansel about this "other name" that he truly realizes the depths of their loss:

> "You're Gretel. That's your name." Hansel was crying. He wasn't crying because she couldn't remember her name. He was crying because he wasn't sure that he remembered it. It felt like they had been in the forest forever. Her name—he didn't know what it was. Hansel tried to think of his own name, and then he stopped and began to sob.

[…]

"She can't remember—" Hansel sobbed louder. If Gretel forgot, he wasn't sure if he'd remember. She was the one who knew things. (146-147)

With Gretel out of commission, there is no one left to hold together the archive of their pre-war lives. Hansel has bought too fully into his fabricated identity, in part because he trusted Gretel to keep their names and memories until it was safe for him to access them as well. Now Hansel must not only step up into the role of the care-taking sibling—"You're the big brother now," Magda tells him (147)—but he must also bear responsibility not so much for memory itself but the failure of its keeping.

Eventually, the tenuous space of peace built by Magda and the rest of the village community gives way to Nazi terror and the children are left on their own, scavenging for food and wandering aimlessly around the countryside. Hansel must take care of Gretel, who is lost in her own world and incapable of doing much to aid in their survival. Although she is better at asking for food than Hansel—her blonde hair and gender make her a clearer object of pity and charity—she remains incapable of sharing the largest burden, that of fear, anxiety, and the pain of a lost connection to memory and the past. The two wander around in a sort of daze—without Gretel to anchor their lives to specific memorial narratives and identities, there is no clear destination and not even a memory of home toward which to make their way. After weeks of aimless straying, Hansel decides they might as well go back to where Magda's hut used to be, a painful destination, since both Magda and her hut—that space of safety and warmth—are long gone.

The hut and their life with Magda comprise the bulk of Hansel's most dependable memory narratives. It makes sense that he would yearn to return to that place, although return is,

of course, impossible. Nothing remains: “There was only the mound of earth and splintered wood from the grenade” (272-3). In despair, Hansel turns back to his first murky memories of life in the ghetto. “I don’t remember anything before the ghetto,” he says, “So we have to go back to that. We were in the city and lived in the ghetto, and then we went in the woods, and then Magda” (275). The lack of solid memory narratives leaves Hansel without roots; his homelessness lacks even the most basic foundation: the memory of home. Gretel’s condition—her disappearance into herself—leaves the two children even more stranded. Although Hansel tries, he can never access the memory narratives kept by Gretel; the role of steward was never written with Hansel in mind. This is why Gretel’s state of disconnection cannot last if the two are to ever find their way back to their identities.

While it was the certainty of her own death that drove Gretel’s regression and movement inward, it is the fear of Hansel’s death that brings her back to herself. Gretel’s love for her brother and, ultimately, her assigned position as the older sister, the keeper and caretaker, is a fail-switch of sorts, re-activating the severed connections between memory, identity, and lived reality. “Gretel saw the movement of his body and turned. He was running toward the guns. He was going to die” and at that moment:

> Something in her mind gave way and the memories came in like a wall of water, all at once, the thoughts filing every empty place in her head. She remembered. The war. The guns. Magda. Her father. The Stepmother. She had to take care of Hansel. The forest. The motorcycle. Telek. The ghetto. The tinkling of ice. Nelka. Hansel. (Murphy 282)

In a moment that underscores her displacement from the role of the older sibling and caretaker, Gretel is jolted awake: “I remember. I’d forgotten, but I remember nearly all of it now” (283).

The immediate danger to Hansel's life breaks through the barriers put up by her subconscious in the aftermath of the traumatic rape. The empty spaces in Gretel's mind fill with the memories she relinquished earlier and, as awareness floods back in, she steps forth to reassume her responsibility for keeping the memory narratives of the past whole.

Gretel's "return" is an enormous relief for Hansel, freeing him from the burden of being his sister's caretaker and the anxiety of trying and failing to shoulder the responsibility for their rootless lives. Although their true names are still lost to Gretel, she is once again able to access memories of the time before Magda and the forest. "We have to go back," she tells Hansel:

> "To the forest?"
>
> "No. To the city. We have to look for Father. And our stepmother. There aren't so many soldiers now. The tanks are nearly gone. We have to find the city."
>
> "I can't remember the name."
>
> "Of the city?"
>
> He nodded his head.
>
> "It's Bialystok, silly." (283-284)

Learning the name of the city comforts Hansel and he asks Gretel about their own true names. That, however, remains beyond her grasp. At this point of the novel, the extent to which these limits within Gretel's memory-keeping duties imply failure is unclear. What does it mean to remember old homes and lives but not names? Their various experiences, of trauma, starvation, and fear, have reshaped Hansel and Gretel's identities—would their pre-war names even still fit?

The novel ends in hope, with the war over and the children finding their way to Bialystok where they miraculously encounter their father in the refugee center. "I knew you'd come to the city if you were alive. I knew you'd think of it," he tells Gretel, reaffirming in this way that it

was her knowledge, her role as memory keeper, which built and maintained the foundation of the children's survival. "I remember so much, but sometimes it goes away," Gretel tells him. "I will help you remember," he responds (296). The implication of this reunion is that Gretel no longer needs to bear the burden of being the memory keeper. The father will take over now. He speaks the children's names back to them and the viewpoint of the chapter shifts, from Hansel and Gretel to the father, who watches, "these gifts brought out of darkness, these bits of flesh, this blood of his blood and bone of his bone, his children, begin to smile as they became, once again, themselves" (296).

It is tempting to be comforted by this, to believe that Gretel can be released from her duty and allowed to resume an interrupted childhood. Yet the changing of the narrative standpoint, its transfer from Gretel to the father, does not absolve us of the knowledge that the father's attempts to relieve Gretel of her responsibility are well-intentioned but superficial at best. He cannot undo the preceding narrative or take away Gretel's traumatic experiences, which include the tremendous guilt of trying and failing to shoulder the burden of memory. Gretel's identity has reformed itself around the weight of memory and cannot be given up so simply. The father sees his children as extensions of himself—"blood of his blood and bone of his bone"—so when the novel's perspective shifts to his point of view, we lose access to the real story of Hansel and Gretel, whose narratives are subsumed within the larger narrative of Holocaust trauma and survival. We, as readers, may no longer be able to see for ourselves how the burden of memory-keeping weighs on Gretel's shoulders, but it remains in place, heavy and invisible.

Silence and Postmemory in *Those Who Save Us*

Hansel and Gretel emphasizes the process of memory formation and the assumption of its stewardship by female characters of varying ages, especially through the figure of the female child tasked with the burdens of memory-keeping. Jenna Blum's *Those Who Save Us* (*TWSU*) moves further along the spectrum of gendered responsibility for memory stewardship by focusing on the tension between one memory-keeper's silence and her daughter's curiosity. This tension arises from the clash between the mother's recalcitrance and the adult daughter's sense of duty toward Holocaust memory, both at the micro level of her family's story and the larger sense of historical knowledge. While the female child, Gretel, has little choice about having to shoulder responsibility, the adult woman of *Those Who Save Us* actively seeks memory stewardship, viewing the role as a necessary component of her identity.

The novel tells two stories: that of Anna Schlemmer, a young German woman living in Weimar during WWII, and her daughter, Trudy Swenson, a professor of German history in 1990s Minnesota. Both women occupy positions of stewardship, though their relationships to the memories for which they bear responsibility are vastly different. For Anna, the pain of the past drives her into silence—she does not share her memories with anyone around her, least of all her own child. Trudy, on the other hand, has spent her life attempting to gather up the fragments of her heritage. Understandably, rather than quelling Trudy's desire to know more, Anna's silence and refusal to discuss the past or name Trudy's real father has the opposite of its intended effect; instead of letting the past recede, Trudy dedicates her life to its reification.

Although Anna is not a survivor in the traditional sense, coming from a position of relative privilege at the start of the war, her experience of the Nazi regime is far from that of a typical German woman. She walks a delicate line, ultimately choosing to take on safeguarding duties similar to that of the women of *Hansel and Gretel*. While she is not Jewish herself, Anna

is not an ambivalent bystander; she risks her life for Jewish lives and, by extension, Jewish memory, in a multitude of ways, starting with the romantic relationship she develops with Max, a Jewish man. In attempting to hide him in her own house—under the nose of her SS-sympathizing father—Anna inadvertently steps into the realm of the memory-keeper. Like Magda, Anna becomes responsible for the safeguarding of a Jewish life, a duty made even more explicit by her eventual pregnancy. With Max soon discovered and sent off to die at Buchenwald, Anna leaves her father's home and finds refuge with Mathilde, a baker and member of the resistance. There, once she gives birth to Trudy, her safeguarding duty shifts from Max, who cannot be saved, to ensuring the survival of the half-Jewish daughter she never imagined she'd birth.

Anna takes the duty of caretaking seriously, sacrificing all that she must for her daughter. Along with physical survival, she assumes the burden of memory as well. Yet while Gretel struggles to remember, Anna largely seeks to forget. She believes that the memories she keeps must be subdued, not passed on. Once the war is over, Anna moves to place the past squarely behind her, rendering the enactment of familial memory—within the larger scope of Holocaust memory—as an unspeakable gray blank in Trudy's life. After the war, Anna marries an American soldier, Jack, and emigrates with him to his small town home in Minnesota. There, with Jack's compliance, Anna erects a "conspiracy of silence" against Trudy's curiosity, "a wall that Trudy could neither penetrate nor scale" (85). Anna understands her duty to memory as that of a gatekeeper, a permanent guard against the onslaught of a painful past that is better left forgotten. Keeping these memories safe means keeping them contained and unspoken.

Anna thus enacts what Paul Connerton classifies as the "third type of forgetting," in his list of seven, "which is constitutive in the formation of a new identity" (63). In order to live with the consequences of her traumatic wartime losses and to raise her child in safety, Anna feels that

she must close the book on her past and rededicate herself to the formation of a new identity in a new world. Connerton continues:

> The emphasis here is not so much on the loss entailed in being unable to retain certain things as rather on the gain that accrues to those who know how to discard memories that serve no practicable purpose in the management of one's current identity and ongoing purposes. (63)

Anna's purposes revolve around successfully leaving behind her wartime experiences in order to create a life for her daughter and reorient herself to a new identity, one involving a new husband, a new language, and a new country. The move from Weimar, Germany to small-town Minnesota helps to create a solid barrier between Anna's old life and the promise of what lies ahead.

Whether or not Anna has truly forgotten is secondary to the fact that she actively seeks to do so. Margalit asks, "Is memory, personal memory, involuntary like the muscles of the heart, or voluntary like the muscles of the hand?" (56). For Anna, this question is difficult to answer. While she tries to forget, it is never entirely clear if she succeeds. Blum's narrative is structured in such a way as to insure that we, as readers, remain barred from Anna's inner life in her later years—like Trudy, we never get to know what she actually remembers. The reader is privy to Anna's inner life only while she is in the midst of survival. Once the war ends, so does our access to Anna's viewpoint. In this way, the novel parallels Anna's postwar refusal to speak of what happened; the doors to the archive of Anna's thoughts are shut just when her lived experiences are transformed into memory. Trudy's first-person point of view constrains the scope of the chapters set in contemporary Minnesota and, like Trudy, the reader is frustrated by the inscrutable wall of Anna's unbreakable silence.

In light of the constant call to remember that follows nearly all mentions of the Holocaust, Anna's insistence on silence and forgetting seems especially unusual, particularly because she keeps these memories unspoken not only for herself but for the perceived benefit of her daughter. Even though Trudy knows almost nothing about what happened, her own life is undeniably inscribed by the effects of unknown memories and experiences. Anna's silence aggravates Trudy's already conflicted feelings about the past by creating a space of possibility where Trudy's imagination is free to envision and assume the worst. When visiting a sleeping Anna at her nursing home, Trudy "watches Anna's eyes roll back and forth like marbles beneath their paper lids. What is Anna seeing now as she sleeps? What scenes so shameful that she will never speak of them, has never spoken of them, not even to her own daughter? What memories so tormenting that they have finally—perhaps—become unbearable?" (77-78). Trudy assumes that the memories are tormenting, but, of course, we do not actually know if this is so. The scenarios Trudy creates about Anna's wartime life are based in assumptions and historical information gleaned from her research, not actual fact. Until the novel's end, Trudy remains completely unaware of her father's identity, for example, as well as Anna's heroic partisan activities.

Anna's imposing silence about her experiences of World War II and the Shoah, despite the somewhat peripheral nature of her participation, serves to exacerbate the unavoidable, and yet unknowable, nature of Holocaust memory for the second and third generations (and beyond). Not only is that memory already secondhand and threadbare at best, but its accessibility is also contingent on individual memory-keepers themselves. Trudy's encounter with what Marianne Hirsch calls "postmemory" is thus doubly complicated as a presence felt through its inaccessibility, both as a life event she can never experience and a memory narrative that Anna

will not share. "[Postmemory] reflects an uneasy oscillation between continuity and rupture," Hirsch argues, "And yet postmemory is not a movement, method, or idea; I see it, rather, as a *structure* of inter- and trans-generational transmission of traumatic knowledge and experience. It is a *consequence* of traumatic recall but (unlike post-traumatic stress disorder) at a generational remove" (106). Because Trudy knows only the bare facts of her early years with her mother in Nazi Germany, her relationship with this multi-generational trauma is very different from that of other children of survivors. Trudy's lack of knowledge in the face of Anna's all-encompassing silence means she becomes especially reliant on imaginary and often incorrect beliefs about the memories Anna keeps locked away.

Barred from familial memory, Trudy turns to the historical. As a professor of German history, Trudy spends her professional life mired in the kind of details that Anna has never shared, focusing her research on the lives of German women and mothers in Nazi Germany. An enlarged archival photograph, the only decoration in her office, exemplifies the sense of both distance and connection that Trudy feels to her own and her mother's past. The poster shows American soldiers marching German civilians to Buchenwald after the camp's liberation, but "Toward the rear of the column, clinging to an invisible hand, is a small towheaded girl who could be the identical twin of Trudy at that age. She might in fact be Trudy herself" (89). Trudy knows that the child in the photograph is not actually her, but the blankness of Trudy's past strengthens the sense of identification she feels for the unnamed little girl and the "invisible hand" to which the child clings.

Hirsch suggests that to grow up in the second generation is: "To grow up with such overwhelming inherited memories, to be dominated by narratives that preceded one's birth or one's consciousness, is to risk having one's own stories and experiences displaced, even

evacuated, by those of a previous generation" (107). But what are the effects of growing up in silence? For Trudy, growing up with her mother's obstinate refusal to give voice to the memories she keeps, the already difficult matter of the past's effects on the present are made even murkier due to the mystery by which they are surrounded. After all, what happens to those who grow up with not just "overwhelming inherited memories" but with overwhelming inherited silence? How does one deal with "having one's own stories and experiences displaced" not by traumatic memories but by the emptiness of all that remains unspoken and unknown?

Memory looms over Trudy, like a phantom limb, felt painfully through its lack. Because the typical, organic path of memory transmission, that of a parent's firsthand stories and recollections, is closed to her, Trudy purposefully seeks knowledge of memory narratives via other means. Emboldened by a colleague's program for collecting and recording the testimonies of local Holocaust survivors, Trudy decides to embark on her own interview project. With the German Project, Trudy intends to speak with and record the testimonies of local Germans about their experience as civilians during WWII. Her ads and flyers read: "Wanted: Germans of native descent to participate in a study conducted by University of Minnesota history professor. I am seeking any and all recollections you have about living through the war in Germany […] Female subjects of particular interest but males also encouraged to apply" (152-3). If Anna will not speak, then Trudy will turn to her mother's generational cohort to find those memory-keepers who are willing to open up their private archives to her questions.

Trudy projects her own needs onto her subjects, subconsciously asking them to act as the kind of memory keeper Anna refuses to be. Consequently, the project takes on a volatile nature; her subjects both comfort and horrify her as their experiences become possible stand-ins for the

unknown mysteries of Anna's past.[18] The first woman Trudy interviews, Frau Kluge, is an unwelcome revelation. She is unapologetically anti-Semitic, beginning by asking Trudy if she is a *Mischling* and then clarifying, in her relief, "I should have known you were pure of blood. From your pretty blond hair" (161, 162). Frau Kluge then goes on to speak fondly of the *Fuhrer*, express support for Nazi expansion practices, and finally claims that the concentration camps were pure propaganda (166).

Frau Kluge's horrifying and banal statements send Trudy off in search of a drink, which she finds at her ex-husband, Roger's, restaurant. The wine does not help much when, after hearing the story of the interview, Roger suggests that therapy would be easier than the German Project and calmly tells her, "Don't you see, Trudy? It's all about your mother" (181). Trudy is enraged by the suggestion, unwilling to accept the extent to which her mother's silence colors her own life. "What else did you expect?" Roger asks, "Of course all those old Krauts are Nazis!" (182). Although every other person that Trudy goes on to interview is infinitely less shocking than Frau Kluge, the suspicion sparked by Frau Kluge's unapologetic Nazism clings to Trudy's perception of her mother's behavior during the war. Perhaps Anna's silence is due to guilt; without truly being able to know, Trudy often assumes the worst.

The tension between Anna's refusal to speak and Trudy's persistence understandably leads to a complicated and strained relationship. Trudy's only clues about her mother's life during the war come from her own brief childhood memories, any inadvertent hints dropped by her mother's bodily presence and actions, and the one object from the past that Anna does keep,

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[18] "The women profess relative ignorance of the Nazi regime and regret over its consequences; they speak of bombs, of hunger, of husbands killed or returning terribly changed, disfigured or missing limbs or wraithlike and prone to strange tempers. Of cold and illness and privation. The garden-variety grim tales" (Blum 220).

although she believes it to be hidden from Trudy, a photograph in a golden case with a silver swastika embedded on the front. This relic, stuffed into a sock and kept in the back of a drawer, is the only physical clue that Trudy has about the past. Within the case:

> framed in balding maroon velvet, [there is] an oval black-and-white photograph. Of a young Anna, seated. With the toddler Trudy on her lap, wearing a dirndl, her hair in looped braids. And behind Anna, one hand possessively on her shoulder, an SS officer in full uniform. His head is raised in an attitude of pride, his peaked cap tilted forward so that his features cannot be seen. (84)

Without context, without knowing the details of Anna's complicated and abusive relationship with this man, the *Obersturmführer*, Trudy believes him to be her father. "Does this photograph truly confirm her earliest memories?" she wonders, "Or has she merely looked at it so often that she only thinks she remembers?" (84). Trudy's need for tangible narratives causes an overdrive of imagination and a blurring of memory.

For children and grandchildren of survivors, and for Trudy in particular, the photograph has the capacity to "signal absence and loss and, at the same time, to make present, rebuild, reconnect, bring back to life" (Hirsch 243). Trudy's struggle to gain access to her familial memory narratives is especially exasperating because her personal memory archive consists of nothing but silence, imagination, and one single mysterious, unexplained photograph. Trudy actively seeks to assume a role of memory-keeping but, like Gretel, she is frustrated by the difficulty of remembering and conveying memories to which she does not have firsthand access. The memories she thinks she is keeping are wrong, made-up, or half-remembered from a hazy toddlerhood. As a result, Trudy seeks to acquire memory through historical knowledge and her

interview project, insisting on the role of memory keeping to which she feels drawn but for which she is woefully unprepared.

Trudy's response to Anna's "conspiracy of silence" is to seek as much legitimate access to memorial narratives as she can. By embarking on a career as a professor of German history, Trudy makes the gathering, keeping, and sharing of memory into not just a vocation, but the single driving force of her life. Through her efforts with the German Project, we see the fundamental difference in how Anna and Trudy see memory stewardship. Anna believes that it must be kept unspoken for the good of all, especially her own daughter. Trudy, however, as a member of the postmemory generation, feels betrayed by this silence and all that she believes it implies about Anna's wartime experiences. Assuming the worst—that her mother was a willing collaborator—Trudy insists that there is a distinct memorial narrative, or collection of narratives, to which she deserves access. Despite these disagreements about the nature of sharing and keeping memory, the two feel similarly about the fact that memory is ultimately their responsibility.

The sense of entitlement Trudy feels regarding her mother's memories, as well as Anna's own sense of absolute personal guardianship, have their roots in the gendered and familial ties that wind through the duties of mnemonic labor that Anna and Trudy have either accepted or purposely sought out. "Who are the 'we' who may be obligated to remember?" asks Margalit and the answer is that the "we" who remember the Holocaust, especially in contemporary American

fiction, are women and girls.[19] *Those Who Save Us*, like the other novels covered in this chapter, offers an unmistakable view into how gendered identity intersects with memory keeping. The reader sees the discrepancies and experiences of memorial stewardship come alive through Anne and Trudy, the central characters of the work. The novel's male characters exist solely on the periphery and engage with the keeping and dissemination of memory only through their interactions with Anna. Her American husband, Jack, for example, helps Anna maintain the "conspiracy of silence" in the face of Trudy's questions. He does not ask for details and is happy to believe that Anna and Trudy's new roles as his wife and daughter are more important than their history.

The only possible exception to male disengagement in memory comes toward the novel's end, with Trudy's final subject, Felix Pfeffer. In the course of their interview, Mr. Pfeffer tells Trudy about the time he spent in Buchenwald due to his wartime activities (namely, for selling a bad batch of cocaine to the SS). He was assigned to the rock quarry work detail and it was there, he reveals, that he first caught a glimpse of Anna—one of the two women the prisoners called *die Bäckerei Engel*, the Bakery Angels—leaving bread for the starving men. As he tells his own life story, he inadvertently provides Trudy with several vital pieces of the puzzle, accidentally revealing Anna's risky heroics and the identity of Trudy's father, a Jewish man killed in Buchenwald.

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[19] "Are we obligated to remember people and events from the past? If we are, what is the nature of this obligation? Are remembering and forgetting proper subjects of moral praise or blame? Who are the 'we' who may be obligated to remember: the collective 'we,' or some distributive sense of 'we' that puts the obligation to remember on each and every member of the collective?" (Margalit 7)

Mr. Pfeffer's revelations, however, do not belong to the same subset of behavior as memory-keeping. What he remembers is knowledge detached from the meaningful and intentional pressures of memory stewardship. Ultimately, the memories Mr. Pfeffer reveals have little impact on Anna's perception of her role as a memory keeper and while the knowledge is a relief for Trudy, it does not produce the kind of cathartic moment of familial memory transmission that we might expect. Hoping to push Anna to share more about her life, Trudy brings Mr. Pfeffer home to meet her. Yet as Mr. Pfeffer confronts Anna with his memories, she denies everything:

> I saw you standing by the tree in which you left the bread. After all these years, that sight has never left me […]
>
> Obviously you have mistaken me for somebody else.
>
> Mr. Pfeffer smiles.
>
> That is not the case, madam, I assure you. Yours is not a face one forgets.
>
> Forgive me, but you are wrong. I know nothing of this […] In fact, I remember very little of what happened in those days, Anna adds, getting to her feet. My memory is not what it once was. (473)

Rather than swinging open the doors to her memorial archives, Anna instead claims its weakness. Having once decided on how to enact her memory-keeping duties, no external confrontation can push her to abandon the role.

By allowing Anna to keep her silence in the face of the information provided by Mr. Pfeffer, the narrative of the novel itself reaffirms memory-keeping as the duty of women. Even Trudy, despite her disappointment, comes to respect Anna's approach: "Anna has taken the burden of silence upon herself. It is her decision not to speak of the things she has done, valiant

or otherwise […] Each person has this choice to make about how to live with the past, this dignity, this inviolable right" (474). In other words, those who are responsible for memory-keeping have the right to decide how to discharge their duties. Gretel had no choice and Trudy has limited knowledge, but Anna approaches her role with purpose; when it comes to her memorial archive, she chose and continues to choose silence.

Gender and the Archive in *Everything is Illuminated*

The True Story of Hansel and Gretel sets up the gendered components of girls and women pushed into the position of safeguarding lives and memory narratives. Blum's work picks up that thread, shedding light on the tensions between adult women who purposely seek the duties of memory-keeping and are caught between knowledge and silence. *Everything is Illuminated* continues these themes, depicting the intersection of gender and stewardship in relation to both an internalized and simultaneously literal archival project of commemoration. While the protagonists of Jonathan Safran Foer's work are all male, it is the peripheral female characters that hold the key to the memory narratives to which they seek access. The novel tells the story of its "hero," also named Jonathan Safran Foer (whom I will refer to as "Jonathan" in order to avoid confusion with the author, Foer), who, along with his guides, Alex and Grandfather, sets out on what is essentially a memory journey. Travelling from the United States to Ukraine in order to find the woman who saved his grandfather during the war, Jonathan embodies much of the third generation's sense of confusion and guilt in the face of pervasive but unknowable postmemory.

In returning to the land of his much mythologized ancestors, to the place of massive historical and personal trauma, Jonathan seeks to add shape to the legacy of blurry memories

passed down to the third generation or, as Alan Berger calls them, the "Grandchildren of Job" (150). In an essay initially published by Random House, Nicole Krauss writes, "Born into a family started by the children of survivors, we talked about life. What came before was not so much unspoken as it was relegated to all that was past. And yet somehow, despite this, I cannot recall a time when I did not understand in my blood, that above all else the one thing I must do was remember. But remember what?" ("On Forgetting").[20] The uncertainty of memory, along with the knowledge of its existence—the awareness that something happened without the clarity of details—creates a situation in which the role of memory-keepers grows even more potent.

Like Trudy, who must deal with Anna's impenetrable wall of silence, Jonathan bumps up against similar barriers. While he knows many of the facts of his grandparents' wartime experiences and their consequences, there are still obstacles between Jonathan and the one remaining living survivor of the family, his grandmother. The grandmother does not seem to be purposely invested in keeping her past under lock and key, but there is nevertheless a sense of unease regarding her wartime memories in the otherwise warm relationship she and Jonathan share. As a child, "My grandmother and I used to scream words off her back porch at night, when I would stay over," Jonathan tells Alex (159). Yelling out the longest words they could think of, Jonathan would scream in English while his grandmother screamed in Yiddish. Despite the flimsy nature of this linguistic barrier—ultimately, it could have easily been broken through if either made a genuine attempt to do so—Jonathan admits that he never asked his grandmother what the words meant. "Perhaps she desired for you to ask," Alex says. "No," Jonathan responds, despite Alex's insistence (159).

[20] Originally published on Random House's website, Krauss' essay is unfortunately no longer available online.

What can we make of this seemingly agreed upon silence? As with *Those Who Save Us*, we see that the line between questioning and accepting a survivor's decision to speak or not speak about their experiences is a delicate one. For the third generation especially, the urge to know and the desire to remain unaware combine into a complicated guilt that loops itself through memories and relationships. In considering how gender intersects with memory-keeping, it's especially telling that, despite his love for his grandmother, Jonathan is not comfortable with asking her to share her story with him. Whether it is intentional or not, Jonathan's unwillingness to ask reaffirms the tradition of memory as a female responsibility. For this grandson, his grandmother's memory archive becomes an acknowledged secret, sought and avoided, absent and present at once. The ritual of screaming words in Yiddish and English off the grandmother's back porch is in itself a kind of Derridean absent presence, as described by Philippe Codde. Just as the memories are there but unsought, so are the words—the chance for connection—rendered absent by the language barrier. These traces, as Derrida calls them, haunt the novels of third generation writers as "spectral elements that are at once concealed and discernable within the text as absent presences" (Codde 674). Memory itself becomes that absent presence for Jonathan, at once undeniably present and carefully closed off.

Despite its duo of male protagonists, Foer's novel, just like Blum's and Murphy's, insists that the Holocaust memory archive is the purview of women. It is particularly telling that, although Jonathan's journey is centered around the experiences of his grandfather, it is the women in his life, as well as those he encounters along the way—his grandmother and the archive keeper herself, Lista/Augustine—who keep and disseminate memory narratives. The grandfather is another present absence, seen only as a fictional figure constructed by Jonathan himself; we meet and know him only through his grandson's imagination. Even the driving force

behind Jonathan's quest is less about his grandfather's wartime experiences and more about the actions of the woman who hid him, thereby insuring his survival**.**

Jonathan moves within the circles of memory created and kept by otherwise peripheral female characters. "When I was young," Jonathan tells Alex, "I used to sit under [my grandmother's] dress at family dinners. That's something I remember […] I would watch the world through her dresses. I could see everything, but no one could see me. Like a fort, a hiding place under the covers […] I felt safety and peace" (157-158). This poignant image of a child hiding behind his grandmother's skirts is representative of the way in which the third generation, and Jonathan especially, experience their burden of postmemory, of the absent, haunting presence. It also clarifies the overarching importance of gendered identity in this enactment of postmemory.

The image of a womb-like skirt or dress, and a child hidden within it, evokes maternal care and protection. "Safety and peace from what?" asks Alex. "Safety and peace from not-safety and not-peace," Jonathan tells him (158). Jonathan divides up the world into the safety and peace found within the bubble of his grandmother's love and everything else—the "not-safety" and "not-peace"—which exists outside of it, a dichotomy that might explain why he refuses to ask his grandmother about her memories. Facing her traumatic experiences would destroy the feelings of safety and peace that Jonathan ascribes to her. The powerful visual of his grandmother's skirts places Jonathan within a dome, so to speak, of female caretaking and memory-keeping and signifies the extent to which the gendered division of mnemonic labor is taken for granted within family relationships and memory narratives. In *Everything is Illuminated* especially, it becomes an unconscious fact of third-generational exposure to Holocaust trauma; Jonathan genuinely believes that his trip to Ukraine is about exploring the

history of his grandfather, but the fact is that the grandfather is an almost entirely fictional figure and Jonathan's journey is largely driven and shaped by the memories and experiences of the women in his life.

Similarly to its importance in Blum's and Murphy's narratives, it is a photograph that kick-starts Jonathan's mission. Old and yellowed, it features Jonathan's grandfather, Safran, standing with "the family that saved him from the Nazis," including the young girl, Augustine, at the center of his search (59). The photograph did not make its way to Jonathan through direct transmission, rather it was specifically given to his mother by his grandmother two years prior. When Alex asks why the grandmother gave up the photo so recently, Jonathan tells him that she had her reasons but he doesn't know what they are: "'Did you inquire her about the writing on the back?' 'No. We couldn't ask her anything about it.' 'Why not?' 'She held on to the photograph for fifty years. If she had wanted to tell us anything about it, she would have'" (61).

As with the flimsy excuse of the language barrier, Jonathan cements his position on the outside of his grandmother's memories. He doesn't ask for the meaning of the Yiddish words and he doesn't ask about the writing on the back of the photograph. He sees the presence of the archive, but although he wants to know, he cannot or will not ask directly. Jonathan even chooses to forego any possible advice or direction his grandmother might have provided him by keeping his travel to Ukraine secret; "She thinks I'm still in Prague," he tells Alex (61). He argues that this is his way of protecting her—"Her memories of the Ukraine aren't good"—but Jonathan is only protecting himself. He can't bear to see the trauma in the memories she is keeping and can't risk losing the comfort of his grandmother's protection, the peace and safety of her skirts, to the reality of her experiences. In short, Jonathan wants the knowledge of the past without the pain of its memory.

It is telling, then, that the journey concludes at the steps of a makeshift archive, a space of memory created and stewarded by yet another female character. Whether the woman that Jonathan finally finds is really Augustine or Lista (or whether Lista *is* Augustine) is not nearly as relevant as the fact that finding Augustine means facing a physical archive of objects, a literal collection from which Jonathan cannot look away. He can't avoid the pain of Trachimbrod's trauma by refusing to ask about it. Thus, the quest ends at the feet of a very old woman sitting in front of a very old house. As Alex approaches to ask for directions to Trachimbrod, he assumes that there must be a great deal of people living in this small, dilapidated house:

> Many clothes were lying across her yard. I am certain that they were drying after a cleaning, but they were in abnormal arrangements, and they appeared like the clothes of invisible dead bodies. I reasoned that there were many people in the white house, because there were men's clothes and women's clothes and clothes for children and even babies. (116)

The sheer number and variety of clothes and objects strewn across the yard imply that the house holds an entire community—yet the old woman is its sole human inhabitant. What the house does contain, however, is the carefully cultivated archive of a town, the collected evidence of all those lives and moments in time. From Gretel, who fights to keep memories hidden and safe for her own and her brother's future, to Trudy, pursuing memory narratives through her work as a historian, the road ends with Lista/Augustine, a woman whose very life is built around the literal stewardship of Holocaust memory.

Part shrine and part museum, the two rooms are covered in countless photographs and cluttered with all the detritus of human life. Alex even supposes that "All of the clothing and shoes and pictures made me to reason that there must have been at least one hundred people

living in that room" (147). The house itself emerges not just as a place of storage but as an archive of the memories to which Jonathan seeks access. Lista's home—and what is left of her life—is where memory is kept, where it lives on in boxes and dust. Yet if archives are the place of "commencement," as Derrida argues, or the "place from which order is given," then Lista's house is also the place where the archive ends, where order mixes with chaos and memory with forgetting (9).

Lista's archive is situated far from the sense of monolithic permanency imbued in the countless museums and memorials scattered across the public spaces of nations. This is a threadbare archive, its existence dependent solely on the life of the woman who keeps it safe. Derrida describes the archive, from the Greek, *arkheion* as, "initially a house, a domicile, an address, the residence of the superior magistrates, the *archons*, those who commanded" (9). As the location from which the magistrates command, the Derridean archive is a place of power, a place where power originates and collects itself in order to then extend outward.[21] Whether Lista's makeshift archive is the place of power that Derrida envisions, however, is not so clear. As a private collection, the objects, photographs, and, by extension, memories that Lista keeps are not meant for display or presentation.

As Jonathan and his companions move through the dilapidated house, examining its contents, it becomes clear that no audience, no visitors, could ever be expected to properly

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[21] "The citizens who thus held and signified political power were considered to possess the right to make or to represent the law. On account of their publicly recognized authority, it is at their home, in that *place* which is their house (private house, family house, or employee's house), that official documents are filed. The archons are first of all the documents' guardians. They do not only ensure the physical security of what is deposited and of the substrate. They are also accorded the hermeneutic right and competence. They have the power to interpret the archives" (Derrida 9-10).

examine and understand every memory housed in that small and crowded space. The archive is not arbitrary by any means, but the organizational system at work is intensely internal—a product of permanent, ongoing grief and a nearly solipsistic solitude. Thus, while Lista ensures a space for the safe keeping and "filing" of documents (that is, the objects and remnants of Trachimbrod), her improvised archive lacks the vital component of accessibility; it cannot be fully read or understood except by its keeper. Alex describes the house as two rooms, filled with "many things from the floor to the ceiling, including piles of more clothes and hundreds of shoes of different sizes and fashions," the walls cannot be seen through the photographs, and the floor-to-ceiling boxes are haphazardly labeled: "Weddings and Other Celebrations," "Privates: Journals/Diaries/Sketchbooks/Underwear," "Silver/Perfume/Pinwheels," "Watches/Winter," "Darkness," and "Dust" (Foer 147). Even Lista's ability to interpret her own collection is compromised by the passage of years, the fading of her mind, and the traumatic roots of the archive itself.

An overarching fragility characterizes both Lista and her home. With the woman and the house in similar states of disrepair, the fading "body" of the house and the aging body of the woman gesture toward the temporary and frail nature of the makeshift archive. "We are searching for Trachimbrod," Alex tells her, "'Oh,' she said, and she released a river of tears. 'You are here. I am it'" (118). In taking on a quite literal stewardship over the relics of Trachimbrod, Lista's identity has conflated with the identities and memories of all those for whom she bears responsibility. Yet while Lista is the keeper of all of Trachimbrod's memories, the archive within which she lives, which she has built up alone and for no externally motivating reason, is ultimately a private archive, one that begins and ends with a single life. Lista's keeping is a gendered act; the purposeful curating of items both real and ephemeral is the final, extreme

form of the duties of memory keeping that are otherwise assigned to and assumed by the girls and women of Holocaust fiction.

The three novels analyzed in this chapter form a chronological arc in the process of gendering mnemonic responsibility. Murphy's *The True Story of Hansel and Gretel* underlines the initial assignment of memory-keeping. Gretel is still a child and not in a position to choose a task of mnemonic labor for herself, rather, she is assigned this duty by virtue of being the older sister, the caretaker—not only her brother's keeper but the keeper of pre-war memories and true names and identities. Gretel has no choice but to accept the task of the memory-steward despite, or along with, the guaranteed anxiety of failure. Although the novel ends with the father's attempts to take the heavy responsibility for memory back, it is too late. The cycle of gendered memory keeping has begun with Gretel and, though she may wish to, she will never be able to relinquish that duty. Blum's *Those Who Save Us* picks up where Murphy left off. The female child, now grown, chooses to pursue the keeping of mnemonic labor for herself. Trudy feels that knowledge and memory are her heritage and when her mother's obstinate silence renders the familial path of transmission impossible, she seeks to access memory through official means. Through her interview project and as a professor of history, Trudy wraps her life around the responsibilities of the memory-keeper, taking on this duty of her own volition.

The final conclusion of the arc—from being compelled to keep memory, to actively seeking the role—lies in the complete internalization of Holocaust memory stewardship. Lista, the old woman at the end of Jonathan's quest, concludes the cycle, mirrored by the progression of the female characters' ages over the course of the three novels. In looking at her surroundings, Alex observes that Lista's life is "a book of photographs" (148). It is much more, however,

Lista's life—committed to the keeping of memories, of grief and tremendous loss—is a private, internalized archive of Holocaust memory.

Is a private archive always a gendered archive? Not necessarily, but in the context of the pattern I have laid out—one that begins with a female child actively seeking to acquire and hold on to memory and ends with an old woman stewarding the memories of an entire town—the gender of the memory-keeper and the intensity and dedication of that keeping are unavoidably intertwined. This chapter serves as an overview of the manner in which gender and memory-keeping have grown entangled in contemporary American fiction written about the Holocaust. The next chapter builds on my analysis of the private archives created by female memory-keepers by focusing on how the body itself becomes part of the Holocaust memory narrative, both for better and for worse.

Chapter 3:
The Gendered Archive: Memory and Stewardship at the Level of the Body

In the previous two chapters, I have outlined the way in which memory-keeping—and the question of who ought to steward Holocaust memory and how—is depicted in the contemporary American literary tradition. The fictional Holocaust narratives produced, disseminated, and read in the United States, for children and adults, often insist on the memory-keeping duties of women and girls. From children's chapter books to critically lauded literary fiction, the female protagonist assumes the mantle of Holocaust memory-keeping. This assigned or voluntary performance of the mnemonic labor of trauma completes the arc of women's commitment to Holocaust memory-keeping that I have outlined throughout this work: beginning with childhood indoctrination and continuing with the acceptance of memorial duty and the curation of makeshift archives in adulthood, this arc is then completed in the rise of a possessive sense of ownership over the Holocaust memory narrative. In contemporary fiction, we see this possessiveness become naturalized and internalized, transformed ultimately into a drive to physically inscribe trauma, memory, and history directly onto the body. The female memory-keeper, convinced at last of her stewardship duties, expands upon the responsibility to traumatic memory acquired in childhood by either making herself into an archive or by inscribing that archive onto the bodies of her children.

In this chapter, I will consider the intersections of body and memory in two contemporary Holocaust novels. Emily Prager's *Eve's Tattoo* (1991) and Thane Rosenbaum's *Second Hand Smoke* (1999) emphasize the heightened role that the gendered body plays in Holocaust commemoration. Prager's work shows how a naturalized sense of responsibility for memory-keeping can backfire, leading to the kind of entitled possessiveness that allows a non-Jewish woman to appropriate Holocaust memory in a manner that, I argue, actually manifests anti-

Semitism. Rosenbaum's novel focuses on two brothers grappling with their mother's wartime experiences and the memories she refused to share but has nevertheless taken pains to etch directly into their bodies, both by tattooing her infant firstborn and by demanding adherence to a strict physical form with her second son. Although the novel focuses on a male protagonist, it reaffirms the duty that women feel toward stewardship in Holocaust fiction, even if it means writing pain and trauma directly onto the body of the next generation. Ultimately, both texts place the body at the center of commemorative practice, insisting on its crucial role in the archival project. The two novels also rely heavily on the gendered attributes and performances of the body, aligning memory-keeping with the traits generally ascribed to femininity and establishing a complex and convoluted relationship between Jewish identity, memory, femininity, and masculinity.

While the personal experience of gender itself is felt in a multitude of individual ways, in the social/political context, the gender ascribed to any given body predisposes it to particular cultural treatment and marks the way it experiences trauma. Judith Butler asks, "Is 'the body' or 'the sexed body' the firm foundation on which gender and systems of compulsory sexuality operate? Or is 'the body' itself shaped by political forces with strategic interests in keeping that body bounded and constituted by the markers of sex?" (103). The answer is that the characteristics and attributes of gender both arise from a public designation of gender identity and subsequently reify that designation of identity through successful performativity: "That gender reality is created through sustained social performances means that the very notions of an essential sex and a true or abiding masculinity or femininity are also constituted as part of the strategy that conceals gender's performative character and the performative possibilities for proliferating gender configurations outside the restricting frames of masculinist domination and

compulsory heterosexuality" (Butler 115). The gendering of mnemonic labor responsibility is, therefore, directly tied to the assignment of gender onto bodies that then take on performances of that gender, both in the experiences of Holocaust trauma and in the keeping of memorial archives dedicated to its commemoration.

Gender and the Body in Holocaust Commemoration Practices

When it comes to Jewish victims, the specific experiences and victimizations of their bodies are already politically fraught and tied to a long history of gendered anti-Semitism. From the biblical era through the medieval, the early modern, and into modernity, Jewish men have often been depicted in feminized terms and images, emasculated by the anti-Semitic, Christian societies within which they lived. Summarizing Sander Gilman, Ann Pellegrini, and others in her work *Memorializing the Holocaust*, Janet Jacobs explains that, "Like other motifs of European Jewish memory, portraits of the medieval Jews as secretive ritual practitioners bring to mind anti-Semitic writings of later centuries that associate the body of Jewish men with that of women, each of which is marked by dangerous impurities" (125). These medieval and pre-modern characterizations are doubly damaging; in equating Jewish masculinity with the negative characteristics assigned to femininity, European anti-Semitism emasculates Jewish men while simultaneously erasing actual Jewish women.

This tradition continues through the commemorative cultures and practices that have sprung up in the wake of the Shoah. In framing the memory of trauma largely through a depiction of victimized female bodies in atrocity texts and images, Holocaust trauma itself is feminized and its male victims emasculated. As a result, the connection between femininity and suffering, as well as women and memory-keeping, becomes further naturalized, helping to

enshrine gendered mnemonic labor practices in Holocaust literature. In other words, when pain and suffering are commemorated largely through representations of female victims, that victimization becomes gendered and equated with femininity.

Along with Jacobs, studies by Barbie Zelizer, Janina Struk, and Judith Tydor Baumel emphasize commemorative practices that convey Holocaust trauma largely through photographic or plastic depiction of women's bodies. Perhaps due in part to their supposed vulnerability and the shock of "weaker" bodies experiencing such violence, the brutality suffered by women "was seen as doubly atrocious, challenging gender-based expectations of humanity. Not surprising then, female gender was strategically emphasized in the photographic record of the camps that emerged" (Zelizer 255). In her consideration of women's role as "universal symbols of suffering and pain" in Holocaust photography, Struk concludes that such representations are purposefully centered to evoke a response from the viewer and that "there is little demand for pictures of defiant women" (113, 120). In her interview with James Taylor, curator of the Holocaust exhibition that opened at the Imperial War Museum in London in 2000, Struk quotes Taylor's reasoning about the chosen photographs. They have a "raw fear," Taylor claims, which "you don't often get in Holocaust photographs […] The fact that they are women make them all the more affecting" (qtd in Struk 117). In focusing on the physical suffering of Jewish women, these Holocaust memory spaces create a narrative that combines femininity with the victimization of Jewish bodies as a whole.

Alongside this method of memorialization exists a strong impulse to highlight the destruction and desecration of Jewish places of worship and religious iconography in gendered terms. Sexualized violence becomes a kind of framing for discussing images of destroyed sacred objects and buildings. Regarding a museum display in Cologne, Germany, for example, Jacobs

finds that, "Without reference to the deportations and genocide that followed the pogroms, the museum's history of Jewish genocide is framed through the imagery of a violated and tattered Torah" (93). Although Jacobs' reading of the display of the "tattered Torah," the destroyed, profaned object of Jewish religious worship spilling out of a violated, ripped-open ark, does not quite push its own conclusions far enough, these descriptions clearly call forth the images and language of sexual assault. To speak of the destruction of the ark and the Torah is to speak of rape, as the language equates the sacred body of the religious edifice with the far less sacred body of the assaulted woman. Because the overwhelming focus on ruined Arks and scorched Torahs in museum spaces relies on the language of sexual violence, it feminizes both the desecrated objects of patriarchal religious worship and the suffering Jewish body.

The tradition continues in the realm of Holocaust fiction and narrativization. Perhaps it is easier for the reader to consume stories of suffering and trauma when they are normalized as the purview of women. Popular fiction, which, after all, strives for some sort of entertainment value and actively requires an interested audience in order to exist, therefore tends to gloss over the degradation and emasculation of male bodies in favor of more palatable, "feminine" suffering. In this way, the commemorative "over-representation" of women in Holocaust memorial practices carries over into how fictional works frame and gender the bearers and stewards of Holocaust memory. Our need to look to female bodies to represent and commemorate Holocaust trauma naturalizes the gendered distributions of mnemonic labor in our fiction; one of the effects of this mode of thinking, I argue, is that bodies themselves become archival vehicles.

My previous chapter concluded with an analysis of the makeshift archive created by the sole survivor of a community in Foer's *Everything is Illuminated*. Lista's curation of Trachimbod's relics, the careful organization and keeping of them in a single memorial space,

represents one extreme conclusion of naturalizing the task of memory stewardship. As I argued there, Lista takes on the commemorative duty and transforms her entire life into an archive to just one of the many tragedies of the Shoah. Following this notion, novels like *Eve's Tattoo* and *Second Hand Smoke* show us another extreme conclusion to gendered mnemonic labor assignation: the transformation of a physical body into an archive, a living space of inscription. Jacques Derrida suggests that, "There is no archive without a place of consignation, without a technique of repetition, and without a certain exteriority. No archive without outside" (14). The body is, in a sense, an ideal model of interiority and exteriority, the "place of consignation" that embodies the inside/outside dichotomy that Derrida invokes. Trauma inscribes the body, writes upon it in such a way as to make it textual; skin becomes the border between interiority—the soul, the psyche, whatever inner being one associates with the idea of the self—and exteriority, the physical body marked by its experiences of trauma.

In the case of testimonies and memoirs written by female survivors, the insular experience of a body inscribed by pain receives a focus that works by male survivors often lack or minimize. In discussing women's memoirs of the Holocaust, Camilla Loew observes "a strong insistence on the physical nature of the body" that tends to privilege "the corporeal aspect that forms the identity in pain" (13). If, as Scarry says, pain resists "linguistic expression," then the body's transformation into an archive is a necessary component for the communication of trauma. Charlotte Delbo's memoirs, for example, emphasize the physical and sensory components of Auschwitz, purposely seeking to "represent the victims' pain through physical sensations and sensory experience" (Loew 25). Although engaged in a literary telling of what she has undergone, Delbo places the physical pains and transformations of her own and other women's bodies at the forefront of her narrative. "Although communication with her reader can

only take place through the imposition of external memory," Loew writes, "Only the body, with its expression and logic, can truly convey the experience of pain" (31). Loew never refers to it as such, but Delbo's memoirs are communicating and describing her body's unwilling transformation into an archive.

While many of the visible markers of her experience fade over time, the body that Delbo places at the forefront of her testimony remains marked by Auschwitz. In the years after liberation, "Delbo was able to remove the more visible, external traces of that skin (the superficial scars and bruises) and recover the gestures, odors, and tastes of daily life. But memory is engraved and kept in a place that is also physical—the domain of sensation" (Loew 28). The traces of trauma remain upon the survivor's body, engraved in the skin and deeper. The marks on the body function as "linguistic signs" which transform it "into a site of writing, into the written object," as Anita Durkin argues, "It becomes, in other words, a *textual* body. The body itself, in that it bears writing, may be read like a text" (545). While Durkin is speaking specifically of Toni Morrison's classic literary representation of African American trauma in *Beloved*, and in fact, this mode of analysis is far more prevalent in African American literature and theory, there are distinct parallels to be drawn to bodily archives in American Holocaust fiction as well. The "tree" on Sethe's back, as well as the literally wrenching loss of her limb—to history, to trauma—that Dana undergoes in Octavia Butler's *Kindred*, for example, have their counterparts in the scars and markings of the Holocaust survivor's body. Although the experiences and aftereffects of the Holocaust and American chattel slavery are very different, there is a similarity in the way that massive collective trauma "writes" on the bodies of survivors and future generations. This inscription creates a physical archive, one that can be seen and "read" from the outside.

As the focus on Holocaust trauma shifts to its consequences for the second and third generations, it becomes clear that as trauma scars the body, marking it to reflect lived experience of suffering, pain, and degradation, so does the memory of trauma "write" upon the body as well. What is especially interesting, then, is how the feminization of suffering and the overemphasis on female bodies in pain come together in fictional representations of Holocaust memory. The body cannot be left behind, not even in fiction, and continues to play a role in literary conceptualizations of memory keeping roles and duties. Although in many cases, such as with Jane Yolen's Hannah and Louise Murphy's Gretel, the duties of memory are forced upon girls who have little choice in the matter, the grown women of Holocaust fiction, having internalized their perceived memory-keeping responsibilities, respond voluntarily to the call to remember. Some do so because they feel compelled to of their own volition, such as with Trudy—whose feelings of memorial duty are inspired by her mother's silence—others because they can't even comprehend another option, as with Lista, who knows nothing of the outside world and sees her very life as a memorial to the loss of Trachimbrod. The naturalization of female memory-keepers in Holocaust fiction for children and adults creates a sort of feedback loop where writers, having internalized the gendered divide of memory stewardship through their own reading and exposure, then go on to perpetuate the same tradition in their own works. The outcome is a small, but solid sub-genre of fiction that takes it for granted that girls and women are the ones who must carry the burden of Holocaust memory forward into the Third Generation and beyond. For women, memory becomes not only a duty but a right.

Holocaust Memory and Appropriation in *Eve's Tattoo*

This naturalization of Holocaust memory as the rightful responsibility of women carries its own set of challenges. While memory-keeping can be empowering, it can also be traumatic and damaging to those fictional girls and women who are forced into these responsibilities, as well as their progenies. Emily Prager's novel, *Eve's Tattoo*, is an extreme example of the appropriation that can develop from a misplaced sense of possessiveness. My reading of this novel builds on the work of makeshift archive creation that we see in *Everything is Illuminated*. Continuing the arc, *Eve's Tattoo* shows the possibilities of the body's own transformation into an archival text. Unlike Lista, however, the woman doing the commemorative work is not Jewish and her motives for inscribing Holocaust memory onto her own body are largely detached from the actual trauma of the victim she claims to be commemorating. In recreating the numbers of Auschwitz on her own arm, the titular Eve co-opts a memory of pain that she does not understand and which can never belong to her.

After finding a photograph of unnamed female prisoners at Auschwitz, Eve, a New York journalist, develops an identification with a woman she thinks particularly resembles her, with the same blond, straight hair and "open Germanic features, with a thin nose, and large, almond eyes" (10). Growing obsessed with Nazi Germany, Eve reads widely and embarks on her own research project about women in the Third Reich. Driven by the sense of possessiveness she feels over the photograph, she finally gets a copy of the unknown woman's tattoo inked onto her own forearm. Although the woman in the photograph is never identified, Eve names her Eva and proceeds to construct various stories about her, changing Eva's background and characteristics to suit her different audiences. In the end, the novel does not allow Eve to keep the tattoo; after injuring her arm in a freak car accident, Eve wakes up in the hospital to find the tattoo gone, replaced by stitches. Although she is disappointed, giving up the tattoo allows Eve to reconnect

with her boyfriend and re-establish her own identity separate from the unnamed woman in the photograph. Ultimately, the novel illustrates the consequence of misplaced commemorative duty through an American woman's selfishly motivated appropriation of a historical trauma to which she has no personal duty or connection.

I contend that Eve's sense of entitlement is an unfortunate outgrowth of naturalized gendered mnemonic labor practices and representations. Why would a non-Jewish woman, living comfortably in late twentieth century America, seek to recreate the pain of an anonymous Jewish inmate? Why reconstruct the scar? If Eve were Jewish, perhaps her actions could be easier to understand. Although there would still be issues with the physical appropriation of another's suffering, she would at least have a connection to the Holocaust's collective Jewish trauma. Yet Eve believes that the numbers of Auschwitz are something she has a right to archive on her own body. It is her identity as a woman which allows Eve to feel that she can and should take up Holocaust memory stewardship. As it stands, the decision to tattoo herself with the number of a Jewish woman who likely died in Auschwitz is not only tasteless but appallingly appropriative, speaking far more to Eve's mid-life crisis than any genuine desire honor the victim.

When pushed to justify her actions, Eve states: "'I'm forty today.' She bowed her head. She was embarrassed by this. 'I don't have children. I want to give someone life. I'm giving Eva life'" (17). Stripped to its bare bones, we can read Eve's actions as a selfish attempt to use Holocaust trauma as a vehicle for her own mundane troubles: fear of aging, anxiety over being alone, and failure to have children. Average and commonplace though they may be, these are distinctly gendered issues—the fear of aging and especially the sense of reproductive failure are typical anxieties for women socialized in a certain way and time, caught between the freedom of choice offered by feminism and the expectations of the traditional. Eve's sense of inadequacy

around her reproductive choices, coupled with a rock-solid belief in her gendered prerogative to give life, creates a situation where she feels comfortable displacing her ambivalent maternal urges onto a commemorative act of "life giving." The ability to create life seems innate to Eve, an assumed byproduct of her gender, and she equates this seemingly natural—if ultimately uncompleted—bodily capacity for procreation with the right to bodily commemoration. Instead of a child, Eve uses her body to give birth to what she thinks of as memory, but what is actually just a kind of ghostly fiction.

Eve's obsession begins after she finds a photograph of three female Auschwitz inmates in the back of her boyfriend's file cabinet. One of the women in the image appears to bear a striking resemblance to Eve. In the photograph, this anonymous woman, who Eve decides to call "Eva," stares "aggressively at the lens, her back straight, her chin up, an evil little grimace of defiance on her pretty face" as she holds out her arm so that the "fresh tattoo could be easily read" (10). Later, having returned home with her own replica of the numbers tattooed on her arm, "Eve, an evil little look of defiance on her face, extended her tattooed arm to the woman in the photo and said, 'Immortality for you, Eva. You're coming with me into the twenty-first century'" (11). The moment mirrors the earlier description of the photographed woman's expression and gestures practically word for word; although the woman "grimaces" while Eve merely carries a "look," Prager describes both as having a sense of "evil little defiance." It's an odd choice of words, one that reveals more about Eve's motivations than anything of the actual experiences of the woman in the photograph.

Defiance is one thing; to imagine rebellion on the face of a concentration camp inmate is, in some sense, comforting. To think of powerless women nonetheless leveling an insolent gaze at the camera/observer reassures the person looking at the photograph of the subject's humanity, of

their refusal to be broken. For Eve, the sense of defiance also helps ease the guilt she feels for perpetuating the victim's trauma through her own fascination with the photograph. The woman is the perfect blank slate onto which Eve can project hopes and expectations. By seeing her facial expression as an "evil little grimace of defiance," Eve can assure herself of the woman's intact personality and her strong sense of self, thereby forging an intense, and one-sided, personal connection. Eve reads the image the way she wants to—her disconnect from the photograph's subject lets her filter the picture through the lens of her own thoughts and feelings. She sees the photograph capturing a moment of quiet revolution, which she admires and hopes to emulate, as opposed to the suffering and degradation of which Eve has no real comprehension. Subsequently, she equates the woman's gesture, the holding out of the tattooed arm, and in fact the tattoo itself, with the defiance she wishes to see in herself.

There is something curious, however, about Eve's association of this perceived defiance with evil. Is the pairing of the two words meant to function as hyperbole, enhancing the impact of Eva's defiance, or is there something critical in Eve's supposedly sympathetic attitude? In ascribing a negative connotation to the woman's look of defiance, Eve inadvertently reveals her inner anti-Semitism and ambivalence toward the Jewish victims of the Holocaust. Although the tattoo allows Eve to align "herself with Jewish victimization," she is actually "not Jewish and—as is increasingly apparent—doesn't really like Jews […] To her own surprise. Eve must confront Judeophobia in and on herself" (Baum 118). Despite the selfishness of her actions, Eve means well when she promises to grant "Eva" immortality, to bring her along to the 21st century by archiving an emblem of the woman's trauma in her own body. It is likely that she even thinks of her actions as selfless and purely commemorative, yet there is a sinister tone in the mirrored

description of Eve's own "evil little look of defiance" when she holds up her freshly tattooed arm to the photo, a sense of oppressor looking at victim.

By establishing an intense personal connection with a Jewish woman who can only be recreated and "remembered" through imagination, Eve forces her way into the role of a Holocaust memory-keeper. She feels entitled to grant immortality-through-commemoration, just as she feels entitled to the possibility of granting life through childbirth. It is that failure that drives her to turn her body into a physical archive by literally inscribing it with the marks of memory. It is worth noting that Eve's feelings of demoralization about her failure to bear children, to even attempt to do so, are caused by external shame and pressure rather than any serious inner maternal drive. Eve experiences her failure to procreate, as well as her general ambivalence about motherhood, as a failure of femininity and her identity as a woman. She seeks to make up for this failure through the only other "life-giving" action she can imagine, misguided though it is.

On the day of her fortieth birthday, Eve marches into a seedy tattoo shop to get a replica of "Eva's" camp numbers tattooed on her own forearm. Prager seems to revel in her descriptions of a dated stereotype of the scary urban tattoo shop, complete with bikers and taxidermy. Big Dan's Tattoo Parlor features all the usual accoutrements of a stereotypical Hell's Angels clubhouse: slime-filled fish tanks, old TVs, broken down armchairs, and tattoo designs offering fiery skulls, snakes, dragons, mermaids, madwomen, and, of course, "swastikas festooned with roses," scotch-taped haphazardly to the walls (4). Next to a "stack of chipped motorcycle helmets" there are also two old Nazi infantry helmets with "bullet holes through the temples" (4). It seems strangely appropriate that Eve comes to get her Auschwitz tattoo done in a place so full of casually glorified Nazism. "See how they're squiggly, done in a hurry, badly?" Eve tells Big

Dan, “That’s just how I want them, not straight and well done like you would probably do them” (8).

In seeking out a setting that contains so many reverential references to Nazism and the SS, and by asking Big Dan to purposely mimic the poor quality of the tattoo, Eve does all she can to recreate a caricature of the Auschwitz experience in her modern world. Like the mirroring of Eve’s and Eva’s facial expressions—the “evil little look/grimace of defiance”—the scene of the actual tattooing serves as a crude parallel to the experience the woman in the photograph must have endured. The differences in the situations, however, are so monumental that they cannot help but emphasize the obscenity of Eve’s actions and the underlying impossibility of understanding. Eve goes out of her way to make sure that her bodily archive, her “homage” to the woman in the photograph, remains a faithful recreation of an experience she cannot imagine but strives to inhabit.

Along with the veritable Nazi shrine of the tattoo parlor, the character of Big Dan himself is covered in “elaborate and violent” tattoos, with one arm dedicated to Vietnam (a C-130, exploding rice paddies, “a naked Vietnamese beauty […] fingering her long black hair,” etc.) while the other features lovingly rendered images of Nazi Germany:

> On his bicep, the full insignia of the elite Totenkopf, or Death’s-Head Squadron of the SS, was perfectly inked with its lightning bolts and skulls, and then along the forearm, swastikas and iron crosses, ending on top of his hand with ACHTUNG, around which coiled a naked blonde with red lips and a rolled hairdo from the 1940s. (6-7)

There is a sleazy eroticism to Big Dan’s intricate tattoos. In marking himself, he has created his own bodily archive. Yet his is not a memorial archive so much as a veneration of violence and

power. Seemingly historical on its surface, the tattoos of naked women which bookend the depictions of a beaten Vietnam and a victorious Nazi Germany make clear that the real purpose of the art is a sexualization of power. Eve observes that while "the Nazis earned glorification in the tattoo world, the Vietcong did not […] All the pungee sticks and bamboo prisons in the world just couldn't come close to one white man's death camp" (7). It is telling that these images are all presented through the figures of women.

Even though the body that bears this grotesque archive is male, the images that give the tattoos their narrative are those of women. Rob Baum reads the language of Big Dan's tattoos as dominated by women: "Women *are* the language of the tattoos. Eroticism is inseparable from the meaning and purpose of these pictures as symbols of the tattooist's memorial art: the fascist ideology expressed on the biker's arms is couched in images of violent desire" (123). Eve's desire, though less overtly violent, is just as connected to the pain of women. Eve relies on her gendered identity to excuse her appropriation while Big Dan uses drawings of women's bodies to venerate war, power, and violence. Gender affects the archives that both characters inscribe unto themselves. In the end, the distinct parallel between Eve's co-optive, appropriative violence and Big Dan's caricatures of eroticized female bodies is that both characters see female bodies and female pain as linguistic signifiers detached from their own histories and experiences. Despite what she tells herself and others, the archive Eve inscribes onto her body is not about honoring a Jewish victim's memory so much as it is a warped and appropriative attempt at self-expression.

Eve believes whole-heartedly in her own good intentions and is baffled by the confused responses she receives from her friends and boyfriend, Charles César. It is difficult to see how she can believe her own reasoning when Eve then proceeds to spend much of the novel relying on the tattoo as a way to gather attention and sympathy from those around her. The belief that

she can "memorialize Jewish women by inscribing the sign of their torment on [her] own body is to see Jews as numbers, as surfaces for the print of Nazi superiority" (Baum 138). No matter her intentions, Eve's unquestioned sense of possessiveness means that she has more in common with the tormentors than the victims. The numbers and the Jewish woman they represent are, for her, just another way to direct her own life. A journalist by trade, Eve sees herself as a storyteller and the tattoo becomes another conversational device, a tool that she uses to navigate social gatherings. Although she does eventually find out the real story of the woman in the photograph, much of the novel is taken up with Eve's co-option and appropriation.

Every time Eve finds herself in front of a captive audience, she takes the opportunity to make up a new tale about the tattoo's original victim, tailoring it to fit the environment and her own needs. At a dinner with friends, the tattoo belongs to "Eva Klein," a doomed Jew in hiding; at a high society party, she tells the story of "Eva Berg," a good hearted gynecologist and obstetrician, sent to Auschwitz for the crime of trying to help others; at a veterinarian's office with her sick cat, Eve invents "Eva Beck," an animal lover who goes out of her way to save "Jewish" pets. In one particularly disturbing incident, Eve carries on a one night stand with an especially dim young bass player and goes all out, telling him that the tattoo is from her own survival of Auschwitz. In a post-coital haze, she weaves an absurd, intricate story designed to elicit his pity and admiration, as well as sexual desire. Finally, before she loses the tattoo for good after her accident, Eve relies on it one last time to guarantee good treatment and sympathy from the surly nuns at a Catholic hospital. For them she makes up "Eva Hartz," a Catholic true believer, sent to Auschwitz for the sins of helping Jews and generally being too Christian for the Third Reich. Eve teaches "the history of Nazism disguised as heroic biographies," Baum claims, "Eliciting curiosity, dismay, disgust—and desire" (125). Whatever good intentions she may have

had in the beginning of her archival project, Eve's subsequent treatment of the tattoo is obscenely offensive and ultimately anti-Semitic.

The novel's conclusions are unclear. Although it does not directly criticize her appropriation and remains invested in presenting Eve as a sympathetic character, the narrative ultimately does not allow her to keep the tattoo. In a dramatic moment, the fictional universe comes together to insist that Eve must give up her supposed homage to the unnamed Auschwitz prisoner. Grieving the dissolution of her relationship and coming around to the possibility of seeing her own inner anti-Semitism, Eve suffers a bizarre accident when a drunk driver hits a parked car that then rolls over her. In a moment of shock, she looks down on her arms to find that "she had fallen on them. One, the one with the tattoo, the one with Eva, was bleeding" (161). In the hospital, when she wakes up after surgery, Eve realizes that the tattoo is gone, replaced by "a neat row of suturing staples" (176). The world realigns; without the tattoo, Eve can make amends with her boyfriend, Charles César, a Jewish convert to Catholicism, and their life together can resume. On the surface, it appears as if Eve may have learned her lesson about mistaken, warped appropriation of the trauma of others, but the context of the novel's ending is troubling.

The accident effectively erases the tattoo from Eve's forearm, signifying her failure as a memory-keeper. Since the memories were never truly hers, this failure is justified and expected—Eve cannot be allowed to continue appropriating a trauma history that does not belong to her. I argue, however, that the failure to transform her body into an archive also functions as an erasure of Holocaust trauma from public awareness. Eve's preoccupation with the woman in the photograph, along with a general obsession with Nazism, characterizes her as the kind of "Holocaust Consumer" that reads "the Shoah as a secondary or tertiary text,

projecting themselves into the literature of torture and gratuitous death" (Baum 130). Everything that Eve learns about the Holocaust is projected, first and foremost, through a lens of her own needs and assumptions. Once Eve has gotten her "fix"—attention, sympathy, a carefully cultivated sense of righteousness—the tattoo and the trauma it symbolizes lose their purpose and can be removed.

On the last page of the novel, the reunited Eve and Charles César gaze at a faded Star of David armband. Prager emphasizes the threadbare nature of the cloth, describing it in all its washed out glory, and ends by likening the "weak yellow" of the star itself to the weakness of "a dying sun" (194). Both the faded armband and the faded scepter of Holocaust trauma are out of place in Eve's Christian, American home. In making up stories about primarily non-Jewish victims and by believing that she has the right to archive Holocaust memory onto her own skin, what Eve actually conveys—along with the appropriative issues inherent in naturalizing gendered memory keeping—is a profound discomfort with Jewish trauma.

Marking and Shaping the Second Generation in *Second Hand Smoke*

A very different type of novel, Thane Rosenbaum's *Second Hand Smoke* is just as concerned with the body's role in Holocaust commemoration as *Eve's Tattoo*. Despite its focus on a male protagonist, it remains invested in constructing Holocaust memorial stewardship as a female responsibility. Although it lacks the craft of Foer's *Everything is Illuminated*, *Second Hand Smoke* is similarly interested in telling the story of Jewish men seeking access to memorial archives kept by women. Rosenbaum's novel centers on Duncan Katz, an American-born son of survivors, whose entire childhood and early adulthood occur in a kind of memorial stasis. Raised by Yankee and Mila, the quintessential put-upon, powerless Jewish father and domineering

Jewish mother, Duncan is shaped—body and soul—by his mother's unspoken memories and secrets. One of these secrets happens to be the existence of another son, Isaac, born in the immediate aftermath of the war and left behind in Poland. Abandoned by his mother as a baby, Isaac's body nevertheless carries the imprints of Mila's memory; before she leaves him for good, she forcibly tattoos his arm with her own trauma, the numbers of Auschwitz. As Mila scars one son—through the tattoo and through her abandonment—so does she shape and mold the second one, physically and emotionally, thereby solidifying her sense of stewardship and control over the inscription of traumatic memory.

The novel's entire premise, I argue, operates on the assumption that Holocaust memory becomes archived on the bodies of not only survivors but their offspring as well, the survivors *of* the survivors. In her reading of black bodies broken by slavery, Hortense J. Spillers asks, "If this phenomenon of marking and branding actually 'transfers' from one generation to another, finding its various *symbolic substitutions* in an efficacy of meanings that repeat the initiation moments?" (67). Although Spillers' work investigates the "kinlessness" and rupture that American chattel slavery imposed on the black family, the question of transfer between generations is also applicable to Jewish bodies and Holocaust trauma. Calling back to Durkin's notion of the textuality of the body, to be physically marked by Holocaust memory insures that this trauma remains readable and legible in the current day, on the bodies of the second generation and beyond. In marking her sons, Mila insists that her experiences and memories do not stop with herself but are transferable—both as familial and culturally visible lines of transmission—to the bodies of her children.

Second Hand Smoke begins with the assertion that bodies not only can but should be marked and that this marking is contingent on gendered identity. The narrative opens with

Duncan's circumcision. Despite Mila's ambivalence about her second son's birth, she eventually agrees to a *bris*, thereby "forever branding their child as a Jew" (5). This moment invokes Derrida's archive, calling back to his question, "Is a circumcision, for example, an exterior mark? Is it an archive?" (15). In Duncan's case, it is the very beginning of his body's transformation into an inscribed, archival text. Yet while the *bris* is "a traditional ritual that affirms and reinforces patrilineage," in Rosenbaum's story, it is not the father, Yankee, but the mother, Mila, who takes on "the leading role in Duncan's bris, wanting him to feel the pain of the incision in order to build strength of character" (Lieber 147). In the moments after, "Mila held Duncan up in the air, at an angle, away from her body. Beads of blood dripped from his circumcised penis as if he were a stone cherub in a Florentine fountain […] And because Mila wasn't holding Duncan close, the wound was open, the mark of Duncan's manhood and the fresh bond with his God there for all to see" (Rosenbaum 16). Thus, from the first days of his life, Duncan's body is imprinted by outside forces, his gender signifying the manner in which Judaism marks him as its own. However, where God's demands end, Mila Katz steps in to pick up the slack. In the way that Eve's gendered identity—which she ties to her biological potential for motherhood—allows her to feel entitled to "give life," so does Mila believe that birthing her sons entitles her to treat their bodies as her own commemorative artifacts.

The commemorative impulse is subconscious for Mila; her archival intentions, at least in regards to Duncan, are more concerned with his body's potential for revenge. In creating life, Mila also believes she can weaponize its very existence. From birth, "Duncan was being groomed:"

> He was evolving into a very different conception of the standard Jewish prince. Not simply God's gift to Jewish women (as Jewish mothers all assume of their

> boys), but rather, Mila's gift to all Jews. A Frankenstein experiment gone right this time; a modern-day golem from Miami Beach who could defend any Jewish ghetto anywhere, anytime. (36)

Having already permanently marked and abandoned one son, Mila is reluctant to keep and raise this second one. Yet once she does decide to take on motherhood again, she does so with the sole intention of molding Duncan into a physical embodiment of her trauma and need for vengeance. Beginning with martial arts lessons and moving on to "organized kickboxing and random bouts of street fighting," as well as wilderness survival courses and a triumphant career as a high school linebacker, Mila demands the highest level of physical perfection and conditioning from her son (31, 34-35). When Duncan suggests that maybe he could quit karate and learn to play the violin, Mila finds the idea ridiculous, telling her son that he doesn't "have time to play" and should go practice his kicks instead (29).

Duncan's meticulously structured childhood leads to an adulthood of near single-minded purpose. The emphasis on constant exercise and preparedness, on paranoid vigilance and bodily enhancement, results in almost exactly what Mila set out to create. Strong and athletic, his nose small and stunted from being "forcibly moved around over the years," the adult Duncan is a heavily muscled, thick-necked prosecutor of Nazi war criminals with the Office of Special Investigations at the Department of Justice (20). When he is not chasing down Nazis, he is lifting weights at the gym. Mila's boy, the second-born son into whom she burned all her fears and traumas, grows up to be the Jewish avenger of her dreams. Ultimately, neither Duncan's life nor his body are truly his own; both his career and bulked up frame are the direct products of Mila's careful labor.

Second Hand Smoke is largely Duncan's story and it is through him that we begin to critically encounter second generational trauma. In this way, the structure of the novel mirrors Mila's mothering—looking back from her deathbed, it is her second-born son, Duncan, who comes first in the narrative and who is forcibly equipped to be the hero of the story. Yet before there was Duncan, the golem of Miami Beach, there was Isaac. While never particularly comfortable with motherhood, Mila feels especially conflicted over Isaac's existence. Barely seventeen at liberation, survival meant a life "without moderation" (148). Mila makes up for lost time with a vengeance, "sacrificing nothing to memory-numbing pleasure" as she smokes, drinks, and sleeps her way across liberated Poland: "As a child of the Warsaw Ghetto and then Birkenau, she stepped back into the free but shell-shocked world without a basic working knowledge of her own body. Biology seemed to work despite the surrounding indignity. But suddenly she was a young woman who had never had a chance to be a teenager" (149). Just as she finally regains control over her life, Mila becomes pregnant, a biological event that she experiences as betrayal.

Being Jewish in post-war Poland, however, still means continual danger, with rampant anti-Semitism and the occasional pogrom (150). It is unsurprising, then, that after her experiences Mila is paranoid and angry, reacting to the world like a cornered, abused cat. She comes to the conclusion that she must escape Poland, a task easier accomplished without an infant in her arms. "I had to leave him," a dying Mila tells her nurse in the hospital, "I remembered what happened to the women in the camps who tried to hide their children" (151). The confused nurse asks, "But you weren't in the camp anymore?" "You never leave the camp," Mila tells her, "I survived but I am still there" (151). In her mind, postwar Poland is every bit as

dangerous as Auschwitz and it is only possible to survive alone. Leaving Isaac for his father to find, Mila sneaks across the border and eventually finds her way to the United States.

Before she departs his life completely, however, Mila leaves Isaac with one final lasting reminder of his origins. After getting the infant drunk on wine, Mila tattoos his "pudgy, baby-soft forearm" with her own Auschwitz numbers:

> 101682. The enduring password. These were her numbers, tattooed onto her own left forearm when she was a young teenager. For almost two years they had replaced her real name. Now it was a permanent scar. And this was what she chose to give her son as a farewell, something to remember her by. The digits were now his, too. They would share this in common—the family brand, in case the cattle got away. (239-240)

Although abandoning her baby may seem irrational, for a woman steeped in the twisted logic of Birkenau, it makes perfect sense that survival requires the separation of mother and child. In branding Isaac, however, Mila does not only mark him as a way to find him again later, but she also exercises the rights she feels entitled to by virtue of her motherhood. The numbers are not only the family brand, but the family history, the memory that "was the very essence of her—what she had become" (175). Through Mila's actions, Isaac's arm now bears the emblem of Auschwitz, transforming his body into the physical archive of his mother's trauma.

This inscription is ultimately Mila's most motherly action toward Isaac. In the same way that Eve's appropriative and misplaced impulse to commemorate the woman in the photograph on her own skin is borne out of her reproductive anxieties, so does Mila's motherhood lead to her sense of possessiveness over the archival possibilities of her son's body: "For her, the burning would become the last and most imprinting memory of her motherhood. An act of

disfigurement—not quite infanticide, but far from love—that defined her parenthood: more umbilical than a cord, more sustaining than a breast" (174). For Eve, motherhood is an ultimately unachieved biological possibility, for Mila, a lived experience; yet it is this capacity for birth that colors the two women's experiences of their gender identities and allows them to connect life-giving with the right to etch memory archives into the bodies of their children and themselves.

Holocaust Trauma and Femininity

Along with depicting characters who believe that physically inscribing memory onto their own and their children's bodies is an extension of a perceived gendered capacity for life-giving, the two novels are also invested in equating Holocaust memory and trauma with femininity. Rosenbaum and Prager both take on especially gendered tones in their depictions of male victims and survivors, drawing troubling parallels between weakness, femininity, and the male bodies that seek to comprehend and access Holocaust memory archives. Hearkening back to standard anti-Semitic tropes of emasculated men, the two stories each feature highly feminized Jewish men, as victims and survivors, whose every softness and bodily fault is almost lovingly rendered by the authors. Rosenbaum takes a particular glee in his description of Isaac's soft, overweight, yoga-loving body (199). Prager revels in a simultaneously philo-Semitic and anti-Semitic representation of Eve's handsome, but secretly Jewish boyfriend, Charles César, as well as Jacob Schlaren, an old Holocaust survivor whose subsequent career in Yiddish theater earned him the title of the "great Yiddish transvestite" (155). Although writing specifically about male characters, it quickly becomes evident that both Rosenbaum and Prager code their trauma as female.

Even when it is not women who are shown to be suffering, the suffering itself—and the body that bears it—is made feminine. *Second Hand Smoke* fixates on the "femininity" of Isaac's body and temperament, constantly reiterating and detailing its faults and weaknesses, from his "feminine" profession as a yoga instructor to his weight. Although Isaac is an adept practitioner and a highly sought-after teacher of yoga, implying an impressive level of athleticism, the novel treats his skills as anomalous to his body: "How could this short, overweight, double-chinned man, with feet pointed out in reverse Vee formation, contort and balance his body without regard to the laws of physics, or common sense?" (199). In Rosenbaum's descriptions of Isaac, his stomach hangs "over his belt, filling out his sweatshirt like an overstuffed laundry bag" and he maintains his posture "like a round, fleshy statue" (212, 213). Overall, unlike Duncan, "whose torso was lined and chiseled, each piece of his body sculpted like stone, Isaac was not exactly a pretty picture of human form. Duncan's physique was all geometric angles, while Isaac's body was a dense heavyset block of long addition" (242). Through his description of the brothers' bodies, Rosenbaum is quick to create a good/bad dichotomy between Duncan's hardened masculinity and Isaac's overweight feminine softness.

The coded femininity with which Isaac is presented is especially tied to his resemblance to Mila. Duncan, who does not particularly resemble either of his parents, is shocked at the likeness between Mila and Isaac, the abandoned firstborn: "Mother and son had the same height and shape, the same fleshy lips, the round face, the reddish hair, the wide gap between their front teeth" (209). Already overwhelmed by their similarity, Duncan is horrified when he sees the tattoo on his brother's arm: "These weren't Isaac's numbers; they were Mila's. Duncan had seen these digits before; hell, he had seen this arm before. Like the rest of his body and his face, Isaac had inherited all that was Mila" (243). The presence of the numbers, along with Isaac's looks and

soft, rounded body, mark him as not only Mila's offspring but as a bodily archive imbued with femininity.

It is precisely that softness, I argue, along with the codes of femininity imposed on Isaac's body, that makes him better suited to serve as a steward for Mila's trauma, if not her actual memories. Where Duncan is rigid, trapped in the body and role he is assigned, Isaac is looser, more fluid. Once tattooed, Isaac absorbs the specter of Auschwitz into his own skin. Neither he nor Duncan ever gain direct access to Mila's memories, but Isaac's sense of the history she passes on is experienced more organically, as a literal part of his skin. Duncan, however, who is molded so much more literally by Mila's experiences of victimization and survival, is far more disconnected from the sense of memory imprinted in his muscles, spending most of his life seeing his parents' wartime experiences solely through a murky lens of revenge. Despite their many differences, both sons receive their birthrights in infancy when bolstered by her sense of herself as a life-giver, Mila commits to transferring her memories into their bodies, creating a Holocaust archive that Isaac and Duncan do not actually understand but must nevertheless shoulder.

Perhaps because Isaac is marked more by his mother's abandonment than her overbearing, controlling presence, he is ultimately better suited for carrying her traumas. Rosenbaum's description of Isaac's body imply that he is protected, in a sense, by his own softness, whereas Duncan's tense musculature leaves him no room to process what he carries. In the pivotal moment of Isaac's scarring, when Mila forces her Auschwitz tattoo into her child's arm, "The wine mixed with the intense screams had produced its own anesthetic. Whimpers turned to silence. It was as though he had gotten used to the fire. The flesh hardened; the pain became familiar" (240). This scene mirrors the moment of Duncan's *bris* as discussed earlier.

While Mila gets the infant Isaac drunk on wine before inscribing the numbers, she refuses any kind of anesthetic for baby Duncan at his circumcision, saying, "I want him to feel it" (16). In the moments after the *bris* is done, Mila holds Duncan away, detached from his pain as he bleeds from the open wound (16). In these two moments we can see how Mila's sense of archival control over her children's bodies—her belief in an innately gendered right to mark and inscribe—reverberates throughout the rest of their lives.

Isaac undergoes intense pain, of course, but he is shielded in some small way by Mila's attempts to anesthetize, as well as by her absence. Abandonment leaves its own scar, but it also allows Isaac to grow up free from the kind of direct control that Mila exerts over Duncan. He is allowed to grow up "soft," despite the "hardened flesh" Mila leaves him, the core of her traumatic legacy imprinted on his skin. Isaac's femininity is depicted as both denigrating and essential; above all it aligns him with the otherwise female-coded duties of mnemonic labor and therefore re-emphasizes the traditional connection between suffering and femininity, trauma and femaleness. Duncan is created and raised in direct opposition to Isaac. Beginning with the *bris* and continuing throughout the rest of his childhood, the relationship Duncan has with his mother is characterized by Mila's refusal to shield her son from pain, to ease his suffering, or to allow him to be "soft" in any way.

For the most part, Mila succeeds, except for the flaw at Duncan's center, the fissure in his spirit, which keeps him from accepting or understanding the history of trauma archived in his body. Represented through the ham-fisted plot device of a "bad" stomach, this inner weakness is everything Mila attempted to destroy through the course of Duncan's tense, unhappy childhood. As an adult, though he seeks to fulfill his assigned purpose as a Jewish avenger, he nevertheless harbors great resentment and anger for the unasked-for, incomprehensible archive embedded

within his body by his mother. Unlike Duncan's hardened rigidity, Isaac's supposed softness makes him plastic, capable of bending without breaking. To his yoga students, Isaac is a marvel as he tells them that "Real power comes from the stomach, where the spiritual energy is stored," for "isn't a big belly the center of the internal universe?" (199). The core of Isaac's self, the strength hidden within the soft body, is resilience; Duncan is the opposite, his hardened body hiding his true "weakness" within his bad stomach. In order to begin to understand his mother's experiences—and the traces they have left on his own body—Duncan must work to let go of some of his hardness and learn softness and elasticity from his brother.

In the case of *Eve's Tattoo*, Prager shows a similar predilection for feminizing Holocaust trauma and Jewish male survivors. Of the two Jewish men featured in the novel, one is described as a great "Yiddish transvestite" and the other, Eve's boyfriend, is the exception that proves the rule. Charles César, while never at the forefront of the story, is nevertheless given a great deal of narrative space. His intensity and physical good looks, as well as the sexual chemistry they share, are especially important to Eve. Prager spends a great deal of time describing Eve's intense attraction to Charles César, an attraction that often hinges on his Catholicism. Eve idolizes his elegance and class, the care he takes with his dress, and his overall appearance, often describing his looks as that of a Catholic cardinal. Even his emotions, his "stately anger" is described as being worn "quietly and gracefully like a priest's cassock" (9). Eve's fixation on the perceived parallels between his attractiveness and Catholicism take on a fetishistic quality and she feels shock and betrayal when she finds out that he is ethnically Jewish: "And then there was that earthiness about him, a hotness that up until now she had ascribed to Catholicism. She had thought, perhaps, he had Italian or Irish blood, some genetic drop that made the difference. But no, she thought, he's Jewish" (13). It is difficult for Eve to reconcile Charles César's "Catholic"

sex appeal with the reality of his Jewishness because she has bought into the common anti-Semitic tropes of Jewish masculinity as lesser than gentile masculinity.

When Eve bumps into Charles César after their break-up, the knowledge of his Jewish background makes everything that she once found attractive about him ugly: "She tried picturing him as a Vatican cardinal in his cassock and zucchetto but it wasn't working. Why? Why? And then she knew. The zucchetto no longer looked like a cardinal's skullcap, it looked like a yarmulke. And he no longer looked like Charlie, the priest. He looked Jewish" (142). In that moment, Eve's attraction disappears and she can no longer see the features, which she has fetishized as an "earthy" Catholic masculinity, as anything other than subpar and unsightly. To Eve, Jewishness makes Charles César ugly and strips from him the virile masculinity he had previously possessed. Fortunately, this is the realization which jump-starts Eve's awareness of her innate anti-Semitism and ultimately leads to the tattoo's erasure. Yet the way the novel represents Charles César's Jewish identity and simultaneously exceptional and "Catholic" good looks matters a great deal for the purposes of representation, especially when the only other Jewish male character is depicted at an extreme level of feminization.

After her traumatic encounter with Charles César and his Jewishness, Eve meets the novel's only Holocaust survivor character, Jacob Schlaren. When she catches a glimpse of the tattooed numbers on his forearm, she is rightfully overcome with shame. "A survivor," she thinks to herself, "Why did she have to meet a survivor?" (146). Yet as they talk, the man's fluidity of gender becomes more and more apparent and discomforting for Eve: "The old man leaned toward her. He was more goblinesque than ever. His sexuality was indeterminate. He could have been a woman" (147). The man is both monstrous—"goblinesque"—and feminine, two traits that often align in traditionally anti-Semitic portrayals of Jewish men. It is later

revealed that Jacob Schlaren survived the early years of the Holocaust by hiding in plain sight as an Aryan girl, a task at which he was so successful that he was even hand-picked to star in a fashion show. After liberation, he took his act on the road, becoming a "Yiddish transvestite." "He's renowned in Yiddish theater," Eve's friend tells her, "I saw his act in France once. Unreal. He's exactly like a woman. Odd profession for a survivor of the camps, isn't it?" (155). But in fact, it is not especially odd, not in light of the continued feminization of trauma and suffering that is perpetuated by Prager's narrative.

There would be no reason to compare the two vastly different characters except for the fact that they are the only examples of Jewish men provided by Prager. The contrast, therefore, between Charles César and Jacob Schlaren underscores the complex interactions of masculine ideals, the feminization of trauma, and Jewish identity. While the narrative smooths over Charles César's unattractive Jewishness by focusing on his highly sexual, virile masculinity and early conversion to Catholicism, Jacob Schlaren's feminine attributes take center stage and function to support the novel's problematic insistence on Jewish emasculation and the feminization of Holocaust trauma. As with Rosenbaum's Isaac, who is "better" suited for life due to his supposedly feminine qualities, it is femininity and its performance that saves Jacob.

The insistence on feminized suffering, of using female bodies or feminine characteristics to commemorate Holocaust trauma in *Eve's Tattoo* and *Second Hand Smoke*, in combination with the naturalized gendering of memory keeping, creates narratives that ultimately uphold a gendered assignment of mnemonic labor practices. Building on the idea of women as memory keepers, my reading of the two novels also clarifies the way in which this practice leads to the creation of bodily archives, for better and for worse. In its most negative iteration, by naturalizing women's roles in Holocaust memory keeping and insisting that these roles are

somehow "naturally" feminine, Prager and Rosenbaum create narratives that normalize memory as an act of harmful appropriation. If "signing or marking the body signifies its passage into writing, its becoming a literary body, and generally also a narrative body," then to inscribe an archive onto skin is also to write narratives into being (Brooks 3).

Eve's Tattoo and *Second Hand Smoke* exemplify the damage done by narratives that buy too fully into the belief of gendered memory-keeping. In these stories, women are driven to remember and to transmit Holocaust memory in the most extreme terms. Eve "writes" on herself in an attempt to claim a history which doesn't belong to her while Mila "writes" on the bodies of her sons in order to convey a memory she cannot speak out loud; in the end, both women's actions cause damage. The move toward bodily archives, while completing the arc of gendered memory stewardship I have outlined throughout this study, therefore reminds us that the project of memory is volatile and that it can at times elicit violence from its keepers. If pain resists "linguistic expression," as Scarry tells us, then the memory of that pain is similarly difficult to tell and represent. As we see fictional memory-keepers turn to the body in an effort to commemorate trauma, we can consider how such representations impact the way Holocaust memory and gender intersect and interact in real-world commemorative spaces.

Conclusion:
"Like a Tree that Grows Around a Fence:"
Power, Memory-Keeping, and Marginalized Identities

Through my exploration of gender and memory-keeping in American literature about the Holocaust, I have come to see that the project of commemoration is an outgrowth of power. The question of who remembers and how is implicitly tied to larger concerns of gate-keeping, public versus private commemorative practices, and narrative control. My work leads me to conclude that the gendering of mnemonic labor is at once a response to and the result of systemic barriers within public memory. The ideology at work in institutional memory—museums, monuments, and "official" historical narratives—is patriarchal in its creation and execution. While the bodies of women are often relied upon to call up trauma and affective response, "women are still not taken seriously as historical actors by those composing the 'master narrative'" (Mushaben 155). Looking beyond this "master narrative," then, means seeing the gendered work of memory-keeping, as it occurs within the private sphere, as one way in which women exercise power and agency.

In the preceding chapters, I have identified the trope of the female memory-keeper in American literature about the Holocaust and established a system for considering its causes and impacts. In the fictional texts that comprise my study, girls and women take up memory stewardship in line with the patterns of narrative control established in first generational works of testimony and memoir. In my consideration of Elie Wiesel and Anne Frank, for instance, we can see that cultural receptions make the two especially resonant examples of how narrative control, power, and agency interact within the context of gender identity. Wiesel personifies the "master narrative" of Holocaust witnessing and memory while Frank's diaries, despite the purpose with which she worked and her professional goals as a writer, continue to be read as an insulated,

albeit universalized, coming of age story, rather than a Holocaust memory text and a testimonial record. Although we cannot discount the matter of sheer longevity, Wiesel's and Frank's different cultural and historical treatments emphasize and reify the gendering of the master narrative.

There is a similar dynamic in second-generational works like *Maus*, which parallels Wiesel's and Frank's narrative control through Vladek and Anja. Like Frank, Anja purposefully engages in narrative creation, writing down her memories specifically for others to access at a later date. Although she survives the camps, Anja also dies early, leaving her diaries to be mediated and, as it turns out, destroyed by surviving male relatives. Art Spiegelman is ostensibly interested in his mother's kept memory archives, but it is Vladek who gets to contribute to the master narrative. Having destroyed Anja's diaries, his own story becomes enshrined as history through Spiegelman's representation. *Maus* may have been a non-traditional text initially, but its acceptance as a classic of the Holocaust literature canon ensures that Vladek's tale becomes part of the public sphere while what little is left of Anja's story fades into the private.

It is this private sphere, and the mnemonic labor undertaken there, that has been the focus of my research throughout this study. In turning to fiction produced largely (but not entirely) by the third generation, we see this same pull toward narrative creation, thwarted by patriarchal, institutional barriers, instead manifest itself through the stewarding of memory in a largely private space. Characters like Hannah Stern, Anna Schlemmer, Gretel, Lista, Mila Katz, Eve Flick, and others work outside established patriarchal systems of institutional memory. Instead, they create makeshift archives within themselves (or literally, as with Lista's house), where memory is held in silence, transmitted as family history, or physically inscribed onto the next

generation. As far as literary tropes go, once recognized, the female memory-keeper of Holocaust literature cannot be ignored and makes her appearance in countless texts of the genre.

Not all American novels about the Holocaust, however, fit neatly within the traditions I identify. One of the understandable concerns of my study is that it is not possible at this time to fully consider every work of fiction published within the genre of focus. How can we reconcile the exceptions to the "rule" I have established? In other words, what can we learn from works in which memory-keeping does not appear particularly gendered? Nicole Krauss' novel, *The History of Love* (2005) is one example of a text that gestures toward the limitations of my argument. Here, the work of memory and, by extension, transmission, storytelling, and narrative formation, is undertaken by men as well as women. A convoluted story made up of many interlocking parts, *The History of Love* is conveyed through four main voices: Leo Gursky, Alma Singer, her little brother, Bird, and an unnamed omniscient narrator that follows Zvi Litvinoff and his wife Rosa.

There are several levels to the story, but in short, *The History of Love* is a novel about surviving trauma, enduring loneliness, and navigating the difficulties of memorial transmission between generations. Once, when he was young, Leo Gursky wrote a book for the girl he loved, Alma Mereminski, whose father had the resources and foresight to send her to America ahead of the Nazis' arrival in Poland. Before going into hiding in the forests, Leo leaves his manuscript for safekeeping with Zvi Litvinoff, who escapes to Argentina. Years pass and believing that his friend did not survive the war, Zvi translates "The History of Love" from its original Yiddish into Spanish and publishes it under his own name. Later, Alma Singer's Israeli father discovers the book in Buenos Aires and uses it to woo her mother. After his death, fifteen-year-old Alma Singer, who is named after every character in "The History of Love," sets out on a mission to

find new love for her still grieving mother and to learn about her namesake, Alma Mereminski. Meanwhile, the aging and lonely Leo Gursky, reaching the end of his life, begins to write again as he yearns to connect with the world around him.

Victoria Aarons and Alan Berger describe *The History of Love* as "the quest of the third-generation artist to find means to reimagine the traumatic history of Jews marked by exile and genocide" (148). Jessica Lang reads *The History of Love* as a bridge between the earlier generation of Holocaust memoirs and the future of Holocaust literature: "The representation of the Holocaust in this novel may be read as an early witness to the end of a generation of Holocaust memoirs and to a future of Holocaust literature where imagination and history—both Holocaust and non-Holocaust history—are interpolated" (44). Krauss' novel signifies a shift in how writers incorporate the Holocaust into their stories, portraying it "in ways both explicit and obscured, and both as a memorial and a method" (Lang 46).[22] The trauma of the Holocaust resonates throughout the text, especially for Leo Gursky, but it exists alongside other more "mundane" traumas, such as the disorienting grief that accompanies the death of a loved one.

Although they do not know it until they meet at the novel's conclusion, Alma Singer and Leo Gursky are positioned on either end of a line of memorial transmission. Leo, the survivor, is the story's most overt memory-keeper and creator of narratives. Alma, in the third generation, is a seeker of memory. Her search for information about the original Alma takes the teenage Alma Singer all over New York City, from one forgotten, dusty archive to another. As she reads over old marriage records and squints through microfiche readers, she imagines "rooms all over the

[22] "If the struggle of second-generation writers of the Holocaust involves re-populating a void of memory, the struggle for third-generation Holocaust writers lies in crossing not one but two gaps, that of experience and that of memory. In order to imagine the Holocaust, third-generation writers both rely on text and imagine text. In short, third-generation writers work to represent a text of the text" (Lang 49)

city that housed archives no one has ever heard of, like last words, white lies, and false descendants of Catherine the Great" (173). The description of the haphazard, forgotten, and fantastical calls to mind Lista's ramshackle house in *Everything is Illuminated*, packed full of boxes with labels like "darkness" and "dust." It also ties back to Leo Gursky's cluttered mess of an apartment. "When they write my obituary," Leo tells us, "it will say, *LEO GURSKY IS SURVIVED BY AN APARTMENT FULL OF SHIT*" (3). Because Alma is operating from a space of narrative ignorance, she imagines the archive as a collection of magical mysteries. For Leo, his memories are a place of confinement: "I'm surprised I haven't been buried alive. The place isn't big. I have to struggle to keep a path clear between bed and toilet, toilet and kitchen table, kitchen table and front door" (3). The disorder and chaos of the objects that litter his apartment limit Leo's physical movement in the same way that his memories have stifled his life and growth.

Leo survived the Holocaust by "becoming invisible" in hiding and his emotional life stopped, for all intents and purposes, in the years after the war. With his entire family gone, Leo emigrates to New York City and goes to the girl he has loved since childhood, Alma. He finds out that she has given birth to their child, Isaac, and married another man. In the end, she will not leave her husband and Leo must walk away. He never falls in love again, never truly lives his life beyond the increasingly cluttered space of his apartment, and never meets the son he loves, since, "after all, what does it mean for a man to hide one more thing when he has vanished completely?" (13). Leo's life as a survivor is a kind of mirror to Lista's; they are both entirely committed to and overwhelmed by their memory archives. Although the objects Leo hoards have no tangible connection to his memories of life before, they are stand-ins for all that he has lost. He cannot move forward and does not have anyone to share his experiences with, but at the very

least, the collection of junk that fills Leo's home is proof that he exists.[23] The similarity between Leo and Lista also points to the sense of futility and determination bound up in internalized memory-keeping.

Unlike Lista, however, who retreated almost entirely inside herself in order to commit her whole being to Trachimbrod's archive, Leo maintains a tentative link to the world, mostly through his loneliness. Lista feels no need to reach out and welcome others to access her insulated archive, but Leo very much yearns for connection. This is why, finally, "A couple months after my heart attack, fifty-seven years after I'd given it up, I started to write again. I did it for myself alone, not for anyone else, and that was the difference" (9). By convincing himself that he doesn't need an audience, that his writing—and by extension, his memory narrative—is only for himself, Leo allows himself to step more fully into the memory keeper role, one typewritten page at a time.

The writing, however, is not just for Leo himself. Alongside his bone-deep loneliness, Leo Gursky also carries a surprising amount of hope. In a moment of delirious bravery, he titles his completed manuscript, "Words for Everything," packages it up, and mails it to Isaac, the son he has never really met (33-34). Deciding to turn his memory into a narrative means deciding to care about living; part of the tragicomedy of Krauss' novel is that Leo only begins to live as he is preparing to die and only reaches out to the son he has loved from afar just as Isaac is dying himself. Losing Isaac pushes Leo to finally understand that despite his isolation, he was still connected to the lines of familial transmission, that he had not been living solely for himself: "Only now that my son was gone did I realize how much I'd been living for him. When I woke

[23] "At the end, all that's left of you are your possessions. Perhaps that's why I've never been able to throw anything away. Perhaps that's why I hoarded the world: with the hope that when I died, the sum total of my things would suggest a life larger than the one I lived" (Krauss 165).

up in the morning it was because he existed, and when I ordered food it was because he existed, and when I wrote my book it was because he existed to read it" (80). When he finds out that Isaac has died, likely before he was able to read his book, Leo sees his attempt at the memory narrative as a failure.

He goes to search Isaac's empty house for the manuscript, but it is nowhere to be found. Leo equates the absence of the manuscript with his own invisibility, his absent presence in his own life: "Aside from myself, there was no sign of me" (169). Yet the book's absence is temporary and not the sign of failure Leo thinks it is. Because Isaac grew up to become a writer himself—a second generational storyteller barred from his father's story—when the manuscript is found in his home it is assumed that the book is his final novel and is set to be published posthumously. Uncredited and unknown, Leo Gursky and his narrative nevertheless live on through Isaac. The lines of memorial transmission may be muddled but they are not absent nor even especially broken. It is fitting that just as Leo solidifies his identity as a memory keeper, Alma Singer embarks on her search for answers.

In looking for her namesake—the real Alma Mereminski behind all the Almas in "The History of Love"—Alma demands access to the memory archive and insists on her right to know and participate in the lines of memorial transmission that thread through her diasporic Jewish community. As Leo begins to write his narrative and becomes a memory steward, Alma assumes responsibility for memory keeping. "The convergence of the two journeys undertaken by a survivor in search of a reader and a teenage girl in search of her namesake has allayed Gursky's dread of invisibility and also made Alma Singer aware of her people's past," Aarons and Berger argue, "of her roots, of the importance of family, of the need to memorialize the victims of the

Shoah" (155). As Alma's and Leo's paths cross, a connection is forged and the weight of Holocaust memory begins to pass from the first to the third generation.[24]

While Alma fits neatly into the trope of gendered memory-keeping I identify throughout my study, it is clear that she is not the only one to do so in *The History of Love*. The novel simultaneously enacts the trope and expands beyond it, giving nearly all of its characters a role to play in the keeping, telling, and transmitting of Holocaust memory. By virtue of being given the name of so many others, Alma is already born into an archive, but so is her little brother: "When I was born my mother named me after every girl in a book my father gave her called *The History of Love*. She named my brother Emanuel Chaim after the Jewish historian Emanuel Ringelblum, who buried milk cans filled with testimony in the Warsaw Ghetto" (35). Even more so than Alma, such a name ensures that Emanuel is burdened at birth with the weight of memory. It is too much to carry and despite being trusted, or perhaps "saddled" is a better term, with such an eminent namesake, Emanuel refuses the name and chooses to call himself Bird.

Bird is a strange, lonely, and religious child. Because he was so young when David Singer died, his experience of his father's death is very different from Alma's and his grief is much more confusing. On his own, Bird doesn't remember much about their father and has only other people's memories and narratives to guide him. As a result, much like in *The True Story of Hansel and Gretel*, it is the older sister who bears the responsibility for memory. Bird often asks Alma to tell him more about their father, but her memories are limited too and eventually she

[24] "Alma's search for the author of *The History of Love* are both attempts to re-claim the particular from the universal, to peel back one layer of text in search of the story, to bridge both the gap of memory and that of experience in order to represent, and to remember, the Holocaust" (Lang 50).

begins to make things up.[25] In trying to first transmit and then create memories for her younger brother, Alma and Bird recreate a portion of the dynamic between Gretel and Hansel. But it is his commitment to the religious component of Judaism that makes Bird a fitting counterpart to Alma's budding memory-keeper.

The difference in how the two children approach loss and trauma calls back to the gendered mind/body (*Sophos*/*Telos*) divide in writing by survivors. Bird turns to religion, investing himself deeply in Jewish thought and ritual in order to understand his loss, while Alma looks outward, hungering for knowledge and narratives. Alma seeks memory while Bird seeks the divine. He confesses to Alma that he believes himself to be a *lamed vovnik*, one of the "thirty-six holy people" that "the existence of the world depends on" (53). "In every generation," Bird explains, "there's one person who has the potential to be the Messiah. Maybe he lives up to it, or maybe he doesn't. Maybe the world is ready for him or maybe it isn't. That's all" (53). Whether or not Bird is a *lamed vovnik* or not, he is the one who orchestrates the meeting between Alma and Leo, the connection between the seeker and keeper of memory. Bird represents "messianic yearning, in spite of the Holocaust" and "plays a pivotal, quasi-mystical, role that enriches Leopold Gursky and Alma Singer by allowing them both to bear witness—he as a survivor, and she as a third-generation member—and transmit the legacy of the Holocaust to future generations" (Aarons and Berger 155). In this way, Krauss expands the memory-keeper

[25] "'Did he like to dance,' Bird asked. I had no idea if he liked to dance, but I said, 'He loved it. He could even do the tango. He learned it in Buenos Aires. He and Mom danced all the time. He'd move the coffee table against the wall and use the whole room. He used to lift her and dip her and sing in her ear.' 'Was I there?' 'Sure you were,' I said. 'He used to throw you up in the air and catch you.' 'How'd he know he wouldn't drop me?' 'He just knew.' 'What did he call me?' 'Lots of things. Buddy, Little Guy, Punch.' I was making it up as I went" (Krauss 52).

trope, insisting that there is a place for Bird's "messianic yearnings," that they are just as important for memorial transmission as Alma's archival research.

While it moves beyond the overarching arguments of my study, the larger themes of *The History of Love* draw an important connection between memory-keeping and disempowered identities. Even when it is not women in positions of memory stewardship, the novel implies that this work is done by those who are rendered socially invisible and disenfranchised due to their gender, class, or age, for example. Alma, Bird, and Leo Gursky, as the main participants in the keeping and transmitting of memory, emphasize the way in which memory-keeping is the purview of marginalized identities. Thus, not only is it women and girls, but the very old, the young, and the poor, who respond to the barriers and gate-keeping of the "master narrative" by embarking on their own projects of narrative creation and transmission in the private sphere, far from the rituals and structures of public history.

My research has brought me to the conclusion that this private approach to memory-keeping, barred from the public, becomes a source of agency and self-determination for the characters who take it on. In short, I propose that there is a kind of freedom in setting aside institutional memory and choosing instead to consider the private archive and the individual, as well as familial and domestic, spaces of memorial transmission. As this project identifies a crucial component of memory-keeping, contributing to larger conversations within Holocaust Studies, so does it also open up areas for further exploration.

Some of the questions we are left with are: What sort of power lies in the makeshift archive? What does agency and self-determination look like for those who operate on the margins? How can the "canon" of Holocaust history be not only expanded but rethought into a more malleable space for different identities? These are especially crucial thoughts to explore in

light of current political and cultural trends. With anti-Semitism, nationalism, and white supremacy on the rise in the United States, as well as globally, it is necessary for educators and scholars to rethink the way we read, write, and teach about Holocaust history and literature. As the third generation flows into the fourth and on, it is vital that we see the worth and the struggle involved in keeping and transmitting narratives, moving forward with the knowledge that we are not done with memory and that memory is not done with us.

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