

Do I Know My Grandparent?

An Exploration of Trauma and the Contrast Between Familial and Institutional Knowledge in *My Grandfather Would Have Shot Me* and *De Derde Generatie*.

BA Thesis

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Abstract

Grandchildren of victims as well as perpetrators of the Holocaust are now producing works about their family history and their relationship as grandchildren to this history. It is a pivotal moment in history, when the last witnesses are dying and a stark contrast appears between familial and institutional knowledge about the Holocaust. This thesis compares two texts by a grandchild of victims of the Holocaust and by a grandchild of a perpetrator of the Holocaust, showing that the intertwining of and contrast between familial and institutional knowledge can be crucial for the development of trauma in posterity, and that subsequent generations on both sides of the Holocaust do suffer from trauma, although these traumas are different in terms of specific feelings and origin. Finally, this thesis shows the tendency to focus only on the victims and their descendants, and the need of descendants of perpetrators for acknowledgement that they, too, are affected by the Holocaust. Ultimately, this thesis aims to point to the necessity of an opening up of the dialogue about and between these two groups of posterity of the Holocaust.

Introduction

Constant self-flagellation and self-damnation will eventually make a person ill – and this kind of suffering, over one's identity and family history, gets passed on to one's children. [...] They buried themselves in their pain and transferred their fears to the next generation. The trauma experienced by the child of a Holocaust survivor is totally different from that experienced by a child of a perpetrator, but the transfer process is similar. (Teege 142)

How can a memory that is not your own haunt you? Suffering the pains of a previous generation, especially by children of Holocaust victims and perpetrators, has been theorized in works by Marianne Hirsch, Eva Hoffman, Sigrid Weigel, Dan Bar-On and many others. This topic is closely related to the field of memory studies. Astrid Erll points out that, starting in the 1980's, the "*mediality of memory*" (9) is now put to the forefront: "Without organic, autobiographic memories, societies are solely dependent on media [...] to transmit experience." (9) The realization that the stories of the Holocaust will not forever be told by those who experienced it first-hand, induced a new phase in theory, as well as a body of literature written by the children of those witnesses. Writers such as Daniël Mendelsohn, Eva Hoffman, Niklas Frank, Helga Schneider and Arnon Grunberg deal with their relationship to their parents, who were victims and perpetrators of the Holocaust, respectively. The children of victims deal with topics such as remembrance of their parents' traumas, survivors' guilt, and the effect those traumas have on them as children, one generation removed from the actual occurrence of the traumatic events. On the other hand, children of perpetrators – and others of the second generation – tend to distance themselves from the "Täter-Väter" in an accusing manner. (Weigel 268)

Now, 71 years after the Holocaust, the generation of witnesses is almost gone. Beginning around the last turn of the century their grandchildren have started to write their accounts of their families. Among this new generation of writers, grandchildren of both victims and perpetrators write down their family stories, as well as fully fictional accounts of the Holocaust. Such fictional works have been written by Joseph Skibell, Rachel Seiffert, Rachel Kadish, Alison Pick, Jonathan Safran Foer, Nicole Krauss, Julie Oringer and Holly Müller. Non-fictional accounts have been written by Carlijn Vis, Jennifer Teege and Natascha van Weezel, among others. In this context, it needs to be emphasized that many of these texts are neither strictly fictional nor non-fictional. These hybrid forms of fiction and non-fiction opened up an entirely new way of coming to terms with this traumatic familial heritage.

When looking at this new, third generation of survivors, the question that presents itself is how this generation is different from the second and what its special relation to the Second World War is. This generation of grandchildren is shocked by the sudden contrast of the (memory of) their loving grandparents and the horrors which these grandparents had to endure, or brought on others. It

is the third generation that is witness to the dying of the *last few* who can still testify to what happened in the Second World War. The children of the Holocaust realized that the witnesses would die, while the grandchildren experience their actual death while painfully realizing that they did not really know their grandparents or their stories. In addition, the grandchildren have to come to terms with the fact that their grandparents' stories will vanish in the generalized narratives of history books, monuments and museums. Because of the silence of the grandparents, or the profound impact of the pieces of information that sometimes were given by these grandparents, snippets of a life unknown to these grandchildren, they are driven to search for their grandparents' story in the hope of finding and understanding their own identity in relation to these grandparents. However, it is exactly this that is (largely) impossible to do. The story of the grandparent is impossible to tell completely because of the unreliability of memory and trauma, the unwillingness or inability to speak, or because they have already died. In this desire, which is can only be accomplished in part, of wanting to understand their grandparents in order to understand themselves lies the tragedy of the third generation.

Jan Assmann describes the pivotal moment that I argue this third generation finds itself in. He describes three levels of memory. The first is individual memory. (109) Borrowing from Halbwachs' notion of collective memory he defines the second level as living "in everyday interaction and communication" (111). Memories are shared by members of the family and social community and are embodied by the ones who tell and hear them. The third level of memory is cultural memory. For Assmann this is memory that is held in symbolic forms such as "monuments, museums, libraries, archives, and other mnemonic institutions"(111). Because of the disembodied form of these collective memories the new generation can re-embody them, bringing them to life again for each subsequent generation. The collective, communicative memory, on the other hand, has a maximum durability of about 80 years, or "three interacting generations" (111).

Assmann links this understanding of memory to findings of the anthropologist Jan Vansina on memories in oral societies. Vansina describes two kinds of history in oral societies: the recent past and the remote past. In their workings these correspond to collective memory and cultural memory as explained above. The recent past consists of what can be told by the people who are still alive to give an account of that past and shared with contemporaries, whereas the remote past deals with things such as the origin of the world and the tribe. Vansina points out a "floating gap" (qtd. in Assmann 112) between the recent past and the remote past, shifting with the "successions of generations" (Assmann 112). Assmann remarks that in both oral and literate societies studies have shown that the floating gap comes 80 years after the occurrence of the event. 71 years after the Holocaust we are approaching this gap. The grandchildren of witnesses to the Second World War are the ones who live within this gap. Many have learned of this history in school and through institutionalized memorial days, as well as through the stories of their grandparents, however minimal those were. This

generation is the last that is able to make the bridge between the familial history and cultural history. But this contrast of textbooks and tormented grandparents, I argue, creates the urgency of this generation to write not only the story of their grandparents, but also of themselves as grandchildren within this gap, and the struggle to incorporate this aspect of their grandparents into their own identity as grandchildren. In this thesis I am interested in exploring how grandchildren on both sides of the Holocaust think and write about themselves in relation to this problematic family history, which in turn is again embedded within the broader collective history. But most importantly, while much has been and is still being written by this third generation, not much has yet been written *about* this generation. This is why I think it is relevant to take a close look at this generation and the works they produce.

Two books by grandchildren of the Holocaust that undoubtedly deal with this contrast between the personal interactions with a grandparent and the formal knowledge of the Holocaust are *My Grandfather Would Have Shot Me* by Jennifer Teege from 2013 and *De Derde Generatie* by Natascha van Weezel from 2015. Both writers have one thing in common: their lives are dominated by the Second World War and their responsibility for the inheritance of their grandparents' stories. Both books are non-fiction accounts of the authors' search for their own identity as a grandchild of the Second World War. In *My Grandfather* Teege tells the story of how she found out at thirty-eight that her biological grandfather was Amon Goeth, a Nazi commandant at concentration camp Plaszów, and the effect this had on herself. Teege is half Nigerian and was adopted, which complicates things significantly. *De Derde Generatie* is the report of van Weezel's quest to find out what exactly the third generation of the Holocaust is. She wants to know if others of her generation are as preoccupied with the Holocaust as she is. Van Weezel is Jewish and her grandparents survived the Holocaust.

During the final stages of writing this thesis, Michael Rothberg published an article on *My Grandfather*, in which he emphasizes the "fine-grained, contradictory forms complicity can take" in the case of a collective war trauma, as well as Teege's family history, and the reluctance of bridging a divide between the public and the private. I will return to these topics in the next two chapters. There is no other secondary literature on either *My Grandfather*, or *De Derde Generatie*.¹ This thesis is the first in-depth comparative study of these texts.

¹ There are some newspaper reviews on *My Grandfather*. For more in-depth reviews see "When a Black German Woman Discovered Her Grandfather Was the Nazi Villain of 'Schindler's List'" by Avner Shapira, and "My Grandfather Would Have Shot Me: A Black Woman Discovers Her Family's Nazi Past" by Tara Campbell. Van Weezel also made the documentary *Elke dag 4 mei*, in which she interviews Dutch grandchildren of Holocaust victims. Most of these interviewees are included in *De Derde Generatie*. The 4th of May is the national remembrance day in the Netherlands for all Dutch victims of war and freedom missions from the beginning of the Second World War onwards. For a combined review of this documentary, see "De kleinkinderen van de Holocaust" by Jonas Kooyman.

My Grandfather and *De Derde Generatie* allow a comparison between a grandchild of (a) perpetrator(s) and of (a) victim(s). Both authors position themselves very differently in relation to other grandchildren of survivors and perpetrators. The question I will aim to answer in this thesis is: In what way do *My Grandfather* and *De Derde Generatie* show similar and dissimilar experiences of transgenerational trauma in grandchildren of the Holocaust in relation to their grandparents being perpetrators and victims respectively? With this question I hope to shed light on the broader question of what the experiences of grandchildren of perpetrators can add to the understanding of transgenerational trauma. In order to answer this question, I will expand in chapter 1 on concepts from cultural memory using works by Aleida and Jan Assmann, and relate this to postmemory, as described by Marianne Hirsch. Then I will turn to trauma theory, focusing on works by Cathy Caruth, and on Rothberg's notion of multidirectional memory, using their work to argue towards a bringing together of different cultural memories and traumas. Then I will look at the dynamics between and within (generations of) descendants of victims and perpetrators of the Holocaust as theorized by Sigrid Weigel, Bernhardt Giesen, Dan Bar-On and Harald Welzer. In chapter 2 I will focus on *My Grandfather* and *De Derde Generatie* and explore and compare these books on three points. Firstly, I will look at the way they contrast familial and institutional knowledge. Secondly, I will explore how the authors relate to their maternal and paternal grandmother respectively. I choose to focus on these members of the first generation because both authors had a very close and warm connection with these grandmothers. Where possible, I will compare their own account of these grandmothers with the writings and statements of others on these grandmothers. Thirdly, I will compare the authors' self-identification as reflected in these texts within the realm of the third generation and in relation to others of the third generation.

71 years after the Holocaust the posterity of victims and perpetrators are not only troubled and traumatized by their heritage, but also live together in one society and share a cultural memory. I will show that on the level of cultural memory, the side of the perpetrator is repressed and placed outside society. However, the posterity of perpetrators live *within* that society. Moreover, it has become clear, as I will show, that the posterity of perpetrators are, although in a different way than posterity of victims, troubled by their heritage. Thus, is it necessary to pay attention to the 'other' side of the Holocaust and incorporate that into cultural memory. In the postwar period, this has proven not to be possible. However, possibly and hopefully the distance to the tragedy of the Holocaust can allow a connection to be made between the perpetrator side and the victim side of the Holocaust, and a dialogue to be opened.

Chapter 1: Theory

Cultural Memory and Postmemory

The way in which the memories of the Holocaust can be transferred to the following generations is theorized by Marianne Hirsch. Building on what Eva Hoffmann called “the hinge generation” (qtd. in Hirsch² 1) Hirsch developed the notion of postmemory. The hinge generation is the second generation, the children of Holocaust survivors. This second generation produces postmemorial work: “at stake is precisely the “guardianship” of a traumatic personal and generational past with which some of us have a “living connection,” and that past’s passing into history or myth.” (1) Hirsch explains postmemory “as a *structure* of inter- and transgenerational return of traumatic knowledge and embodied experience. It is a *consequence* of traumatic recall but (unlike posttraumatic stress disorder) at a generational remove.” (6, emphasis Hirsch). What is crucial in the understanding of postmemory is that a generation feels such a deep connection to the traumatic event that members of a previous generation have lived through, that they “identify that connection as a form of *memory*” (3). However, these transferred memories are distinct from the memories of witnesses of that particular event: they are postmemories, once removed from the actual memory of the remembered event and they are mediated by the person who encountered the remembered event. Yet, at the same time postmemory “approximates memory in its affective force and its psychic effects” (31). In addition, the ‘postness’ indicates a critical distance to the original memory it relates to. (3, 31) A transferred memory enters a new context, giving way to a different meaning-making.

In her attempt “to scrutinize the lines of transmission between individual and collective remembrance”(32) Hirsch bases her understanding on the abovementioned differentiation Jan Assmann makes between communicative memory and cultural memory, and on the further distinction of communicative memory into individual and social memory as theorized by Aleida Assmann. She argues that once the individual verbalizes his or her memory, the individual’s memory becomes “fused with the inter-subjective symbolic system of language”(qtd. in Hirsch 32), meaning that it has become social; no longer of the individual alone and no longer under control of that individual. This intergenerational transfer takes place within the family and other social groups.³ (Hirsch 32-3) Following Aleida Assman, Hirsch finds the most important “scene of transmission” within the family, where “the language of the body: nonverbal and precognitive acts of transfer occur most clearly” (*The Generation of Postmemory* 34). The proximity to those bodily expressions of “massive historical

² Marianne Hirsch published the book *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust* together with Leo Spitzer in 2012. The first chapter of this book is based on the article “The Generation of Postmemory” that Hirsch published earlier in 2008.

³ For a more elaborate explanation, see Aleida Assmann, “Re-Framing Memories”.

trauma" (*The Generation of Postmemory* 34) for years on end causes the child to internalize those feelings that are expressed. Feelings of "[l]oss of family, home, of a sense of belonging and safety in the world" are transmitted onto a next generation. This is what the "living connection" of postmemory with the traumatic past consists of. Hirsch makes a difference between familial and affiliative postmemory. The first accounts for the transmission within the family, from parent to child. The second accounts for the transmission between contemporaries, within a generation. (36) Postmemory is a form of social memory: for Hirsch it is the "[f]amilial structures of mediation and representation" that "facilitate the *affiliative* acts of the postgeneration." (39).

In the same way as memory can be transferred and become postmemory, trauma can be transferred onto a following generation, Hirsch argues. Following Eva Hoffmann, she states that what is transferred in the case of trauma are individual memories transmitted through "the language of the body"(31) – the feelings of trauma that become tangible in those interactions within the close familial sphere. This is for Hirsch the "*postmemory* of trauma, and of its return" (31, emphasis by Hirsch). The expressions of the trauma are indeed not only transmitted to the next generation. The reliving of the trauma transmits the feelings of that trauma, feelings of fear and anxiety, but they may take a different form in the new generation. Not the traumatic event itself but the emotions that occur when the trauma is relived are transmitted and thus the trauma returns. A transformation of the original trauma is experienced by the child and grandchild.

Hirsch points out that the workings of memory theorized by Jan and Aleida Assmann do not account for ruptures in those schemata, such as trauma and destroyed documents. The second generation has a lack of objects that have a connection with the familial past due the sequestration of property in the camps and ghettos. The indirectness of the heritage, the lack of physical objects and the distance in time to the memorized event(s) all complicate the way in which children (and grandchildren) relate to their familial history. Hirsch' notion of postmemory focuses on the second generation of victims of the Holocaust. In this thesis I show that postmemory also accounts for structures of dealing with (trauma) heritage in further generations in both victim and perpetrator side of a traumatic historical event. In the analysis chapter of this thesis I will show in what way *My Grandfather* and *De Derde Generatie* deal with familial heritage in the light of familial and institutional knowledge.

Trauma

Now that I have established in what way Hirsch uses the notion of cultural memory to understand the workings of Holocaustal heritage and trauma in the following generations, it is necessary to explore trauma itself. I will focus on Cathy Caruth's work and explain her notion of trauma, her use of Freud's rewriting of the history of the Jews to explain the interrelatedness of traumas, and her emphasis on

listening to others' traumas as a connection between individuals and cultures.⁴ Caruth emphasizes the possessive nature of traumatic recall. She argues that the pathology cannot be found in either the specific event, or in a distortion through "personal significances attached to" that event. Rather, the pathology lies in the "*structure of its experience or reception*". Caruth argues that "the event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated *possession* of the one who experiences it" ("Trauma and Experience: Introduction" 3). In addition, the departure from the traumatic event, "the *survival itself [...] can be crisis*" ("Trauma and Experience: Introduction" 9); the person survives an event he/she was not meant to survive. Caruth poses that a trauma comes from the "oscillation between a *crisis of death* and the correlative *crisis of life*: between the story of the unbearable nature of an event and the story of the unbearable nature of its survival." (*Unclaimed Experience* 7).

In her monograph *Unclaimed Experience*, Caruth interprets Freud's *Der Mann Moses und die Monotheistische Religion*. In this work Freud rewrites the biblical account of Jewish history and liberation from enslavement in Egypt. Caruth argues that Freud's rewriting is constructed around a repressed murder – that of the Moses who led the Jews to Canaan, whose identity was merged with a later Moses – the effects of which show in Jewish history. This illustrates that the history of the Jews is a history of trauma. The murder of the first Moses is not fully perceived and therefore is only referential to the "very inaccessibility of [the] occurrence" (*Unclaimed Experience* 18) of the event. This has two consequences for the relationship between Judaism and Christianity. Firstly, Freud argues that Christ's death, believed to be atonement for the original sin, was actually "belatedly and unconsciously" (*Unclaimed Experience* 18) an atonement for the murder of the first Moses. Secondly, through this belated (re)surfacing of the murder of Moses, the history of the Jews and the history of the Christians are implicated in each other through the trauma of the suppressed murder. Thus, the Jewish history of trauma is also the history of the trauma of others. (*Unclaimed Experience* 14, 17-8) Caruth concludes that a trauma is never completely one's own and that "history is precisely the way we are implicated in each other's traumas" (*Unclaimed Experience* 24). In making a comparison between *My Grandfather* and *De Derde Generatie* I bring to the fore how both texts reflect such an implicatedness in the traumas on both sides of the Holocaust. I will first discuss Michael Rothberg's

⁴ Caruth's work on trauma has been criticized by Ruth Leys and Susannah Radstone for bypassing the relation between trauma and hypnosis. Leys criticizes Caruth for generalizing trauma to encompass the "tendency to collapse distinctions between victims and perpetrators" (8) through the link between "absolute opposition between external trauma and victim" (15) and "the transmission of psychic suffering to others", leaving trauma "unlocatable in in any particular individual". Radstone criticizes Caruth for maintaining a Manichean dichotomy in trauma theory, holding on to a Western use of binaries and prioritizing events considered traumatic for the West. (19, 23-6) However, Caruth's notion of trauma is very helpful for my argument because it both provides an explanation of trauma that moves towards a working through of that trauma in subsequent generations and it allows for a theorization of implicatedness of trauma in other's traumas.

notion of a multidirectional memory in relation to such an implicatedness in order to better understand the possible dangers of turning a blind eye to the other side of the traumatic event.

Thinking About Cultural Memory and Trauma in Relation to Others

The abovementioned specific structure of the experience of the traumatic event means that trauma is first and foremost an individual response. However, if a history of trauma implicates others through the shared origin of such a trauma, then trauma is not *only* individual. Rothberg points out the difficulty of thinking about the “relationship between different social groups’ histories of victimization” (2). Memories of such histories of victimization are believed to compete for limited space in the public sphere. Against this hierarchical framework, Rothberg poses “multidirectional memory” (3), where the public sphere is open to dialogue and interaction, reconstructing both the groups and the public space; a space of “cross-referencing, and borrowing” (3). In this way Rothberg avoids a “hierarchy of suffering” (9) and proposes inclusive thinking about histories of violence. (Rothberg 2-9)

Whereas Caruth’s history of trauma speaks of bringing traumas together through their shared origin, Rothberg aims to bring histories of victimization together through opening up the public sphere. Rothberg and Caruth both see memory and trauma respectively, as a means to connect with other groups/cultures who have different cultural memories/traumas. What Rothberg’s non-hierarchical way of thinking does not account for, however, is groups within the same cultural memory, or a group that experienced, or whose trauma stems from, the same traumatic event. Caruth does account for such groups in showing that Freud’s rewriting of the history of the Jews gives way to implicatedness of trauma. However, she passes by a possible traumatic event where both the aggressed and the aggressor meet each other through such an implication of each others’ trauma. I argue that while it is important to seek such connections between different traumata and different cultural memories, it is also important to pay attention to different sides of the same traumatic event. This is partially why I make a comparison between the grandchildren of victims and perpetrators of the Holocaust. I want to emphasize here that I do not mean to equate the trauma of victims with the trauma of perpetrators. What I am talking about is the structure of implicatedness – and ultimately, ethical listening to each other – that is especially powerful and important for the future generations of both sides of a trauma. I will return to this in chapter 2, where I will explore how Teege and Van Weezel relate to traumas on the other side of their own trauma.

Victims, Perpetrators and next Generations

In order to arrive at an understanding of how grandchildren of victims and perpetrators of the Holocaust relate to each other I will now explore the topic of generations after the Holocaust, in particular the generations of families of perpetrators. Sigrid Weigel argues that in Freud’s *Der Mann*

Moses the notion of transgenerational trauma is already implied. The “archaic inheritance” (270) of the history of the first and the second Moses, and the “obscure and distorted memories” (Freud qtd. in Weigel 270) of this are passed down generations within “one particular nation of people” (270). This genealogical transfer can also be found in the “succession of symptom manifestation” (271) in posterity of victims of the Holocaust. As I showed above, Hirsch poses that postmemory incorporates trauma and loss of objects in the transmission of memorial heritage within families, focusing, however, on families of victims. Weigel focuses on “distortions of genealogical discourse” (271) within families of perpetrators. When the children of perpetrator-fathers define themselves as a second generation and do this, as described above, through an alienation from these perpetrator-fathers, this results in a “concealed first generation” (272). Thus, the second generation “establishes itself after the war as the first authority in question of politics, truth and morality” (272) and as a generation of origin of critique on the perpetrator-father, and therefore can be called a first generation as such. (Weigel 270-2)

Bernhardt Giesen has analyzed “German national identity after the Holocaust”, focusing on “the memory of the perpetrator as a collective trauma” (114). He argues that perpetrators have dehumanized other human subjects by their actions and have, in doing so, also “challenged their own sacredness” (114). Giesen poses: “Every subject needs the recognition of others for its own self-consciousness, and it is exactly this recognition that is denied to the perpetrators.” (114). In the case of a community where members are the perpetrators of violent acts, acts that do not align with the identity of that community, the past is traumatic.⁵

Giesen explains that Germany had, of course, to cope with a great loss after the war. Eight million Germans had been killed in the war and many had encountered violence, rape, or had been displaced by it. But this was overshadowed by the guilt and shame of criminal actions. Thus, Germany did not have a mourning period for these losses. In addition, one assumed others had also supported the Nazi regime, leading to an idea of tacitly keeping silent together. History lessons at school “stopped at Bismarck” (Bar-On 328) and films and television series showed German prisoners of war and their return; focusing on the way the Germans had suffered, not on the barbarism of the Nazi regime. Giesen poses this as a latency: the trauma of the brutal past of the Nazi regime was repressed. (115-9) However, not everyone kept to that “coalition of silence” (119) and the Nazi evil had to be explained. This led to the demonization of the Nazi regime. Nazi rulers were depicted as barbarians, who oppressed and seduced the German people, depriving them of their common sense, allowing the

⁵ Jeffrey C. Alexander poses in “Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma” that an event is not inherently traumatic, but that it becomes traumatic when it disrupts the collective patterns of meanings. A collective trauma lies at the level of a cultural crisis, which occurs when social actors “represent social pain as a fundamental threat” (16) to the identity of the cultural collective.

blame and responsibility to be put outside the German people. When the past of prominent Nazis was publicly disclosed, a narrative of “individual criminal guilt” (121) was inflicted. This kept the rejection of any kind of collective guilt in place during the 1950’s. (119-22) The children of the perpetrators, however, confronted their parents with difficult questions and did not want to be part of the perpetrator identity. This postwar generation proclaimed the guilt of the entire war generation, including the bystanders. In this way they identified with the victims, pointing to all who had done harm and those who could and should have prevented that harm from being done. This led to a first “clear public statement of collective German guilt” (128). (127-8)

The psychologist Dan Bar-On was one of the first to do research on the children of perpetrators of the Holocaust. In *Legacy of Silence* he analyses what kind of problematics this heritage left them with and what could be the reason for the scarce attention paid to that. Firstly, Bar-On shows that the children of perpetrators deal with fear of being a “bad seed” (330): having inherited a gene or other of essence that causes them to have a potential for evil that others do not. Secondly, many of his interviewees speak of repeated occasions where others told them not to speak of the matter, or did not understand their occupation with their parents: “the children of perpetrators are unhappy reminders of the burden of the past” (328-9).

Within the generation of children of perpetrators, Weigel points out, autobiographical literature shows a tendency to see themselves as victims and therewith relating to the position of the actual victims. The children of these “perpetrator-fathers” found themselves in “the tension between the fear of guilt [for being the offspring of a perpetrator] and the desire to recognize the past” (268). It was only after the 1980’s that they “accepted their historical heritage and came to terms with their descent from a collective of perpetrators” (268). This resulted in different ways of dealing with this heritage, such as identification with the victims, or an extreme focus on this heritage, together with extensive research on that personal history and persecution of perpetrators. These reactions have in common, Weigel observes, that they “all attribute their own historical position to a self-identification as a second generation genealogically to the guilty parent generation” (286). Whereas members of the perpetrator generation were denied an identity as such, their children claimed their identity as children of perpetrators publicly. In the effect of “silenced and repressed guilt” in the second generation Weigel sees proof that the “belatedness of symptoms that, according to Freud, marks all trauma has now entered historical time” (269).

Harald Welzer explored in the book *Opa war kein Nazi* the mechanisms of memorial transmission within German families on the basis of his understanding of memory. He poses that in both a community of memory and in individual memory, “memory always involves re-inscription” (344). Welzer explains the idea of the group as: “this is how things will be in the future because this is how it is now and how it always was” (343), creating a (fictional) unity of the group over time. This

allows, however, the story of the past to change in retellings, a change that is not noticed, creating a shocking realization for the grandchildren of Nazi perpetrators. The grandchildren have a different relationship to the grandparent than the children, not problematized by conflict. This leads to a much more powerful reaction to the change in the conception of that grandparent than it does in the children. This “threatens the fictive unity of the family” (344). These family dynamics show that, even when grandparents speak of their Nazi past, grandchildren do not always incorporate that into their family narrative. (Welzer 343-5) What Welzer shows is how the public memory in Germany appears incompatible with memory in the private sphere (Mueller Dwembling 478)⁶.

In his work on multidirectional memory Rothberg borrows from Freud’s idea of *Deckerinnerungen* to argue that screen memories serve to cover memories that are unpleasant. Relating the Holocaust to other histories of victimization, he quotes that “ the Holocaust may function as a ‘screen memory’ in the Freudian sense, covering up a traumatic event – another traumatic event – that cannot be approached directly” (Hansen qtd. in Rothberg, 12). Rothberg underlines that such avoidance of certain uncomfortable memories is the other side of forgetting.⁷ (Rothberg 12-3) Following Rothberg’s use of the concept of screen memories, I argue that the attention to victims of the Holocaust is used as a screen for the fact that the perpetrators of the Holocaust and their offspring live in that same society. Furthermore, the identification by children of perpetrators with the (children of) victims can be seen as a screen against the fear of their own potential for evil. And the denial of grandchildren of perpetrators that Welzer presents is facilitated by the slowly changing narrative of the unity of the family. That narrative of a good family and the close relationship to the grandparent function as a screen for the fact that the grandparent was in fact a perpetrator of horrible acts. In both cultural memory and in the familial sphere there is no space for an evil chapter, which is denied vehemently.

In the following chapter I will discuss *De Derde Generatie* and *My Grandfather* and will explore the contrast between familial knowledge and institutional knowledge to show how within the familial sphere the knowledge becomes altered in order to form a ‘comfortable’ narrative – I use the word ‘comfortable’ hesitantly – of the family as a unity. I will pay attention to Hirsch’ notion of transmission of feelings of trauma within the familial sphere, especially in *De Derde Generatie*, and will follow Caruth’s definition of trauma to understand where the traumas posed in these texts originate. In addition, I will make use of Giesen and Welzer’s explanation of cultural and familial dynamics of

⁶ Mueller Dwemblings article “Opa was a Nazi: Family, Memory, and Generational Difference in 2005 Films by Malte Ludin and Jens Schanze” is a reaction to Welzers work, giving an analysis of documentary films that are willing to break with the cultural taboo of the perpetrators in the private sphere, although the documentaries that are dealt with are not made by grandchildren, but children of Nazi perpetrators.

⁷ See also “Canon and Archive”, Aleida Assmann, for an explanation of the dynamics of memory and forgetting in memorial institutions.

repression of perpetrators to show how both texts are part of their own and other's familial heritage, and I will analyze how these texts relate to other traumas, making use of Rothberg's notion of multidirectional memory and screen memories.

Chapter 2: Case Studies

Writing (About) the Self

In writing on his/her own life, “the writer becomes, in the act of writing, both the observing subject and the object of investigation, remembrance, and contemplation” (1). With this statement, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson pinpoint exactly what is at the core of *De Derde Generatie* and *My Grandfather*. Both texts are a reflection on a search for the self and for a way to self-identify in relation to their familial history in the context of the Holocaust. *De Derde Generatie* investigates the existence of a coherent third generation of Holocaust survivors. Van Weezel interviews grandchildren of Holocaust survivors in The Netherlands, Israel and the U.S.A. At the same time it is a book about Van Weezel’s family and how the Holocaust affect her as a grandchild of four Holocaust survivors. *My Grandfather* is more clearly focused on the family itself, in particular in what way the knowledge of the family history has an impact on Teege herself as a grandchild of a Nazi perpetrator. Her relationship to her grandfather and grandmother is dealt with in depth and the text shows a high level of self-reflexivity, while also referencing other children and grandchildren of perpetrators.⁸

In their book *Reading Autobiography*, Smith and Watson argue that life narrative relates the inner life, the experience of the self by the self, *and* the outer life, the factual information about that person’s life, which can be seen by others. This inner life has a history of self-observation, the narration of which is a subjective testimony to the experience of the outer life by the inner, which only the life writer him/herself can narrate: “personal memories are the primary archival source” (6). (5-6) As Smith and Watson argue, life narrators want to persuade their readers of their version of experience, which is exactly what the narrators in *De Derde Generatie* and *My Grandfather* do. “[R]emembering involves a reinterpretation of the past in the present” (Smith and Watson 16): the life narrative is also a reinterpretation, a meaning-making of those memories of the past. And such a meaning-making is precisely what both Teege and Van Weezel undertake. Writing the self is complicated by (transgenerational) trauma. The traumatic event is not fully experienced and instead repressed in order to survive it, resurfacing in possessive remembering of the event, defying language and understanding. However, attributing words to something unspeakable changes the life story itself and can be cathartic or a way of meaning-making. (Smith and Watson 22-4)

⁸ For example, Teege speaks out strongly against the decision of Bettina Goering, the great-niece of Hermann Goering, to be sterilized. Teege holds that “There is no Nazi gene” (141) and that sterilization sends the wrong message.

The Friction Between and Intertwining of Familial and Institutional Knowledge

In my introduction I argued that the grandchildren of survivors and perpetrators of the Holocaust find themselves *in* the floating gap between collective memory and cultural memory, between familial and institutional renditions of history. Both *My Grandfather* and *De Derde Generatie* show friction between these knowledges, but they do so in different ways, and, crucially, the realization that these knowledges overlap comes at a different time in Teege's and Van Weezel's lives. In *De Derde Generatie* it is when Van Weezel is around seven years old, whereas in *My Grandfather*, the author learns of this history only when she is thirty-eight, resulting in a major crisis of identity.

In *De Derde Generatie*, the narrative voice is split into a more factual voice and a more personally affected voice: the stories of her paternal grandparents' survival of the Holocaust are printed in italics, while the interview parts are written in a more matter of fact style, interspersed with Van Weezel's own comments. At the same time, her reasons for asking (follow up) questions are highly personal, which colors the journalistic style in which she engages with her interviewees.

De Derde Generatie starts with a prologue that shows the way that past and present are intertwined in the remembrance of the Holocaust: "Op het eerste gezicht [ben ik] een heel normale jonge vrouw. Maar ik weet niet of dat wel zo is: Ik ben overmatig bezig met de Tweede Wereldoorlog." (11). When writing this book at twenty-eight, Van Weezel says that she has read many books and has seen most films on the topic, goes to many memorials and always visits the Holocaust monument or museum wherever she goes on holiday. When her mother explained why her mother and her two aunts differ almost twenty years in age – her mother's sisters are actually her mother's nieces, who were adopted by her mother after their parents had died in the Holocaust – the young Van Weezel realizes: "Er waren mensen in mijn familie vermoord. De nazi's uit de schoolboeken hadden mijn familie vermoord!" (17). *De Derde Generatie* shows institutional knowledge of the Holocaust and familial knowledge that are woven together in such a way that they have become inseparable.

In *My Grandfather* there are two narrators. Teege herself gives an account of her own story, written in a very personal style. The second narrator is journalist Nikola Sellmair. Both narrators alternate throughout the book, clearly marked by a different font. Sellmair's voice functions as legitimation and commentary: she provides historical background information that contextualizes Teege's account and provides an additional perspective. In this way, Sellmair's voice can be seen as a voice of institutional knowledge that contrasts with Teege's own voice in which she speaks of her grandparents. In addition, this makes this book not only about Teege herself, but also about children and grandchildren of perpetrators in general. The abovementioned references to other (grand)children of perpetrators and references to scholarly work and the elaborate bibliography provide context and legitimation.

The first chapter describes the pivotal moment in *My Grandfather*, when Teege finds a book

called *I Have to Love my Father, Don't I?* in her local library. The subtitle reveals her own connection to this book: *The Life Story of Monika Goeth, Daughter of the Concentration Camp Commandant from "Schindler's List"*. Teege knows that Monika Goeth is her biological mother: "I was also called Goeth once." (Teege 1). Coming across names and photos of her relatives in a library, a place of institutional knowledge, seems incompatible to her: "Is this my family? Are these pictures of my mother and my grandmother? Surely not, that would be absurd: It can't be that there is a book about my family and I know nothing about it!" (Teege 2). Sellmair's observing narration explains what exactly happens here: "The moment when Jennifer found the book with the library code Mcm O GOET#KESS is the moment that cut her life in two, into a before and an after: A *before*, when she lived without knowledge of her family's past, and an *after*, living with that knowledge." (Sellmair 7) The institutional knowledge she finds in a book in the library completely changes the understanding she has of her family and therefore also of herself. This rupture in what Teege knows about her familial history requires her to radically re-calibrate her sense of self and her (family) history. Yet, the means to find out more about it are mostly media of institutionalized knowledge: she has to rely on books, films, tour guides – even when visiting her grandfather's house – and museums.

Besides the book on Teege's mother, the film *Schindler's List* is a recurring motif. Teege saw the film when she was studying in Tel Aviv and many of her friends had parents or grandparents who survived the camps. The fact that she did see the film, in which Amon Goeth has a prominent role, but did not connect this historical figure to her birth name shows a keeping at bay of a dangerous connection, possibly using her emotional connection to so many Holocaust victims and her current name as a screen, as Rothberg describes. Even more, Harald Welzer has shown how young people in Germany are knowledgeable about the Second World War and the Holocaust, but nevertheless exculpate their own grandparents, maintaining a split between factual knowledge, and emotional and familial knowledge. Sellmair also mentions Welzer's study, emphasizing that to the grandchildren of perpetrators, "the Holocaust is just a history class, the victim's story memorialized in films and on TV; they don't look at it as the history of their own family, their own personal history" (13). Just so, Teege says: "*Schindler's List* was just a film to me; it didn't have anything to do with me personally." (3).⁹

Whereas in *De Derde Generatie* familial and institutional knowledge overlap, in *My Grandfather* familial and institutional knowledge seem incompatible. Here Welzer's research is key to understanding the mechanisms of repression, externalization and denial. When the perpetrator is

⁹ Sellmair writes: "The whole world knows her grandfather's story: In Steven Spielberg's film *Schindler's List*, the cruel concentration camp commandant Amon Goeth is Oskar Schindler's drinking buddy and adversary: Two men born in the same year, one a murderer of Jews, the other a savior. One particular scene has stuck in the collective memory: Amon Goeth shooting prisoners from his balcony, his personal form of morning exercise." (Teege 7) For an analysis of this scene, see Hirsch 136-8.

placed outside society and demonized, it is easy not to relate to or identify with the perpetrator. In that way Giesen's analysis of the way the perpetrator history was dealt with in postwar Germany explains in part why Teege would not have made the connection between her birth name and Amon Goeth when she saw *Schindler's List*. Van Weezel, however, was not in any way hindered and even encouraged to connect her being Jewish with victimhood: "Het gebeurde ook geregeld dat we bij feestjes even moesten denken aan 'zij die er niet meer waren'." (60) Such different contexts for both backgrounds explain in part the very different relation to their heritage Teege and Van Weezel convey.

How Does Transgenerational Transmission of Knowledge and Trauma Take Shape in these Texts?

Transgenerational Trauma in De Derde Generatie

Van Weezel's maternal grandmother and paternal grandfather died before she was born and her maternal grandfather died when she was eight. She had a very close relationship with her paternal grandmother, Carry Blitz, who was sixteen when Nazi Germany invaded The Netherlands. She and her father spend the last two years of the war hiding. Her brother, sister and both their spouses died in the camps, but their children survived. Shortly after the liberation Carry met her husband, Richard van Weezel, who survived the war working at a farm under a false name. This story of her paternal grandmother's past is interspersed with the account of Natascha's special bond with that grandmother and the last few days before she died. The way Van Weezel writes about her dying grandmother shows a deep connection: "Ik moet naar Oma toe, ze heeft me nodig!" (25), she thinks when her grandmother is going to the hospital. When her grandmother has died she reminisces on the things that she will never share with her grandmother again: "Nooit meer oma en ik. Nooit meer oma." (30). This shows the special bond she had with her grandmother, but it is also an echo of a phrase that does not carry out grief of what is no more, but hope that something will never recur: "Nooit meer oorlog." This is echoed later in the text when Van Weezel partakes in the March of the Living at Auschwitz, where thousands of young Jews come together to show their families survived the Holocaust, deeply identifying with victims that survived. Van Weezel's strong identification with her grandmother determines her sense of self, causing her to stay loyal to her grandmother's trauma, and to identify as a victim.¹⁰

Natascha remarks that her grandmother was constantly thinking about the war, but that she did not realize that certain reactions were due to the Holocaust. When her grandmother was locked in a bathroom because the lock was old she had a panic attack and when she was freed, she said: "Ik heb

¹⁰ Although Van Weezel does not feel comfortable with the festival-like March of the Living, she feels a close connection to other Jews whose families suffered during the Holocaust. She reflects on a group vacation for Jewish young adults to Israel: "ik hoorde ergens bij. In Yad Vashem, het grootste Holocaustmuseum ter wereld, moest iedereen huilen om zijn eigen familie, we namen ons heilig voor nooit te vergeten wat die vuile nazi's 'ons' hadden aangedaan." (169).

al zo lang binnen gezeten.” (35). As a little girl Natascha did not understand the reference, causing her to show her loyalty to her grandmother in sharing her fear for that door. This translated itself into the young Natascha never using the lock on doors, rotating doors or elevators: “Ik heb het jaren volgehouden.” (35). As a teenager Natascha developed an eating disorder, which she explains as a way to create a sense of control when she was not fitting in at high school. Control would prevent anything from going wrong, to keep any kind of danger at bay. However, this can be seen in the light of internalization of her grandmother’s fear and anxiety. (67-70, 54-6)¹¹ Her grandmother babysat Natascha for at least one day a week until long after she needed a babysitter. Natascha was a consolation for the many losses in her grandmother’s life: “Ze vertelde dat ik een van de belangrijkste dingen in haar leven was, dat ze door mij het nut er weer van inzag. Ik begreep niet wat ze bedoelde” (33).¹² This close relationship is exemplary of the relationship that Welzer describes between grandparent and grandchild; not hindered by conflict within the household. In addition, it provides the familial sphere, which Hirsch deems so important for the transmission of embodied experience onto a next generation, returning in similar feelings of fear and anxiety, but not necessarily the same expressions of these feelings. Van Weezel is preoccupied with the contingency of her existence and feelings of guilt for existing. Without the Nazi regime and subsequent Second World War both her paternal and maternal grandparents would not have met and she would not have existed: “[je zou] kunnen zeggen dat ik besta niet ondanks, maar dankzij de oorlog” (120). It seems evident for Van Weezel that her family’s history of the Second World War is an inherent part of who she is, not only in her identification as a victim, but also as the reason for her existence.

Van Weezel and her father deal very differently with their (grand)mother’s trauma. Oma Carry talked about the Second World War almost constantly. Van Weezel understood later that her father would often leave the room, not because he had to work, but because he wanted to work whenever someone spoke about the war. He points out that he could read when he was three years old and used that as a shield against all the stories about how good life was before the war. Whereas Natascha wanted to know everything about her grandmother’s stories of the war, her father avoided those stories. Van Weezel points to the difference in their relation to Carry: “Pas nu begrijp ik dat ik door een bepaalde afstand – ze was immers niet mijn moeder, ze hoefde mij niet op te voeden – beter naar haar kon luisteren. Mijn vader stond te dichtbij.” (135-6) The relationship between parent and child

¹¹ Van Weezel herself also links this to her protective mother. Van Weezel wrote a book also on her eating disorder: *Magere Jaren*. Her eating disorder is also dealt with in *De Derde Generatie*, where Van Weezel connects it to her fear for a second Holocaust, or bad things happening in general. Also, the topic returns when Van Weezel speaks to New York based psychotherapist Judy Goldenblatt, who is herself a granddaughter of Holocaust survivors and developed an eating disorder when she was in college.

¹² As a teenager Van Weezel learns the reason for this: for the first time since the war, there were three generations in the family and they were a normal family again. (39)

versus grandparent and grandchild that Van Weezel describes here is just as Welzer discusses it. The distance is greater and that makes possible a closer connection of a different kind. Recapitulating, I would say that Van Weezel's father is acting out by working compulsively and trying to keep his mother's trauma at bay. However, Natascha identifies with and repeats her grandmother's feelings of trauma, which lead to her fear of locked rooms and possibly her eating disorder.

(Transgenerational) Trauma in My Grandfather Would Have Shot Me

Teege shows a similarly close relationship to her grandmother. I will focus here only on Teege's relationship with her maternal grandparents because this is the side of her family where she discovers a perpetrator history. As I described earlier, Teege finds out that her grandfather was a Nazi commandant rather late in life. Her adoptive parents did not know about this history and she did not have contact with her mother or grandmother after her adoption at age seven. Being forced to combine the institutional knowledge she has of Nazi perpetrators and of a person in her own family she shares DNA with is a grave shock: "Slowly I begin to grasp that the Amon Goeth in the film *Schindler's List* is not a fictional character, but a person who actually existed in flesh and blood. A man who killed people by the dozen and, what is more, who enjoyed it. My grandfather. I am the granddaughter of a mass murderer." (7). This shock is increased by the fact that Teege herself is half Nigerian, thus, it is likely that her grandfather would have shot her. Despite the difference in skin color Teege sees physical similarities between her and her biological mother and grandfather: the lines around her nose and mouth, and her height. Asking herself a question "on the matter of blood" (15), she wonders whether she might have also inherited her grandfather's "violent temper" (15). Having had depressions earlier in life, Teege fears that she inherited her grandmother's disposition towards psychosis. Although not psychotic, Teege suffered from a variety of emotional problems of which the origin is not easily determined. Considering a history in which she very early in life was abandoned by her mother and later discovered she was the granddaughter of a mass murderer, it could be said that she is doubly traumatized. Her mother, too, is a traumatized woman who was unable to live a stable life and be a mother to her daughter.¹³ When visiting the house at Płaszów where her grandparents lived together, Teege thinks to herself: "I hope the house won't collapse on top of me and bury me beneath it." (24). This shows a deeper fear of being buried in her past, not able to rise out of it and live her own life. Teege rejects both the Nazi idea of an *Übermensch* and the possibility – that she herself so very much fears – that she has any more tendency towards evil than others. She rejects her grandfather as Nazi commandant and clears herself of the possibility of being a "bad seed" (330), as

¹³ See also the documentary about Monika Goeth, *Inheritance*, which focuses on the impact her father's war crimes had on Monika. Monika meets with Helen Rosenzweig, who worked and lived as a maid in Amon's villa. *Inheritance* shows the difficulties of such a dialogue. Monika finds Helen's memories very difficult to comprehend in relation to her mother and Helen is very much reminded of Amon when seeing Monika.

Bar-On described it, by stating that we are all in fact possible bad seeds: we all have “potential for evil” (5). (5-7, 329-30)

Teege knew her maternal grandmother, Ruth Irene Kalder, when she was young. She remembers her as a safe haven, which is very important for a child, especially for Teege, who did not have a real home until she was seven. Her mother, with whom she lived until she was three and visited on weekends until she was adopted, was married to a violent alcoholic, and Teege remembers her mother as uninterested and impatient. The image of her grandmother is shattered now she learns of a different side of her grandmother. The contrast between the institutionalized knowledge of Ruth Irene Kalder that Sellmair provides and the personal/familial knowledge that Teege provides is insurmountable. Sellmair writes of eyewitnesses who spoke about how Ruth adored Amon and how she spent her life in the villa at Płaszów in luxury, turning up the music to drown out the gunshots and playing tennis with the wives and girlfriends of other SS men, whereas Teege speaks of one photograph she has of her grandmother, which is for Teege a symbol of Irene’s kindness. The different pictures she now finds of her grandmother, posing with the dog Amon trained to attack people are irreconcilable for Teege with the image she has of her grandmother.

Sellmair describes Teege’s feelings towards her grandmother as “fluctuat[ing] between rejection and affection, attack and defense. She cannot get a handle on who her grandmother really was.” (75). In a recorded interview when Irene was sixty-five, Irene puts the blame elsewhere: “I always felt that it was all wrong, but I wasn’t the one who made the rules of those times.” (89). Sellmair’s account of the interview shows a woman who felt she did the best she could have done under the circumstances. What is so very painful for Teege is that her grandmother really appears to believe in her own innocence, which gives an irreconcilable contrast to how she remembers her grandmother: “If it hadn’t been for her, maybe discovering Amon Goeth in my family tree wouldn’t have been such a shock. I could have regarded him more as a historical figure; I might not have taken it quite so personally. Yes, he is my grandfather, but he never pushed my stroller or held my hand. But my grandmother did.” (Teege 61). In *My grandfather* the way Teege views her grandfather shows a similar dynamic as the demonization of the Nazi regime in the postwar period. Even more, she chooses to see her grandmother only in a good light. Just as Van Weezel, Teege has found great comfort in her grandmother, which resulted in not being able or willing to see her flaws. Her grandmother was seduced by Amon Goeth and was freed of him when he was hung. In this way, the pure evil in which Teege frames her grandfather also serves as a screen memory, allowing her to cling to the positive memories she has of her grandmother. Teege splits the good and the bad which is part of every human being, thus preserving the ‘good grandmother’. In the same way, she splits her grandfather, preserving only a ‘bad’ grandfather, allowing her to condemn him, to set him aside as a demon and, moreover, allowing her to deny the potential of evil inside herself and to identify with the

'good grandmother' only.

In *De Derde Generatie* the feelings of trauma are transmitted from grandmother Carry to Natascha in the familial sphere and their close relationship enforces the impact this has on Van Weezel, showing transgenerational trauma transmitted from grandparent to grandchild. In *My Grandfather*, Teege also had a close relationship with her grandmother, but the discovery of her grandfather's role in the Nazi regime and that her grandmother loved and stayed devoted to him until she died, is a grave shock. This particular case of posterity of perpetrators where Teege only knew her biological family until a very young age complicates the structure of transgenerational trauma. As I have shown above, in Teege's case the traumatization is multilayered and complex. Caruth calls trauma a crisis of live and a crisis of death; surviving something you are not supposed to survive (7). The recurring traumatic event that possesses Teege is not something that happened to her grandparents in the Second World War, but the realization that her grandfather was a Nazi commandant and a mass murderer, while her grandmother chose to devote her life to him. I argue that this trauma originates in Teege herself. The crisis that caused it is not a crisis of life and death particularly; it is a crisis of a realization of identity. This crisis comes from the split identity of her grandmother. Teege's repetitive and obsessive search for her biological background can be seen as the recurring belated reliving of the trauma. Arguably, Teege's mother also suffers from such a crisis of identity. It is important to keep in mind that such a trauma is not to be compared with a trauma of (descendants of) a victim. Nevertheless, *My Grandfather* sheds light on a different kind of trauma that can occur in the successive generations of perpetrators. This trauma, I argue, is a trauma that is located in the act of realization of a direct connection to a perpetrator identity.

How Do These Texts Relate to Other Grandchildren of Victims and Perpetrators?

De Derde Generatie

In the prologue Van Weezel gives her reason for writing this book: "Ik heb me altijd afgevraagd of ik de enige ben die zich zo voelt, of het met mijn karakter te maken heeft, of dat andere kleinkinderen van Holocaust-overlevenden op een vergelijkbare manier in het leven staan." (13). This passage makes clear that this third generation consists, for Van Weezel, only of the grandchildren of victims and survivors. Much later in *De Derde Generatie* it becomes clear that the exclusion of grandchildren of perpetrators might not be an (entirely) conscious decision. When Van Weezel is on an exchange in Berlin one of the German girls apologizes profusely to her because her grandfather had been a Nazi. Van Weezel says: "Ik stelde haar gerust door te zeggen dat zij haar opa niet was en dat er niets aan de hand was zolang zij mij niet dood wenste. Het verbaasde me dat zij net zozeer met de oorlog bleek te zitten als ikzelf." (172). She makes a distinction between generations, insisting that the German girl is not guilty of her grandfather's war history. However, the mere mention of the possibility of the girl to

wish her dead seems to show that Van Weezel does think of perpetrators and subsequent generations. In addition, she poses herself as a possible victim by saying that they are fine as long as the German girl herself does not want to kill her, as a Jewish girl, emphasizing her identification as a (possible) victim. Apart from this encounter *De Derde Generatie* does not pay much attention to the effects of the Holocaust on the offspring of perpetrators and when this is brought to her attention she does not explore the perpetrator side. As a grandchild of Holocaust victims Van Weezel does not recognize that others whose (grand)parents had a different role in the Holocaust, be it bystander, perpetrator, or for example, a member of the Hitler Jugend, can also be troubled or traumatized by that heritage. Thus, *De Derde Generatie* is an example of how it can be tempting to think and identify in terms of victimhood, rather than to open up to other kinds of being traumatized, resulting not only in a hierarchy of suffering, but also an absolute definition of suffering.

Interestingly enough, in the U.S.A. she speaks with a man who is half African-American, half Dominican and realizes that she has been so preoccupied with the Holocaust that she did not think of talking to people belonging to other violently suppressed minorities. This man from another minority does spark curiosity and compassion in her, whereas the German girl seems to spark aversion, or discomfort. (256-7, 266) When a Russian Jewish girl wonders whether she would be considered part of the third generation because only one of her family members died through violence, Van Weezel remarks: "alsof er een hiërarchie voor leed bestaat" (262). However, despite Van Weezel's belief that there should not be a hierarchy for suffering, there is. *De Derde Generatie* points to a hierarchy of suffering, such as Rothberg describes, however, between descendants of victims and perpetrators. This discrepancy in *De Derde Generatie* brings to the fore a questioning of the definition of the third generation of the Holocaust. Such a questioning and even opening up, of creating a dialogue between the offspring of victims and perpetrators is precisely what *My Grandfather* actively calls for.

My Grandfather Would Have Shot Me

Teege studied and lived in Israel. Her two best friends there, Noa and Anat, both have lost family members to the Holocaust. She is afraid that her friends' relatives might have died at Płaszów. Working at the Goethe institute in Israel she met elderly people who survived the Holocaust, to whom she sometimes read German books and newspapers. No one thought she was really German, her skin color protected her, she says. She feels she has led a double life, has betrayed her friends, and fears they would think so, too. When she finally tells Noa she is very relieved: "There is nothing left to hide; everything feels good and right." (194). (20-1, 19-4) This shows how large that burden was for Teege and how relieved she is that her friend from 'the other side of the Holocaust' still wants to be *her* friend. This acceptance, I argue, is relieving because it softens Teege's feelings of guilt and shame. Her fear of telling her friends of her family history is a fear of becoming the demonized other. Teege fears

that her family history of Nazi perpetrator will enclose and define her, just like her grandfather's house she is afraid to get trapped under. As Giesen shows, in the postwar period Nazi perpetrators who escaped integrated into (political) society again, but when their identity was uncovered, it was a scandal. Having grown up in Germany Teege might well have those stories in mind. The 'wrong' side of the war was, and still is a taboo for many.

The last chapter of the book describes the second time that Teege visits Płaszów, accompanying the class of Anat's eldest son on their school trip to visit concentration camps, something many Israeli schools do. The students have prepared commemorative ceremonies for each memorial site. During the ceremony one of the students invites Teege to join them and lay down flowers on behalf of the class. Comparing this to her first visit to Płaszów, when she also laid flowers at the memorial, she says: "This time, it is better. This time, I am not alone." (215). Moreover, she is invited by the grandchildren of *victims* to share in their remembering and honoring the dead of the Holocaust; she is invited to share in that history by the ones she feels most guilty to. When visiting Płaszów the first time Teege thought: "I can't just shove my grandfather's past into a box and put a lid on it. I can't just say, *That's the past, it's over, it doesn't affect me anymore*. That would be a betrayal of the victims." (Teege 57). In this line of thought Teege's entire life would have to be an atonement for the crimes of her grandfather. She wants to show she will never forget the victims of her grandfather, but that goes at the cost of herself. Such a giving up of one's own identity is what Teege and Van Weezel share. Teege tries to make up for her grandparents' guilt, whereas Van Weezel tries to live up to her grandparents' suffering. The scene of both posterity of victims and perpetrators of the Holocaust portrays a being implicated in one another's trauma. The Israeli students understood what Teege told them about the ways her family history influences her and recognize that she mourns over that family history because of the same historical event that causes them to mourn their family members.

In the previous chapter I showed how Caruth explains Freud's idea of the trauma of the history of the Jews and how this explains that Christians needed to attest to the guilt of killing Moses, and how they unconsciously remember that and hate Jews for that. Such an idea of atonement for a sin of an earlier generation can be linked to the case of perpetrators' descendants as found in *My Grandfather*. The very act of publishing a book about her family history can be seen as both an act of atonement, but also as an act of opening up the taboo about perpetrators. In addition, the fact that Teege is now giving lectures as a public speaker of her family's past reinforces this act of atonement, making her life into a life of atonement.

Conclusion

In this thesis my aim was to answer the question in what way *My Grandfather* and *De Derde Generatie* show similar and dissimilar experiences of transgenerational trauma, and to shed light on the broader question of what the experiences of grandchildren of perpetrators can add to the understanding of transgenerational trauma. I have shown that 71 years after the Holocaust, the grandchildren of victims and perpetrators find themselves in-between familial and institutional knowledge. At the same time, these grandchildren have a different relationship with their grandparents than the children do, not burdened by the day-to-day life, but close enough to build a relationship. Therefore, these grandchildren have a specific relation to the Holocaust, burdened by their family history, while overwhelmed with institutional knowledge.

In my introduction I quote Teege, who says: “The trauma experienced by the child of a Holocaust survivor is totally different from that experienced by a child of a perpetrator, but the transfer process is similar.” (142). Indeed, the traumas experienced by Van Weezel and Teege are very different. And while the process of transgenerational trauma, as embodied knowledge which is transmitted through the close contacts of the familial sphere as described by Hirsch, can be similar in families of victims and perpetrators, the feelings of trauma that are transmitted are very different. What *My Grandfather* shows is an additional trauma that arises in the offspring of perpetrators: a trauma that originates in the realization of the family history. This familial knowledge that comes to light shows a contrast between familial and institutional knowledge, which is enforced by narrative in both the familial sphere and cultural memory, leading to repression and denial of parts of cultural and political history, and familial history.

Because the perpetrator-side of the Second World War still is a taboo of some kind, being burdened by a familial history that involves such perpetrators falls under the same taboo. *De Derde Generatie* seems to show a keeping at bay of the burden children and grandchildren of perpetrators carry. However, as *My Grandfather* shows, the trauma of posterity of perpetrators is real. Teege is troubled by her familial heritage and desperately wants to be heard. That is why being included in the ceremony by the students at Płaszów means so much to her. Teege seeks validation of her trauma that stems from the realization of her ancestry. Caruth states that “the traumatic nature of history means that events are only historical to the extent that they implicate each other” (18). Teege’s trauma is implicated in the trauma of descendants of victims because the realization of her grandfather’s war crimes, while her grandmother stood by and watched, is directly related to the (transgenerational) trauma of the descendants of victims. Similarly, the trauma of the descendants of victims is implicated in and connected to the trauma of the decedents of perpetrators. Both problematics stem from the same event. Rothberg pleads for a non-hierarchal way of thinking, which I

propose to extend to a non-hierarchical way of thinking in relation to the familial heritage of both victims and perpetrators of the Holocaust. Also, I showed that Caruth sees being implicated in others' trauma as a way to make such a connection. *De Derde Generatie* focusses on making sense of what characterizes this third generation of victims. Van Weezel includes many, but due to the limited attention for the emotional pain of others than victims – which is of course understandable – she also excludes many others of a validation of their trauma. In *My Grandfather*, on the other hand, Teege is in desperate need of validation of her trauma. This contrast shows that a widening of the definition of the third generation is needed. Keeping in mind the difference in origin and specific feelings of psychic pain in posterity of victims and of perpetrators, the identification with the victimized grandparents on the side of posterity of victims, and feelings of guilt and shame on the side of posterity of perpetrators, impede and complicate a reciprocal empathy of both sides. While recognizing this, I argue that a hierarchical order of such psychic pains should be avoided, and for an opening up of the dialogue on and between posterity of the Holocaust.

Further research on this topic could focus on comparing other works from both sides of posterity of the Holocaust, in particular on the relation to and identification with victimhood on the one hand, and shame and guilt on the other, as well as the way in which such works relate to others whose familial heritage implicates them in a different way. It would be interesting to explore the ways in which posterity of people in the grey area between victim and perpetrator relate to a nonetheless possibly traumatic familial history. For instance people who were in the resistance (while they were themselves not otherwise specifically a target for the Nazi regime), members of the Hitler Jugend, and bystanders, people who were after the war falsely accused of cooperation with or working for the Nazi regime, or women who had affiliation with SS men and were shaved after the war. In addition, this way of looking at and attempting to bring together different sides of a major historical event can also be put to use in an attempt to scrutinize the consequences of more recent traumatic conflict.

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