

Making the unspeakable visible?

Representation of intergenerational trauma and memory in second- and third-generation graphic memoirs about the Holocaust



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Samenvatting

Deze scriptie onderzoekt de verschillende manieren waarop het intergenerationeel trauma en herinneren van de Holocaust wordt weergegeven in *graphic memoirs* die zijn geschreven door tweede- en derde-generatie overlevenden. Dit wordt onderzocht aan de hand van vier *graphic memoirs*, namelijk *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors* (2006) van Bernice Eisenstein, *Mendel's Daughter* (2006) van Martin Lemelman, *Flying Couch* (2016) van Amy Kurzweil en *We Won't See Auschwitz* (2012) van Jérémie Dres. Deze scriptie onderzoekt, door middel van een close-reading, hoe deze *graphic memoirs* persoonlijk en collectief trauma visualiseren in relatie tot intergenerationeel herinneren. De analyse laat zien dat, ondanks het grafische narratief, de *graphic memoirs* niet in staat zijn om het onzichtbare zichtbaar te maken en het onbeschrijfelijk te beschrijven. Kortom, de *graphic memoirs* zijn niet in staat om trauma volledig te representeren. Daarnaast blijkt dat de verschillende generaties zo inherent met elkaar verbonden zijn door het trauma van de Holocaust dat ze niet in staat zijn om zichzelf los te maken van ditzelfde trauma. Dit onderzoek positioneert zichzelf binnen de velden van *life writing*, *comic studies* en trauma studies.

Keywords: cultural memory / intergenerational memory / Holocaust / graphic memoir / trauma / memory transmission / life writing

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Introduction

One of the first graphic novels I have read was Art Spiegelman's graphic memoir *Maus* (serialised between 1980 - 1991). *Maus* centralises around two stories: the story of Spiegelman's father's survival in Auschwitz and the story of Spiegelman's complex relationship with his father and the trauma of the Holocaust. I was fascinated by how Spiegelman was able to not only narrate but also visualise such a complicated and personal trauma, especially in 'simple' drawings of animals. Spiegelman showed that, as a child of Holocaust survivors, he was also affected by his parents' trauma. Through *Maus* I became interested, both personally and scholarly, in graphic novels that deal with issues of trauma, war, and identity. I have read graphic novels about war trauma in Afghanistan, Palestine and Bosnia. But most of the graphic novels I have read deal with the trauma of the Holocaust. What interests me about this is that this trauma, as Spiegelman has shown, still affects generations today.

French writer Jérémie Dres exemplifies this in his graphic memoir *We Won't See Auschwitz* (2012) when he describes this trauma of the Holocaust as "still so real it threatens to make us forget everything else".¹ Dres is the grandchild of a Holocaust survivor and only knows about the events of the Holocaust through his grandmother's testimony. In his graphic novel, he and his brother visit Poland to research his grandmother's homeland and life there. Dres is curious about her life 'besides' the Holocaust but admits that her trauma of the Holocaust still dominates his own narrative. Similarly, in Martin Lemelman's graphic memoir about his mother's survival, *Mendel's Daughter* (2006), his mother says to him that "sometimes your memories are not your own".² This also refers to the fact that, as a child of Holocaust-survivors, this trauma affects Lemelman's own narrative. These passages illustrate the issue under discussion in this thesis: the difficulties of the inherited Holocaust trauma and its representation in graphic memoirs. This thesis attempts to explore how second- and third-generation survivors visualise the Holocaust. It posits the following research question: how do graphic memoirs about the Holocaust, written by second- and third-generation of Holocaust survivors, represent the intergenerational memory of the Holocaust? Specifically, this thesis focuses on Bernice Eisenstein's *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors* (2006), Martin

¹ Dres, Jérémie. (2012) *We Won't See Auschwitz*. London: Selfmadehero: 3. English translation, translated by Edward Gauvin.

² Lemelman, Martin. (2006) *Mendel's Daughter*. New York: Free Press: 6.

Lemelman's *Mendel's Daughter* (2006), Amy Kurzweil's *Flying Couch* (2016), and Jérémie Dres's *We Won't See Auschwitz* (2012).³

Trauma and the Holocaust

The representation of trauma in literature, and more specifically Holocaust trauma, is a popular subject when it comes to scholarly research. Within the academic debate, however, there is no firm, coherent definition for the notion of trauma.⁴ Although the term originally derives from the ancient Greek word for 'physical wound', it now is often used to refer to a 'psychological wound'.⁵ Cathy Caruth describes trauma as an event or an experience that is so direct and overwhelming that its victim is unable to process it.⁶ This causes the response to the event to be delayed and occur much later in "uncontrolled repetitive occurrence of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena".⁷ Sigmund Freud described this delayed response as 'belatedness', which signifies that the traumatic event was "not fully experienced at the time of occurrence, due of its suddenness and the lack of preparedness on the part of the human subject".⁸ Similarly, Dori Laub states that, despite its reality, the traumatic event "took place outside the parameters of 'normal' reality, such as causality, sequence, place and time".⁹ Thus, trauma attains a certain "timelessness" and, as Laub argues, for its victims the event "continues into the present and is current in every aspect".¹⁰ Trauma, then, continues to reside in the unconsciousness of the victim. It is not accessible through language, because the victim is often unable to describe the experience in words. Traumatic memory, Victoria Aarons explains, is "slippery, deceptive, distorted by the ambiguities of trauma".¹¹ In relation to the Holocaust, Laub argues that it is an event without witnesses as "the event precluded its own

³ These graphic memoirs will be discussed further later in this introduction.

⁴ Caruth, Cathy. (1991) 'Unclaimed Experience: Trauma and the Possibility of History', in: *Yale French Studies*, no. 79, pp. 181 – 192: 182.

⁵ Caruth, Cathy. (1996) *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press: 3-4.

⁶ Caruth (1991): 181.

⁷ Caruth (1991): 181.

⁸ Mahan, William. (2017) 'Triangulating Trauma: Constellations of Memory, Representation, and Distortion in Elie Wiesel, Wolfgang Borchert, and W.G. Sebald', in: *Humanities*, vol.6, no.4: 1.

⁹ Felman, Shoshana & Dori Laub. (1992) *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History*. London: Routledge: 69.

¹⁰ Felman & Laub (1992): 69.

¹¹ Aarons, Victoria. (2012) 'The Certainties of History and the Uncertainties of Representation in Post-Holocaust Writing', in: *Studies in American Jewish Literature*, vol 31, no. 2, pp. 134 – 148: 134 – 135.

witnessing, even by its very victims”.¹² The Holocaust, Laub states, was so incomprehensible that it is impossible to describe in words.¹³

The Holocaust affected so many people that its trauma is not only a personal one, but it also became a collective trauma. The term collective memory was introduced by sociologist Maurice Halbwachs.¹⁴ He argues that individual and collective memories exist simultaneously. In short, the collective memory offers a social framework by which individuals remember, yet simultaneously individuals affirm this social framework.¹⁵ Jan and Aleida Assman elaborate on Halbwachs’ theories and propose the term ‘cultural memory’.¹⁶ According to Ann Rigney, this term emphasises that “shared memories of the past are the product of mediation, textualization and acts of communication”.¹⁷ Cultural memory, according to Assman, consists of two phases, namely that of communicative memory and cultural memory proper. The first phase refers to the stories that are told by the eyewitnesses and participant of the event, the second phase refers to when only the stories and memory sites are still there.¹⁸ This research uses this notion of cultural memory as it emphasises the connection and interplay between cultural contexts and memory.

Intergenerational trauma

Although the year 2020 marks 75 years of liberation, the trauma of the Holocaust still remains. Its trauma does not only affect its survivors, but also the subsequent generations.¹⁹ In other words, the trauma of the Holocaust is inherited and transferred over generations. Scholars use various terms to describes the generations born after the Holocaust. This thesis follows Esther Jilovsky’s definition, and distinction, of second- and third-generation survivors.²⁰ This distinction is important because, as Jilovsky notes, each generation

¹² Felman & Laub (1992): 80.

¹³ Felman & Laub (1992): 80 – 82.

¹⁴ Halbwachs, Maurice. (1992) *On Collective Memory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Translated by Lewis A. Coser: 37 – 39.

¹⁵ Halbwachs (1992): 40.

¹⁶ Rigney, Ann. (2005) ‘Plenitude, scarcity and the circulation of cultural memory’, in: *Journal of European Studies* vol 35, no.1, pp.11 – 28 : 14.

¹⁷ Rigney (2005): 14.

¹⁸ Rigney (2005): 15.

¹⁹ In this thesis I will employ Esther Jilovsky’s definition for Holocaust survivors, which is a broad definition based on that of Julia Chaitin. A Holocaust survivor, then, is “an individual, of any age, who has lived under Nazi rule or influence between anytime between 1939 and 1945” and anyone “who fled Europe after the Nazis’ rise to power in Germany in 1933.” See Jilovsky, Esther. (2015) *Remembering the Holocaust: Generations, Witnessing and Place*. London: Bloomsbury Academic Press: 16 – 17.

²⁰ Jilovsky (2015): 16 – 17.

experiences the memory of the Holocaust differently. Identifying these different experiences shows what Jilovsky calls “the evolution of Holocaust memory”.²¹

The second-generation refers to the children of Holocaust survivors. Even though they did not experience this traumatic event themselves, their lives are dominated by their parents’ trauma. Furthermore, Jilovsky notes that the circumstances they were born into also contribute to their trauma. After the war, Jewish survivors could often not return to their homes. Many of them lived in Displaced Persons camps or left Europe, migrating to Canada or the United States.²² The second-generation was born in places unfamiliar to their own parents, enhancing feelings of displacement.²³ Jessica Lang states that the second-generation struggles with confronting the Holocaust. Lang describes it as a traumatic event that haunts them, yet at the same time, they only know about through the accounts of others.²⁴ Although the second-generation is affected by the trauma of the Holocaust, their representation of it is more abstract. It is, after all, a trauma they did not experience themselves. Jilovsky states that a common theme is memory, or rather the lack of memory: “their [the second-generation] life is shaped by traumatic events that happened before they were born, which they will never completely know or understand”.²⁵

This relates to Marianne Hirsch’s notion of post-memory, which describes (traumatic) memories that transfer over generations. She states that these memories are not “beyond memory” because one still has a deep, personal connection to the memory.²⁶ Hirsch describes post-memory as something that “characterizes the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of the previous generation”.²⁷ Aarons and Berger state that the second-generation narrates their parents’ trauma in two ways: through narrating specific stories of their parents’ survival or through silence. Similarly, to Hirsch, Aarons and Berger also note that the second-generation struggles with calling upon a trauma that is not their own.²⁸ Second-generation narratives try to make sense of a trauma that they did not experience. Aarons and Berger

²¹ Jilovsky (2015): 17.

²² Jilovsky (2015): 20.

²³ Jilovsky (2015): 20.

²⁴ Lang, Jessica. (2009) ‘*The History of Love, the Contemporary Reader, and the Transmission of Holocaust Memory*’, in: *Journal of Modern Literature*, vol. 33, no. 1, pp. 43 – 56: 45.

²⁵ Jilovsky (2015): 20.

²⁶ Hirsch, Marianne. (1992) ‘Family Pictures: Maus, Mourning, and Post-Memory’, in: *Discourse* 15, no. 2, pp. 3-29; 8.

²⁷ Hirsch, Marianne. (1997) *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press: 22.

²⁸ Aarons, Victoria & Alan, L. Berger. (2017) *Third-Generation Holocaust Representation: Trauma, History and Memory*. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press: 56 – 57.

argue that second-generation narratives “reveal patterns of anxious, fraught witnessing”.²⁹ To summarise, the second-generation finds themselves burdened with their parents’ trauma and their writings reflect on this trauma. However, there is a constant tension between knowing and not knowing about the trauma.

The third-generation, the grandchildren of the survivors, are also affected by the trauma of the Holocaust. Although they do experience the trauma differently because of temporal and emotional distance to the event. An important characteristic of the third-generation is their status as “the last living link to the Holocaust”.³⁰ They are the last generation to know a Holocaust-survivor personally. Therefore, they play a crucial role in transmitting the memory of the Holocaust. However, this task of transmitting history is complicated by historical distance and the fragmented nature of traumatic memory. Aarons and Berger note that the third-generation is confronted with a “vast lacunae created by the erosion of time and memory”.³¹ In contrast to the second-generation, who lived in the constant shadow of their parents’ past, the third-generation must actively search for their past. This search is often the subject of their narratives and illustrated in narratives of both literal and imaginative returns to Holocaust sites.³² Another important characteristic of the third-generation is its diversity. As Jilovsky describes, this generation includes people “with either one, two, three or four grandparents who survived the Holocaust”.³³ Consequently, there is a great variation in “family histories and personal identities”.³⁴ The third-generation might not be only of Jewish descent or struggle with their Jewish identity.³⁵ Despite these questions about Jewish identity, the third-generation still attempts to preserve and transmit their family’s past.

It is important to note that the term third-generation is still in formation and not used by all scholars.³⁶ Furthermore, its definition differs amongst scholars. For example, in her influential analysis of third-generation fiction, Jessica Lang uses a broader definition of third-generation describing it as authors with “an *indirect* relation to the original eyewitness”.³⁷ As

²⁹ Aarons & Berger (2017): 61.

³⁰ Jilovsky (2015): 21.

³¹ Aarons and Berger (2017): 63.

³² Jilovsky (2015): 52 – 54 and Berger & Aarons (2017): 64.

³³ Jilovsky (2015): 22.

³⁴ Jilovsky (2015): 22.

³⁵ Jilovsky (2015): 22.

³⁶ Aarons & Berger (2017): 63. Jilovsky (2015): 21. These scholars argue that there is still a debate about the specific characteristics and collective identity of the third-generation.

³⁷ Lang (2009): 46.

Lang's definition is not very specific, this thesis uses Jilovsky's definition which views the second- and third-generation as anyone with a "familial connection" to the Holocaust.³⁸

Both generations struggle with a trauma that they have inherited but can never fully witness, feel or understand. As Victoria Aarons and Alan Berger argue, the shift from survivors and eyewitnesses to second- and third-generation writers, who did not experience the event itself, marks not only a change in representation but also in "perspective, narrative voicing, and the disposition of memory".³⁹ These stories, as Aarons and Berger show, are not only affected by the intergenerational trauma but also by the collective trauma.

Trauma narratives and the graphic memoir

Although Caruth and Laub both argue that trauma is beyond language and it is impossible to express trauma in words, paradoxically, language is also considered a way to heal trauma. The constant repetition of the traumatic memory can be broken by creating a comprehensible, structure narrative about the traumatic event. Through this, Caruth argues, the "unconscious language" is replaced by a "conscious language that can be repeated in structured settings".⁴⁰ Similarly, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson note that narrating the traumatic memory may be seen as "therapeutic in resolving troubled memories".⁴¹ In his research of survivors' testimonies, Laub notes that Holocaust survivors have "an imperative to need to *tell*" their story but also find it impossible to tell this story as there "are never enough words or right words".⁴² the Holocaust, then, is marked by the "impossibility of telling".⁴³ Similarly, trauma is often represented in literature by its unspeakability.⁴⁴ According to scholar Sara Horowitz this unspeakability, which she calls "muteness", functions in two ways. Firstly, it expresses the inability to say "anything meaningful about the Holocaust".⁴⁵ Secondly, it represents the nature of the Holocaust itself. The silence in language affirms what Horowitz calls "the consistent movement of displacement - geographic, historical, linguistic, symbolic - that

³⁸ Jilovsky (2015): 21.

³⁹ Aarons & Berger (2017): 41.

⁴⁰ Gilmore, Leigh. (2001) *The Limits of Autobiography: Trauma and Testimony*. New York: Cornell University Press: 6.

⁴¹ Smith, Sidonie & Julia Watson. (2001) *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*. Minneapolis, Ma: University of Minnesota Press: 28.

⁴² Felman & Laub (1992): 78. Emphasis in the original.

⁴³ Felman & Laub (1992): 79.

⁴⁴ Aarons (2012): 135.

⁴⁵ Horowitz, Sara. (1997) *Voicing the Void: Muteness and memory in Holocaust Fiction*. New York, NY: State University of New York Press: 38.

characterizes both the event and its subsequent reflections and depictions”.⁴⁶ Aarons argues that Holocaust narratives struggle with the paradox of ‘telling’ the unspeakable”.⁴⁷ This, then, raises the question how Holocaust trauma can be narrated. If survivors already struggle to find the words to describe their trauma, how can subsequent generations give voice to the intergenerational trauma they have inherited?

Laub emphasises that despite the impossibility of telling the Holocaust, it is essential to still narrate it, whether through written or recorded testimony. This, namely, enables “act of bearing witness”.⁴⁸ Many survivors have recorded or written their testimony, attempting to transmit the memory of the Holocaust. Here, the fields of life writing and trauma intersect. Smith and Watson define life writing as a general term for “writing that takes a life, one’s own or another’s, as its subject”.⁴⁹ They make a distinction between *life writing* and *life narratives*, where the latter does not only refer to written forms of self-presentation but to “autobiographical acts of any sort”.⁵⁰ The most notable example of life writing is the autobiography, which is a self-referential form of life writing. However, Smith and Watson consider the term autobiography to refer only to “the traditional Western mode of retrospective life narrative”.⁵¹ The terms *life writing* and *life narrative*, then, are considered to be more inclusive.

Within life writing the notion of truth is complicated and scholars have questions if life narratives can and should be truthful. The process of memory, for example, complicates the interpretation of experiences and events in the past.⁵² As Nancy Pedri points out “[t]he telling of one’s self, whether through recall or direct witnessing, is a task that is often fraught with perils and doubts that pose a challenge for both authority and accuracy”.⁵³ Despite these questions about truthfulness, autobiographical fiction often still strives to achieve a sense of authenticity, to affirm a story’s connection to an ‘objective’ reality.⁵⁴ Elisabeth El Refaie

⁴⁶ Horowitz (1997): 38.

⁴⁷ Aarons (2012): 135.

⁴⁸ Felman & Laub (1992): 85.

⁴⁹ Smith & Watson (2001): 4.

⁵⁰ Smith & Watson. (2001): 4.

⁵¹ Smith & Watson. (2001): 4.

⁵² El Refaie, Elisabeth. (2012) *Autobiographical Comics: Life Writing in Pictures*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi: 137.

⁵³ Pedri, Nancy. (2015) ‘Graphic Memoir: Neither Fact nor Fiction’, in: Daniel Stein and Jan-Noël Thon (eds.) *From Comic Strips to Graphic Novels: Contributions to the Theory and History of Graphic Narrative*. Berlin: De Gruyter, pp. 127 – 154: 129.

⁵⁴ Authenticity is also a complex concept, often associated with something “real” or “genuine”. As I use Elisabeth El Refaie’s concept of “performing authenticity” I also use her conceptualisation of authenticity as “something that is performed more or less convincingly and either accepted or rejected by an audience”. See El Refaie (2012) : 138 – 141.

argues that cultural connotations of the genre “lead many authors to aspire to - and their readers to expect - some kind of special relationship between a narrative and the life it purports to represent”.

This research focuses on intergenerational trauma in relation to autobiographical graphic novels, also called graphic memoirs. The graphic novel is a multimodal medium as it not only combines words and images in its narrative but also employs “different semiotic modes—maps, paintings, charts, and photographs”.⁵⁵ Daniel Stein argues that comics can be studied as intermedial objects because they “thrive on exchanges with other media”.⁵⁶ Similarly, Smith and Watson describe autobiographical graphic novels as a very hybrid form because it mixes verbal and visual narratives.⁵⁷ Furthermore, the notion of self-presentation is complicated in the graphic novel because besides the narrator there is also what Smith and Watson call “the autobiographical avatar”, which refers to the drawn image of the author, and “an ‘I’ both imaged and voiced”.⁵⁸ Michael Chaney also argues that the visual style of graphic memoirs complicates claims of accuracy, self-reflexivity, and authority. Thus, complicating the very notion of an autobiography.⁵⁹

The graphic narrative also has the ability to juxtapose past and present and perspectives. Furthermore, the paradox of ‘telling’ the ‘unspeakable’ becomes even more apparent in graphic memoirs. Not only do authors have to ‘tell’ the unspeakable, but they also try to find ways to visualise their trauma. This further complicates the issues of how to represent the Holocaust. How does one visualise such a trauma, what images are included or excluded? In addition, Hillary L. Chute argues that graphic memoirs are an interesting medium for representing problematic collective histories because they are able to “explore the conflicted boundaries of what can be said and what can be shown at the intersection of collective histories and life stories”.⁶⁰ In other words, the graphic narrative has the ability to show the interplay between personal and cultural memory. Chute even goes so far to propose that trauma, which is perceived as unrepresentable, can be represented in graphic narratives. She argues that graphic narratives value presence and insist on the importance of their

⁵⁵ Pedri, Nancy. (2017) ‘Photography and the Layering of Perspective in Graphic Memoir’, in: *ImageText*, vol 9, no. 2, no page numbers. Department of English, University of Florida. Web, found via: http://imagetext.english.ufl.edu/archives/v9_2/pedri/ (accessed 1 October 2019).

⁵⁶ Stein, Daniel. (2015) ‘Comics and Graphic Novels’, in: Gabrielle Rippl (ed.) (2015) *Handbook of Intermediality: Literature, Image, Sound, Music. (vol 1)*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 420 – 438: 420.

⁵⁷ Smith & Watson. (2001): 169.

⁵⁸ Smith & Watson (2001): 169.

⁵⁹ Chaney (2011): 5.

⁶⁰ Chute, Hillary L. (2008) ‘Comics as Literature? Reading Graphic Narrative’, in: *PMLA*, vol. 123, no. 2, pp. 452-465: 452 – 453.

“visual-verbal form”.⁶¹ Thus, Chute offers that graphic memoirs about trauma ask to reconsider “tropes of unspeakability, invisibility, and inaudibility”.⁶²

Scholarly interest in the representation of trauma in graphic memoirs has increased in the past few decades. A large part of this research has focused on Art Spiegelman’s *Maus*, in which Spiegelman visualises his father’s survival in Auschwitz. Chute has researched the graphic representation in *Maus* and Hirsch has explored how photographs in *Maus* can be seen as an example of post-memory.⁶³ Another graphic memoir that has been analysed from the perspective of trauma and memory studies is Marjane Satrapi’s graphic memoir *The Complete Persepolis* (2007), which illustrates her childhood in revolutionary Iran.⁶⁴ Chute has stated that *Persepolis* comments on both the inability of representing trauma and extreme violence, as well as a child’s understanding of, or lack thereof, this trauma and violence.⁶⁵ Leigh Gilmore states that “the child witness” in *Persepolis* explores the relationship between public events and personal experience. Gilmore argues that Satrapi’s memoir navigates trauma by “drawing what can and cannot be seen”.⁶⁶

Research question

As established, this thesis focuses on the intergenerational memory and trauma of the Holocaust in graphic memoirs. Bernice Eisenstein’s *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors* (2006) and Martin Lemelman’s *Mendel’s Daughter* are both second-generation narratives, but offer different perspectives. *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors* narrates how Eisenstein’s parents barely talked about the Holocaust. As she feels burdened by their trauma, she tries to understand their past better whilst simultaneously reflecting upon how their trauma affected her. Lemelman’s memoir focuses largely on his mother’s survival during the war. However, as Aarons argues, it offers a second-generation perspective on these events as Lemelman visualises the narrative and often intervenes. Amy Kurzweil’s *Flying Couch* (2016) and

⁶¹ Chute, Hillary L. (2010) *Graphic Women: Life Narrative and Contemporary Comics. Gender and Culture*. New York: Columbia University Press: 3.

⁶² Chute (2010): 3.

⁶³ Chute, Hillary L. (2006) ‘The Shadow of a past Time’: History and Graphic Representation in ‘Maus’, in: *Twentieth Century Literature*, vol 52, no. 2, pp. 199 – 230. Hirsch (1992): 6 – 8.

⁶⁴ *Persepolis* was originally published as a French comic series, with four volumes that appeared between 2000 and 2003. The Complete *Persepolis*, the omnibus edition, was published in 2007.

⁶⁵ Chute, Hillary L. (2008) ‘The Texture of Retracing in Marjane Satrapi’s ‘Persepolis’’, in: *Women's Studies Quarterly*, vol. 36, no. 1.2, pp. 92-110.

⁶⁶ Gilmore, Leigh. (2011) ‘Witnessing Persepolis: Comics, Trauma and Childhood Testimony’, in: Michael Chaney (ed.) *Graphic Subjects: Critical Essays on Autobiography and Graphic Novels*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 157 – 163: 160.

Jérémie Dres's *We Won't See Auschwitz* (2012) are third-generation narratives. The latter narrates how Dres and his brother travel to Poland to retrace their family history, whereas the first tells how the trauma of the Holocaust affects both Kurzweil, her mother, and her grandmother.

There has been earlier research on these graphic memoirs, although there has been considerably less scholarly attention for *We Won't See Auschwitz* and *Flying Couch*.⁶⁷ Jean-Phillipe Marcoux has researched intervocality and post memorial representation in *Mendel's Daughter* and *I Was the Child of Holocaust Survivors*.⁶⁸ He found that these memoirs used intervocality to engage with and reproduce the narrative of first-generation witnesses with their own narrative. Furthermore, Nancy Pedri has analysed the incorporation of photographs in relation to self and experience in *Mendel's Daughter*.⁶⁹ Hannah Saltmarsh analysed *Flying Couch's* reflections on Jewishness and roots.⁷⁰ Dana Mihăilescu argues that, as a third-generation graphic memoir, the Holocaust is much less presented as a singled out dominating event in *Flying Couch* and much more as 'just' another aspect of Jewish identity.⁷¹ Historian Christine Gundermann incorporates *We Won't See Auschwitz* in her research about historical agency in graphic memoirs.⁷² Furthermore, Victoria Aarons briefly mentions *We Won't See Auschwitz* in her research about third-generation memoirs.⁷³

However, there is little research that focuses on the generational perspectives of these memoirs and the similarities and differences between their representation of intergenerational memory. The different generational perspectives, but also the different ways how the survivors experienced the Holocaust, might affect how second- and third-generation writers visualise and narrate intergenerational trauma. This thesis aims to contribute to a better

⁶⁷ Part of this lack of scholarly interest compared to *Mendel's Daughter* and *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors* can be explained by the fact that *We Won't See Auschwitz* and *Flying Couch* have been published almost ten years later.

⁶⁸ Marcoux, Jean-Philippe. (2016) 'To Night the Ensilenced Word': Intervocality and Postmemorial Representation in the Graphic Novel about the Holocaust', in: Derek Parker Royal (ed.) *Visualizing Jewish Narrative: Jewish Comics and Graphic Novels*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 199–218.

⁶⁹ Pedri, Nancy. (2017) 'Photography and the Layering of Perspective in Graphic Memoir', in: *ImageText*, vol 9, n2, no page numbers. Department of English, University of Florida. Web, found via: http://imagetext.english.ufl.edu/archives/v9_2/pedri/ (accessed 1 October 2019).

⁷⁰ Saltmarsh, Hannah. (2017) "'I Feel Jewish ...': Roots and Reflections in *Flying Couch: A Graphic Memoir*", in: *Tikkun* 32, no. 3, no page numbers.

⁷¹ Mihăilescu, Dana. (2018) 'Mapping transgenerational memory of the Shoah in third generation graphic narratives: on Amy Kurzweil's *Flying Couch* (2016)', in: *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*, vol. 17, no. 1: pp. 93-110.

⁷² Gunderman, Christine. (2015) 'Real imagination? Holocaust Comics in Europe', in: Schult, Tanja & Diana I. Popescu. (eds.) *Revisiting Holocaust Representation in the Post-Witness Era. The Holocaust and its Contexts*. Palgrave Macmillan, London, 231 – 250.

⁷³ Aarons & Berger (2017): 95.

understanding of intergenerational trauma and its representation in graphic memoirs. Therefore, this research posits the following question: how do graphic memoirs about the Holocaust, written by second- and third-generation of Holocaust survivors, represent the intergenerational memory of the Holocaust? This question will be answered by comparison and close-reading of the aforementioned graphic memoirs.

Although Mihăilescu makes an interesting argument that in the third-generation narrative the Holocaust is much less singled out as an event, this thesis argues that the inherited Holocaust narrative still very much affects third-generation survivors. However, because of the distance in time and narrative, second- and third-generation survivors are also affected by the collective narrative of remembering and more depended on archives and memorial.

This thesis is limited to only four graphic memoirs due to the scope of this research. The graphic memoirs in question were selected based upon their similarities – each memoir features a (grand)parent who has experienced the Holocaust – and because they were published shortly after each other, with only ten years between the oldest and the most recent novel. It is also important to note that this research will not focus on the historical accuracies of the graphic memoirs or historical narration of the Holocaust. Instead, it will focus on how the Holocaust and its aftermath are narrated by the authors. Of these graphic memoirs, only *We Won't See Auschwitz* has been translated from French to English. The other memoirs were written in English and are of American (*Flying Couch*, *Mendel's Daughter*) or Canadian (*I Was the Child of Holocaust Survivors*) decent. However, Europe plays an important part in these memoirs, both as a place as well as an identity. Each memoir features a (grand)parent who fled Europe during or after the war. Almost all of the characters are of Jewish-Polish descent and a large part of the memoirs focusses on their Jewish identity in Poland during the war and their relationship with that very same identity after the war. The characters struggle with their Jewish-Polish identity and their feeling of displacement in their 'new' homeland.

A note on terminology and methodology

This thesis touches upon several research fields, mainly life writing, trauma and memory studies. In order to research the interplay between personal and cultural memory, this thesis uses the concept of cultural memory as defined by Jan and Aleida Assman and further

explored by Ann Rigney.⁷⁴ This will enable me to also explore the interplay between personal memory and the collective narrative about the Holocaust. Furthermore, it uses Esther Jilovsky's definition of generations and Alan L. Berger's and Victoria Aarons' conceptualisation of second- and third-generation narratives.

The graphic novels analysed in this thesis are considered to be forms of life writing. They are autobiographical in the sense that the authors narrate their own lives. However, their own life stories are also intertwined with that of a (grand)parent, creating layers in perspective and memory. The term used in this thesis to describe autobiographical graphic novels is graphic memoir. However, as Michael Chaney points out, there is much controversy and debate about autobiographical graphic novels. A graphic novel, or graphic narrative as Chute calls it, is a "book-length work in the medium of comics".⁷⁵ Autobiographical graphic novels have been referred to as autobiographix, comix, graphic memoirs, and autography.⁷⁶ Nancy Pedri emphasizes that despite the large number of autobiographical graphic novels "no consensus has been reached as how to refer to this graphic narrative subgenre".⁷⁷ This thesis uses the term 'graphic memoir' to make a clear distinction between fictional graphic novels and autobiographical non-fiction graphic novels.⁷⁸ Furthermore, this term emphasises its connection to the genre of life writing and the memoir. For the latter, this thesis follows Couser's definition that a memoir "depict the lives of real, not imagined, individuals".⁷⁹

As methodology, this thesis will do a close-reading of the graphic memoirs. Chute emphasises that graphic narratives include both text and image, thus requiring a "rethinking of narrative".⁸⁰ This means that this thesis incorporates both visual and textual elements in its close-reading, as these elements are both vital to the memoir's narrative. Furthermore, the close-reading will explicitly include the intermedial nature of the graphic memoirs. Thus, it will also focus on the inclusion of other media in the graphic narrative. Chute's and Nancy Pedri's analysis of graphic memoirs function as examples for this method. They show that an important part of the graphic novels is its lay-out, the order of the panels, and the use of gaps.

⁷⁴ Rigney, Ann. (2005) 'Plenitude, scarcity and the circulation of cultural memory', in: *Journal of European Studies* vol 35, no.1, pp.11 – 28.

⁷⁵ Chute (2008): 453.

⁷⁶ Chaney, Michael (2011) *Graphic Subjects: Critical Essays on Autobiography and Graphic Novels*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press: 5 - 6.

⁷⁷ Pedri, Nancy. (2013) 'Graphic Memoir: Neither Fact nor Fiction', in: Daniel Stein & Jan-Noël Ton. (eds.) *Graphic Novels: Contributions to the Theory and History of Graphic Narrative*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 127 – 154.

⁷⁸ This term is used by scholars such as Nancy Pedri, Michael Chaney and Thomas Couser. Couser even states that the term graphic *memoir* is better because "they concern the lives of real people and historical events". (16)

⁷⁹ Couser, Thomas. (2012) *Memoir: an introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 15.

⁸⁰ Chute, Hillary L. (2008) 'Comics as Literature? Reading Graphic Narrative', in: *PMLA*, vol. 123, no. 2, 452-465: 462.

As Scott McCloud has argued, graphic novels consist of multiple images that the reader needs to connect to each to create a coherent narrative.⁸¹ These images might be divided by panels but this is not necessary. The lay-out of the graphic novel is important as it influences the interpretation of the story. The gap in graphic novels is the space between the panels, also referred to as ‘the gutter’.⁸² It is between this gutter that the reader reconstructs the images to create a narrative. Chute states that this fragmented narrative of graphic novels is useful for representing memory “the spatial form of comics is adept at engaging the subject of memory and reproducing the effects of memory – gaps, fragments, positions, layers, circularities”.⁸³ The close-reading will also focus on the different aspects of intergenerational trauma, namely personal memory and trauma and collective memory. These subjects were chosen because, as Aarons and Berger argue, intergenerational trauma links “personal and collective identities within moments of traumatic history”.⁸⁴

Research structure

In order to examine and discuss the representation of transgenerational trauma and memory in graphic novels, this thesis will analyse the memoirs in three parts, followed by an extensive conclusion. The first chapter of this thesis explores how personal trauma is visualised in the graphic memoirs. It will pay specific attention to the use of language, fragmentation (in space, temporality and narration), absent memory, and bearing witness through testimonies. The chapter will also briefly touch upon how on other materials in the graphic memoirs, such as photographs and objects, are employed to represent trauma and loss.

The second chapter concentrates on the intermedial nature of the graphic memoirs and how this intermediality is employed to represent trauma. It focuses specifically on photography as this is a medium that is used frequently by almost all of the graphic memoirs. The chapter, then, raises the question how the materiality of photography affects the story, arguing that is used to both claim authenticity as well as to complicate the layered perspective of intergenerational trauma.

⁸¹ McCloud, Scott. (1992) *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*. New York: HarperCollins: 63.

⁸² McCloud (1992): 63 – 67.

⁸³ Chute, Hillary (2011) ‘Materializing Memory: Lynda Barry’s *One Hundred Demons*’, in: Michael Chaney (ed.) *Graphic Subjects*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press: 282 – 309, 304.

⁸⁴ Aarons & Berger (2017): 46.

The last chapter asks how the memoirs represent cultural memory in relation to intergenerational memory and trauma. By doing so, this research tries to examine how these forms of memory interact. Specifically, the third chapter focuses on how memory sites, such as cemeteries, show that the act of remembering is an act of selection. This, then, illustrates that second- and third-generation narratives might experience and remember the Holocaust differently than the collective group does. Finally, the most important findings will be discussed in the conclusion, which will also offer suggestions for further research.

Chapter one

Lost in memory: Language, fragmentation, and trauma

“I fear that my language has become inadequate, that
you need to speak a different language today.”⁸⁵

The introduction provided an overview of theories on trauma, which is defined as a psychological wound. Trauma is an experience that is so overwhelming that its victim is unable to process it and that it disrupts memory itself. As established, the trauma of the Holocaust extends over multiple generations. Victoria Aarons and Alan L. Berger view memory as “the structural and foundational link among those who write about the Holocaust from direct experience as well as from the haunting legacy”.⁸⁶ But as trauma and historical distance complicate memory, this also affects “the nature of telling” by the subsequent generations of the Holocaust.⁸⁷ This raises the question of how one can write about trauma. In the case of graphic memoirs, it also raises the question of how trauma can be represented in a graphic narrative.

This chapter will focus on the representation of personal trauma in *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors*, *Mendel’s Daughter*, *Flying Couch*, and *We Won’t See Auschwitz*. It posits the following sub-question: How do the graphic memoirs represent personal trauma in their narrative? As these memoirs narrate intergenerational traumas, this chapter will focus on both the trauma of the direct witness, if this is included in the memoir, and that of the second- and third-generation. As will become apparent, both levels of witnessing and trauma play an important role in the narratives of these graphic novels. Second- and third-generation narratives of trauma cannot be told without incorporating the narrative of direct witness, something that will also be discussed in chapter three. The first section will explore the use of fragmentation, in narrative, lay-out, and perspective. The second section argues that the graphic memoirs are unable to visualise the unseen and represent the unrepresentable, despite

⁸⁵ Levi, Primo in ‘The Voice of Memory: interviews, 1961 – 1987’, Belpoliti, Marco and Robert Gordon. (eds.) (2001) New York: The New Press. As quoted in Eisenstein, Bernice. (2006) *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors*. Basingstoke: PacMacmillan: 7.

⁸⁶ Aarons & Berger (2017): 41.

⁸⁷ Aarons & Berger (2017): 41.

Chute's argument that graphic narratives are able to do so. Finally, the last section explores the concept of absent memory and trauma in second-generation narratives.

1.1. Fragmented memory: fragmentation, temporal and spatial dislocations

As the response to a traumatic event is delayed, it is often relived later on in “uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena”.⁸⁸ Traumatic memory is fragmented in its nature. Dori Laub interprets it as “an event that has no beginning, no ending, no before, no during and no after”.⁸⁹ As established in the introduction, scholars have argued that the fragmentation of traumatic memory corresponds with the fragmented graphic narrative as graphic narratives have the ability to merge time and space.⁹⁰ This fragmentation in time, space, and narrative also seems to be an important characteristic of the memoirs discussed in this thesis. This section will demonstrate how the graphic memoirs mimic traumatic memory through fragmentation.

In *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors*, Bernice Eisenstein reflects extensively on the nature of memory. Eisenstein's parents, who survived Auschwitz, barely talk about their traumatic experience. This causes Eisenstein to fanatically search for answers herself. She describes herself as addicted to the Holocaust and, as a result, “lost in memory”.⁹¹ Memories of her childhood are redrawn and re-examined in an episodic structure, visualising memories as and when Eisenstein remembers them. As a result, the memoir constantly switches between past and narrated present. Eisenstein justifies her approach to memory by stating that memory “[...] is not a place that has been mapped, fixed by coordinates of longitude and latitude, whereby I can retrace a step and come to the same place again”.⁹² Similarly, she later states that “there is no center to be found in memory”.⁹³ In other words, her

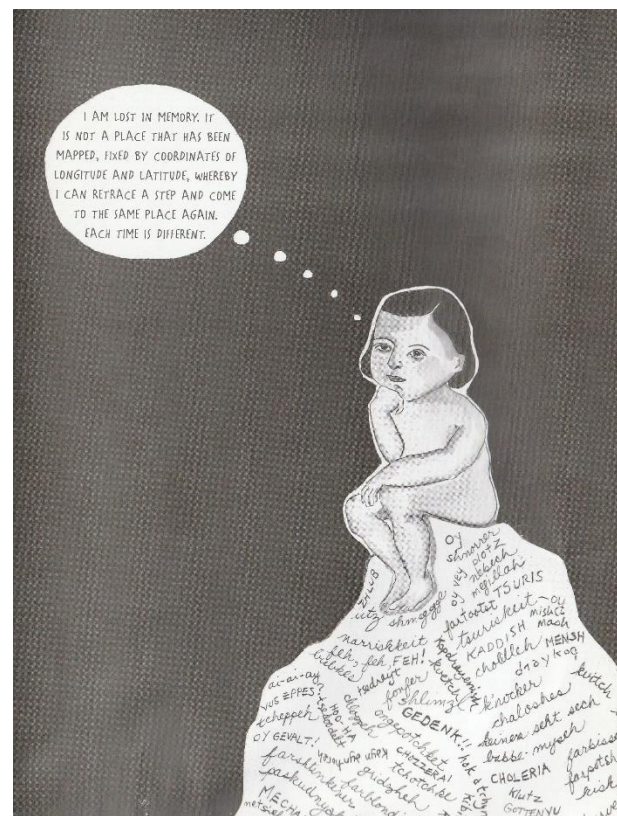


Figure 1.1. (*I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors*, 10)

⁸⁸ Caruth (1996): 11.

⁸⁹ Felman & Laub (1992): 69.

⁹⁰ Chute (2008): 453.

⁹¹ Eisenstein (2006): 19.

⁹² Eisenstein (2006): 19.

memories are fragmented and differ each time she (re)visits them. The memoir mimics this through its non-linear narrative and thematically structured chapters.

I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors merges time and space even further through its depiction of Eisenstein herself. In the memoir, an illustrated child-figure represents Eisenstein as she guides the reader through her memories. It is exactly this child-figure that enables Eisenstein to figuratively, almost literally, travel back in time to retrieve her memories. The use of this child-figure layers perspective in temporality and narration. Chute argues that in graphic novels the use of a child narrator and adult narrator “is a way to visually present a tension between the narrating ‘I’ who draws the stories and the ‘I’ who is the child subject to them”.⁹⁴ *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors* narrates how Eisenstein, as a child, witnessed her parents’ trauma, but she analyses this witnessing in retrospective as an adult. In the memoir, the child figure voices both the adult and child perspective, further layering and complicating temporalities and perspectives.

Temporalities and perspectives are also complicated in Martin Lemelman’s memoir *Mendel’s Daughter* (2006), which narrates the story of how Lemelman’s mother, Gusta, survived the war. The novel opens with Lemelman describing to the reader that his mother has passed away in 1996 and that years earlier, in 1989, he has recorded a videotape of her talking about surviving the war. Lemelman has found the videotape again, stating that he has not looked at it for years.⁹⁵ As he starts playing the videotape, the perspective of the story switches to his mother Gusta. Thus, the memoir is a visualisation of Gusta’s video testimony. This tape, however, is recorded and directed by Lemelman, who also visualises the memoir. This results in a complicated layering of perspective and narrative. The story is experienced and told by Gusta, but what the reader sees is Lemelman’s visualisation, his perspective and interpretation of his mother’s story. It is his “hand” that creates the story and it is hand that

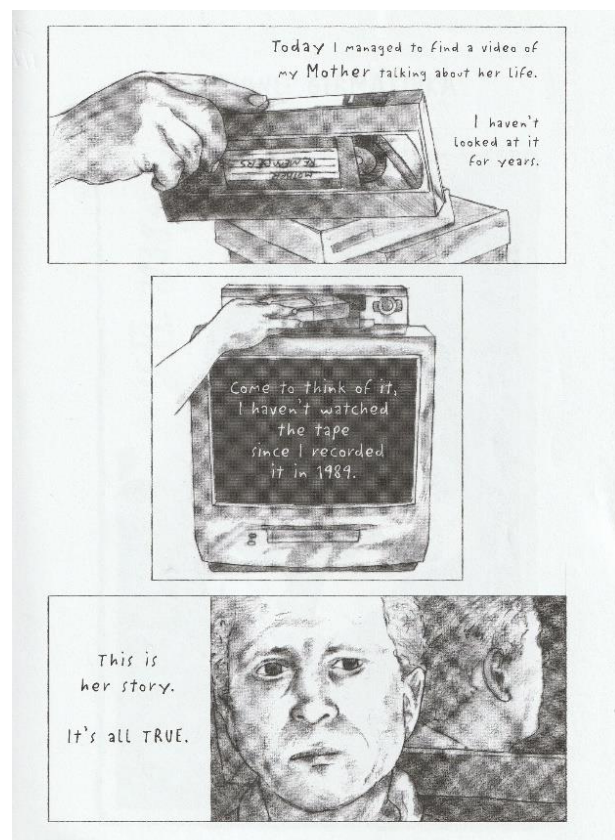


Figure 1.1. (*Mendel’s Daughter*, 5)

⁹³ Eisenstein (2006): 83.

⁹⁴ Chute (2010): 5.

⁹⁵ Lemelman (2006): 5.

inserts the videotape that initiates it. Lemelman's hand is an image that recurs throughout the story, constantly emphasising his involvement. This doubling of perspectives and voices raises the question of whose story it is. Are Lemelman and his mother both telling their stories? Victoria Aarons states that Lemelman furthermore complicates this through the layout of his novel. Instead of using text bubbles, Lemelman places his mother's text next to the images "[...] thereby establishing two voices, two perspectives, a structural choreography of narrating voices".⁹⁶ This is also a layering of temporality, as Gusta's perspective as a direct witness and survivor merges with that of Lemelman as a second-generation survivor.

Similar to *Mendel's Daughter*, Amy Kurzweil's *Flying Couch* also includes a survivor's testimony. The memoir illustrates Kurzweil's life parallel to her grandmother's testimony about the Holocaust. Scenes in which Kurzweil reflects on her Jewish identity are interspersed with Bubbe's struggle with hiding her Jewish identity during the war. This results in a layered perspective in which Kurzweil reflects on the inheritance of trauma, whilst simultaneously including her grandmother's reflection on the traumatic experience of the Holocaust. Through the inclusion of survivors' testimonies, both *Mendel's Daughter* and *Flying Couch* illustrate the second- and third-generation's need to preserve their (grand)parents' memory. However, they are not the only memoirs to include survivors' testimonies, *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors* also includes the testimony of Eisenstein's mother. *We Won't See Auschwitz* even includes testimonies by family members of other survivors, such as people Dres meets in Poland. As Aarons and Berger argue, the second- and third-generation are "invested in negotiating and preserving the memory of the Shoah, [they are] all conservators of a shared intergenerational inheritance".⁹⁷ This inclusion of survivors' testimonies also shows how their trauma intertwined with that of subsequent generations. Second- and third-generation narratives seem to be incapable of letting go of the testimonies of their (grand)parents. This results in graphic memoirs that are hybrid mixtures of temporalities and perspectives. As *Mendel's Daughter* already illustrated, the inclusion of multiple perspectives raises the question of whose story it really is. Aarons also argues that through this layering "the autobiographical 'I' of these narratives implicitly asks the following: 'Where does one story end and the other begin?'".⁹⁸ In other words, the memoirs

⁹⁶ Aarons, Victoria. (2019) *Holocaust Graphic Narratives: Generation, Trauma and Memory*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press: 56.

⁹⁷ Aarons & Berger (2017): 65.

⁹⁸ Aarons (2019): 127.

raise the question of where the trauma of the survivor ends and the trauma of subsequent generations starts.

1.2. Trauma, unspeakability and unrepresentability

As the previous section argued, the fragmented narrative illustrates the nature of trauma and memory. Another characteristic of trauma, often found in its representation in literature, is that of unspeakability. As discussed in the introduction, the traumatic event is so overwhelming that its victim is unable to process it or put it into language. Cathy Caruth states that “to be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or event”.⁹⁹ As survivors are ‘possessed’ by the Holocaust, they are often unable to find the right words to describe their experience. Although subsequent generations of the Holocaust have not witnessed to the overwhelming experience of the Holocaust itself, they are burdened with its trauma. Gary Weissman suggests that subsequent generations are “haunted not by the traumatic impact of the Holocaust, but by its absence”.¹⁰⁰ As such, second- and third-generation narratives often deal with the issue of representing the trauma of their (grand)parents and that of their own. In relation to the graphic narrative, Hillary Chute suggests a rethinking of the tropes of unspeakability and invisibility. The graphic novel, Chute argues, values presence and “[...] pushes on conceptions of the unrepresentable that have become commonplace in the wake of deconstruction, especially in the contemporary discourse about trauma”.¹⁰¹ In other words, graphic novels might have the ability to make the unspeakable seen. However, in contrast to Chute’s suggestion, this section argues that the graphic narrative does not offer a solution to the notion of unrepresentability. Although the memoirs, as this section will demonstrate, do attempt to make the unseen visible and represent the unrepresentable, this proves to be a difficult task.

In the graphic memoirs, the issue of language is often addressed directly as characters admit to being unable to talk about the Holocaust or to find the “right” words to express their feelings or experience. In *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors*, Eisenstein struggles with writing about her experience as a child of Holocaust survivors, but especially with writing about the Holocaust itself. She states that it is “difficult enough to discover the right words for what is to be remembered, but even harder when each word longs to shelter and sustain the

⁹⁹ Caruth, Cathy. (1995) *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*. Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press: 5.

¹⁰⁰ Weissman, Gary. (2004) *Fantasies of Witnessing: Postwar Efforts to Experience the Holocaust*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press: 22.

¹⁰¹ Chute (2010): 2.

memory of a generation aged and now dying”.¹⁰² Eisenstein feels as if she is burdened with the difficult task of sustaining memory, whilst simultaneously not being able to find words for this memory. This corresponds with Ellen Fine’s description that post-holocaust generations “feel obliged to accept the burden of *collective memory* that have been passed unto to them and to assume the task of sustaining it”.¹⁰³ Indeed, Eisenstein tries to sustain her parents’ memory of the Holocaust, but she also attempts to understand their and her own trauma.

I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors tries to speak about trauma through the narratives of others and by visualising it. On the title page of *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors* five figures are displayed, all representing famous Jewish personages, namely Primo Levi, Charlotte Salomon, Bruno Schulz, Hannah Arendt, and Elie Wiesel. Each of them provides a quote, a motivation for Eisenstein, on how she should approach the subject of the Holocaust. For example, Levi urges to find a new language because his old language has become inadequate. Charlotte Salomon states that “[y]ou must first go into yourself – into your childhood – to be able to get out of yourself”.¹⁰⁴ This is a quote that the memoirs put into to practice, by representing Eisenstein as a child that travels through memory. As Aarons notes, these voices provide Eisenstein with “a context, a ‘language’”.¹⁰⁵ Indeed, it is from this context provided by these figures that the memoir starts. Through the use of images and drawings, the memoir also seems to put Levi’s advice for a ‘new language’ into practice. Although Eisenstein focusses on finding a new language to describe her own experiences, her memoir opens and closes with narratives of others. As described, the first drawing is that of multiple Holocaust writers and their quotations. The novel closes in a similar way, with an image of Eisenstein and her whole family sitting around a table. On the table there is a quote by Paul Celan “o you dig and I dig, and I dig towards you, and on our finger the ring awakes”.¹⁰⁶ It shows that, although Eisenstein searches for a new language, she can never completely let go of the language of others.

Whereas in *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors* Eisenstein feels burdened with the task of sustaining memory and finding the right words for this, *Flying Couch* shows Kurzweil

¹⁰² Eisenstein (2006): 55 – 56.

¹⁰³ Fine, Ellen S. (1997) ‘Transmission of Memory: The Post- Holocaust Generation’, in: Dominick A. Iorio, Richard L. Libowitz, & Marcia S. Littell. (eds.) *The Holocaust: Lessons for the Third Generation*. Lanham, Md: University Press of America; 126.

¹⁰⁴ Felstiner Lowenthal, Mary. (1994) *To Paint Her Life: Charlotte Salomon in the Nazi Era*. New York: HarperCollins. As quoted in Eisenstein (2006): 7.

¹⁰⁵ Aarons (2019): 124.

¹⁰⁶ Celan, Paul. ‘There was earth inside them’, from: *Poems of Paul Celan*, translation by Michael Hamburger (1972). As quoted in Eisenstein (2006): 189.

willingly tasking herself with sustaining her grandmother’s memory. This choice corresponds with Aarons and Berger’s statement that for the third-generation “bearing witness is a conscious, deliberately enacted choice”.¹⁰⁷ When explaining her choice, Kurzweil states that she often thinks of Bubbe, her grandmother, but that “actually talking to her is a different story. Our conversations are always in fragments, like my knowledge of her life”.¹⁰⁸ Admitting to the limited knowledge of her grandmother’s life, Kurzweil actively pursues Bubbe’s memories by reading her testimony, which she received via her mother at the beginning of the memoir. Whilst reading her grandmother’s testimony, Kurzweil decides to illustrate it. She argues that her writing and visualising Bubbe’s life is necessary as she will “[...] polish and publish her history, immortalize it, fashion into those stories to be imprinted upon our homes and on our gates”.¹⁰⁹ Although Bubbe’s testimony is already recorded and stored in an archive, Kurzweil still feels the need to “immortalize” it. The corresponding image shows a laptop screen with a summary of Kurzweil’s novel on it, describing it as a “meta-narrative, third-generation inheritance, transcription of oral history, making the unseen visible, framing stories”.¹¹⁰ This decision to make the “unseen visible” is important because, apparently, Kurzweil feels that Bubbe’s written testimony is unable to do that. Kurzweil, then, adds another layer to Bubbe’s testimony by drawing it and making the unseen literally visible. This turns out to be not an easy task and, despite Bubbe’s testimony, Kurzweil is dependent on her imagination. The testimony only gives an overview of the events but does not enable her to really see what happened. Thus, Kurzweil imagines what her grandmother looked like at the time and draws a young version of her. Nevertheless, making the unseen visible is limited even in graphic narratives.

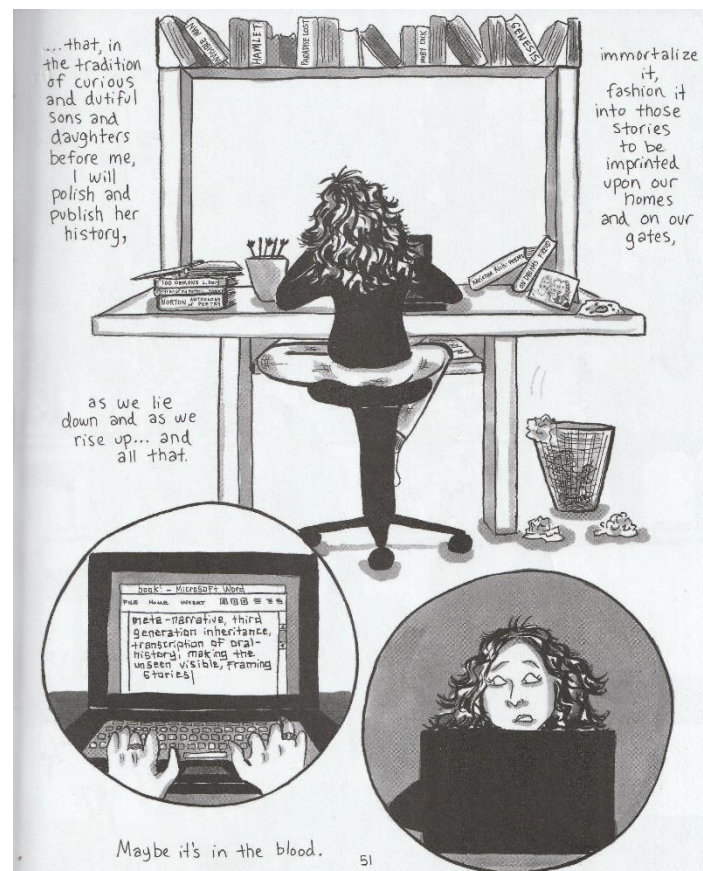


Figure 1.3. (*Flying Couch*, 51)

¹⁰⁷ Aarons & Berger (2017): 15.

¹⁰⁸ Kurzweil, Amy. (2016) *Flying Couch*. New York: Catapult/Black Balloon: 31 – 32.

¹⁰⁹ Kurzweil (2016): 51.

¹¹⁰ Kurzweil (2016): 51.

This is illustrated in *Flying Couch* by drawing faces, or rather the lack thereof. In multiple drawings of Bubbe's testimony, the faces of characters lack or are not shown. This can be explained by two reasons. Firstly, the faces that often lack are those of Bubbe's family members, people unknown to Kurzweil. She is able to imagine her grandmother's appearance, but she is not familiar with her other family members since they never survived the war. Here, Kurzweil's perspective as a third-generation writer is limited. Secondly, the faces often lack in traumatic experiences and it is in those instances that Bubbe describes the horrifying images that haunt her. For example, in the testimony, Bubbe shares how during the war her younger sister died of starvation. When Bubbe describes how her sister looked before her death, she admits to being haunted by the eyes of her sister "[h]er lips blue. And the eyes. Black eyes and blue lips. [...] The eyes is the thing".¹¹¹ Earlier in the memoir, Bubbe compared Kurzweil's eyes to that of her sister, also describing the black eyes that she cannot forget. As Bubbe describes her sister's death, the corresponding image shows her sitting next to her sister as she covers her sister's eyes. The image of eyes is so traumatic, that even Kurzweil seems to be unable to draw them. A similar example is when Bubbe gets home and informs her mother of her sister's death. The drawing shows Bubbe hugging her crying mother. The image is framed as if the reader is looking through a window. This layout makes the reader feel almost voyeuristic, emphasising that he is witnessing a very private moment. In the corresponding text, Bubbe comments "[m]y mother's face. Such a thing I have to recollect. A lot of things you block out".¹¹² Thus, Bubbe is unable to retrieve her mother's face, which is indeed covered. Kurzweil, it seems, is not able to fully retrieve or imagine her grandmother's memory of the Holocaust.

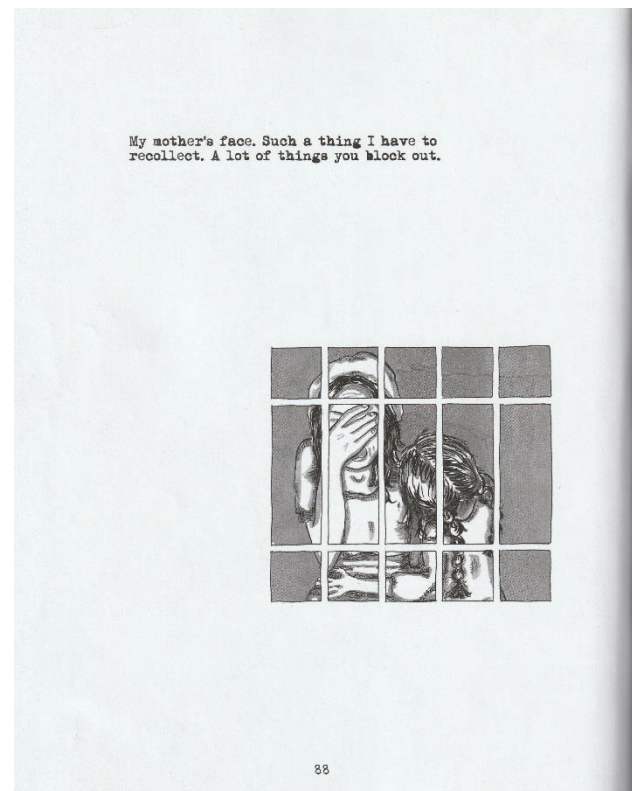


Figure 1.4. (*Flying Couch*, 81)

This facelessness and the covering of eyes also is a theme in *Mendel's Daughter*. In this memoir, photographs of Gusta's family are included in the narrative. Sometimes these photographs are shown parallel to drawings of these very same family members. As chapter

¹¹¹ Kurzweil (2016): 87.

¹¹² Kurzweil (2016): 87.

two will discuss, these photographs remind the reader that these characters were real people. Despite that these photographs already make the reader aware of what Gusta's family looked like, the memoir sometimes covers or erases the faces of characters. A drawing of Gusta's complete family is repeated in the memoir. The first time it is shown at the beginning of the memoir when Gusta introduces her family. The drawing shows her family having breakfast together at the kitchen table, a normal morning ritual for them according to Gusta. The second time, the drawing is shown towards the end of the narrative. However, this time part of the drawing is erased, visualising which family members did not survive the war.

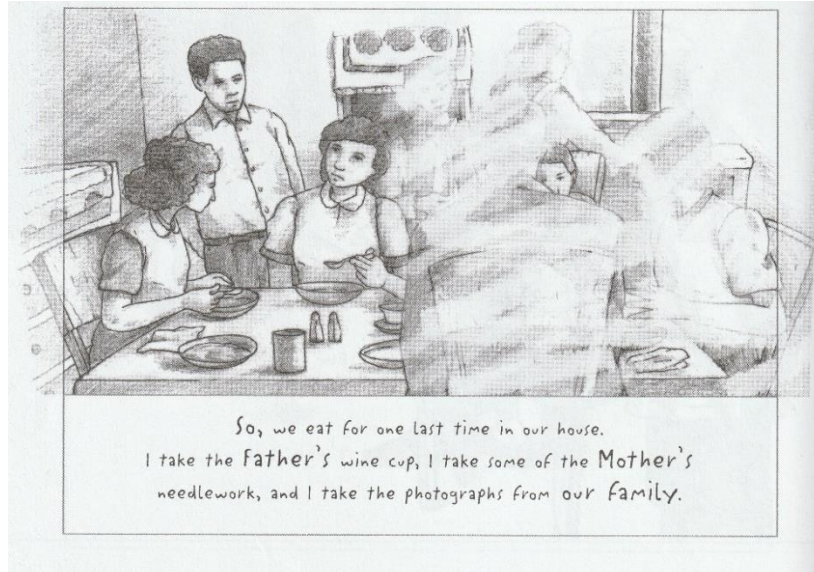


Figure 1.5. (*Mendel's Daughter*, 186)

Through this erasing of family members, the memoir evokes Gusta's loss. As the erasing marks are still visible, Aarons argues that the memoir "skilfully represents both presence and absence".¹¹³ Like *Flying Couch*, eyes also play an important role in this graphic memoir. A notable example of this is the memoir's close-up of Gusta's eyes with the corresponding text "[s]ometimes we believe we are going to survive and sometimes we are believing we are going to die".¹¹⁴ Here, the memoir asks the reader to literally see through Gusta's eyes, from her perspective. Aarons rightly points out, however, that the reader can never fully see from her perspective "[w]e are from the outside looking in; we cannot see from her eyes – that is, from the inside of her experience".¹¹⁵ Through this visualisation, the memoir illustrates that it can attempt to make trauma visible but it will never fully succeed. Neither reader or Lemelman, as a second-generation survivor visualising the narrative, can fully understand Gusta's experience and thus her trauma.

In other instances, throughout the narrative, characters are visualised blocking their eyes similar to in *Flying Couch*. An example can be found towards the end of the memoir where drawings of Gusta's deceased family members are included. Here the perspective switches to these characters, as each of them confirms Gusta's story stating that "this

¹¹³ Aarons (2019): 77.

¹¹⁴ Lemelman (2006): 97.

¹¹⁵ Aarons (2019): 69.

happened to me”.¹¹⁶ The characters, such as Gusta’s mother, then share how they were murdered. In the drawing, their eyes are covered with hands. It is unclear whose hands are shown, as the posture suggests that these? are not their own hands. Moreover, their confirmation of the story is a layering of temporality since the characters cannot know of their own death. The covering of the eyes might refer to the Jewish custom of covering the eyes of the deceased. Aarons argues that eyes “represent visual memory” and are “a metonymy for bearing witness”.¹¹⁷ Following this argumentation, then, here the characters seem to refuse to bear witness. Furthermore, they refuse to witness an event that has already happened. Here, again, the memoir raises the question whose story it is, who is refusing to bear witness. Is it Gusta, who refuses to bear witness to the death of her family, or is it Lemelman, who cannot fully understand his family’s loss and trauma? In relation to trauma and its unspeakability, the memoir does attempt to let the dead speak for themselves. Their absent memories and lost histories receive a voice through the memoir. Although *Mendel’s Daughter* might not be able to visualise the unseen, it can try to preserve the testimonies of those that were lost.



Figure 1.6. (*Mendel's Daughter*, 217)

The visibility of trauma also plays a role in *We Won't See Auschwitz*. In this memoir, the country Poland represents trauma for Dres's family. As Dres describes, Poland is a taboo subject within his family because it is the place where his grandparents were forced to leave and where many of his extending family members were murdered. Dres and his brother decide that they want to move beyond this taboo and discover their family roots in Poland. They visit three places with an important meaning for their Jewish identity and family history: Warsaw (where their grandmother grew up), Żelechów (where their grandfather grew up), and Krakow (where there is an important festival to celebrate Jewish identity). However, it becomes clear that for Dres and his brother it is not Poland that represents their trauma, but a more specific place: Auschwitz. As the title already suggests, Dres and his brother do not go to Auschwitz. In fact, the subject is such as taboo that the word "Auschwitz" is only

¹¹⁶ Lemelman (2006): 217.

¹¹⁷ Aarons (2019): 69.

mentioned four times in the novel. Not only are Dres and his brother unable to visit it, but they are also unable to name it. They briefly touch upon the subject when they are in Krakow and Dres asks his brother, out of curiosity, if he wants to go and visit Auschwitz. His brother refuses and comments that he will not go “not after all we’ve seen”.¹¹⁸

Despite that Dres and his brother refuse to name and see Auschwitz it is still a location with a history that is important to them. This importance of Auschwitz is demonstrated by the title of the memoir, in which Auschwitz is very much present. It shows that paradoxical relationship Dres and his brother have with Auschwitz. Although they want to ignore its existence and refuse to go there, they cannot erase Auschwitz from their family history and from Jewish history. This paradox is further enhanced by not naming Auschwitz. As Lola Sheraf notes, the novel retraces the past of a family and a culture that was affected by the Holocaust “while at the same time actively trying not to mention Auschwitz”.¹¹⁹ While the other graphic memoirs search for a new language to express trauma, *We Won’t See Auschwitz* seems to look for a new way to talk about Jewish culture and identity, in a way that moves beyond the trauma of the Holocaust and the inability to speak about it. For Dres and his brother, the unspeakability of the Holocaust lies not only in the trauma of the war but also the inability to talk about the pre-war Jewish culture. Thus, the memoir focuses on finding a way to speak about Jewish culture without immediately addressing Auschwitz. However, this proves to be more difficult than Dres initially hoped. As chapter three will demonstrate, all the Jewish memory sites that Dres visits illustrate that the act of remembering is also an act of selection.

Thus, despite the visual-verbal language that the graphic narrative offers, the graphic memoirs still struggle with representing trauma. *Mendel’s Daughter* and *Flying Couch* illustrate that the visual narrative cannot, or perhaps should not, visualise traumatic memory. Furthermore, language and unspeakability play a different role in *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors* and *We Won’t See Auschwitz*. Whereas *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors* cannot talk about the Holocaust without referencing to other testimonies, *We Won’t See Auschwitz* refuses to talk about the Holocaust at all.

¹¹⁸ Dres (2012): 170.

¹¹⁹ Sherraf, Lola. (2019) ‘Holocaust Impiety in 21st Century Graphic Novels; Younger Generations ‘No Longer Obligated to Perpetuate Sorrow’’, in: *Genealogy*, vol. 3, no. 4: 9.

1.3. Absent presence: shadows, ghosts and haunting memory

As described by Aarons earlier in this chapter, traumatic memory is unstable and fragmenting, which complicates the transmission of memory. Although subsequent generations carry the burden of the Holocaust, it is also a memory they cannot fully access. Second- and third-generation survivors are excluded from experiencing the Holocaust and from knowledge about the event, but they are burdened with its trauma. This creates “a lack of memory” that Ellen Fine interprets as “absent memory”.¹²⁰ Fine describes this form of memory as “filled with blanks, silence, a sense of void”.¹²¹ According to Aarons and Berger, this lack of memory is a central theme in second-generation narratives.¹²² Narrators depend on the memories of others and their own imagination to fill the gaps in their memory. This section will explore the use of shadows in *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors*.

A central theme in *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors* is that Eisenstein has inherited the burden of her parents’ trauma. Even though the Holocaust is not discussed by her parents, it is always present in Eisenstein’s life. Eisenstein notes that her parents are not aware of how their trauma affects Eisenstein. For them, the migration to Canada signified a new start. Bernice states that: “[m]y parents and their friends, once they came to a new land, never knew that their past drew an unseen shadow over the lives they brought into the world. *Only the shadow knows and it is trying to speak*”.¹²³ This conceptualisation of the Holocaust trauma as a shadow is a recurring subject in the memoir, both visually and textually. In the opening of *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors*, Eisenstein addresses her father’s inability to talk about the Holocaust. She attempts to understand her parents’, in particular how it formed her father, and describes her obsession as a Holocaust addiction.

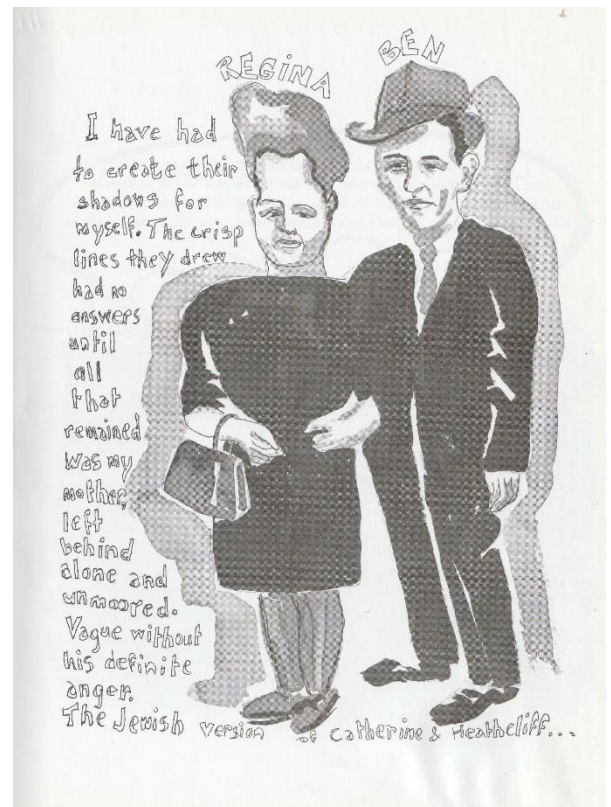


Figure 1.7. (*I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors*, 17)

¹²⁰ Fine (1997): 126.

¹²¹ Fine (1997): 126.

¹²² Aarons & Berger (2017): 45 – 46.

¹²³ Eisenstein (2006): 72. Emphasis mine.

Ultimately, Eisenstein states that “I have had to create their [her parents] shadows for myself”.¹²⁴ The accompanying image shows her parents as blurred, shadowy figures. These shadow figures seem to visualise both the trauma of Eisenstein’s parents, that casts a shadow over her life and her limited knowledge of this trauma. Through this the unseen shadow, that Eisenstein’s parents brought into the world, is made visible.

Other shadow and ghostly figures also appear in the memoir, for example when the memoir visualises Auschwitz prisoners behind a barbed wire. These are drawn as blurred figures, almost disappearing behind the wire. In the accompanying text they address Eisenstein and her search into her parents’ past, asking her “[o]y, will we never get any rest? Trust, shmust! *We’re ghosts*. Dead, fertig, toyt, finished”.¹²⁵ *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors* visualises what Alan Berger describes as a “presence of an absence”.¹²⁶ According to Berger, this is a particular characteristic of the trauma that second-generation survivors deal with. They are confronted with a past and a trauma that they did not experience, whilst they are simultaneously excluded from this past because their parents are unable to talk about it. This results in an absence in their lives, that of their past, that is also very much present, through its trauma. Another second-generation writer and scholar, Nadine Fresco, describes it as “[...] a hand amputated that they never had. It is a phantom pain, in which amnesia takes the place of memory”.¹²⁷ It is an “indirect pain” that affects the second-generation. Similar to trauma’s unspeakability, the feeling of a present absence cannot be put into words either. It is intangible and invisible, yet always there. The conceptualisation of this feeling into a shadow, as the memoir does, is therefore interesting.

Similar to the feeling of present absence, a shadow is something that cannot be grasped but is always present.

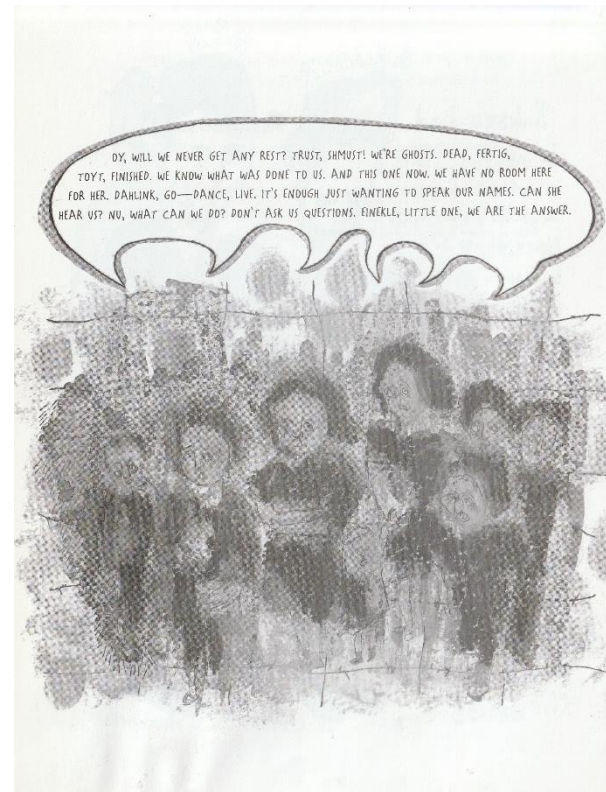


Figure 1.8. (*I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors*, 18)

¹²⁴ Eisenstein (2006): 17.

¹²⁵ Eisenstein (2006): 18.

¹²⁶ Berger, Alan. (1997) *Children of Job: American Second-Generation Witnesses to the Holocaust*. Albany: State University of New York Press: 2. Emphasis mine.

¹²⁷ Fresco, Nadine. (1984) ‘Remembering the Unknown’, in: *International Review of Psycho-Analysis*, vol. 11, no.4: 419. As quoted in Berger, Alan. (1997) *Children of Job: American Second-Generation Witnesses to the Holocaust*. Albany: State University of New York Press: 2.

Similarly, the ghostly figures haunt Eisenstein, just like the feeling of absence haunts her.

Scholar Miriam Harris argues that the memoir tries to transform the ghostly into “a form that is corporeal and thus emotionally comprehensible”.¹²⁸ In other words, by making the unseen shadow visible it attempts to make Eisenstein’s trauma comprehensible. Harris notes that the memoir also opens and closes with drawings of ghostly figures. She refers to the Jewish personages at the beginning and the conclusion of the novel, such as Elie Wiesel and Primo Levi. Each of these drawings contains people who have passed away, ghosts who are somehow still present in the images of *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors*. Harris states that these ghosts are “sharing in matter-of-fact fashion the same space as the living”.¹²⁹ This, according to Harris, illustrates that Eisenstein ultimately does not let herself be haunted by the ghosts of the past. Instead, she is able to let past, represented by the ghosts, and present live together. Although Harris is right, it also shows that Eisenstein is never able to fully let go of the past. The ghosts do not pass on or receive closure, they remain. Similarly, gaps and absence remain in Eisenstein’s understanding of her parents’ trauma. As she states that she “will never be able to know the truth” and thus the shadows might continue to haunt her.¹³⁰

Similarly, to the ghosts and shadows that are visualised in *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors*, the graphic memoirs *Mendel’s Daughter* and *We Won’t See Auschwitz* frequently incorporate photographs in their narrative. These photographs are of deceased family members and Holocaust survivors, such as Dres’s grandmother and Gusta’s sisters. These photographs serve as a reminder of those who were murdered during the war and those that survived but are still traumatised. In her famous collection of essays *On Photography* (1977), Susan Sontag argues that “[p]hotographs state the innocence, the vulnerability of lives heading toward their own destruction and this link between photography and death haunts all photos of people”.¹³¹ Marianne Hirsch also points out that photographs carry a presence of both life and death. She describes photographs as a “relic” and a “harbinger of death”.¹³² Because photographs show that what no longer is, yet also continues to be, Hirsch considers them to be the ultimate example memory as well as post-memory, the transferral of memory

¹²⁸ Harris, Miriam. (2010) ‘Releasing the Grip of the Ghostly: Bernice Eisenstein’s *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors*’, in: Samantha Baskind and Ranen Omer-Sherman (eds.) (2010) *The Jewish Graphic Novel: Critical Approaches*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press: 129 – 143: 129.

¹²⁹ Harris (2010): 134.

¹³⁰ Eisenstein (2006): 178.

¹³¹ Sontag, Susan. (1990) *On Photography*. New York: Doubleday Anchor: 70.

¹³² Hirsch (1992) : 6.

over generations.¹³³ Photographs of Holocaust survivors, Hirsch argues, illustrate both the memory of the survivor and that of the child of the survivor.¹³⁴ Indeed in *Mendel's Daughter*, photographs of Gusta and her family are part of Gusta's family. They represent that what no longer is, Gusta's life in Poland and her family, but the trauma still remains and has transferred over generations. By incorporating the photographs into the narrative, the memoirs connect both past and present, life and death. Hirsch emphasises that memory is not absent but rather very much present.¹³⁵ However, Ulrich Baer also notes that photographs in the context of a traumatic past, such as the Holocaust, also reveal "the striking gap between what we can see and what we can know".¹³⁶ In a sense, the photographs also expose a certain absence of knowledge and a gap of memory. In order to interpret the photograph, the second- and third-generation narrators depend on the knowledge of Holocaust survivors. In *Mendel's Daughter*, as chapter two will explore further, the photographs are accompanied by Gusta's commentary. Without her knowledge and commentary, Lemelman is not able to explain what the photograph visualises. Thus, the photographs do not connect past and present, but they also expose the gap of knowledge.

Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the visualisation of personal trauma and memory in the graphic memoirs, focusing on both the perspective of the survivor as well as that of the second- and third-generation. As the analysis has demonstrated, the graphic memoirs mimic traumatic memory through fragmentation. Here, the memoirs make use of the graphic narrative's ability to juxtapose past, present, and sometimes, future. For example, *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors* employs a child-figure as the visual representation of past and present. *Mendel's Daughter* combines perspectives from different generations, layering temporalities and perspective. Through this fragmentation, each of the memoirs also illustrates how traumatic memories of the Holocaust are intertwined and overlap generations. Thus, both second- and third-generation narratives visualise intergenerational memory as a complicated web of multiple perspectives and temporalities.

¹³³ Hirsch, Marianne and Spitzer, Leo. (2012) 'What is wrong with this picture?', in Hirsch, Marianne. (ed.) *Generation of Post-Memory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust*. New York, Columbia University Press: 61.

¹³⁴ Hirsch (1992): 6 – 8.

¹³⁵ Hirsch (1992): 8 – 9.

¹³⁶ Baer, Ulrich. (2002) *Spectral Evidence: The Photography of Trauma*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press: 2 - 3.

The second-generation narrative *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors* also visualised that intergenerational memory can also mean a lack of memoirs. As the second-generation is often excluded from the Holocaust but is still burdened with its trauma, they experience a lack of memory, referred to as absent memory. Paradoxically, this absent memory is also very present through its absence. The graphic memoir visualised this through the use of shadows, gaps, and ghostly figures. In *Mendel's Daughter* and *We Won't See Auschwitz* photographs are included to visualise both life and death. These photographs illustrate both memory and post-memory, but also gaps in memory. The following chapter will discuss the incorporation of photography as a medium in more detail, arguing that photography can both claim authenticity and expose subjectivity.

Lastly, the graphic memoirs reflected on the invisibility and unspeakability of trauma. Hillary Chute has theorised that the graphic narrative has the ability to express and visualise trauma. The memoirs, however, demonstrated that this is not an easy task. Both *Mendel's Daughter* and *Flying Couch* illustrated this by incomplete or covered faces, eyes, and erased drawings. *We Won't See Auschwitz* paradoxically tried to illustrate Jewish culture after the Holocaust without naming Auschwitz. Despite the visual language, trauma remains a psychological wound that is not easily healed or represented. Furthermore, through the trope of drawn eyes, the memoirs suggest that it not possible to completely experience what a survivor has experienced.

Chapter two

Materialising trauma: Intermediality, photography, and memory

“This is her story. It’s all true.”¹³⁷

The previous chapter explored how the graphic memoirs visualise traumatic experiences. It demonstrated that the graphic memoirs use fragmentation to mimic traumatic memory, but also to illustrate how intergenerational memory transfer over generations. Furthermore, it discussed how the memoirs show that visualising trauma is not an easy task. The chapter also already showed that graphic memoirs are a multimodal medium, often referencing to other media in their narrative. For example, *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors* uses intertextual references to other Holocaust memoirs to illustrate the complexity of Holocaust trauma. As the introduction also discussed, the graphic novel is often perceived as a medium that “thrives on exchanges with other media”.¹³⁸ However, with this intermediality, it is important to remember that other media “are not hollow conduits for the transmission of messages but material supports of information whose materiality, precisely, ‘matters’ for the type of meanings that can be encoded”.¹³⁹ In other words, it is precisely the materiality of the other medium that matters for the information it is sending. The graphic memoirs discussed in this thesis often reference to or use other media, such as photography. In line with Stein’s and Ryan’s comments, this raises the question of how this intermediality functions.

This chapter will focus on the use of intermediality in the trauma narratives of these graphic memoirs. It aims to answer the following sub-question: How is intermediality deployed to represent trauma? It will pay specific attention to the use of photography, as this medium proves to be important for all graphic memoirs. The first section will demonstrate that, although photography is used to claim authenticity, it can also complicate the idea of objectivity. The second section will explore the use of maps and floor plans in *Flying Couch* of how maps can illustrate relationships to people and places. Finally, the conclusion will summarise the findings.

¹³⁷ Lemelman (2006): 5.

¹³⁸ Stein (2015) : 420.

¹³⁹ Ryan, Marie-Laure. (2004) *Narratives Across Media: The Languages of Storytelling*. Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press: 1-2.

2.1. Authentic trauma: Performing authenticity through photography and objects

As discussed in the introduction, authenticity and truthfulness are complicated concepts in autobiographical fiction. Graphic memoirs, in particular, further complicate this issue through the use of drawings, which are often perceived as subjective because they are created by an artist. Elisabeth El Refaie states that in their process to “perform authenticity” graphic memoirs use various “visual cues”.¹⁴⁰ This often results in the graphic memoirs incorporating other media such as photography. Photography, in this case, stands out for the frequency it is used in graphic memoirs. El Refaie and Nancy Pedri both point out that photography is perceived to be an objective, documentary medium.¹⁴¹ In *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors*, Eisenstein also treats photographs as documentary evidence. She constantly searches for “documented photographs of survivors of Auschwitz” because only if she can see her father in those photographs, she would “know what he was made to become”.¹⁴² Although Eisenstein fails to find any photographs as evidence of her parents’ experience, characters in the other memoirs do find and use photographs. This section will explore how they use photography as a form of evidence and to claim authenticity over their trauma.

Photography forms an important part of *Mendel’s Daughter’s* narrative, as the memoir includes photographs almost as much as drawings. In the opening of the memoir, Lemelman explicitly claims the story’s authenticity, before starting his mother’s testimony, by stating that “[t]his is her [his mother’s] story. It’s all true”.¹⁴³ This suggests that, although his mother’s story has not begun yet, Lemelman apparently feels the need to claim authenticity. However, the memoir does not rely on Lemelman’s words to establish authenticity. Instead, the memoir constantly incorporates photographs, archival documents, and historical artefacts (such as passports) to provide the reader with evidence of Gusta’s testimony. Through these media, *Mendel’s Daughter* seems to emphasise its connection to an “objective reality”. This is particularly the case in instances in which the memoir shows photographs parallel to its drawings. An example of this is when Gusta first introduces her family in the story. The memoir shows an image of a family sitting around the kitchen table, with Gusta explaining in the corresponding text that “the mother [her mother] has a lot of kids to cook for. We are seven children”.¹⁴⁴ This image is followed by seven photographs, which officially introduce

¹⁴⁰ El Refaie, Elisabeth. (2012) *Autobiographical comics: Life writing in pictures*. Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi: 137.

¹⁴¹ See El Refaie (2012): 138 and Pedri (2017).

¹⁴² Eisenstein (2006): 16.

¹⁴³ Lemelman (2006): 5.

¹⁴⁴ Lemelman (2006): 13.

each of the family members individually. In the corresponding text, Gusta describes who everyone is and what their relation is to her. By showing these photographs, the reader is now aware of what these people actually looked like, leaving little space for imagination. But, more importantly, the reader is reminded that the people in the memoir are more than just characters. As Aarons states the photographs illustrate that the characters in the story and photograph “were real people with a pre-Shoah existence”.¹⁴⁵ The photographs show that these people existed and, thus, remind the reader of the story’s reality.

This pre-Shoah existence that Aarons refers to is indeed emphasised in *Mendel’s Daughter*. Multiple photographs show Gusta and her family in their daily, pre-war life such as attending a bar mitzvah, getting together with friends, and playing together. However, through the photographs, the reader is also made witness of Gusta’s trauma, as she shares more intimate details of her survival. Part two of the memoir, titled “who is to live and who is to die? 1940 – 1945” narrates, as the title suggests, who survived and who did not. Underneath the title, a photograph of Gusta’s baby nephew is included, foreshadowing his death later in the chapter. The baby looks directly into the camera, and thus directly at the reader. Here, the photograph moves beyond its task of affirming the story’s authenticity. It places the reader in the discomfiting role of a voyeur by looking at a very private photo that signifies a difficult loss for Gusta’s family. Another example of this is in the same chapter

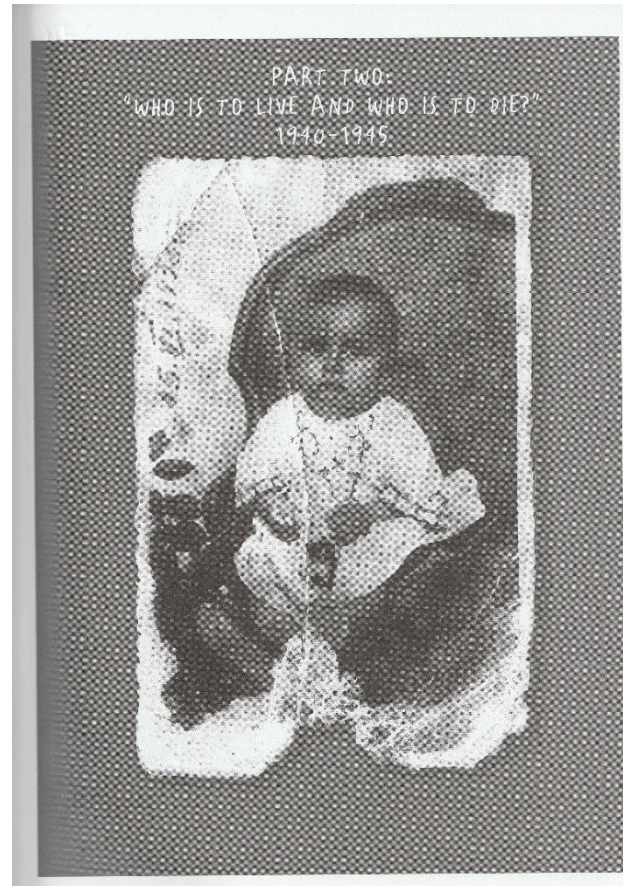


Figure 2.1. (*Mendel's Daughter*, 57)

when Gusta recalls how her family was taken away and put on the train. The memoir shows a vertical, small drawing of people squeezed into a train. Next to the image, a series of photographs are shown. One is of Gusta’s family together, with their names written on the photograph, the other two photographs are of Gusta’s mother, sister and nephew. Like the first image of Gusta’s family reminded the reader that these were real people with a life before the war, this image serves as a reminder that these were real people being deported.

¹⁴⁵ Aarons (2019): 57.

As mentioned earlier, *Mendel's Daughter* also includes archival documents and artefacts, both reproduced and drawn, in its narrative. Most of the documents and artefacts are from after the war, when Gusta stays in a Displaced Persons Camp and, later, when she emigrates to the United States. When Gusta describes the difficult process of emigrating to the United States, she recalls the many papers and tickers that were necessary. The memoir reproduces these different papers, such as the "Certificate of Identity in Lieu of Passport" and "Alien Registration Receipt Card".¹⁴⁶ Here, these objects seem to have a double function as evidence. Within Gusta's narrative, they formed proof for her and the United States that she was allowed to come there. Gusta also explicitly acknowledges this when the memoir shows her vaccine passport "America don't let you in just like this. I and the Tateh [husband] have to get the shots. *This is my card for proof*".¹⁴⁷ However, for the reader, the documents also function as evidence of Gusta's narrative. There is not only photographic 'evidence' but also documental evidence. In Victoria Aarons' analysis of objects and artefacts in other memoirs, such as Edmund de Waal's *The Hare with Amber Eyes* (2010), she argues that artefacts can become substitutes for memory. They visualise "that which was destroyed and the narrative that was lost [...] artifacts thus become telling, living histories".¹⁴⁸ In *Mendel's Daughter*, the included documents are, as mentioned, only from after the war. Apart from the photographs, Gusta has no materialised memory from before the war. The documents that are shown are all evidence of what Gusta calls her "new life in America".¹⁴⁹ However, together with the photographs, the documents also visualise that what was destroyed during the war. They embody the "living histories" and memory of both Gusta and her family.

This idea of photography as an authentic medium that embodies living histories is also illustrated in *We Won't See Auschwitz*. As the previous chapter noted, *We Won't See Auschwitz* "uses a quest narrative" in which the memoir simultaneously documents both Dres's journey to Poland and parts of his family's history before and during the war.¹⁵⁰ This narrative is common amongst third-generation writers, who actively search their Holocaust past.¹⁵¹ For Dres, then, his documented journey already functions as evidence of his grandmother's story and Jewish cultural memory. In this journey there is "careful attention to

¹⁴⁶ Lemelman (2006): 211 – 213.

¹⁴⁷ Lemelman (2006): 212. Emphasise mine.

¹⁴⁸ Aarons (2019): 28.

¹⁴⁹ Lemelman (2006): 215.

¹⁵⁰ Gorrara, Claire. (2018) 'Not Seeing Auschwitz: Memory, Generation and Representations of the Holocaust in twenty-first century French Comics', in: *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*, vol. 17, no. 1., 111 -126: 116.

¹⁵¹ Aarons & Berger (2017): 15 – 16.

detail, numbers, places, dates, and identities”.¹⁵² To retrieve this detailed information, third-generation writers depend on “mediated information through their parents or other families or must resort to research, to combing through documents”.¹⁵³ The latter is certainly the case for Dres, whose family refuses to talk about Poland or the Holocaust. Instead, Dres turns to archives, cemeteries, Jewish cultural organisations, and photography. The memoir carefully documents how Dres retrieves his information, including drawings of photographs in the narrative. In contrast to *Mendel’s Daughter*, *We Won’t See Auschwitz* includes family photographs as well as ‘public’ photographs, such as archival images of Jewish life before the war and photographs from newspapers.

Whereas the public photographs help Dres to research and understand Jewish cultural life, the family photographs represent the lost memories and narratives of his family. For example, a family photograph of his grandmother, with her brother and sisters, functions as a reference point of what happened to everyone during the war. As Dres’s grandmother holds the photograph, which is shown in the memoir, she narrates where everyone went. An important detail is the drawing style of the drawn photographs.

Whereas it is common for graphic memoirs to draw photographs more realistically than other images, *We Won’t See Auschwitz* visualises them in the same style as the rest of the memoir.¹⁵⁴ According to Gorrara the black-and-white-style images “suggest a pared down connection with the past in a documentary style aesthetic”.¹⁵⁵ Using the same style for the drawn photographs, then, emphasises that drawings establish just as much authenticity as the drawn photographs.

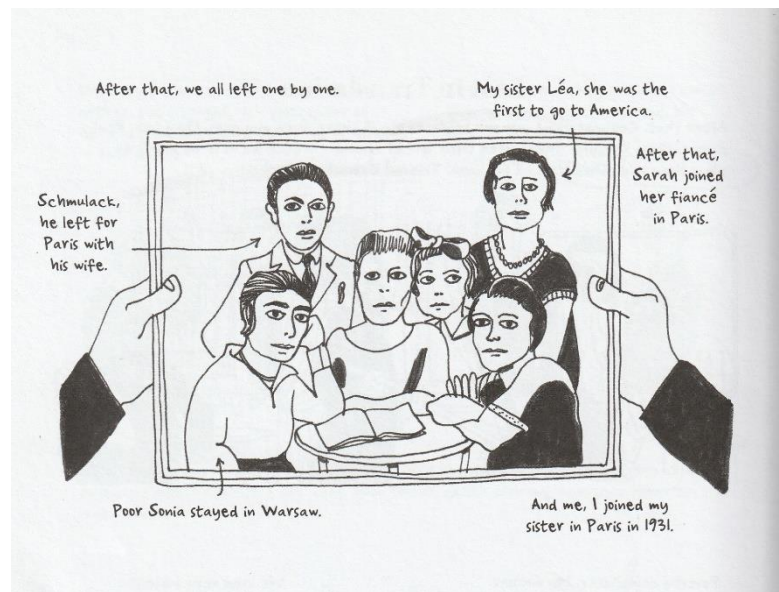


Figure 2.2. (*We Won't See Auschwitz*, 108)

¹⁵² Aarons & Berger (2017): 15.

¹⁵³ Aarons & Berger (2017): 17.

¹⁵⁴ Pedri, Nancy. (2015) 'Thinking about Photography in Comics', in *Image & Narrative*, vol. 16, no. 2, pp. 1 – 13: 8.

¹⁵⁵ Gorrara (2018): 121.

However, similar to *Mendel's Daughter*, this memoir also seems to feel the need to further claim authenticity. At the end of the memoir, in the author's note, Dres states that "all the interviews in this book actually happened. The conversations were recorded, and the people and *the settings photographed*".¹⁵⁶ This suggests that the drawings in the memoir were based on photographed settings, which might help to affirm the story's authenticity. Here, photography is once again perceived as a documentary medium. After the author's note, in the appendix, the drawn photographs are reproduced. Photographs of Dres and his brother traveling through Poland, but also the family photographs of their grandmother, are positioned next to each other. Each photograph is accompanied by a typed commentary describing who or what is shown in the frame. This intratextual reference to the different photographs in the memoir is interesting on a few levels. Firstly, by positioning the photographs after this list of sources, and not in the narrative itself, their function as a referential medium is emphasised. More importantly, the memoir requires the reader to actively connect the drawn and reproduced photographs to each other. In the process of doing so, it refers to the material differences and similarities

between the drawings and the reproduced photographs. For example, the photographs are marked by age, colours have faded and there are scratches on the photographs. This ageing suggests that this is indeed truly a photograph of the family of Dres's grandmother, emphasising its authentic status.

Thus, both *Mendel's Daughter* and *We Won't See Auschwitz* employ photographs to establish authenticity and remind the reader that the characters in their story were real people. Furthermore, the photographs become living histories, visualising that what was lost or destroyed. Gorrara argues that the "authenticating materials" in the memoir, places *We Won't See Auschwitz* in "a broader cultural movement to rescue and recover marginalized

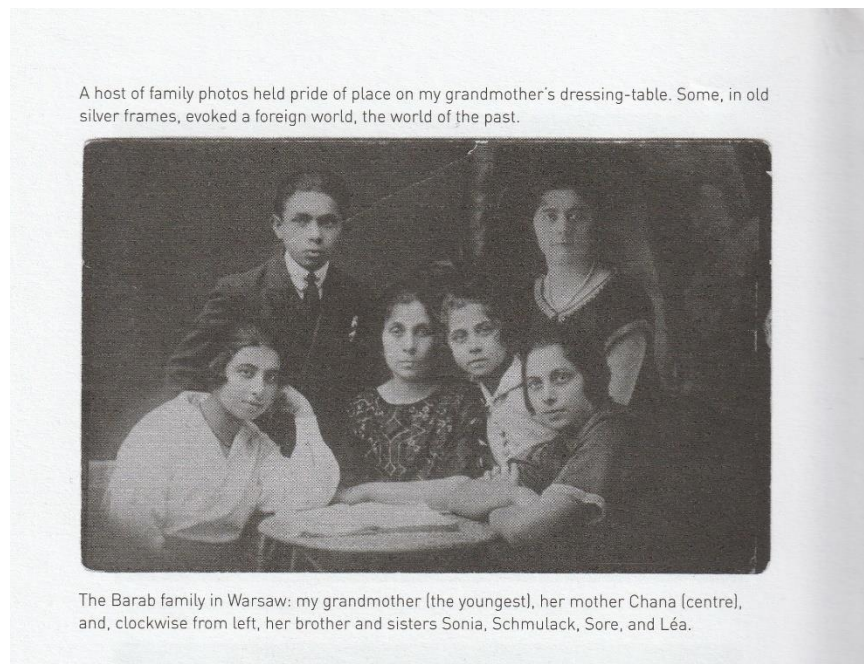


Figure 2.3. (*We Won't See Auschwitz*, 194)

¹⁵⁶ Dres (2012): 189.

stories of the shoah”.¹⁵⁷ Aarons and Berger also state that third-generation narratives have a sense of urgency to transmit and preserve Holocaust memory.¹⁵⁸ This can also apply to *Mendel’s Daughter*, which preserves and continues the memory of Gusta. The memoir’s incorporation of photographs and objects almost presents the memoir as a scrapbook of Gusta’s memory. However, as these photographs and objects are carefully edited, framed, and positioned in the memoir it is important to reconsider the complete objectivity of photography. Although photographs claim authenticity, the subsequent section will demonstrate that photography in these memoirs moves beyond this task of authenticity.

2.2. The layering of self: subjectivity and intermediality

Examinations of photography in graphic memoirs often focus on the documentary, objective status of the medium.¹⁵⁹ However, Pedri argues that photographs “often have a narrative, story-based (and not a referential, reality-based) function”.¹⁶⁰ Indeed, photography seems to be an important part of the graphic narrative of *Mendel’s Daughter* and *We Won’t See Auschwitz*. For example, in *Mendel’s Daughter* photographs do not only refer to an ‘objective’ reality but also narrate parts of the story. In order to do so, the photographs are accompanied by written commentaries. Furthermore, as the previous section already highlighted, photographs are often edited, framed, and positioned in certain ways. Kai Mikkonen argues that photography in graphic memoirs can present multiple perspectives and draw “attention to the choice of perspective, and the use of juxtaposed perspectives”.¹⁶¹ Pedri also states that photography can raise questions about focalisation in graphic memoirs. This section will explore how photography complicates issues of subjectivity and focalisation in the memoirs.

As established in chapter one, *Mendel’s Daughter* has a complicated narrative with overlapping perspectives. This constantly raises the question of who is narrating and whose perspective is offered. Gusta narrates her story, as her son Lemelman visualises it. Furthermore, Gusta interpretations of the events are reinterpreted by Lemelman through his drawings. This issue is further complicated by the photographs included in the narrative. Often these are, as mentioned, photographs of Gusta and her family. However, the

¹⁵⁷ Gorrara (2018): 117.

¹⁵⁸ Aarons & Berger (2017): 9.

¹⁵⁹ Pedri (2017): paragraph 4.

¹⁶⁰ Pedri (2017): paragraph 4.

¹⁶¹ Mikkonen, Kai. (2012) ‘Focalization in comics. From the specificities of the medium to conceptual reformulation’, in: *Scandinavian Journal of Comic Art*, 2012, vol.1, 69-95: 79.

photographs are added to the narrative by Lemelman. These photographs are remediated into the narrative in a complex way. In some instances, Gusta refers to a photograph in her testimony, for example stating that “[t]hese are pictures of my sister”.¹⁶² This also calls attention to how the graphic memoir is a remediation of a recorded testimony, reminding the reader that Gusta is actually talking to her son. References like this suggest that Gusta showed Lemelman the respective photograph. The addition of the photographs into the narrative, then, is also a way to stay true to how Gusta narrated her testimony. In other instances, though, these photographs are obviously added by Lemelman. An example of this is when the memoir shows a collage of photographs of Gusta with friends and family. The corresponding text of Gusta’s testimony does not refer to the photographs at all, but in a smaller font, the memoir states that “[t]hese are some of the photographs my brother, Bernard, and I found in my mother’s night table after she died”.¹⁶³ This suggests that Lemelman added these photographs later and they do not necessarily correspond with the story that Gusta is telling on this page. This raises the question of why Lemelman felt it was necessary to add these photographs. Again, the memoir complicates who is narrating the story, to what extent is this Gusta’s testimony and where does Lemelman’s perspective start? Yet, even in these instances, there is a written commentary on the photograph itself. These written commentaries are always written from Gusta’s perspective. Often the commentary explains who is shown in the photograph, which affirms the idea of the photograph as evidence. However, the commentary is also subjective and comments on the relationship between the photographed subject and Gusta. She comments on who of her siblings in the photographs is her parents’ favourite and whom she does or does not like. This may cause the reader to view the photographs from her viewpoint, which takes away part of the objectivity of the reader. By relating every photographed subject to herself, Gusta also places herself within the frame. Pedri argues that photographs thus not only function a referential point to reality but ask the reader to consider “how what is pictured on the photograph intersects with Gusta’s identity and subjectivity”.¹⁶⁴ Through the photographs, Gusta constantly creates her own identity in relation to others.

In relation to memory and trauma, the photographs prove not to be fixed in a certain moment but instead constantly interact with the narrative and the narrator. As mentioned in the previous section, life writing is affected by what seems important in hindsight. The photographs are good illustrations of this as Gusta interprets them, and her connection to the

¹⁶² Lemelman (2006): 30.

¹⁶³ Lemelman (2006): 46.

¹⁶⁴ Pedri (2017): paragraph 11.

photographs, years after they were taken. Through the process of memory and the traumatic experience of the Holocaust, the value and personal meaning of the photograph might have changed. For example, the photograph of Gusta's deceased nephew, which has been discussed earlier, has come to illustrate the death of Gusta's family members to her. The photograph is repeated every time Gusta discusses the tragic loss of her family members. This process of interpretation also problematises the sense of truthfulness of the graphic memoir. As Pedri points out, Gusta "holds and shares important information about those photographed, information that she selects and filters according to her own interests".¹⁶⁵ Although the photographs do function as "material supports" for Gusta's story, they also acknowledge that the process of life writing is a process of selecting.

As *We Won't See Auschwitz* documents Dres's "quest" to recover his grandmother's history, the process of selecting seems somewhat more visible than in *Mendel's Daughter*. Similar to *Mendel's Daughter*, photographs in this memoir are accompanied by explanatory texts. However, in *We Won't See Auschwitz* the commentary accompanying the redrawn photographs differs from the reproduced photographs, both in content and style. This, then, is also an important difference in comparison to *Mendel's Daughter*. The explanatory texts accompanying the redrawn photographs are often presented in a handwriting font, presumably to fit the style of the rest of the memoir. In terms of content, the texts are part of the narrative. In contrast, the reproduced photographs are accompanied by texts in a typed font, suggesting a more documentary style. It also excludes the photographs from the narrative, marking them as a separate part of the memoir. The texts are written from Dres's perspective. He explains who is in the photograph, when the photograph was taken, but also, who owned the photograph. For example, Dres states that the photograph of his grandmother's family, together with other family photographs, were placed "on my grandmother's dressing-table. Some, in old silver frames, the world of the past".¹⁶⁶ This comment explains that the reader is looking at very private family photographs, reminding the reader that he was invited to be part of a personal history. It is exactly the materiality of the photograph, its difference to drawn images, that emphasises this. As Pedri argues "[p]ersonal photographs [increasingly] prove to be a medium through which individuals confirm and explore, tell and package their identities and personal histories".¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ Pedri (2017): paragraph 19.

¹⁶⁶ Dres (2012): 194.

¹⁶⁷ Pedri, Nancy. (2018) 'Traumatic Layerings of Self: Scrapbooking Personal Photographs in *One Hundred Demons*', in: *Polysèmes*, vol. 19: 1.

This idea of inviting the reader to look at personal histories through photographs is also explored in *Flying Couch*. Although the memoir includes drawings of photographs throughout the narrative, they form a central part of the narrative in the chapter “homecoming”. In this chapter, Bubbe tells about the first few years of her life after the war ended. Before moving to the United States, Bubbe and her newly-wedded husband lived in a Displaced Persons Camp in Heidelberg, Germany. It is in this camp that their daughter Sonya, Kurzweil’s mother, was born and spend the first few years of her childhood. As Bubbe tells this part of her testimony, the visual narrative shows a hand that holds drawings of photographs over a page of what appears to be a family album. Similar to *Mendel’s Daughter*, this hand signifies both a subjective lens as well as an awareness that history is being materialised here. In

what follows, the reader sees a sequence of photographs in this album, almost in the style of a film montage, until this part of Bubbe’s testimony is finished. Each photograph shows a part of Bubbe’s life in the camp. For example, one of the drawn photographs shows a couple holding a baby as Bubbe tells about the birth of her daughter Sonya, suggesting that this is her in the photograph. The photographs in *Flying Couch*, then, do not function as an illustration of pre-war life nor as a reminder of the ‘real’ lives that were lost. Instead, they show the lives of those who survived. The suggestion that the reader is looking at a photographic album, as well as the idea? that Bubbe is not aware that the reader is reading her testimony, emphasise that the reader is made witness to something very private. Furthermore, the photographic album emphasises the subjective perspective because albums are, as Pedri argues, “records of personal experience and private selves that are made, collected, and viewed”.¹⁶⁸ Family albums, Pedri continues, present an ideal version of self, a version that conforms to social norms. This also partly made visible through the combination with verbal narrative. Whereas Bubbe tells about the less than ideal circumstances in the camp, such as the small rooms and the cold environment, the photographs show a very happy family.¹⁶⁹ The photographs also do not show the trauma that Bubbe and her husband deal with. Although Bubbe’s testimony

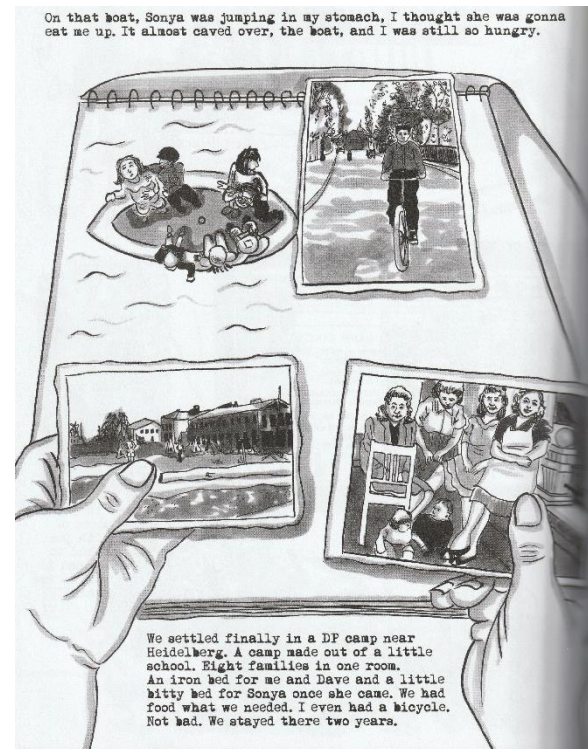


Figure 2.4. (*Flying Couch*, 215)

¹⁶⁸ Pedri (2018) : 2.

¹⁶⁹ Kurzweil (2016): 217.

narrates this trauma, the photographs offer a different perspective. This illustrates how, as Pedri describes, personal and family photographs offer an incomplete story as they are staged and framed.¹⁷⁰

2.3. Mapping trauma: floor plans, maps, and place

Photography, archival documents, and objects are not the only other media forms used in the graphic memoirs. Third-generation narrative *Flying Couch* remediates maps into the narrative. El Refaie briefly mentions that maps also signal authenticity, in particular in travel narratives, because they “provide clear, unambiguous links between locations in a narrative and actual places in the real world”.¹⁷¹ However, *Flying Couch* illustrates that maps have a more elaborate, narrative-based function than that. Carolyn Kyler’s rightly observes that maps and graphic novels are very similar as both have a visual-verbal narrative and require interactive reading.¹⁷² Kyler argues that maps not only refer to physical places but also “relationships between places, people, and ideas”.¹⁷³ The following section will show that in *Flying Couch* the maps do not only refer to actual places but function as subjective guides of relationships and journeys.

In *Flying Couch* maps form a central part of the narrative, recurring throughout the story as both a standalone image as well as a background in the panels. The memoir, fittingly, also opens with the creation of a map of Kurzweil’s childhood home. A pile of books, including a notebook with Bubbe’s stories, is shown transforming into a house, which then slowly changes into a map. Through this illustration, the memoir already emphasises two recurring themes, namely that of home and travelling. Each of the memoir’s chapters refers to home, for example, chapter four is titled ‘homeland’ and chapter six ‘homecoming’. The maps in *Flying Couch* can be divided into two types, namely the maps in Bubbe’s

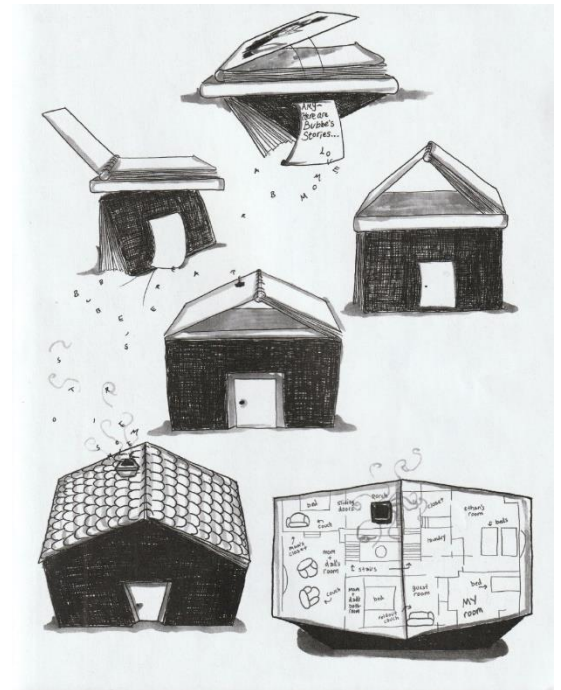


Figure 2.5. (*Flying Couch*, 1)

¹⁷⁰ Pedri (2018): 2 -3.

¹⁷¹ El Refaie (2012): 158.

¹⁷² Kyler, Carolyn. (2010) 'Mapping a Life: Reading and Looking at Contemporary Graphic Memoir', in: *CEA Critic*, vol. 72, no. 3, pp. 2 - 20: 4.

¹⁷³ Kyler (2010): 13.

narrative and those in Kurzweil's narrative.

The maps in Bubbe's narrative are shown for the first time when Bubbe describes how and where her family lived in the ghetto in Warsaw. Here, the maps are incorporated as a panel background. The maps are not very detailed, as they only show a schematic drawing of the neighbourhood with a few street names. In the foreground, there is a square image of Bubbe's home, representing the small space in which she and her family lived. This combination of the map in the background and Bubbe's house on the foreground recurs two times and each time Bubbe narrates about a traumatic event that took place. The first time she shares how she and her family hid when the German bombed the neighbourhood, the second time she shares how her grandmother died in the small house. Here, the maps do not function as "unambiguous links" as there is very little detailed that the reader can connect to the real world. Instead, the maps gain meaning through the combination of images and Bubbe's verbal narrative. The maps also visualise Warsaw, or specifically the ghetto, as a site of Bubbe's trauma. Later in the narrative, the maps are featured more prominently. As Bubbe shares how she decided to flee and started walking, the memoir includes a map to visualise this. This map extends over two pages, demanding the reader to look at the map extensively, and it includes an image of young Bubbe walking over the map. Although this map is, once again, not very detailed, place names such as Warsaw show the setting of the story. To some extent, the map here functions as documentary evidence of Bubbe's survival during the war.

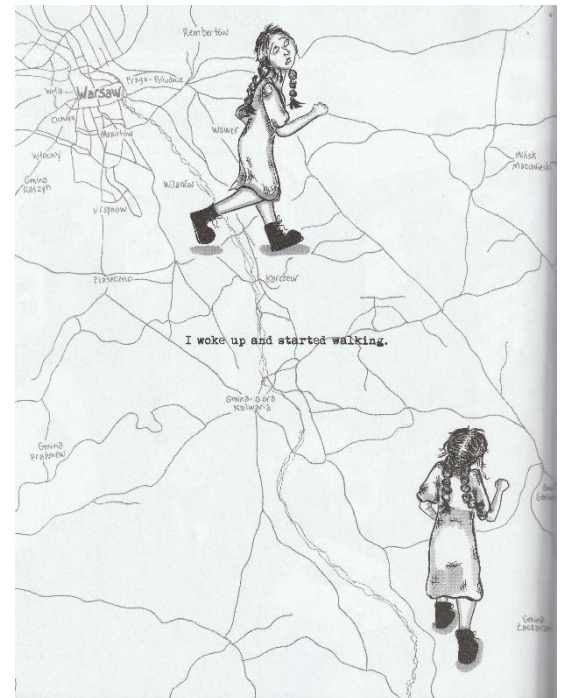


Figure 2.6. (*Flying Couch*, 90) This image shows just one part of the map, as the other part extends over page 91.

In contrast to Bubbe’s maps, that visualise the loss of and running from home, the maps in Kurzweil’s narrative appear to be more fixed places that signify home to Kurzweil. The maps are highly personal and gain meaning through Kurzweil’s narrative and the descriptions in the maps. For example, the floor plan of Kurzweil’s childhood home features descriptions such as “pretty pictures on the wall”, “balcony (fun for picnics and sunbathing)”, and “good place for putting ear to wall to spy on mom and dad”.¹⁷⁴ A map of Kurzweil’s university neighbourhood is accompanied by commentaries such as “for Ivy League students (pretentious” and “for grad students (avoid)”.¹⁷⁵ Through these commentaries, Kurzweil places herself within the maps and connects her identity to these places. Furthermore, in contrast to

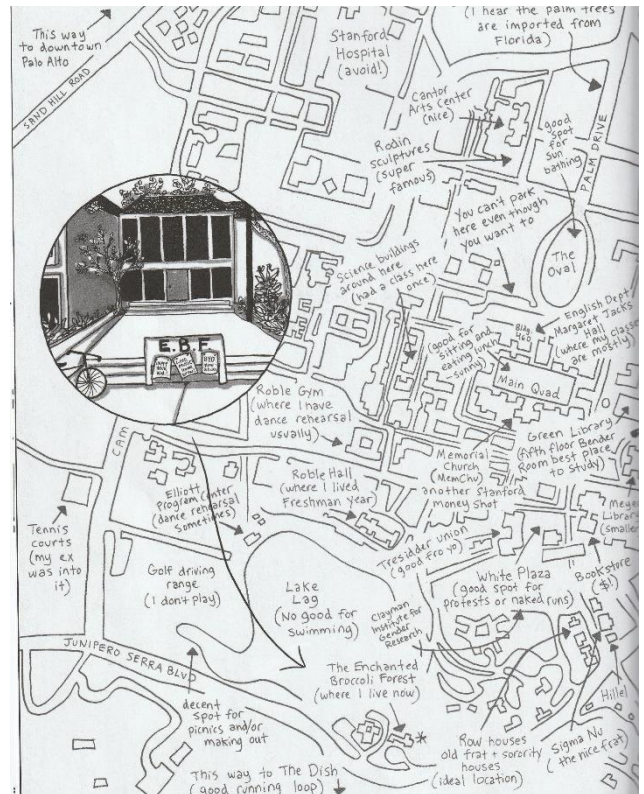


Figure 2.7. (*Flying Couch*, 28)

Bubbe, the maps in Kurzweil’s narrative are very detailed. This difference can have two reasons. Firstly, the maps in Bubbe’s narrative visualise sites of trauma, whereas Kurzweil’s trauma does not seem to be connected to a certain place. As discussed in the previous chapter, Bubbe has admitted that she blocks certain memories due to her trauma. The lack of details in the maps can illustrate this same gap in memory. Another explanation is that the maps are drawn by Kurzweil, who has no precise knowledge of the ghetto. She might know where the ghetto was, as visualised by the maps, but she cannot add the same subjective detailed descriptions as in her own maps. Through the maps, Kurzweil confronts both her Bubbe’s past and her own present. In her analysis of maps in Spiegelman’s *Maus*, Kyler states that maps might act as “a reminder of the distance between the author’s experience and the narrator’s”.¹⁷⁶ Through the incorporation of maps, *Flying Couch* exposes the different perceptions of home and experiences of trauma in connection to space.

¹⁷⁴ Kurzweil (2016): 6 -7.

¹⁷⁵ Kurzweil (2016): 28 – 29.

¹⁷⁶ Kyler (2010): 14.

Conclusion

This chapter has looked at the incorporation of other media in the graphic memoirs, in particular the incorporation of photography and maps. Photography is often perceived as a documentary medium. Scholars have theorised that incorporating photography in graphic memoirs calls attention to the memoir's connection to the real world and supports claims of authenticity. However, photography is a more complicated, subjective medium than that. In relation to the Holocaust and traumatic memory, the personal photographs place the reader in an almost voyeuristic position. By doing so, the reader is made aware that this is a private history made public. Furthermore, the personal photographs, and corresponding commentaries, illustrate that the act of life writing is also an act of selection. Some information is shared with the reader, whilst other information is withheld.

Furthermore, *Flying Couch* also remediates maps into the narrative. Not only because of their status as an objective medium that can claim authenticity, but more importantly to illustrate the subjective relationships characters have with places. Through this, the memoir also exposes the different experiences of Kurzweil and Bubbe and how they perceive home and trauma.

Although these are all very private stories, they are also a part of a more collective trauma. As mentioned earlier, *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors* uses intertextual references to other testimonies and novels. This already illustrates how Eisenstein's trauma is individual as well as shared by others. The subsequent chapter will discuss how the graphic memoirs visualise personal trauma and memory in relation to cultural trauma. Part of this chapter will also further explore intermediality, as the graphic memoirs frequently refer to other novels, literature, museums, and memory sites in their attempt to position themselves in a specific cultural framework.

Chapter three

The need to remember: Jewishness, memory sites and collective memory

“Memory attaches itself to sites,
whereas history attaches itself to events.”¹⁷⁷

Chapter one explored how the graphic memoirs *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors*, *Mendel’s Daughter*, *Flying Couch*, and *We Won’t See Auschwitz* visualised traumatic experiences. It focused on the use of shadows to represent the present feeling of absence and the use of photographs, objects, and blurred faces to represent loss and the inability to process traumatic experiences. In the previous chapter, it was also noted how the memoirs attempt to move beyond the trauma. An example of this is *We Won’t See Auschwitz*, in which the characters refuse to name the Holocaust and want to discover their cultural history. When visiting the neighbourhood where his grandmother grew up, Jérémie Dres comments to a friend that “nothing related to Jewish memory seems to have been rebuilt”.¹⁷⁸ His statement suggests that, firstly, memory can be related to a specific group and, secondly, that memory can be attached to certain places. Similarly, scholar Pierre Nora, as demonstrated by the quote above, states that memory can be attached to specific sites, in contrast to history which is attached to events. Both statements suggest that memory and trauma are not only personal or private. Trauma and memory, then, do not only operate on an individual level but also on a collective level.¹⁷⁹

This chapter will analyse how collective and personal remembering, and the possible tension between these two levels of remembering, are represented in the graphic memoirs. It will posit the following sub-question: How do the graphic memoirs incorporate collective trauma and memory in relation to personal trauma and memory? It will pay specific attention to the visualisation of this in the memoirs. The first section will explore the tension between generational and personal trauma and memory, focusing on the specific characteristics of second- and third-generation writers. The second section, then, will focus on the tension

¹⁷⁷ Nora, Pierre. (1989) ‘Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire’, in: *Representations*, 25, pp. 7 - 24: 22.

¹⁷⁸ Nora (1989): 22.

¹⁷⁹ Dres (2012): 16.

between personal and collective trauma. The third and final section will demonstrate this in two specific themes in the graphic memoirs. Firstly, the representation and visualisation of memory sites in the graphic memoirs. Secondly, the struggle with and the visualisation of Jewish identity. Finally, the conclusion will summarise the main points of this chapter.

3.1. Personal versus generational remembering

As discussed in the previous chapter, an important part of the trauma of the Holocaust, and the subject of this thesis, is that it is trans-generational. Second and third-generation survivors inherit a trauma, yet are excluded from the very same history that has caused this trauma. As Alan Berger notes, this causes tension between different generations and often results in “distorting generational communication”.¹⁸⁰ Aarons and Berger both highlight that children, and grandchildren, of survivors carry the legacy of trauma either wilfully or unconsciously. This is illustrated in *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors* when Eisenstein states she wants to be able to reject her parent’s past. She states she wants to “[...] stand before my parents and say, Here, take it- it’s yours [their tragic past], I don’t want it”.¹⁸¹ However, as the memoir shows, she is unable to do so and has to find a way to carry the weight of her parents’ legacy. The following section discusses the portrayal of this generational tension and the second- and third-generation perspectives in the graphic memoirs.

Each of the graphic memoirs, except *Mendel’s Daughter*, narrates multiple life stories crossing over generations. *Flying Couch* intertwines Kurzweil’s story with that of her grandmother, *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors* includes the testimony of Eisenstein’s mother, and *We Won’t See Auschwitz* briefly narrates the life of Dres’s grandmother and that of another Holocaust victim. By doing so, the memoirs emphasise that their story is one of multiple generations that affect each other. Moreover, it illustrates the need for an “other” when narrating life stories. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson define this as “relationality” signifying that self-consciousness and inquiry are “routed through others”.¹⁸² For example, Eisenstein’s coming-of-age story growing up as a child of Holocaust survivors could not be told without relating it to her parents’ past. Similarly, Kurzweil’s identity is formed by the stories of both her mother and her grandmother. As mentioned earlier, the issue of the narrator is complicated in *Mendel’s Daughter*. Here, the main focus of the story is Gusta’s survival,

¹⁸⁰ Berger, Alan. (1990) ‘Bearing Witness: Second Generation Literature of the ‘Shoah’’, in: *Modern Judaism*, Vol. 10, No. 1, pp. 43 – 63: 48.

¹⁸¹ Eisenstein (2006): 53.

¹⁸² Smith & Watson (2001): 86 – 87.

told through her recorded testimony. However, Lemelman does visualise the story and sometimes intervenes.

An important characteristic of second- and third-generation narratives is the imaginative return. As Aarons and Berger theorise, children and grandchildren of survivors often need to bridge a gap in time, memory, and distance between them and those who experienced the Holocaust directly.¹⁸³ They argue that this can only be done through an imaginative refocusing, often taking the form of narrative journeys. According to Aarons and Berger, these narrative journeys “take the form of both literal and metaphorical journeys to re-enact and reclaim the past”.¹⁸⁴ In addition, Jilovsky states that narratives of return to Holocaust sites, both literal and imagined, are a common theme in second-and third-generation narratives.¹⁸⁵ Each of the graphic memoirs indeed includes a return narrative. In *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors* Eisenstein’s mother returns to Auschwitz years later. Eisenstein’s fear of flying disables her to accompany her mother, but her brother Michael does join their mother. Jilovsky argues that for second-generation survivors, the visit of a Holocaust site often reveals the complex relationship between them and their parents. Moreover, their experience of a Holocaust site is different when accompanied by a direct survivor. The company of a parent who has survived the Holocaust affects how a memory site is constructed and how its meaning is communicated.¹⁸⁶ As a result, narratives of return without a parent differ in experience and portrayal compared to those with a parent. As will be described later, Eisenstein’s journey of return takes the form of a museum visit. Here, she also acknowledges that the company of her mother would have changed her experience.

Flying Couch and *We Won’t See Auschwitz* both include literal journeys. As Jilovsky states, the third-generation attempt to access memory is problematised by their distance to the Holocaust, both historically and figuratively. Since most of the Holocaust survivors already passed away, the direct link between the Holocaust and the third-generation also disappears. Thus, for the third-generation, the past is often only accessible indirectly. Both Aarons and Jilovsky note that this often results in literally retracing the past, emphasising the importance of place. As this chapter will show, in *We Won’t See Auschwitz* this past is retraced through Dres’s journey through Poland. The places he visits there form a replacement for his grandmother’s memory and his family’s history. Kurzweil also travels to places that have a

¹⁸³ Berger & Aarons (2017): 13.

¹⁸⁴ Berger & Aarons (2017): 7.

¹⁸⁵ Jilovsky (2015): 73.

¹⁸⁶ Jilovsky (2015): 79.

certain importance to her family. Together with her mother, Kurzweil visits the site of the Displaced Persons Camp in Heidelberg, Germany. Sonya, Kurzweil's mother, was born here and wants to visit it one more time. The house where she was born is now a dance school. Whilst Sonya talks to the owner of the dance school, Kurzweil feels alienated and uncomfortable, wondering if this is "[t]he legacy of diasporic people. Forever displaced from the homes of their parents?".¹⁸⁷ Feelings of displacement, according to Jilovsky, are typically experienced by survivors and their children.¹⁸⁸ However, here Kurzweil reflects on this same feeling. The Displaced Persons Camp, to Kurzweil and her mother, represents the displacement from Bubbe's homeland. Through her journey to this place, Kurzweil bears witness to her grandmother and mother's past. Another example of this is when Kurzweil travels to Israel to claim her "birth right".¹⁸⁹ Here, she visits a Holocaust museum, where she bears witness to her grandmother's past. The visualisation of this museum will be discussed later in this chapter.

3.2. "Am I still Jewish?" Holocaust and Jewish identity

The trauma of the Holocaust is not only transferred over generations, but it also affects the Jewish identity, both collectively and personally. Jeffrey Alexander argues that collective trauma is "the result of this acute discomfort entering into the core of the collectivity's sense of its own identity".¹⁹⁰ It then causes a "fundamental threat" to the group's sense of identity.¹⁹¹ Following this argument, the trauma of the Holocaust has caused a rupture in the Jewish identity. Berger considers the Holocaust to be "a continuing source of contemporary Jewish identity".¹⁹² Nirit Gradwohl Pisano even describes the Holocaust as "the basic infrastructure through which [the] world is shaped" for Holocaust survivors and the generations after.¹⁹³ This raises the question about what this Jewish identity entails and how the Holocaust is a part of this identity, an issue also explored in the graphic memoirs. The characters in the memoirs struggle with how they define "being Jewish" but also how Jewish identity is perceived by

¹⁸⁷ Kurzweil (2016): 183.

¹⁸⁸ Jilovsky (2015): 18.

¹⁸⁹ Kurzweil (2016): 122.

¹⁹⁰ Alexander, Jeffrey et al. (eds.) (2004) *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*. Berkeley: University of California Press: 10.

¹⁹¹ Alexander (2004): 10.

¹⁹² Berger, Alan. (1997) *Children of Job: American Second-Generation Witnesses to the Holocaust*. New York: State University of New York Press: 1.

¹⁹³ Pisano Gradwohl, Nirit. (2012) *Granddaughters of the Holocaust: Never Forgetting what they didn't Experience*. Brighton, Ma: Academic Studies Press: 80.

others. An important part of this struggle is the definition of Jewish as both an ethnicity and a religious group, as some characters admit to not being “practising” Jewish.

This conceptualisation of Jewish identity is first challenged in the survivors’ testimonies, specifically by Gusta in *Mendel’s Daughter* and Bubbe in *Flying Couch*. For Gusta, her faith is an important part of her life, which is shown in the memoir. She shares stories over her nephew’s bar mitzvah and her family during Shabbat. In the opening of the novel, Lemelman states that his mother “lived in a world of magic”.¹⁹⁴ He also shares that his aunt believes that “an angel of God” saved her from the Nazis.¹⁹⁵ This suggests that faith continued to play an important part in Gusta, and her sister’s, life after the war. In addition, the novel contains material references to Judaism, such as drawings of the Torah, and quotes from the Torah. An example of this is given at the ending of the memoir, when the memoir closes with a quote from the Passover Haggadah, which references to the exodus from Egypt “[i]n every generation, one must look upon himself, as if he personally came out of Egypt”.¹⁹⁶ The quote emphasises how history is passed over from generation to generation. However, as it is Lemelman, not Gusta, who has inserted this quote into the narrative, it also shows that Lemelman values his Jewish identity and history. An identity he connects with both the Holocaust and the religious history of Judaism. Aarons states that Lemelman even “contextualizes his identity within the frame of [these] two Jewish narratives: The Holocaust and the Exodus”.¹⁹⁷ Thus, in *Mendel’s Daughter*, Jewish identity is connected to religion, rituals, and holy texts. Despite the anti-Semitism and trauma that Gusta has suffered, she stays true to her faith.

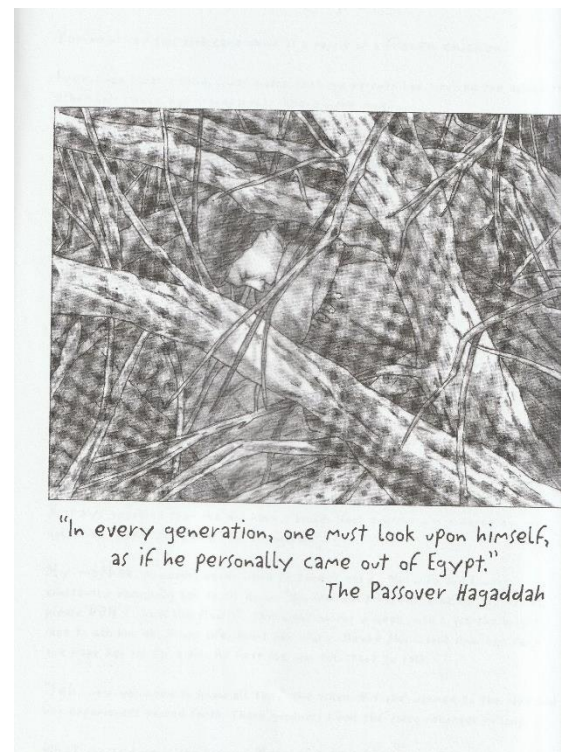


Figure 3.1. (*Mendel’s Daughter*, 219)

¹⁹⁴ Lemelman (2006): 1.

¹⁹⁵ Lemelman (2006): 1.

¹⁹⁶ Lemelman (2006): 219.

¹⁹⁷ Aarons (2019): 60.

This is different for Bubbe in *Flying Couch*, who doubts her identity and beliefs during the war. Whilst Gusta hides in the woods during the war, she never hides her Jewish identity. In contrast, Bubbe only survives the war because she pretends to be a Christian. She is able to do so because, as Bubbe claims, she does not look like a Jew. Bubbe goes to church and takes the communion but claims that “[e]ven though I wasn’t practicing Jewish, I was still a Jew in the heart”.¹⁹⁸ To reinforce this claim, Bubbe tells the story of how she secretly gave bread to a Jewish boy. Although the farmer family with whom she lives forbid her to give him anything, she still does so because of their shared Jewish belief. Bubbe states that she “gave that bread like a secret. I was so scared, but I gave it”.¹⁹⁹ The corresponding image shows Bubbe handing over

the bread to two hands. The image is framed as if she is standing in front of a window, similar to earlier drawings of Bubbe. She is not looking through the window but behind her, almost as if she is looking at the reader. The image and its framing remind the reader that this is a private moment that the reader is witnessing. Bubbe is scared to share her Jewish identity but the reader is made a witness of how she cannot let this identity go. Despite this act, Bubbe starts to doubt her Jewish identity, wondering if she is still Jewish.

I would go to this place which was dark and I’d be alone gathering the woods, and I’d say to myself, what am I? Do I still speak Jewish? And I would try to say a little bit of Yiddish words to myself, but I was so scared.²⁰⁰

This self-doubt is not only a significant moment for Bubbe but also plays an important role in Kurzweil’s own exploration of her Jewish identity. Throughout the narrative, Kurzweil struggles with her Jewish identity. It is a legacy she has inherited but, for Kurzweil, it is impossible to understand what it contains. *Flying Couch* also highlights how different generations have different attitudes toward Judaism. Bubbe, part of the first generation, had to hide her identity which caused her to have a complex relationship with her Jewishness.

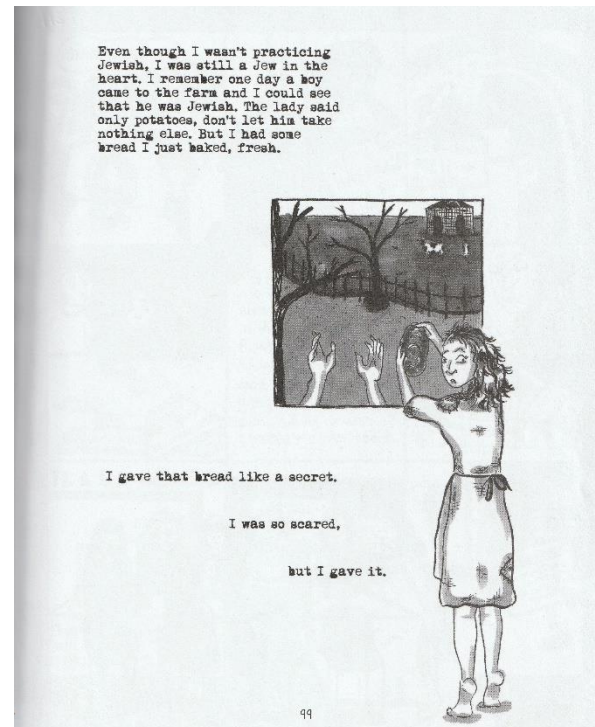


Figure 3.2. (*Flying Couch*, 99)

¹⁹⁸ Kurzweil (2016): 99.

¹⁹⁹ Kurzweil (2016): 99.

²⁰⁰ Kurzweil (2016): 193.

Consequently, Sonya, Kurzweil's mother, learned very little about her Jewish ancestry. She encouraged Kurzweil to study Jewish history and religion because these were "privileges denied to her".²⁰¹ According to Marita Grimwood, this is common for second-generation children. Parents often hid their Jewish identity because they associated it with "persecution rather than a rich and viable cultural identity".²⁰² However, Bubbe is also motivated by survival. She chooses to not go to Israel and her husband chooses to run a non-kosher company because they "have suffered enough".²⁰³ Finally, Kurzweil represents the perspective of the third-generation. She has to learn about Jewish history, her inherited legacy, but also notes that "in my tranquil New England suburb, our greatest privilege was our greatest ignorance."²⁰⁴ Whereas her grandmother and her mother had to struggle to claim their Jewish identity, Kurzweil has the privilege to explore it in freedom, unaware of anti-Semitism and troubled histories. However, it is exactly this freedom that causes Kurzweil's anxiety about her Jewish identity. She wants to understand her history and its impact on her identity.

As Berger notes, third-generation narratives are a manner to both mourn a history they never knew and to understand their Jewish identity.²⁰⁵ According to Aarons and Berger, these narratives often show "a recurring pattern of identity formation, of affectively imagining oneself in others, others in oneself".²⁰⁶ Indeed, *Flying Couch* does so by constantly juxtaposing Bubbe's struggle with her identity with that of Kurzweil. Through the drawings of Bubbe's testimony, Kurzweil tries to place herself in Bubbe's position. Hannah Baker Saltmarsh interprets Bubbe's story about giving the bread to a Jewish boy, in particular "Bubbe's words and the tremendous courage of her empathy" as Kurzweil's definition of what it means to be Jewish.²⁰⁷ Although Baker does not explain her interpretation, Bubbe's story is followed up by a story in which Kurzweil presents multiple interpretations of Jewish identity: the university-wide identity fair.

²⁰¹ Kurzweil (2016): 75.

²⁰² Grimwood, Marita. (2007) *Holocaust Literature of the Second Generation*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan: 16.

²⁰³ Kurzweil (2016): 222.

²⁰⁴ Kurzweil (2016): 77.

²⁰⁵ Berger, Alan (2010) 'Unclaimed Experience: Trauma and Identity in Third Generation Writing about the Holocaust', in: *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies*, Volume 28, Number 3, pp. 149-158: 157.

²⁰⁶ Aarons & Berger (2017): 25.

²⁰⁷ Saltmarsh (2017): 53.

In this story, Kurzweil enrolls at university and is forced to choose “an identity” at the university fair. Various stands are representing different identities such as “lesbian activists” and “Filipinos who dance well”. There is an exclusive fair for “Jews (various)”, already emphasising that there is not one fixed Jewish identity. The various Jewish identities include “ardent Pro-Israel Jew”, “Radical Anti-Zionist Jew”, “Politically and Culturally Apathetic Jew”, and “Expert Educated Jew”.²⁰⁸ Each identity is displayed in an image, including the pros and cons of this specific identity. For example, Kurzweil chooses the “Expert Educated Jew” which includes “a wealth of knowledge” as a pro, but as a con provides a higher chance on an “inevitable existential crisis”. Each identity almost seems fixed, with clear boundaries of what this identity entails and no possibility to change this identity. Kurzweil is forced to choose one, emphasising the impossibility to form an identity of herself. Consequently, with each identity, she also inherits certain expected behaviours and legacies. Dana Mihăilescu interprets Kurzweil’s identity quest in *Flying Couch*, in particular the university fair, as a sign that “the Holocaust is no longer singled out as the only paradigmatic event impacting the identity of the third-generation descendant of a Shoah survivor”.²⁰⁹ In other words, the Holocaust is just another part of Kurzweil’s Jewish identity.

A recurring theme in third-generation narratives is that being Jewish has little to do with religion and is represented more as a cultural identity that one inherits. This is illustrated in *Flying Couch* but also in *We Won’t See Auschwitz* where Dres and his brother are very explicitly not religious. Berger comments that in *We Won’t See Auschwitz* “Jewish identity is presented as an inherited phenomenon having little or nothing to do with religious observance”.²¹⁰ Indeed, this is not only the case for Dres and his brother but also the people they encounter. When Dres is talking to members of TSKZ, a Jewish organisation in Poland,

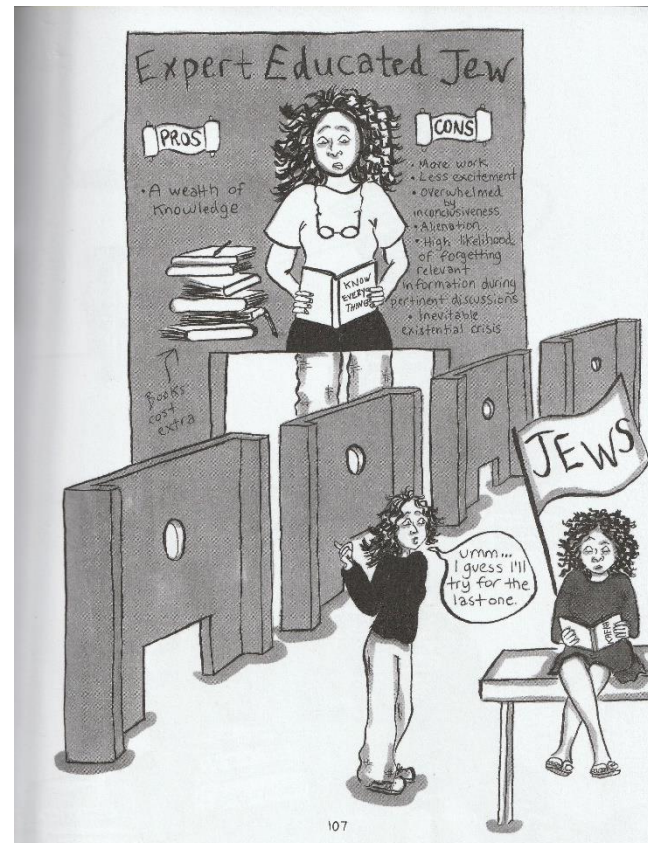


Figure 3.3. (*Flying Couch*, 107)

²⁰⁸ Kurzweil (2016): 105 – 107.

²⁰⁹ Mihăilescu (2018): 104.

²¹⁰ Berger, Alan. (2016) ‘Life After Death: A Third-Generation Journey in Jérémie Dres’s *We Won’t See Auschwitz*’, in: Victoria Aarons (ed.) *Third-Generation Holocaust Narratives: Memory in Memoir and Fiction*. London: Lexington Books, pp. 73 – 88: 80.

they describe being Jewish as “an accident of birth”.²¹¹ Jan Spiewak, a Polish friend of Dres, comments that he only wants a Jewish girlfriend to continue his Jewish legacy “out of duty to my grandparents”.²¹² *We Won't See Auschwitz*, however, also focuses on people rediscovering their Jewish identity. These are people who were unaware of their Jewish ancestors or are only partly Jewish. As a member of TSKZ describes, these people “want to feel Jewish so badly that they go to synagogue”.²¹³ The synagogue, in this context, is presented as a place where someone can affirm their Jewish identity. A rabbi in *We Won't See Auschwitz* states that people “are working to maintain their heritage and this revival of Jewish life”.²¹⁴ Similar to Mihăilescu’s comments about Holocaust not being the only event impacting Jewish identity anymore, *We Won't See Auschwitz* attempts to move beyond the Holocaust as part of the Jewish identity. Aarons and Berger remark that other third-generation narratives also attempt to rebuild the past but state that these are attempts “inadequate” because “they constitute a remote, muted, and muffled knowledge”.²¹⁵ As it is impossible to know and recover everything, a certain gap remains.

In conclusion, even though the memoirs show different attitudes towards Jewishness and Judaism, they all show that characters struggle with their identity. For Bubbe and Gusta, as Holocaust survivors, their identity is a central part of why they have to hide or flee. This results in a complicated relationship with her Jewish identity for Bubbe, but for Gusta, it strengthens her Jewish identity. The third-generation narratives, *Flying Couch* and *We Won't See Auschwitz*, both illustrate being Jewish as more of a cultural identity that one inherits. This causes Kurzweil and Dres to question to what extent the Holocaust is a part of this identity. In addition, they also deal with the pressure of their cultural identity, such as the duty to their grandparents. The following section will further discuss the, sometimes tense, relationship between cultural and individual memory.

3.3. Historical figures, survivor’s testimonies, and collective remembering

Astrid Erll argues that culture and memory converge on two different levels. Firstly, there is the level of what Erll describes as “biological memory” which refers to the idea that memory

²¹¹ Dres (2012): 42.

²¹² Dres (2012): 23.

²¹³ Dres (2012): 43.

²¹⁴ Dres (2012): 43.

²¹⁵ Aarons & Berger (2017): 20.

is never solely individual, but always influenced by “collective contexts”.²¹⁶ Secondly, there is the level of the cultural practices that construct a shared past for a social group. Similarly, Ann Rigney argues that shared pasts are mediated.²¹⁷ She and Erll both describe memories of the past as “the product of public acts of remembrance using a variety of media”.²¹⁸ In addition, Erll states that individual and cultural memory constantly interact. Cultural memory cannot exist without the individual memories and stories that form it, but simultaneously individual memory cannot exist without a cultural memory framework.²¹⁹ This also becomes apparent in *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors*, *Flying Couch*, and *We Won't See Auschwitz*. Throughout the narratives, these graphic memoirs constantly refer to important Jewish figures, other's testimonies, literature, and films. Through the portrayal of these testimonies and figures, the memoirs show precisely this interaction between individual and cultural memory.

A very explicit example of this is given in the chapter “The Meaning of Books” in *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors*. As discussed in the previous chapter, Eisenstein quotes other testimonies, by Elie Wiesel and Primo Levi, throughout her novel. In this chapter she explores her interest in Holocaust literature and films. The chapter opens with Eisenstein's child-figure sitting on a pile of Holocaust books, such as Eva Hoffman's *After Such Knowledge* and Primo Levi's *The Voice of Memory*.²²⁰ The child-figure wonders what would have happened if her parents read her books before she went to bed. This already highlights why Eisenstein is interested in the subject of the Holocaust. She feels as if her parents neglected her as a child as they refused to talk about the Holocaust. As a result, Eisenstein finds company and comfort in books and films. When Eisenstein sees a Holocaust film as a

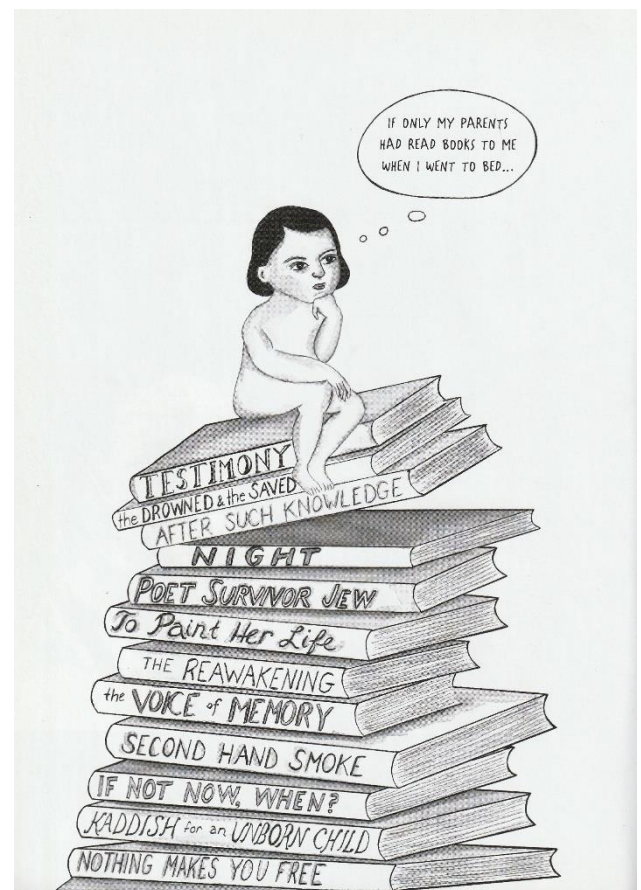


Figure 3.4. (*I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors*, 88)

²¹⁶ Nünning, Ansgar & Astrid Erll. (2008) *Cultural Memory Studies*. Berlin: De Gruyter: 5.

²¹⁷ Nünning & Erll (2008): 5.

²¹⁸ Rigney, Ann. (2005) 'Plenitude, Scarcity, and the Circulation of Cultural Memory', in: *Journal of European Studies*, 35, 1, pp. 11 – 28: 15.

²¹⁹ Nünning & Erll (2008): 4 – 6.

²²⁰ Eisenstein (2008): 88.

young child, it provides her with a sense of familiarity and connects her to her parents' past. Eisenstein states that she reads "books to hear those whose voices have been silenced or lost, to discover what I have not been told".²²¹ Thus, Eisenstein employs a framework of testimonies by others in order to understand the problematic history of the Holocaust and to, ultimately, relate to her parents' troubled past. This relates to Ernst van Alphen's argument that the coherence of Holocaust memory was not necessarily achieved by Holocaust survivors or their children, but rather came from outside. According to Van Alphen, testimonies and public accounts by others provided "the narrative framework in which memory fragments can be integrated".²²² These testimonies were provided by survivors "who were less traumatized than most".²²³ Indeed, Eisenstein's parents appear to be too traumatised to provide her with a necessary framework for the traumatic memories she has inherited. By invoking the memories of others, Eisenstein is able to, at least, relate to their past.

In contrast to *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors*, the portrayal of cultural memory in *Flying Couch* puts more emphasis on the complex relationship between personal and cultural memory. The "Expert Educated Jew", Kurzweil's earlier discussed persona, requires her to read a considerable number of books. Similar to *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors*, the novel includes a drawing of Kurzweil near a pile of books, with Kurzweil being visibly overwhelmed by the large pile. Still, she attempts to read all the books, starting with the Torah. Whilst reading it, Kurzweil is surprised by the sudden appearance of a male figure. She mistakes him for God, but he turns out to be the biblical figure of Jacob, also considered to be the father of the twelve tribes of Israel. Jacob pressures Kurzweil that, as an intellectual Jew, she needs to honour her ancestors and wrestle with the past. However, Jacob is interrupted by the appearance of Doctor Sigmund Freud, also mistaken for God by Kurzweil,

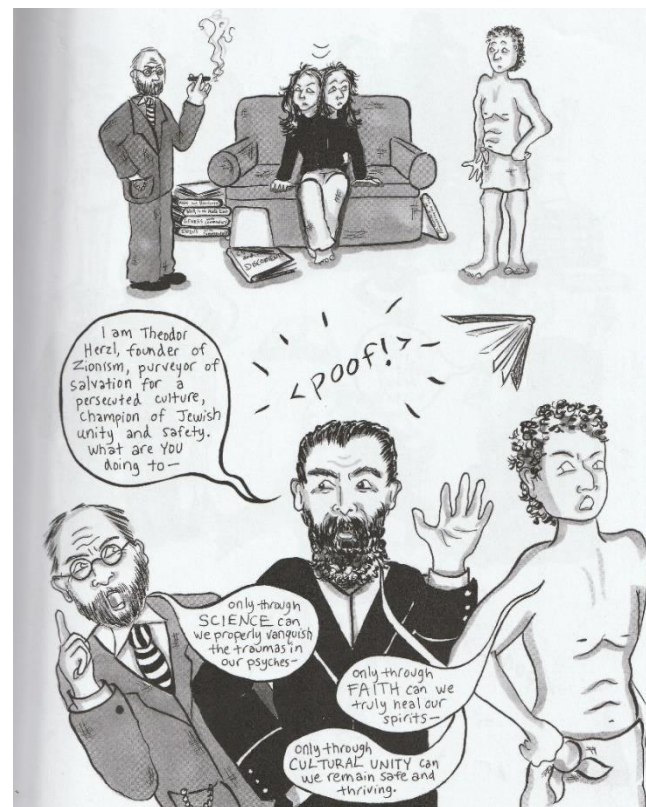


Figure 3.5. (*Flying Couch*, 111)

²²¹ Eisenstein (2006): 96.

²²² Van Alphen, Ernst. (2006) 'Second Generation Testimony, the transmission of Trauma, and Postmemory', in: *Poetics Today*, 27, 2, pp. 473 – 488: 485.

²²³ Van Alphen (2006): 485.

who starts to give unsolicited advice to Kurzweil. He encourages Kurzweil to analyse the details of “your familial life in the context of your American identity”. After Freud, Theodor Herzl, founder of Zionism, appears. The three figures then disagree about Jewish identity and culture in relation to Holocaust trauma. Freud argues that science is the solution for processing trauma, whilst Herzl pleads for cultural unity and Jacob states that only faith can heal. Similar to the identity fair, Kurzweil is again pressured to choose a side in her Jewish identity. Faith, science, and cultural unity all offer a framework to integrate memory and process trauma, but they seem impossible to unite. Aarons argues that these figures pressure Kurzweil’s already “fraught identity”.²²⁴ Mihăilescu interprets the appearance of these figures as an example of Kurzweil’s “transcultural” Jewishness.²²⁵ However, when Kurzweil explains to the figures that she just wants to draw pictures, three Jewish comic artists appear, namely Will Eisner (*A Contract with God*, 1978), Harvey Pekar (*American Splendor*, 1976), and Art Spiegelman (*Maus*, 1980 - 1991). With the appearance of all of these figures, *Flying Couch* illustrates the vast cultural legacy in which Kurzweil places herself, both as a Jew and as a comic artist. Indeed, these figures show that her identity is fraught and although Kurzweil tries, it seems impossible to detach herself from this legacy.

However, testimonies, films, and literature are not the only mediated memory products that are explored in the graphic memoirs. As the following sections will show the graphic memoirs pay great attention to physical memory sites, especially in narratives of return. Similar to testimonies, films, and literature, these memory sites are always constructed and mediated forms of remembering.

3.4. Sites of memory: synagogues, cemeteries and Jewish life in *We Won't See Auschwitz*

As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, in *We Won't See Auschwitz* Jérémie Dres notes that nothing of Jewish memory seems to be rebuilt in Poland. He and his brother travelled to Poland hoping to find physical places of Jewish memory. During their journey, they visit various places with significance to Jewish remembrance. The graphic memoir portrays what scholar Pierre Nora describes as “lieux de mémoire”, sites of memory. In doing so, it calls attention to the complicated construction of these sites of memory and the role of “selective” remembering. *Flying Couch* and *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors* also

²²⁴ Aarons (2019): 142.

²²⁵ Mihăilescu (2018): 103 – 105.

highlight this selective remembering, and the complex relationship between the personal and the collective, through the portrayal of museums. This section will focus on the portrayal of architecture and cemeteries in *We Won't See Auschwitz*, whilst the next section will explore the portrayal of museums in the other graphic memoirs.

Sites of memory, as Rigney notes, are a complicated concept that is “the product of a selection process that has privileged some “figures of memory” above others”.²²⁶ Similarly, Jilovsky states that memory sites particularly show “what and how people wish to remember”.²²⁷ It is also important to note that the term not only refers to physical places but also “museums, archives, cemeteries, festivals, anniversaries, treaties, depositions, monuments, sanctuaries, [and] fraternal orders”.²²⁸ However, *We Won't See Auschwitz* focuses mostly on physical locations. Dres's idea of the sites of memory he wants to visit can be related to Jilovsky's conceptualisation of Holocaust memory sites. She states that Holocaust sites are not limited to the Holocaust but also “encompass places of pre-war Jewish life as well of those where Jews were killed or imprisoned during the Holocaust”.²²⁹ It is precisely this pre-war Jewish life that Dres intends to explore. At the beginning of the memoir, Dres explains that he thought that Jewish people in Poland were just “archival images” and that he is surprised to learn that there are still Jews in Poland. He states that he wants to “bear witness to the future of an entire people, to life before and after”.²³⁰ This Jewish life before the war, for Dres, is represented in buildings with significance for Jewish life. As Gorrara notes, places and architecture “act as a substitute of memory” in *We Won't See Auschwitz*.²³¹ With the passing of his grandmother, Dres attempts to continue her memory by visiting these places.

²²⁶ Rigney, Ann. (2010) ‘The Dynamics of Remembrance: Texts Between Monumentality and Morphing’, in: Erll and Rigney (eds.) *Cultural Memory Studies*. Berlin: De Gruyter: 345

²²⁷ Jilovsky (2015): 3.

²²⁸ Young, James. (1993) *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press: 5.

²²⁹ Jilovsky (2015): 6.

²³⁰ Dres (2012): 12.

²³¹ Gorrara (2018): 118.

Not only is it interesting how places of memory are narrated in *We Won't See Auschwitz*, but also if and how they are visualised. *We Won't See Auschwitz* opens with Dres walking through the old town of Warsaw. Dres notes that this "Old Town" is not at all historic since it was originally destroyed during the war. Dres narrates how the historic town was restored to its original form after the war, something that makes Dres feel uneasy because "the nearly total reproduction of a part of history for Poland's greater glory results from a selective remembering".²³² As Rigney argues, in sites of memory some "figures of memory" are valued more than others. Although the old town functions as a memory site in Warsaw, some part of its history is left out. Jan Spiewak, a Polish friend of Dres, explains that the Jewish ghetto was poor and "it didn't hold much interest".²³³ He tells that the town was rebuilt based upon "Canaletto's paintings from the 18th century, a glorious time".²³⁴

Here the process of selection in remembering is illustrated. The old town is rebuilt corresponding with a certain image Poland wanted to carry out for themselves. The corresponding image shows a drawing of the same neighbourhood in different moments in time. Firstly, the ruins of the old town during or directly after the war. A statue of a saint holding a cross forms a recognizable landmark. The image of the ruins is partly covered by a hand holding a photograph of the neighbourhood. Based upon the horse carriage in the photograph, this is the neighbourhood before the war. The photograph is from Dres's grandmother and shows the neighbourhood in her time. Below these images, is an image of the current historic town. The position of the images invites the reader to look for the differences between them and to see for themselves which choices have been made in rebuilding the town.

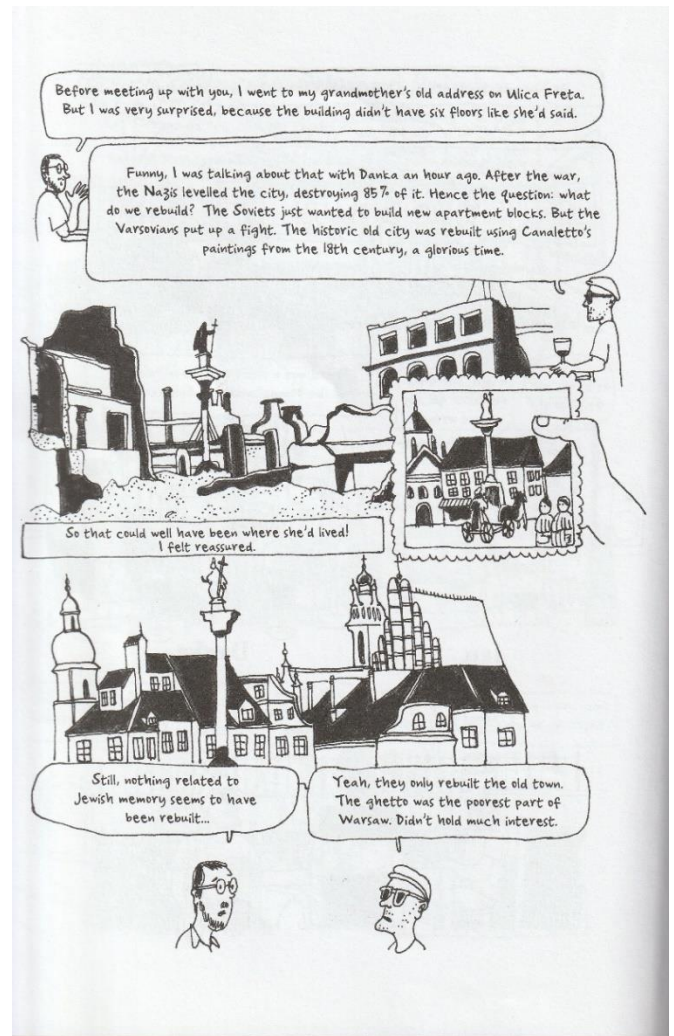


Figure 3.6. (*We Won't See Auschwitz*, 16)

²³² Dres (2012): 2.

²³³ Dres (2012): 16.

²³⁴ Dres (2012): 16.

This selective remembering is a subject that returns through the narrative. A significant illustration of it is given through *We Won't See Auschwitz*'s portrayal of Jewish cemeteries. Dres and his brother visit several cemeteries during their travels, from which two have great personal meaning for them: the cemetery of their maternal great-grandparents and that of their paternal great-grandfather. In relation to sites of memory, cemeteries are interesting for multiple reasons. Firstly, they form places of mourning and remembering for both personal and cultural memory. As Jilovsky states, cemeteries strip Holocaust victims from their anonymity by giving them, if possible, a name and a grave.²³⁵ Furthermore, the construction of memory sites is also visible in cemeteries. For example, Jewish cemeteries existed before the Holocaust as sites of memory and mourning for Jewish people. However, the traumatic history of the Holocaust has changed their memorial status, changing them to Holocaust memorials. As Jilovsky argues, these cemeteries function as “memorials for individuals whose death was incorporated into established societal rituals”.²³⁶ Elizabethada Wright states that cemeteries also illustrate the role of forgetting in remembering. Although cemeteries record dates of birth and death, they do not store the individual memories of people mourning their loved ones.²³⁷ And, as *We Won't See Auschwitz* illustrates, even recorded data can be lost or incorrect. However, for the second- and third-generation they can form a connection to Jewish pre-Holocaust life.²³⁸

It is this connection that Dres and his brother are looking for when they visit the cemetery of Warsaw in the chapter *The Jungle of the Forgotten*. Here, with the help of the cemetery's director, they go looking for their maternal great-grandparent's grave. The cemetery is the largest of Jewish cemetery in Europe. For Dres, this means that he finally found a place that “bears witness to how large the Jewish community once was”.²³⁹ In line with Jilovsky's argument, Dres indeed considers the cemetery as evidence of Jewish life and culture before the war. His personal connection to this memory site is illustrated when Dres finds his great-grandmother's grave. Upon finding the grave, he immediately recalls his grandmother's stories about her childhood. The grave forms a connection to his past, something that Dres himself emphasises when they find his great-grandfather's grave. His grave is harder to find because, as the director explains, some of the data was missing. This is

²³⁵ Jilovsky (2015): 78 – 80.

²³⁶ Jilovsky (2015): 78.

²³⁷ Wright, Elizabethada. (2005) 'Rhetorical spaces in memorial places: The cemetery as a rhetorical memory place/space', *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, vol. 35, no. 4, pages 51-81.

²³⁸ Jilovsky (2015): 78.

²³⁹ Dres (2012): 95.

caused by the grave almost being destroyed. It is shown to be broken down and overgrown with weeds. Dres notes that this grave is the evidence of his family's existence in Poland, it signifies "the last traces of our family in Poland".²⁴⁰

Whereas Dres and his brother consider their visit to the cemetery in Warsaw to be evidence of the once thriving Jewish community in Poland, their experience is very different when they find their paternal great-grandfather's grave. The brothers anxiously travel to the town Żelechów, where their great-grandfather lived, because they have been warned that "[a]nti-Semitism may have vanished from the big cities, but it's still around in the country".²⁴¹ This feeling of anxiety overshadows their trip as Dres and his brother feel as if they do not belong in Żelechów. They try to leave as soon as possible until they accidentally stumble upon what a field with "weird stones".²⁴² In contrast to their visit to the Warsaw Cemetery, which included a tour by the director, Dres's brother nervously states "let's not hang about" when entering this cemetery. The corresponding image shows the brothers entering a field that is overgrown with weeds and feels abandoned. Dres describes how he feels that he is doing something forbidden. While the cemetery in Warsaw shows that there are initiatives to restore Jewish memory, this cemetery illustrates that choices have been made in what to restore and what not. It also depicts the different attitudes within a country towards remembering and forgetting.

²⁴⁰ Dres (2012): 99.

²⁴¹ Dres (2012): 120.

²⁴² Dres (2012): 128.

As Dres finds the Jewish graves, he describes how he feels “like I’ve been given a divine mission: photograph these graves while there’s still time”.²⁴³ The memoir then inserts a full page in which the graves are portrayed. They are broken, overgrown with weeds, and inscribed in Hebrew. The corresponding text notes that “Here, in this abandoned field, lie the traces of a community that lived in Żelechów for more than 100 years, traces fading to general indifference”.²⁴⁴ Dres’s experience at this cemetery corresponds with Jilovsky’s description of how Holocaust survivors experience Holocaust memory sites in Poland. According to Jilovsky, people often perceive Holocaust sites to give “unmediated access to the Holocaust”. Whilst people are aware that films and literature are mediated, they are not always aware of this mediation in physical sites. As a result, they are often confronted “in abundance” with the “destruction of Jewish life and culture”.²⁴⁵ Similarly, Edward James Young notes that people “come to know a

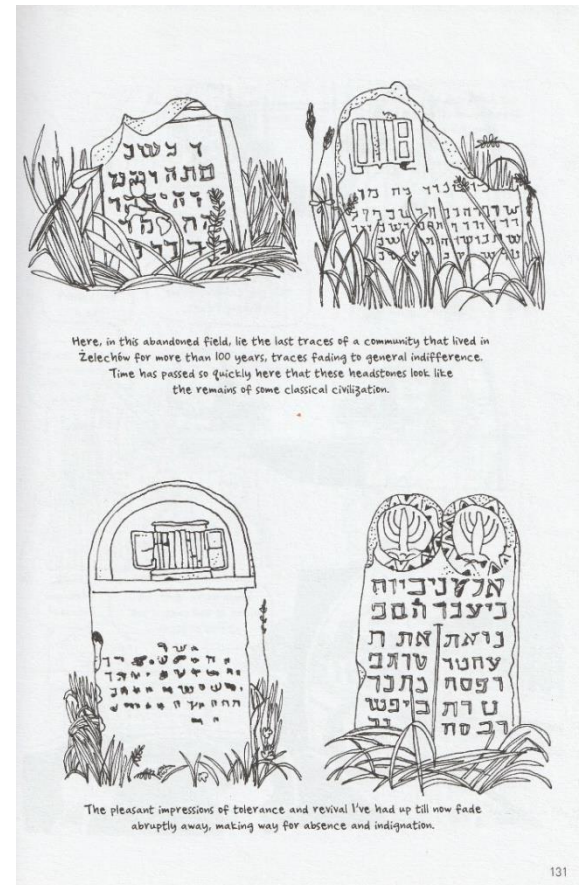


Figure 3.7. (*We Won't See Auschwitz*, 131)

millennium of Jewish civilization in Poland by its absence and the rubble of its destruction: dilapidated synagogues, *uprooted and plowed-under cemeteries* [...]”.²⁴⁶ It is this sense of absence that Dres feels at the cemetery. He describes that “the pleasant impressions of tolerance and revival I’ve had up till now fade abruptly away, making way for absence and indignation”.²⁴⁷ His experience at the cemetery in Żelechów overshadow his hope for the restoration of Jewish memory. The contrast between city and countryside within one country is once again visible. It shows that cultural memory is by no means a narrative shared or accepted by everyone. Gorrara describes the portrayal of Żelechów’s cemetery as a representation of “a localized memory of denial”.²⁴⁸

²⁴³ Dres (2012): 130.

²⁴⁴ Dres (2012): 131.

²⁴⁵ Jilovsky (2012): 78 – 80.

²⁴⁶ Young, James. (1994) ‘Jewish Memory in Poland’, in: Hartman, Geoffrey H. (ed.) *Holocaust Remembrance: The Shapes of Memory*. Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell: 215. Emphasis mine.

²⁴⁷ Dres (2012): 131.

²⁴⁸ Gorrara (2018): 119.

Thus, the cemeteries in Poland illustrate the juxtaposition between restoring memory and forgetting. In addition, Dres's wish to find traces of his family's memory is in contrast with the abandoned places he sometimes finds. However, the restoration of memory is not only something that Dres wants to do in Poland. *We Won't See Auschwitz* also closes with Dres visiting a cemetery, namely the cemetery in France where his grandmother Téma is buried. Dres's journey starts and ends with her. Upon visiting her grave, in the chapter *Putting Things Back in Order*, Dres describes the origins of his grandmother's name. When Téma fled to France a mistranslation changed her name from Téma Barab to Thèrèse Baran. The latter is the name that is inscribed upon a grave, which is not the same name as her parents' graves have. Dres states that "these tiny acts of carelessness can impact a family's destiny forever. Perhaps this story will help put things in order".²⁴⁹ Thus, not only did Dres want to retrace his grandparents' past, he also wants to restore his family's name. The memoir then concludes with a drawing of Téma's grave next to that of her grandparents. Their faces are drawn upon their graves, emphasising that these graves are not lost in abundance and anonymity. Consequently, the graves also read the right name, Barab, as Dres has literally restored his grandmother's name.

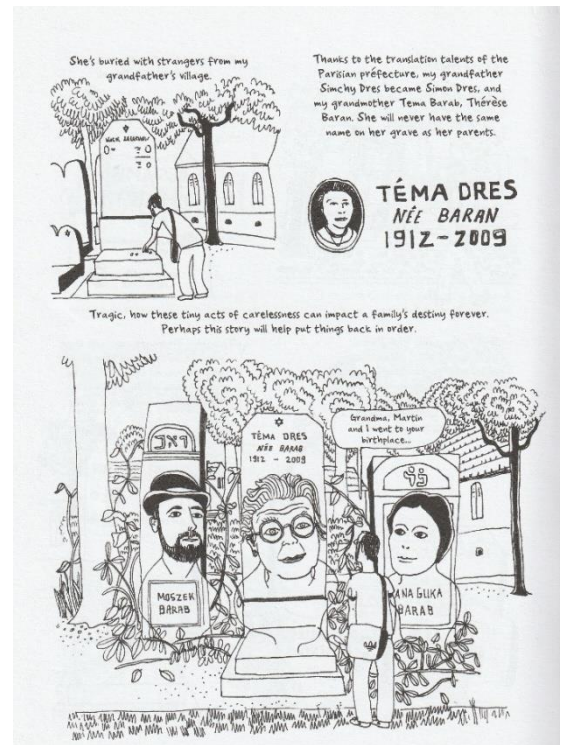


Figure 3.8. (*We Won't See Auschwitz*, 186)

3.5. "Respect the history" Holocaust museums and selective remembering

Whilst in *We Won't See Auschwitz* Dres is confronted with the complicated issue of cultural memory and selective remembering, a similar issue is highlighted in *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors* and *Flying Couch* through the portrayal of Holocaust museums. In both graphic memoirs the main characters visit a Holocaust museum. Their motivations to visit a museum differ, Eisenstein is invited to the Holocaust Museum in Washington to celebrate its tenth anniversary, whereas Kurzweil visits Yad Vashem in Israel as part of a school trip. However, both memoirs raise the question how these museums are visualised and how they experience their visit.

²⁴⁹ Dres (2012): 186.

Like all examples of cultural memory, museums are also mediated. Furthermore, Aleida Assman perceives museums to be examples of what she describes as active and passive remembering. Different institutions have different modes of remembering. Although not all memories are forgotten, they are also not always remembered actively: “[t]he institutions of active memory preserve the *past as present* while the institutions of passive memory preserve the *past as past*”.²⁵⁰ Museums, Assman argues, juxtapose these two forms of remembering. Museums are never neutral because choices have been made in what is or is not exhibited. They present certain objects to their viewers which, as Assman argues “are arranged to catch attention and make a lasting impression”.²⁵¹ However, the very same museum also has other objects which are not accessible to the public. Assman distinguishes this as canon, which is the active memory, and archive, which is the “passively stored memory”.²⁵² Thus, museums represent what is actively remembered and what is not forgotten nor actively remembered, but stored. Similarly, archives also preserve memory.

In relation to, *I Was the Child of Holocaust Survivors* and *Flying Couch* this issue of mediated museums and memory is even more complicated. Firstly, as already illustrated in *We Won't See Auschwitz*, (grand)children of Holocaust survivors' experience can juxtapose with the cultural memory presented. Secondly, the memoirs not only narrate the visit of Eisenstein and Kurzweil to the museums, these visits are also portrayed. The museums are copied into the memoir. However, the reader cannot be sure if what is copied is exactly how the museum is in real-life. The image can change what objects are exhibited, how they are positioned, what texts are shown in the museum. Similar to how museums make choices in their exhibition, there could also have been choices in what parts of the museum are shown in the memoir.

As mentioned, in *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors* Eisenstein visits the Holocaust Museum because of its tenth anniversary. Another motivation for Eisenstein is the fact that, as mentioned earlier, was unable to accompany her mother on her visit to Auschwitz. For Eisenstein, her narrative of return is presented in the form of the museum visit. In line with Jilovsky's theory on return narratives with parents, Eisenstein also notes that she would have experienced her visit differently if her mother had been there. Yet, Eisenstein notes, she was

²⁵⁰ Assman, Aleida. (2010) 'Canon and archive', in: Erll, Astrid. & Ansgar Nünning (ed.) *Cultural Memory Studies*. Berlin: De Gruyter: 98. Emphasis in the original.

²⁵¹ Assman (2010): 98.

²⁵² Assman (2010): 98 – 99.

“unprepared in some way for the enormity of what I would see”.²⁵³ Remarkably, Eisenstein does not illustrate her visit to the museum but instead only uses words to describe the experience. She begins with narrating the set-up of the anniversary, describing how the museum has prepared multiple tables. Each table represents a Polish or German camp from the Holocaust. As Eisenstein sits down at the Bergen-Belsen table, this almost represents her narrative of return. Although she does not return to the literal place where her parents have been, she meets others who have been there and share their experience. One of the visitors knew Eisenstein’s parents from Auschwitz and hugs her. Eisenstein describes that she feels that she has “entered a place where time had begun to measure loss and my father had begun to move forward”.²⁵⁴

After this meeting, Eisenstein enters the museum exhibition. She describes the exhibition as a place that carefully documents the Holocaust and Jewish trauma, yet paradoxically she feels as if she is surrounded by chaos:

I spend the rest of the afternoon in the museum, which eloquently guides its visitors through the story of the Holocaust. There is overwhelming information to read: dates, European-Jewish populations of towns before the war, after the war, numbers, numbing numbers. [...] This is not a place of hope and impossible to leave. As I walked through room after room of carefully displayed and documented history, I was surrounded by a world in which order could not be found. The past my parents had lived through was all around me.²⁵⁵

Although the museum has attempted to construct a coherent narrative about the Holocaust, Eisenstein is still unable to process this narrative. Her account of her museum visit remains very factual, except for her last remark on a world without order. This factual description, in words instead of images, might show that the memoir is unable to visualise and express Eisenstein’s experience.

In contrast to *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors*, *Flying Couch* barely uses text in the segment where Kurzweil visits a Holocaust museum. Instead, it mostly relays on the visual representation of the museum, with the only text being the text that is in the museum itself and a short dialogue between Kurzweil and the museum security guard. The museum that Kurzweil visits is not explicitly mentioned, but the reader can reconstruct that Kurzweil is

²⁵³ Eisenstein (2006): 175.

²⁵⁴ Eisenstein (2006): 176.

²⁵⁵ Eisenstein (2006): 177 – 178.

visiting the Yad Vashem museum in Jerusalem, Israel. Firstly, because the story before this segment is about Kurzweil's trip to Israel. Secondly, because the last drawing is the Hall of Names which is similar to the Hall of Names in Yad Vashem in appearance. In the first drawing, Kurzweil is shown photographing a map of Warsaw. The security guard then points out that it is not allowed to make photographs, shouting to Kurzweil that she needs to "respect the history".²⁵⁶ The rest of the images then show Kurzweil walking through the museum, uncovering this "history". An important detail here is that the text is not very readable. The reader can see the names of the rooms that Kurzweil walks into, but the explanatory signs in the museums are not readable. Kurzweil is shown reading a list of names, looking at Holocaust photographs, and other rooms. Her expressions show her to be overwhelmed and impressed. The rest of the layout of the memoir also emphasises this. Throughout the museum segment, Kurzweil shrinks as the museum rooms and the displayed objects become bigger than her. In one room the clothing and shoes of the Holocaust victims are displayed and shown to literally drown Kurzweil. She then almost seems to fall through this pile of shoes into the next room, the Hall of Names. This room, its image extending over two pages, is visualised as a sky full of stars and photographs, floating around and almost consuming Kurzweil. On the one hand, this seems to emphasise how all the names and victims overwhelm Kurzweil. On the other hand, it also emphasises the magnitude of the trauma, as something that affects the universe. In contrast to *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors* Kurzweil never verbally reflects on how the museum visit made her feel. The drawings are used to visualise her feelings and experience, more than that they give a literal representation of the museum. After the museum, Kurzweil stays with her

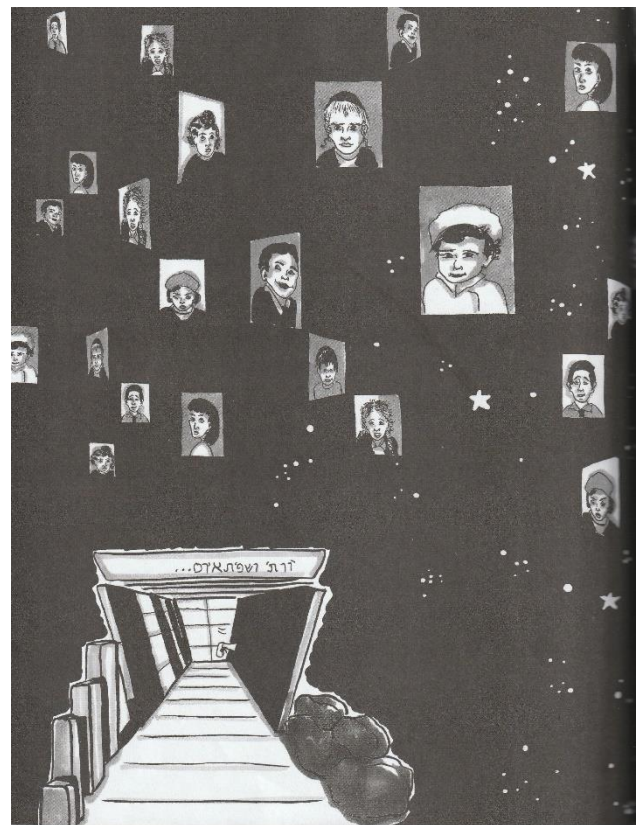


Figure 3.9. (*Flying Couch*, 145)

²⁵⁶ Kurzweil (2016): 142.

family in Israel for a while. After she leaves, she does reflect that it is a “luxury to be a tourist, in your own home”.²⁵⁷ Bearing witness to the Holocaust, even though it is through a museum visit, appears to be too overwhelming for Kurzweil.

Through the visualisation of the museums, *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors* and *Flying Couch* illustrate the tensed relationship between collective and personal remembering. Although the museums offer a carefully documented narrative of the Holocaust, both memoirs visualise or narrate the experience as overwhelming and chaotic. As a result of the trauma they have inherited, Eisenstein and Kurzweil do not seem to perceive the Holocaust as a comprehensible narrative.

Conclusion

This chapter has analysed at the visualisation of personal memory and trauma in relation to collective memory and trauma. Specifically, this chapter looked at the generational remembering, Jewish identity and culture, and memory sites. As mentioned in this chapter, collective and personal memory are intertwined and constantly interact with each other. The graphic memoirs reflected on this, sometimes tense, relationship between the collective and the personal. For example, the third-generation narratives *Flying Couch* and *We Won't See Auschwitz* struggled with the question of the Holocaust was part of their Jewish identity and the cultural expectations they inherited with their identity. *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors* and *Flying Couch* illustrate the interaction between collective and personal remembering through the incorporation of other testimonies, historical figures, and novels in their narratives. They also visualise two different positions, Eisenstein needs these testimonies to relate to the past whereas Kurzweil feels pressured by them.

A common theme within the various graphic memoir was the visualisation of memory sites, such as cemeteries and museums. By doing so, the memoirs position themselves within the context of a certain cultural memory. They also illustrate the different experiences and perspectives between characters and how the Holocaust is presented. This is mainly visible in *We Won't See Auschwitz* where Dres's experience differs with some of the memory sites in Poland. This also shows that memory, and cultural memory, is a constructed narrative that is not shared by everyone. Collective memory, even traumatic collective memory, is an act of selection.

²⁵⁷ Kurzweil (2016): 146.

Conclusion

The introduction of this thesis quoted Gusta Lemelman's statement, to her son Martin Lemelman, that "sometimes your memories are not your own".²⁵⁸ Gusta, who is a Holocaust survivor, refers to the legacy of trauma that her son has inherited as the second-generation. The representation of this intergenerational trauma in graphic memoirs, both in its visual and verbal narrative, was the issue at discussion in this thesis. Scholars such as Victoria Aarons and Alan Berger have explored how second- and third-generation narratives give "voice" to inherited memory in Holocaust narratives.²⁵⁹ They argue that for survivor testimonies memory is fragmented and trauma is characterised by its unspeakability. For second- and third-generation narratives memory is present through its absence. Hillary Chute and Nancy Pedri have researched traumatic graphic narratives, which have the ability to juxtapose past and present.²⁶⁰ Notably, Chute has argued that the language of comics has the possible ability to visualise trauma and make it visible.²⁶¹ Despite the rise in studies in trauma representation in graphic narratives and generational trauma, there has been little research into the representation of intergenerational trauma in graphic narratives about the Holocaust. This thesis aimed to fill this gap by asking how second- and third-generation narratives visualise intergenerational trauma of the Holocaust. Specifically, this thesis has analysed *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors* (2006) by Bernice Eisenstein and *Mendel's Daughter* (2006) by Martin Lemelman, both second-generation perspectives, and *Flying Couch* (2016) by Amy Kurzweil and *We Won't See Auschwitz* (2012) by Jérémie Dres, both third-generation perspectives. The research question was answered through a close-reading of the graphic memoirs, analysing how they visualised personal trauma and memory, employed intermediality in their graphic narratives, and how they visualised collective memory and trauma.

The first chapter explored how the graphic memoirs visualised personal trauma, both that of the survivor and of subsequent generations. It showed that the graphic memoirs mimicked trauma through the use of fragmentation in narrative, perspective, and temporality. Each of the memoirs has a non-linear narrative containing flashbacks and flashforwards. For example, *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors* defined memory as something that is not

²⁵⁸ Lemelman (2006): 4.

²⁵⁹ See Berger & Aarons (2017), Aarons (2019), and Berger (1997).

²⁶⁰ See Chute (2008), Chute (2010), and Pedri (2017).

²⁶¹ Chute (2010): 2 – 3.

fixed, which was illustrated in the thematic, episodic structure of the narrative. *Mendel's Daughter*, *Flying Couch*, and *We Won't See Auschwitz* provided a layered perspective by incorporating survivors' testimonies, multiple narrators, and parallel narratives. Each of these memoirs posits the question of whose story is being told. Where does one story, that of the second- or third-generation, start and the other, that of the survivor, end? By asking these questions, the memoirs illustrate that intergenerational trauma itself is a complicated web of narratives that extend over time and space. In other words, these memoirs illustrate that trauma is not limited to temporalities but instead, as Dori Laub argues, it is an event without a beginning or an end.²⁶² It blurs past, present, and future.

Contrary to Hillary Chute's argument that graphic narratives have the ability to visualise trauma, the analysis in chapter one demonstrated that visualising trauma remains an impossible task. Although the memoirs attempted to make "the unseen visible", to quote Amy Kurzweil's memoir, certain images remain invisible. *Flying Couch* and *Mendel's Daughter* both contained images in which the characters, specifically their faces, were not visible. A common trope is the covering of eyes, visualising what Aarons described as the refusal to "bear witness". However, this covering of the eyes can also illustrate that, although memoirs can try to connect with the survivor's experience, they can never fully see or experience what the survivor experienced. This relates to the idea that both second- and third-generation writers deal with a gap in memory. Furthermore, *We Won't See Auschwitz* characters refused to name or talk about Auschwitz. Consequently, although the memoir contains a survivor's testimony, no images visualised the Holocaust or Auschwitz. Instead, the memoir almost only illustrated modern-day Poland. Lastly, chapter one discussed the notion of absent memory in *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors*, which was illustrated through the use of shadows and ghosts.

The second chapter paid attention to how intermediality is deployed in the representation of trauma, focusing specifically on photography but also on maps, archival documents, and objects. The chapter demonstrated that *Mendel's Daughter* and *We Won't See Auschwitz* included reproduced photographs and drawings of photographs to claim authenticity. This corresponds with Elisabeth El Refaie's argument that graphic narratives frequently incorporate photography, which is often perceived to be an objective medium.²⁶³ Through this the memoirs not only represented their trauma as authentic; they also reminded

²⁶² Felman & Laub (1992): 62.

²⁶³ El Refaie (2012): 138 – 139.

the reader that the characters in the memoirs were real people. However, the memoirs also subverted the idea of photography as objective and illustrated that this is also a subjective medium. In the graphic memoirs, photographs were edited, framed, and accompanied by commentaries that illustrated this. As Nancy Pedri noted, photographs not only have a referential function but also story-based. In this case, the photographs showed that the act of writing about oneself is also an act of selection. Furthermore, the chapter analysed *Flying Couch*'s visualisation of maps and floor plans in the narrative. Although El Refaie has argued that maps also function as a manner to claim authenticity, the maps in *Flying Couch* proofed to be highly subjective through for example accompanying commentaries and framing. In this memoir, the maps show how Kurzweil relates herself to different places. Scholars such as Esther Jilovsky, Victoria Aarons and Alan L. Berger have argued that second, but in particular, third-generation narratives exist of both literal and metaphorical journeys. These maps in *Flying Couch* visualise the metaphorical journey that Kurzweil undertakes in her narrative.

The last chapter of this thesis analysed the visualisation of collective memory and trauma in relation to personal trauma and memory. In comparison to the first chapter, this chapter looked at if and how the graphic memoirs placed themselves in the broader context of collective remembering. Central to this is Astrid Erll's argument that individual and collective memory are always intertwined and cannot exist without each other, as individual memory is often influenced by collective memory and collective memory is formed through individual memories.²⁶⁴ However, the analysis of the graphic memoirs illustrated that this relationship is sometimes tensed as individual traumatic experiences can differ vastly from the collective memory narrative.

The most central and obvious collective identity that these memoirs deal with is that of the Jewish identity and culture in relation to the Holocaust. The memoirs all ask the question of what it means to be Jewish after the Holocaust and if, and to what extent, the Holocaust is a part of this identity. *Mendel's Daughter* and *Flying Couch* illustrated two different survivors' perspectives on Jewish identity. For Gusta, in *Mendel's Daughter*, her faith was ultimately strengthened by the traumatic experience of the Holocaust, which was visualised by the incorporation of religious symbols, texts, and references. *Flying Couch* showed that for some survivors, such as Bubbe, the Holocaust made them question their faith. The memoir also showed that second-generation survivors, such as Kurzweil's mother, often learned nothing

²⁶⁴ Nünning, Ansgar & Astrid Erll. (2008) *Cultural Memory Studies*. Berlin: De Gruyter : 5.

about their historical and religious identity. In third-generation narratives, *We Won't See Auschwitz* and *Flying Couch* the main characters perceive being Jewish as a cultural identity that they have inherited and try to preserve out of duty to their grandparents.

Places and memory sites play a significant role in these graphic memoirs, for both second- and third-generation narratives. *We Won't See Auschwitz* and *Flying Couch* both contain literal journeys of return, for example to Displaced Person Camps and Poland. *Mendel's Daughter* is an imaginative journey of return, visualising Gusta's journey of survival. Except for *Mendel's Daughter*, each of the memoirs illustrates memory sites related to Jewish memory or the Holocaust. *We Won't See Auschwitz* focuses on rebuilding Jewish memory in Poland, an attempt to move beyond the trauma of the Holocaust. However, ultimately, the memoir illustrates that collective remembering is a selective remembering. Although some memory sites are rebuilt, others are forgotten and abandoned. Other memory sites, such as museums, offer mediated, carefully documented access to the Holocaust. Despite this careful documentation, museums can still not fully visualise or materialise the traumatic experience of Holocaust survivors. The analysis in this chapter also demonstrated that *Flying Couch* and *We Won't See Auschwitz* include places and memory sites more frequently than the other two memoirs. Because they are third-generation narratives

In general, it can be concluded that the graphic memoirs visualise intergenerational memory and trauma as multi-layered and juxtaposed. The nature of the graphic narrative, such as its ability to juxtapose perspectives and temporalities, ensures that the memoirs show that intergenerational trauma is not unambiguous, but a complex web of relationships that are at odds with each other. As second- and third-generation narratives, these memoirs are not able to detach themselves from the survivor's perspective. Instead, the memoirs each include survivors' testimonies, exemplifying how their memory and trauma are inherently connected to each other. As a result, each memoir raises the question of whose trauma is narrated. Where does one story begin and the other end? This is complicated by the graphic narrative's possibility to juxtapose narratives, through both text and image. Another example of doubling perspectives is the inclusion of intermedial transpositions and references, such as photography. The third-generation narratives, *Flying Couch* and *We Won't See Auschwitz*, attempt to create space for other narratives besides that of the Holocaust. *We Won't See Auschwitz* tries to represent Jewish culture beyond the Holocaust and without mentioning Auschwitz. *Flying Couch* attempts to narrate other anxieties and questions of identity. However, ultimately both memoirs find that they first need to retrace the past and cannot

answer these questions of identity and culture without mentioning the trauma and memory they have inherited.

Through the visualisation of memory sites, such as cemeteries and museums, the memoirs also illustrate the tense relationship between intergenerational, personal, and collective memory. The constructed narrative of collective memory, and the mediated memory sites, do not always correspond with the individual experiences of memory and trauma. The careful way in which museums document the Holocaust, for example, does not correspond with the chaos and absence of memory that the second- and third-generation narratives describe.

Through their visualisation of intergenerational memory as a complicated web, the memoirs seem to raise the question if it is possible to overcome the unrepresentability of trauma and leave behind the intergenerational Holocaust trauma. The narratives demand to know what this intergenerational trauma entails and what, as second- and third-generation narratives, their place is in this trauma. However, none of these memoirs answers these questions, and neither of them completes their story. The memoirs do not offer closure or an epiphany. This illustrates how, despite the attempts to visualise trauma, it still remains an open, psychological wound. *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors* perhaps explains this most clearly when Eisenstein states about her parents' trauma that "[i]t is beyond my reach, perhaps even theirs, to know the full extent of their loss".²⁶⁵

Reflection and suggestions for further research

Due to the small scope of this research, only four memoirs written by second- and third-generation survivors could be analysed. Naturally, there is a much larger field of graphic memoirs about the Holocaust. Therefore, it would be interesting to research the visualisation and representation of intergenerational memory on a much larger scale. Through this, more concrete results on the differences and similarities in the visualisation of intergenerational memory could be achieved.

Furthermore, this thesis used a close-reading as a methodology, focusing on both visual and verbal narrative. However, in terms of visual narrative analysis, this thesis paid little attention to the specific size of panels, panel frames, and gutters, the space between

²⁶⁵ Eisenstein (2006): 178.

panels. One of the reasons for this is that the graphic memoirs often lack visible frames. In addition, the chosen method of close-reading combined with the theories and concepts of Jilovsky, Assman, and Aarons and Berger offered little space for analysing these formal aspects of the graphic narrative. Another methodology, perhaps one offered by Scott McCloud, could have offered more insight into the narrative structure of the graphic memoirs. Moreover, the theoretical framework of this thesis did not include theories on Judaism and Jewish practices. The graphic memoir, however, did refer to Jewish texts, customs, and beliefs. As the current framework did not offer the possibility to thoroughly analyse and interpret these aspects, it would have been helpful to use theories and concepts that do discuss Judaism and Jewishness.

In addition to researching second- and third-generation memoirs, it would have been interesting to include other generations. Esther Jilovsky argues that there also is a 0.5 generation, survivors who were young children during the Holocaust, and a 1.5 generation, children of survivors who were young during the war.²⁶⁶ An example of 0.5 generation graphic memoir is Miriam Katin's *We Are on Our Own* (2006), which narrates how she and her mother survived during the war. Including these other generational perspectives might contribute to an even better understanding of intergenerational memory and how memory is transmitted.

Furthermore, this thesis briefly touched upon some subjects that could be interesting for further research. As demonstrated, particularly in chapter two and three, the graphic memoirs often refer to other memoirs, testimonies, Holocaust survivors, historical figures, and Jewish personas. For example, *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors* frequently quoted and referred Elie Wiesel and Primo Levi. In *Flying Couch* historical figures, such as Sigmund Freud and Theodor Herzl, and other graphic novel authors, such as Art Spiegelman, were featured prominently in the narrative. This thesis briefly discussed how, through these historical figures, the graphic memoirs illustrated the vast cultural legacy in which they placed themselves. Scholars such as Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson have already argued that life narratives are often "bound to others". Further research could focus on the inclusion of these historical figures in Holocaust narratives. How are these figures deployed to collectivize memory and, possibly, Holocaust trauma? In what ways do second- and third-generation narratives, and perhaps survivor testimonies, refer to each other?

²⁶⁶ Jilovsky (2015): 15 – 17.

Another topic for further research is the representation of Yiddish language and accents in Holocaust narratives, in particular graphic narratives. Although this thesis does not explore this subject, the graphic memoirs sometimes include Yiddish words and refer to it as the language that emphasises their Jewish identity. Furthermore, the Yiddish language and the accents that survivors have are often visualised in text and drawings. For example, in *Flying Couch* and *Mendel's Daughter* add extra syllables and letters when Gusta or Bubbe speak and grammar mistakes are kept, in order to visualise to the reader how the characters speak. Nancy Pedri briefly mentions the role of Gusta's accent in her analysis of the memoir, stating that it is an example of how Gusta's memory process influences the narrative. However, there is very little research into this concept of visualised accents in graphic narratives. Nevertheless, these visualised accents and languages address questions of Jewish identity and culture. Further research could also focus on how these accents are deployed as a literary tool and what their narrative function is.

Lastly, these graphic memoirs were sometimes visualised as a personal archive of Holocaust trauma and memory. The inclusion of (personal) photographs, documents, objects, and testimonies as just a few examples of the archival materials used to retrieve and visualise memory in these graphic memoirs. Furthermore, the graphic memoirs also illustrate how life writing is an act of selection. Some memories and information are shared with the reader, others are not. Thus, some information is worth to be made public, to be made part of history and the collective narrative, other information remains private, or perhaps, forgotten. Maheen Ahmed and Benoît Crucifix have argued that comics and graphic novels are similar to archives, for example because of their ability to juxtapose multiple perspectives on memory. Other scholars have analysed Art Spiegelman's *Maus* and *MetaMaus* function as archives, but also ask a reconsideration of the notion of the archive. The inclusion of archival materials whilst simultaneously creating a personal of Holocaust memory, indeed raises the question of how graphic narratives and archives are intertwined. How are archives visualised and incorporated in graphic narratives and can graphic narratives function as archives? What do graphic memoirs about problematic and traumatic histories tell us about how we could or should remember these traumas and histories?

Finally, towards the end of the memoir *Flying Couch*, Amy Kurzweil reflects how a story is never truly finished, although it might have ended already.²⁶⁷ This idea, to some extent, can also be applied to this thesis and the field of (intergenerational) trauma studies.

²⁶⁷ Kurzweil (2016): 232 – 233.

Although this thesis has aimed to contribute to a better understanding of how intergenerational memory and trauma are visualised, there is still a lot of research needs to be done.

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