



Fiction, Postmemory and Transgenerational Trauma: Literary Possibilities through the Shoah Paradigm

Sabrina Costa Braga

Práticas da História, n.º 17 (2023): 263-294

www.praticasdahistoria.pt

Sabrina Costa Braga

Fiction, Postmemory and Transgenerational Trauma: Literary Possibilities through the Shoah Paradigm

In this article, I place literature as a possibility for the working-through of trauma, taking as object the paradigmatic case of the Shoah, an event that established the need to think about new ways of dealing with the past in historiography. With the inclusion of testimony as a source for historiography, memory invades the historiographical space. Concepts such as post-memory and the notion of a transgenerationality of trauma will be mobilized in order to address the fiction produced by survivors that were children at the time and members of a second and third generation after the Shoah. The text is divided into two major topics, the first dedicated to the so-called 1.5 generation and the second dedicated to the second and third generations.

Keywords: fiction, post-memory, transgenerational trauma, Shoah.

Ficção, pós-memória e trauma transgeracional: possibilidades literárias através do paradigma da Shoah

Neste artigo, busco colocar a literatura como uma possibilidade para a elaboração do trauma tomando como objeto o caso paradigmático da Shoah, um evento que instaurou na historiografia a necessidade de se pensarem novas formas de lidar com o passado. Com a inclusão do testemunho como fonte para a historiografia, a memória invade o espaço historiográfico. Assim, conceitos como pós-memória e a noção de uma transgeracionalidade do trauma serão mobilizados a fim de tratar da ficção produzida por sobreviventes que eram crianças à época e membros de uma segunda e terceira geração após a Shoah. O texto se divide em dois grandes tópicos, o primeiro dedicado ao que se chamará geração 1,5 e o segundo dedicado às segunda e terceira gerações.

Keywords: ficção, pós-memória, trauma transgeracional, Shoah.

Fiction, Postmemory and Transgenerational Trauma: Literary Possibilities through the Shoah Paradigm

Sabrina Costa Braga*

Introduction

The Shoah is a paradigmatic event as it establishes a crisis in historiography and in the way of representing the past. The presence of the Shoah's memory opens up the need for a new way of translating the past. But what way would that be? And what is really new about this approach? I understand that the testimony as it emerges from the Shoah is the element that brings together the urgency of memory and the need for history. Testimony, however, is an exercise of traumatic memory and, as such, is unable to fully correspond to the truth, even if the survivors' objective is to denounce and tell "as it happened". There are "truths" that will always be inaccessible to the narrators themselves, as the story told will always be the story of a wound. In other words, addressing the triggering event of the trauma is always a late act.¹ The inability to bridge the gap between what these survivors had to say and the language they had at their disposal is not a new topic and was the subject of reflection by countless of these survivors themselves, such as Robert Antelme and Primo Levi.

* Sabrina Costa Braga (sabinacostabraga94@gmail.com). Universidade Federal de Goiás (UFG), Avenida Esperança s/n, Câmpus Samambaia - Prédio da Reitoria, CEP 74690-900 Goiânia, Goiás, Brazil. Original article: 4-11-2022; Revised version: 10-10-2023; Accepted: 12-10-2023.

¹ Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Dominick LaCapra, *History and Memory after Auschwitz* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998).

That said, the purpose of this article is not so much to review the relationship between testimony and memory in Shoah historiography, but to deal with literature produced by subsequent generations, not by the survivors of the *Lager* themselves. If, on the one hand, the testimony of survivors as a narrative produced from trauma is an exercise of memory that inevitably intertwines with imagination; on the other hand, the fictional literature produced about the Holocaust is capable of offering new strategies for representing and working-through the past. I take as my object the fictional literature written by surviving children and members of the second and third generations after the Shoah. First, I define the concepts of generation 1.5² to talk about the specifics of the trauma of surviving children³ and present some examples from this literature. Second, I turn to the concept of postmemory⁴ to talk about how trauma reappears in a new way in the second and third generations. The literature written by both surviving children and the following generations does not present itself as a testimony with the urgency to denounce and with the claim to truth as of the survivors themselves. There is a fundamental difference that allows this trauma, received indirectly, to find a freer path for the process of working-through. That is precisely the hypothesis that guides this article.

Beforehand, it is important to briefly revisit the theme of the border between fiction and history. In the debate about the representation of the Holocaust,⁵ the place of literature and fiction is inevitably questioned as

2 Susan Suleiman, *Crises de memória e a Segunda Guerra Mundial*, trans. Jacques Fux and Alcione Cunha da Silveira (Belo Horizonte: Editora UFMG, 2019).

3 To call a testimony or a literary work of a child survivor, does not necessarily refer to a testimony given by a child, but to the testimony given by someone who was a child at the time of the traumatic events of the Holocaust.

4 Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after The Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

5 The impasses found in the discussions about the (im)possibilities of representing the Holocaust gave rise to the congress *The Extermination of the Jews and the Limits of Representation*, held at UCLA (University of California, Los Angeles) in 1990. The congress was attended by renowned North American and European historians and gave rise to the book, organized by Saul Friedländer, *Probing the Limits of Representation*, released in 1992. When questioning the possibility of representing and historicizing the Shoah without disrespecting its historical place, Friedländer coined the concept of *event at its limits* in the context of the emergence of so-called postmodern prerogatives in historiography.

a possibility of confusion between reality and verisimilitude. Criticisms of Hayden White's work are exemplary in illustrating this aspect as they often start from the confusion of fiction as a lie and an association with the idea of postmodernism. Considering that, for Lyotard, postmodernism appears as an attempt to respond to the problem of representation that arose with Auschwitz. A late response, from the 1970s and 1980s, to the epistemological and hermeneutical challenges raised by the Shoah.⁶

Herman Paul⁷ understands that the reach of White's work is due to the fact that he challenged three conventional distinctions between fields that are believed to be significantly different: first, in the philosophy of history, by stating that there was no reflection on historical studies that was metaphysically neutral, but derived from what he called metahistorical assumptions; second, in the distinction between historical practice and speculative philosophy of history, by pointing out that it would not be possible to define what a fact or event is without a substantive vision of what reality is; third, in the incursion into the border between history and fiction. This last point was certainly the one that caused the most discomfort among his peers, as what White was saying was that historians produce narratives just as authors of fiction novels do. With this statement, he was not referring to a literary quality of writing, rather he was pointing out and problematizing how the requirement of a certain form of plot interferes with the interpretation of the past, which means that the problem of history is not restricted to the content of a discourse about the past, thus involving its form.⁸ From this perspective, as long as historians wrote history following, for example, the model of a 19th century realistic novel, they would be adapting history to specific approaches. Furthermore, a commitment of this type to a specific narrative model should be avoided, in the end so that different modes of representation would be validated as history. Thus, literary modernism appears as a product of the effort

6 Jean-François Lyotard, *A condição pós-moderna*, trans. Ricardo Corrêa Barbosa (Rio de Janeiro: Editora José Olympio, 2009).

7 Herman Paul, *Hayden White: The Historical Imagination* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011), 3-5.

8 Hayden White. *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1987).

to represent a historical reality for which realist and classical modes of representation were inadequate, and this reality was exemplified by White with the Holocaust, an event “modernist in nature”.⁹

In this article, fiction is considered a serious path for thinking about and representing the Shoah. Sara Horowitz¹⁰ considers that fiction opens up possibilities for exploring the trope of muteness present in the most diverse narratives about the Holocaust. As White¹¹ states the historical way is not the only one to approach the past and from that he was able to point to the relations between history and literature. The connections between textual omissions and historical events can be particularly investigated taking as an object the literary productions of the generations following the traumatic event and, in the case of the Holocaust, also by the so-called Generation 1.5. Usually (as shown in the aforementioned criticism of White’s work), there is some discomfort with the idea of an aesthetic project built upon a traumatic past, but, at the same time, after the Holocaust, a literature of testimony develops and this literature encompasses not only autobiography but fictional autobiography and fictional works in general.

Surviving Children, Generation 1.5

The unsayable is not buried inside writing, it is what
prompted it in the first place.¹²

The image of the Jewish child during Nazism was shaped by Anne Frank, whose diary is one of the most-read works on the Holocaust

9 Hayden White, “Historical Emplotment and the Problem of Truth”, in *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the “Final Solution”*, ed. Saul Friedländer (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1992), 50.

10 Sara Horowitz, *Voicing the Void: Muteness and Memory in Holocaust Fiction* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1997).

11 Hayden White, “The History Fiction Divide”, *Holocaust Studies* 20, n.º 1-2 (2014).

12 Georges Perec, *W or The Memory of Childhood*, trans. David Bellos (Suffolk: David R. Godine Publisher, 1988).

and whose former home is one of the most visited sites in Holland. She recorded her everyday experiences between 1942 and 1944 while hiding from the Nazis with her family. Of course, the experience of children who survived is usually quite different from that of adults, since most who arrived at the concentration camps were immediately sent to the gas chambers, with the exception of teenagers deemed fit for work and a minority of children selected for medical experiments. Most of the surviving children were separated very early from their families, passed through hiding places or were saved by distant relatives, other families and rescue groups that took them to shelters – such as the *Kindertransport*, which took thousands of children to England. In order to expose stories of surviving children in addition to Anne Frank, Diane Wolf¹³ interviewed about seventy people who were Jewish children in Nazi-occupied Holland and survived by hiding. These people were usually sheltered by other families in arrangements quite different from the Anne Frank case. According to these accounts, the war years were tolerable for most, while the post-war period became a turbulent and traumatic time, marked by the difficulty in connecting life before, during and after the war and in connecting shifting family identities with confused memories.

Susan Suleiman's concept of generation 1.5 refers to a generation that she considers to be under-theorized: the child survivors of the Shoah, many of whom were not in concentration camps and were too young to have any understanding of the moment they were witnessing and, sometimes, even to have any memory at all.¹⁴ Some of these children are both survivors and children of survivors. They occupy two distinct positions in experiencing the Shoah directly and indirectly, usually without any story to tell about the genocide, but living in the shadow of it. Suleiman¹⁵ does not consider it appropriate to speak of the same generation to refer to survivors with such diverse origins, be-

13 Diane L Wolf, *Beyond Anne Frank: Hidden Children and Postwar Families in Holland* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

14 Suleiman, *Crises de memória*, 237.

15 Suleiman, *Crises de memória*, 238.

cause, as much as the Holocaust was a collective experience, speaking of a generation assumes that people did not just share experiences, but also attitudes and behaviors. Surviving children have particularities in the way they experience trauma, such as premature perplexity and helplessness caused by the sudden transformation of a world they thought stable and safe into a chaotic reality. They went through a transition from family life to new environments and had to pretend not to be who they were when they needed to take a new name.¹⁶ Moreover, they experienced the difficulty of apprehending the fact that they were being persecuted by an identity they had not yet claimed for themselves, at the same time that they had to deny their Jewish identity to have any chance to survive.¹⁷

Annette Wieviorka¹⁸ reminds us that the testimonies lend themselves to an individual experience, but also express socially valued discourses. They reaffirm the uniqueness of each Shoah experience, but they do so from a language that must be contextualized, as it responds to political and ideological demands, which places them as part of a collective memory whose function varies. The testimonies of surviving children were collected or published almost exclusively many years after the events, evincing a retrospective interpretation of distant memories. Even though Suleiman¹⁹ states that it is as a personal and subjective expression that the experiences of survivors can best be transmitted, it is necessary, in addition to the individual search for working-through trauma, to consider the public uses of these memories and how they are part of a wider movement. In a study of the testimonies of surviving children, Sue Vice²⁰ points out some distinctive characteristics of these

16 Rebecca Clifford interviewed dozens of people who were child survivors and states that, with a single exception, these people preferred to use their original names rather than pseudonyms, which she interpreted as a deep understanding of the power of names to denote identity and ownership of their life story, especially for those who needed to use a false name at some point in order to survive. Rebecca Clifford, *Survivors: Children's Lives after the Holocaust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020), xvi.

17 Suleiman, *Crises de memória*, 238-239.

18 Annette Wieviorka, *The Era of the Witness* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2006).

19 Suleiman, *Crises de memória*, 242.

20 Sue Vice, *Children Writing the Holocaust* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 2.

accounts, such as errors of perception in relation to facts, attention to detail at the expense of context, divided or indefinite temporality, presence of age-appropriate concerns and what she calls identity disturbances for children who have had to adopt a new name and deny their history. Some of these characteristics led Suleiman²¹ to claim that there is, in the narratives of the surviving children, a special place for literary imagination and artistic representation. Without dismissing the importance of primary testimony, she believes that works with “literary merit” are more likely to resist and continue to be significant for those who are not experts and have no personal connection to events. Furthermore, imagination – which was already indispensable for filling in the characteristic traumatic gaps in the testimonies of adult survivors – occupies a much larger space when memory gaps caused by the shock are joined to the naturally lost memories of childhood.

Among the best-known authors who were children during the Shoah are: Imre Kertész, Aharon Appelfeld, Saul Friedländer, Georges Perec and Ruth Klüger. Imre Kertész, the first Hungarian Jew to win the Nobel Prize for Literature, was deported at the age of fourteen to Auschwitz. His most famous work, *Sorstalanság* (1975), tells the story of a fifteen-year-old boy, György Köves, in concentration camps. Regardless of the autobiographical elements, the writing departs from the tradition of Holocaust literature produced until then and was labelled as “historical fiction”, a provocative mix of authenticity and fictionality in the search for truth,²² or as a philosophical treatise disguised as fiction in the wake of Albert Camus.²³ More important than the chosen genre, there is a clear attempt to make sense of real events using literature and imagination, connecting with a collective memory in which Shoah appears as a lesson. In his speech in Stockholm, Kertész stated:

21 Suleiman, *Crises de memória*, 242.

22 Julia Karolle, “Imre Kertész’s Fatelessness as Historical Fiction”, in *Imre Kertész and Holocaust Literature*, ed. Louise Vasvári and Steven Tötösy Zepetnek (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2005), 89.

23 Louise Vasvári and Steven Tötösy Zepetnek, *Imre Kertész and Holocaust Literature* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2005), 258.

In short, I died once, so I could live. Perhaps that is my real story. If it is, I dedicate this work, born of a child's death, to the millions who died and to those who still remember them. But, since we are talking about literature, after all, the kind of literature that, in the view of your Academy, is also a testimony, my work may yet serve a useful purpose in the future [...] Whenever I think of the traumatic impact of Auschwitz, I end up dwelling on the vitality and creativity of those living today. Thus, in thinking about Auschwitz, I reflect, paradoxically, not on the past but the future.²⁴

In addition to the focus on the future, the quote is important as it shows a common theme in this literature. The death of the child who passed away, the loss of childhood, which Kertész resorts to, is a feeling shared by most survivors subjected to situations in which they had to make choices and take responsibility for their actions without being able to do so. Raymond Federman is exemplary in this regard. The French-Jewish novelist recounts the moment when his mother hid him in a closet and told him to be silent, which eventually led him to be the only one of his immediate family to survive. For Federman, this moment was the fracture between his life before and after, a kind of rebirth, as if the first thirteen years of the boy's existence who feared loneliness and darkness had disappeared in the misunderstanding of waiting in a dark closet. He asks himself: "What name to give to that terrible moment? Was it a day of separation? A day of birth? A day of salvation? Or should it be called the beginning of a long absence from myself?"²⁵

Sorstalanság begins with the seemingly familiar narrative of the ordinary life of a boy living in Budapest before deportation and goes through the inevitable scenes of the travel on cargo trains, the selection

24 Imre Kertész, *Imre Kertész Nobel Lecture: Heureka!* (Oslo: The Nobel Prize, 2002).

25 Raymond Federman, *Shhh, The Story of a Childhood* (New York: Starcherone Books, 2010), 16.

and the life in the camps. Differently, it presents a reflection of a character who returns to Budapest and, already mature, reflects on his condition as a Jew, on the notion of responsibility and on being someone with no fate and no place. The character blends in with the narrator and the author can be seen as resigned or pessimistic. But this resigned tone did not prevent Kertész from continuing to use imagination and “creativity” in literature, from trying to work-through his experience and to turn to the future. In his book, Federman tells the story of his childhood, narrating it from the moment his family was taken by the Gestapo to extermination, incorporating in its title the last word heard from his mother: “shhh”. The English version of the book was only published in 2010 and tells not only the story of Federman, character and author, but the story of silence, of the word that indicates that something must be kept secret. *SHHH: The Story of a Childhood* (2010) is about what happened before the story told in his first book, *Double or Nothing* (1971), whose protagonist is an expatriate living in the USA. Federman talks about how it took him time to understand what his mother meant by her “shhh”. When he remembers, she says it in French, “chut,” so writing this version of his childhood in English carries, in its origins, the falsification of what his mother meant. The falsification and silence concern the story that could not and cannot be told and that, even so, he had to tell. The juxtaposition, for many inevitable, between fiction and autobiography can be noticed from his first works, even in the most experimental ones and even when he affirmed, in the essay entitled *Surfiction* (1975), that fiction proliferates only from its own discourse, being a metaphor of the narrative process that forms it.²⁶ Suleiman²⁷ realizes that the notion that Federman’s works should not be seen as history did not hold for long, as his self-reflexive or postmodern fiction works as a response to the crisis created by the Holocaust.

By including Federman’s work in an experimental writing characteristic of the 1.5 generation, Suleiman analyzes *Double or Nothing*

²⁶ Raymond Federman, *Surfiction: Fiction Now & Tomorrow* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1981), 11.

²⁷ Suleiman, *Crises de memória*, 261.

(1971), a book in which a character, a stubborn and determined middle-aged man, decides to record, exactly as it happened, the story of another character, a young Frenchman who, after World War II, left for the USA.²⁸ The subtitle “a real fictitious discourse” is accompanied by different elements that move the story apart and then bring it closer: a multi-layered narrative, self-reflective comments, humor with delicate topics, dialogues between the author and the readers, etc.²⁹ In the same way, *SHHH*, despite its already assumed autobiographical character, has little in common with a traditional testimony, which can be exemplified by the various interventions of a second voice that draws, in an ironic way, the attention of the Federman narrator. These interventions draw attention for him not to fall into a dying realism or a decadent lyricism, so that he is not included in what they call autofiction or so that he stops reusing the resources of the previous novels that appear at every moment in this story, because, after all, speaking without speaking, the story had already been told in previous works.

The question of form is instrumental in the writing of the 1.5 generation. The visuality, the fragmented narrative, the deviations, the semantic games, the parentheses and the postponement of the story, which is always to be told, are the very substance of the story of the boy in the closet. Regarding this characteristic inventiveness, however, certainly the exemplary author of generation 1.5 is Georges Perec, son of Polish Jews living in France, whose father was killed during the war and his mother deported and murdered in Auschwitz. Perec was part of a group of poets and novelists called Oulipo (*Ouvroir de littérature potentielle*), characterized by including complex wordplay and mathematical structures in literature, so that themes such as loss, absence and identity make up his works in a innovative and experimental way. Perec’s work is not the testimony of an ordinary survivor who witnessed Nazi persecution, nor is it simply the testimony of a survivor’s son. It is found, indeed, in that intermediate place – 1.5 – and carries a testimonial content typical of those who have

28 Raymond Federman, *Double or Nothing* (Illinois: Fiction Collective, 1998).

29 Suleiman, *Crises de memória*, 262-263.

not seen the Shoah, but have been personally marked by its implications. In terms of narratives dealing with the trauma of being a surviving child, *La disparition* (1969) and *W ou Le souvenir d'enfance* (1975) stand out.

W ou Le souvenir d'enfance is a literary representation of trauma and, at the same time, a reflection on the limits found in writing, especially writing that depends on childhood memories. Two simultaneous stories are told: the attempt to reconstitute childhood and the fantastic narrative about W, an imaginary country that revolves around sport. But he also tells the reader that at the age of thirteen he invented the story of W, which he suddenly forgot and remembered many years later. It is *a* story of his childhood that intertwines with the narrative of *the* story of his childhood, also to be reconstructed and reinvented. The book does not depart from the experimental character of the previous works, but acquires the particularity of autobiography. So it is for Lejeune:³⁰ the narrative seems to him an occasion for rewriting, in which various writings are taken up in exercises of transposition and variation. In addition to an occasion for the unpretentious invention of a new type of autobiography, on the sidelines, an invention in the process. In this way, personal experience and childhood memories are no longer hidden under the form, but are constitutive of its essence, making the apparently unspeakable speak through memory that cannot actually be remembered, since it was not even properly formed. In the book, therefore, memory has its gaps filled by fiction, and the absence of memory is also present when he wants to remember, but cannot.

Suleiman³¹ points out that after the publication of *W ou Le souvenir d'enfance* some elements of previous works, such as mysterious disappearances, violent crimes and confused identities, could be perceived with an autobiographical resonance. *La disparition* is a book of more than three hundred pages without the use of the letter “e”, the most common vowel in the French language. Jacques Fux³² sees this as Perec’s attempt to “control

30 Philippe Lejeune, *La mémoire et l'oblique: Georges Perec autobiographe* (Paris: POL,1991), 38-39.

31 Suleiman, *Crises de memória*, 245-246.

32 Jacques Fux, *Georges Perec. A psicanálise nos jogos e traumas de uma criança de guerra* (Rio de Janeiro: Relicário, 2019), 9-10.

the uncontrollable”, by creating this obsessive world, where he imposed a mathematical mastery on literature in order not to deal directly with trauma. With his father and mother (*père* and *mère*) absent, he wrote a book inflicting, from the start, a complex constraint. The lipogram was not even the only mathematical or control resource that Perec resorted to,³³ the rules used are diverse to the point that commentators still discover new logics in their readings. For Fux,³⁴ Perec used mathematics as an escape, a “non-existent attempt” to working-through or sublimation. But despite this use of mathematics, it is still language. Therefore, the author could not control literature or reception, so that, through the visibly absurd attempt to reach totality and exhaustion, Perec ends up allowing criticism of any project that tries to encompass the whole. Much is said through silences. Perec’s testimony, despite its innovative form, is like the testimony of other survivors: “inaccurate, incomplete, falsified and fictitious”³⁵ and *La disparition* is a book in which limitation and impossibility are defined by an imposition prior to writing itself.

Jean-Claude Grumberg is a writer and screenwriter also included by Suleiman in the 1.5 generation category. Grumberg saw his father and grandparents being deported in 1942 from Paris to Drancy, and learned later that they were sent to Auschwitz in 1943 and died there. Grumberg and his brother survived and lived for a time in Moissac, in an orphanage that housed around five hundred Jewish children during the war. There they had to use false names. The persecution and disappearance of the father were present in many of his works, notably in plays such as *Maman revient pauvre orphelin* (1974), *Dreyfus* (1974), *L’atelier* (1979), *Zone libre* (1990) and *Mon père, inventaire* (2003). In the latter, he gathered everything he thought he knew about his father in an attempt to reconstitute a virtually non-existent memory, just like Perec’s. For surviving children, this mixture of traumatic memory and the problem of remembering childhood leads to wanting to remember,

33 Jacques Fux, *Literatura e Matemática: Jorge Luis Borges, Georges Perec e o Oulipo* (São Paulo: Perspectiva, 2017).

34 Fux, *Georges Perec*, 18-30.

35 Fux, *Georges Perec*, 43.

but not being able to. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the difficulty in remembering childhood is not unique to Shoah survivors or even children who have experienced traumatic realities. Perec was five when he last saw his mother and Grumberg was just three when his father was deported. Grumberg defines himself as an expert in his non-memory and states that if he had real memories of the period he would probably not have written the plays he did, since it is so much more difficult to express oneself when one knows horror.

In *La plus précieuse des marchandises. Un conte* (2019), Grumberg begins in a delicate way that does not take long to take on darker contours. The story is that of a couple of poor woodcutters who lived, hungry and childless, in a forest next to train tracks. At the same time, a young Jewish couple and their twin children, born at the worst moment, find themselves on a cargo train. The father – desperate with the horror of the trip, the imminence of a terrible fate and the lack of milk for the two babies – decides to leave one and delivers the girl (without choosing between the girl and the boy) to the poor woodcutter woman who used to always watch the train go by. The book is about the Holocaust and death, also about love and survival, but it is still a kind of deconstruction of the Shoah's denial and a reflection on what is true. At the end, there is an epilogue in which the author states that nothing in his story is true:

You want to know if this is a true story? A true story? Of course not, absolutely not. There were no cargo trains crossing war-torn continents to deliver urgently their oh-so-perishable cargo. No reunification camps, internment camps, concentration camps, or even extermination camps. No families were vaporized in smoke after their final journey. No hair was shorn, gathered, packaged, and shipped. There were no flames, no ashes, no tears. None of this, none of this happened, none of this is true.³⁶

³⁶ Jean-Claude Grumberg, *The Most Precious of Cargos. A Tale*, trans. Frank Wynne (New York: Harpervia, 2021), 52.

In this way he says that none of it – both the real and known story of the Jews on the trains and in the *Lagers* and the fable he created – could be real, except that the little girl, “who did not exist”, was thrown to a poor woodcutter without children, who also “did not exist” and who loved her. This love would be precisely the only thing that deserves to exist in stories. Soon after, in an “Appendix for Lovers of True Stories”, Grumberg explains from where he gets his stories, he tells about convoy number 45, which departed from Drancy in 1942 carrying his grandfather, Naphtali Grumberg, and convoy 49, which left in 1943 and took his father, Zacharie Grumberg. He also mentions *The Memorial to the Deportation of Jews from France*, created in 1978 by Serge Klarsfeld, a sample of this story so horrible that it could not have happened, but that nonetheless is on the alphabetical lists of Jews deported from France. These lists state that Abraham and Chaïga Wizenfeld, with their twin sons Fernande and Jeannine, left Drancy in December 1943, just twenty-eight days after the children were born.³⁷

The trauma that surviving children carried through their lives certainly differed immensely from the trauma of adults, especially children who had little or no recollection of events related to the Shoah. However, this memory was produced, like all memory, in relation to a broad interpersonal and cultural world that includes, in the case of Shoah, silencing, forgetting and the subsequent claim and creation of a memory and identity. With regard to this differentiation, the children’s testimony shows an even greater distance between the desire to give a logical and true account of it and its impossibility. When talking about childhood memory, Perec shed light on the relationship between personal trauma and historical or collective trauma, in the case of surviving children who lost their parents or even those who were taken away from their parents too early:

“I have no childhood memories”: I made this assertion with confidence, with almost a kind of defiance. It was no-

³⁷ Grumberg, *The Most Precious of Cargos*, 65.

body's business to press me on this question. It was not a set topic on my syllabus. I was excused: a different history, History with a capital H, had answered the question in my stead: the war, the camps.³⁸

Perec's autobiographical writing is a literary possibility of meeting the limitations of childhood memories and the traumatic memories of Shoah, testimony and childhood. Perec's innovation, especially in *La disparition*, is in telling his traumatic experience in a completely new way, not just telling it through another person, but using an innovative way that is itself a manifestation of the trauma. Fux's conclusion³⁹ is that Perec's discourse goes beyond a simple testimony: it arises from the Shoah's own restriction, mixing history, fiction and literature, constituting what he defines as a meta-testimony. Kertész, Federman, Perec and Grumberg are authors who have made very different aesthetic choices when it comes to writing, but they meet in relation to experimentation, in an attempt to deal with the trauma they remember very little. After all, as elusive as childhood memory is the reality of the Shoah for these surviving children, so this truth could only appear figuratively, fictionally, speaking without really speaking and speaking of themselves, all at the same time.

Second and third generations

I don't want to talk about that either. If there's one thing the world doesn't need, it's to hear my thoughts on the matter. The cinema has already taken care of that. Books have already taken care of that. Witnesses have narrated this detail by detail, and for sixty years of reporting and essays and analyses, generations of historians and philoso-

³⁸ Perec, *W*, 11.

³⁹ Fux, *Georges Perec*, 98-99.

phers and artists have dedicated their lives to adding footnotes to this material, an effort to renew once again the opinion the world has on the matter, anyone's reaction to the mention of the word Auschwitz. So not for a second would it occur to me to repeat these ideas if they weren't, at some point, essential so that I'm able to talk about my grandfather, and consequently about my father, and consequently about me.⁴⁰

In a recent autobiographical book, Luiz Schwarcz, a Brazilian editor and writer, points out how trauma and its consequences can be present even under the guise of professional and personal success. The title of the book is *O ar que me falta: história de uma curta infância e uma longa depressão* (2021) and shows how the feeling of shortness of breath – one of the most notable symptoms of diagnosed anxiety and depression – has its origins in the author's childhood. He lived together with his father, who suffered from insomnia and used to repeatedly tremble his legs on the bed. His father, a Hungarian Jew, André or András, survived the Shoah at the age of nineteen by fleeing the train that took him to Bergen-Belsen and leaving behind his own father, Láios, to whom his grandson's book is dedicated. The story, about which the father spoke little during his life, elevated the guilt to the foundation of his son's existence: the order, from Láios to András, to get off the train, was obeyed by the son, who used to disobey his father, and transfigured into insomnia, held back tears and moments of anger and sadness. The image of the son who obeys his father at the wrong time had conditioned the way of being of Luiz, who saw himself entrusted with the mission of not failing like his father, of getting it right and providing him with the happiness that the memory of the past seemed to prevent.⁴¹ Naturally, he also failed. Luiz received the translated name of his grandfather, so that even if the couple could not

40 Michel Laub, *Diário da queda* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2011), 9.

41 Luiz Schwarcz, *O ar que me falta: história de uma curta infância e uma longa depressão* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2021), 15-26.

have other children, André had already guaranteed the replacement of a tragically lost existence.⁴² The impossibility of having other children, however, did not stop causing problems for the couple, who came to separate. This situation especially affected the mother – also a Jew who, from a very early age, had to memorize a false name to run away with her parents – who suffered several miscarriages and spent months in bed trying to maintain a pregnancy. The lack of siblings increased the pressure on Luiz, making him believe that he was the only provider of joy in the home, to the point of developing an “almost pathological sense of responsibility”.⁴³

One of the works that first gained prominence on the transgenerationality of trauma was Helen Epstein’s book *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations with Sons and Daughters of Survivors* (1979), in which she interviewed children of survivors, all of whom were undeniably affected by the experiences of their parents. Many of these children were looking, for the first time, to the post-Holocaust aspect as something meaningful and formative in their lives. The terms *second generation* and *third generation* are now important in reflections on the Shoah’s legacies. The expressions refer, at first, to the children and grandchildren of survivors, but they can still be used in a more general way, which does not necessarily imply a family relationship. The Israeli psychoanalyst Ilany Kogan,⁴⁴ for example, saw the implication of a threatening situation in Israel as a reactivation of the Shoah’s traumatic past and not only regarding those directly affected and their descendants but in the entire population.

The consequences of imprisonment in concentration camps were of great interest in psychiatric publications, making the long-term effects of trauma on the lives of survivors visible a few years after the prisoners were released. The term “survivor syndrome” was used to designate a constellation of symptoms that included nightmares, chron-

42 Schwarcz, *O ar que me falta*, 42.

43 Schwarcz, *O ar que me falta*, 48-49.

44 Ilany Kogan, “The Second Generation in the Shadow of Terror”, in *Lost in Transmission: Studies of Trauma Across Generations*, ed. M. Gerard Fromm (London: Karnac, 2012), 17.

ic depression and anxiety, survival guilt, etc.⁴⁵ Most of the survivors, despite the reported psychiatric symptoms, sought to move on with their lives and form new families. In 1978, physician Russell Phillips⁴⁶ analyzed the case of a son of two survivors who, during his childhood, used to hear from his parents that, if he was successful, he would give meaning to their suffering in the concentration camps, but if he failed – if he was not religious, if he did not study, if he did not have a profession or got married – then all the suffering would have been in vain. In line with previous reviews and publications, Phillips traces some typical features of the interaction between surviving parents and their children in a setting that, even when parents do not talk about their experiences, the experiences unfold under the ubiquity of the Shoah. As examples: an overprotective behavior in the quest to enable the children to face disasters that were often unlikely; the inculcation of guilt in children for having a more comfortable life than theirs; a paranoid behavior towards the non-Jews; and the expectation that the child provides meaning to the parents' lives, even compensating in some way for all the lost lives of other family members.⁴⁷

Kogan⁴⁸ makes a case study of the situation of surviving parents who, in addition to the disintegration of their daily lives, lost a child during the Shoah and began to see the new child as a substitute for the one who died. This behavior had profound effects on the development of this new child who starts to try to fulfill the fantasies of their parents as their life goals. In such a scenario, the child is a loved being, narcissistically valued – not as an individual, but only in terms of the condition of fulfilling the destiny of the lost child. The lost child ends up becoming an idealized rival, whose sins were expiated with death. One of the best-known cases of replacement children is Art Spiegelman, who talks about the feeling of growing up in competition with his ghost brother Richieu:

45 Russel Phillips, "Impact of Nazi Holocaust on Children of Survivors", *American Journal of Psychotherapy* 32 (1978): 370.

46 Phillips, "Impact of Nazi Holocaust", 373.

47 Phillips, "Impact of Nazi Holocaust", 371; Bernard Trossman, "Adolescent Children of Concentration Camp Survivors", *Canadian Psychiatric Association Journal* 13, n.º 2 (1968): 121-123.

48 Kogan, "On being a dead", 727.

I wonder if Richieu and I would get along if he was still alive.

Your brother?

My Ghost-Brother, since he got killed before I was born. He was only five or six. After the war my parents traced down the vaguest rumors, and went to orphanages all over Europe. They couldn't believe he was dead. I didn't think about him much when I was growing up... he was mainly a large blurry photograph hanging in my parents' bedroom.

Uh-huh. I thought that was a picture of you, though it didn't look like you.

That's the point. They didn't need photos of me in their room. I was alive! ... The photo never threw tantrums or got into any kind of trouble... It was an ideal kid, and I was a pain in the ass. I couldn't compete. They didn't talk about Richieu, but that photo was a kind of reproach. He'd have become a doctor, and married a wealthy Jewish girl... the creep. But at least we could've made him deal with Vladek. It's spooky, having sibling rivalry with a snapshot! I never felt guilty about Richieu. But I did have nightmares about S.S. men coming into my class and dragging all us Jewish kids away.⁴⁹

Schwab⁵⁰ was the one who used the term “syndrome of replacement child” to, through Spiegelman's example, trace the symptoms of the transgenerational transmission of trauma. For her, the parents could not process the grief of the first child properly because they could not even believe that this child was in fact dead and, even if they said

49 Art Spiegelman, *Maus II: A Survivor's Tale: And Here My Troubles Began* (New York: Pantheon Press, 1999), 15-16.

50 Gabriele Schwab, “Replacement Children: The Transgenerational Transmission of Traumatic Loss”, in *Memory and Political Change*, ed. Aleida Assmann and Linda Shortt (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 18.

little or nothing about this fact, the dead child ended up becoming omnipresent through idealization. The replacement child finds it impossible to compete with the other dead child, yet they cannot avoid the ghostly competition via the parents' fantasies. By the end of the second volume of *Maus*, Vladek is falling asleep and calls Artie by the name of Richieu. In the minds of many of these children of survivors, feelings of guilt and aggression were linked to a terrible historical event. At the same time, the effort, on the part of a child, to fulfill the role assigned by the parents of undoing the destruction caused in the Shoah led to a damaged psychic structure and even to the difficulty in distinguishing what is real or not in the face of a fantasy of restitution. The latent aggressiveness in these relationships was a problem reported by both Kogan⁵¹ – who noticed that parents tended to treat their children as reincarnations of Nazi oppressors, from the moment they faced the hostility of children in response to the pressures suffered – and by Phillips,⁵² who noticed damage to children's psyches caused by the inability to effectively express anger towards parents. The child is aware of the parents' inability to deal with negative affections, so they feel too guilty to add something to the miseries already suffered by the parents. The repression of these affections intensifies unconscious fantasies of aggression that end up getting too close to reports of real experiences. A dangerous fusion between history and fantasy, triggering aggression, fear and guilt.

The effects of trauma on the second generation could be noticed in two situations, despite their apparent opposition: they were present when the children were used as an audience for the repetitive accounts of the miseries suffered during the Shoah and when the parents integrated the group of survivors who chose or were induced to silence their memories. The transgenerational character of trauma is considerably more complex, as became apparent with *Stalag Fiction*,⁵³ produced and

51 Kogan, "On being a dead", 728.

52 Phillips, "Impact of Nazi Holocaust", 376.

53 The *Stalags* or *Stalag Fiction* were magazines in the style of North American pulp fiction, with flashy and pornographic covers that formed a series of works written in the Hebrew language released in Israel at a time that coincided with the Eichmann trial.

consumed by young Israelis, many of whom were the children of survivors.⁵⁴ Studies linked to psychoanalysis and psychotherapy of children of survivors suggest that, as children, they perform a multitude of functions in the family, among them the fulfillment of some unconscious wish of one or both parents, so that the parents could even use their children as transference objects, forcing them into a destructive identification. This identification is associated with the expectation that the child would become an extension of the parents acting on their neuroses and not a separate, autonomous person.⁵⁵ For Freyberg,⁵⁶ survivors can even experience the individuation process of their children as another family loss and, therefore, create dependent and fearful individuals with no control of hostile impulses. The survivors themselves were also carriers of aggressive impulses, making their children the transference recipients of an unconscious and not expressed anger. That can come to the point where children act-out this aggressiveness and/or internalize and somatize this anger.⁵⁷

Kogan⁵⁸ defined enactment as a non-verbal behavior similar to what happens in a psychoanalytic situation, which includes acting-out characteristics in an attempt to avoid painful knowledge and memory. At the same time, it is the only available way to re-act an experience. Regarding the children of survivors, the term was used by her to refer to a compulsion to recreate experiences of their parents in their own lives through concrete acts. In this sense, the transgenerational transmission of the historical trauma occurs through two mechanisms: on the one hand, primitive identification, which refers to the unconscious introjection of the child and the assimilation of the father's or mother's self-image through interaction; on the other, the deposited

54 Sabrina Costa Braga. "O paradigma da Shoah e a historiografia: memória e testemunho sob a ótica do trauma"(PhD diss., Universidade Federal de Goiás, 2022), 55-65.

55 Harvey Barocas and Carol Barocas. "Manifestations of Concentration Camp Effects on the Second Generation", *American Journal of Psychiatry* 130, n.º 7 (1973): 820.

56 Joan T. Freyberg, "Difficulties in Separation-Individuation as Experienced by Offspring of Nazi Holocaust Survivors", *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 50, n.º 1 (1980): 88.

57 Barocas and Barocas, "Manifestations of Concentration Camp Effects", 820.

58 Kogan, "The Second Generation", 6.

representation that emphasizes the role of parents who, unconsciously or consciously, force aspects of themselves on the child and threaten their sense of identity, compelling them to deal with feelings such as anger, guilt and shame, not overcome by the parents.⁵⁹ From these definitions and with the presentation of two clinical vignettes of children of survivors during the Intifada in Israel, Kogan concludes that when members of this second generation are faced with traumatic realities in the present, they can reactivate a mental representation of the Holocaust shared with their parents. A sharing that impacts their perception of reality. In the reported cases, the risk of life made it difficult to differentiate between external and internal reality, since their psychic realities were structured by unconscious fantasies and feelings of guilt associated with the parents own traumatic past. The reality of the Shoah was enacted and acted-out in actual reality rather than verbalized or symbolized.⁶⁰

Dori Laub⁶¹ draws on cases of second-generation Israelis during the Yom Kippur War to address the impact of trauma on current events. He considers that trauma often destroys the ability to know, symbolize and remember, and is ultimately addressed by others, especially this next generation. Auerhahn and Laub⁶² also focus on how the psychic unrepresentability of memory trauma leaves traces in the narratives and fantasies of both generations as they exemplify with the story of a survivor's daughter who, after a long time, had the courage to ask his father about a subject often left out of his war stories. She asked him how many children he had before and what their names were, to which her father replied that he just could not remember. After the father's death, she confirms with a relative the name of one of the children

59 Kogan, "The Second Generation", 7-8.

60 Ilany Kogan, "Recordação da realidade histórica nas análises de filhos de sobreviventes do Holocausto", *Revista de Psicanálise da SPPA* 15, n.º 1 (2008): 79.

61 Dori Laub, "Traumatic shutdown of narrative and symbolization: a death instinct derivative?", in *Lost in Transmission: Studies of Trauma Across Generations*, ed. M. Gerard Fromm (London: Karnac, 2012).

62 Nanette Auerhahn and Dori Laub, "Intergenerational memory of the Holocaust", in *International Handbook of Multigenerational Legacies of Trauma*, ed. Yael Danieli (New York and London: Plenum, 1998).

he had and, then, names her own daughter after the forgotten child. The dilemma, in this case, appears in how to transmit a memory that was not recorded. But what is even more interesting is the process of reconstitution: as the trauma – impossible to be fully remembered or narrated – shapes the psychic world of the second generation, it can find a way (a *Weg*, in heideggerian terms) there.⁶³

The concept of postmemory, as introduced by Marianne Hirsch⁶⁴ in a study on photography, narrative and memory, points to the relationship between a generation – the second or third generation – with traumatic events prior to their birth that were transmitted to them. Friedländer⁶⁵ considers that the voices of a second generation are as powerful as the testimonies produced by contemporaries. Even if the opacity of a deep memory does not dissipate in the face of new forms of historical narrative or modes of representation, trauma can represent an ongoing intellectual and emotional challenge. Eva Hoffman,⁶⁶ also a daughter of survivors, talks about how it was only when she started writing that the Shoah, which until then was an incipient and obscure topic, emerged as a powerful theme and an undeniable influence on her life. Personal memories became attached to history and they became apparent as an important source of study of the profound and lasting impact of a historic catastrophe on society. The implications, therefore, do not refer exclusively to private memories. Especially regarding the death of parents and the natural demise of survivors as a group that tells their stories, Hoffman thinks that the Shoah's legacy passed on to the descendants, those who had somehow come into contact with the horror:

The guardianship of the Holocaust is being passed
on to us. The second generation is the hinge generation in

63 Laub, "Traumatic shutdown", 361.

64 Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*.

65 Saul Friedländer, *Memory, History, and the Extermination of the Jews of Europe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993).

66 Eva Hoffman, *After Such Knowledge: A Meditation on the Aftermath of the Holocaust* (London: Vintage Books, 2004), 10-13.

which received, transferred knowledge of events is transmuted into history, or into myth. It is also the generation in which we can think about certain questions arising from the Shoah with a sense of a living connection. This is one person's meditation on such questions, and on a long reckoning with the long aftermath of atrocity.⁶⁷

Hirsch⁶⁸ states that what is at stake is precisely the protection of a traumatic personal and generational past with which some have a "living connection". It is about paying attention to the passage of this past to history or to myth. The notion of postmemory presupposes that descendants of survivors are so connected to the victims' memories of the past that this memory can be transferred to next generations, whereas this memory is admittedly of a different order. Postmemory is about the relationship between the later generation and the personal and collective trauma of those who came before, so it can really be as if the experiences, transmitted so deeply, behave like memories. It is a connection with the past mediated by imagination. The post-it metaphor serves to explain the "post" in postmemory: it is something that adheres to the surface of texts, adding something, but it can also be easily displaced. Postmemory is therefore the transgenerational structure of traumatic memory that, even in its "post" version, still challenges narrative reconstruction in such a way that someone could have their own life story displaced by that of their ancestors⁶⁹.

Although Hirsch acknowledges that postmemory is not limited to the family setting, this form of transmission and remembrance is characteristically intense and suggests that the transference process causes the past to be internalized without being fully understood, as is distinguishing of trauma. In other words, its internalization starts from an individual and family aesthetic mediation, from private experiences

67 Hoffman, *After Such Knowledge*, 14.

68 Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*, 1-2.

69 Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*, 2-6.

communicated that also incorporates public images. Hirsch⁷⁰ uses the distinction made by Jan Assmann between cultural memory and communicative memory, the latter being a type of memory linked to the biographical characteristic of a generation of contemporaries who witnesses an event and can transmit it through their bodily connection to their descendants. Like Jan Assmann, Aleida Assmann does not focus on the transmission of traumatic memory, but examines the connection of memories between individuals. Memories that, once verbalized, merge with the intersubjective symbolic system of language and lose their exclusive and inalienable property, being able to be shared, corrected, contested, written and made accessible to anyone who is not part of the spatial and temporal reach of that individual.

Aleida Assmann⁷¹ argues that the categories of individual memory and collective memory are insufficient to describe what, in fact, is a complex network of memories in which people are involved. As each person's memories include much more than what individuals experience individually, it becomes clear that individual and collective memories interact. Four memory formats are pointed out: individual memory, social memory, political memory and cultural memory. Social memory includes shared and incorporated memories, especially through oral transmission in different generations of a family. These memories may transcend the individual life, but they are defined by the time span of a few generations. These memories are not restricted to the family, but can be shared with many contemporaries of the same age group and can also be extended in time with the support of symbolic forms of commemoration, such as sites of memory. Thus, losing the quality of a generational experience to become a more generalized form of memory.⁷²

Studies under the name of postmemory have offered important contributions to the analysis of memories and traumas of descendants

70 Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*, 32.

71 Aleida Assmann, "Memory, Individual and Collective", in *The Oxford Handbook of Contextual Political Analysis*, ed. Robert E Goodin and Charles Tilly (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 211.

72 Assmann, "Memory, Individual and Collective", 213-215.

of survivors. The sense of exile described by Hirsch⁷³ is shared by many children and grandchildren of survivors. This is an exile with no return, after all, they could not return to a place they never went to, a place that does not even exist as it did before the war. This exile is an exile from another time, prior to their birth. Exile and displacement accompany a kind of absent memory, of a place that it is not possible to visit, precisely because it is located in this space of absences, fragments, traces and silences that is postmemory: “It creates where it cannot recover. It imagines where it cannot recall. It mourns a loss that cannot be repaired.”⁷⁴ This indirect testimony of a past not fully apprehended is materialized in the most diverse aesthetic forms – in photography, cinema and literature – as a type of re-conduction of trauma.

For Aarons and Berger,⁷⁵ the shift from survivors’ accounts to the writing of a second or third generation marks an important change in the transmission and representation of trauma, a change not only temporal and experiential, but of memory: it does not cease to be memory by returning in an imaginative, borrowed form. The authors also understand the movement of descendants of survivors as carrying the burden of testimony in an attempt to avoid erasure,⁷⁶ a sense of duty, of need for preservation insofar as direct testimony, as highlighted by many⁷⁷ as a facet of *Zakhor*’s command. However, it is necessary to highlight the traumatic dimension of the relationship of these generations with the past, as it is not simply a quest to stop oblivion as a celebration. It is, rather, the typical inscription of the past that returns without necessarily being summoned. With *Maus* it is revealed that the truth about what happened cannot be separated from how the event is remembered and how the testimony is mediated. In addition, it reaffirms that truth and fiction are not polar opposites. What matters

73 Marianne Hirsch, “Past Lives: Postmemories in Exile”, *Poetics Today* 17, n.º 4 (1996): 662.

74 Hirsch, “Past Lives”, 664.

75 Victoria Aarons and Alan L. Berger, *Third-Generation Holocaust Representation: Trauma, History and Memory* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2017), 41.

76 Aarons and Berger, *Third-Generation Holocaust Representation*, 43.

77 Janet Jacobs, *The Holocaust Across Generations: Trauma and Its Inheritance among Descendants of Survivors* (New York: New York University Press, 2016), 2.

is the confluence between the modalities of representation of history and literature, or how literature allows expanding the understanding of historicity. The epigraph that opens this topic is part of Michel Laub's book *Diário da queda* (2011), and illustrates in an exemplary way how the apparent excess of representations about the Shoah still does not exhaust the theme with regard to the transgenerationality of trauma and the need to find new ways of working-through.

Conclusion

It is not necessary to completely dissolve the boundary between history and literature to incorporate fiction into historiography. The notion of testimonial content in literature can be used to refer to a facet of literature that emerges from catastrophes. This facet makes it necessary to review the relationship between the narrative and the *real*. A *real* that resists representation and that, paradoxically, in an attempt to reach the truth, needs to resort to fiction. An interesting example is the dispute over how to label *Maus*. There was no consensus among critics and commentators and the book was classified as literature, oral history, biography, autobiography and even a new category, the one of collaborative biography.⁷⁸ In a letter to *The New York Times Book Review*, Spiegelman says he is honored to have his book on the bestseller list and also surprised that it was included as fiction: "If your list were divided into literature and nonliterature, I could gracefully accept the compliment as intended, but to the extent that fiction indicates that a work isn't factual, I feel a bit queasy."⁷⁹ Spiegelman acknowledges that the boundary between fiction and nonfiction has been prolific for much contemporary writing, but he does not feel good about seeing the work he carefully wrote through his father's memoirs classified as fiction. Finally, he suggests, ironically, that the taxonomy problem he raises when drawing people with animal heads could be solved by including a new category: "nonfiction/mice".

78 Rick Iadonisi, "Bleeding History and Owning His [Father's] Story: *Maus* and Collaborative Autobiography", *CEA Critic* 57, n.º 1 (1994): 53.

79 Spiegelman, *Maus II*.

LaCapra⁸⁰ finds it significant that Spiegelman protested against the categorization of *Maus* as fiction by suggesting its classification as non-fiction, since the work is not *made up*, although it is obviously *made*. More important than thinking about the multiplicity of genres, is thinking about hybridity, its intermediate status resistant to the dichotomy. This hybridity is visible in the unique relationship between image and discursivity, but also in the fact that its characters (Vladek as the survivor and Artie as the survivor's son) are taken by the past, trapped in the repetition that makes it impossible to reach successful forms of mourning and working-through. Given this argument, it is not possible to fit *Maus* into an existing genre or fully explain its hybridity. What is remarkable is that the construction of texts like the examples I brought here embraces the disturbing reinscription of trauma and gives way to the interactive processes of acting-out and working-through. This inadequacy makes it possible to understand the incorporation and reception of a testimonial character for literature in the public sphere and also in historiography.

What can Holocaust literature tell us that history cannot? Or what literature on the Holocaust has to offer for the history of that event? And yet, what does fiction literature (with its testimonial facet) produced by members of the 1.5 generation and members of the second and third generations after the Shoah have to offer that traditional testimonies do not? The possible answer is not in terms of a more adequate way of representing the Shoah than another, but of another possibility of working-through the trauma. More precisely, of a possibility that is not committed to the re-establishment of the factual truth, however much it is impossible to disconnect from the History of what happened. What fiction has to offer beyond History and for History is the possibility of disturbing what is unspeakable in testimony by exploring the border between the real and the imagined. There is truth in the literature on the Shoah, even if it is different from that of history.

How to narrate a trauma impossible to be fully remembered? That is simply not possible since these generations were not present

80 LaCapra, *History and Memory*, 146.

at the traumatic events of the Shoah. The work of Perec is exemplary in this sense: the absence is constant. But precisely because of this, it is necessary to find a new way of working-through the trauma. In the cases selected here, this way was through fictional literature. This can be seen in the book *Diário da queda* written by Michel Laub. The narrator is the grandson of an Auschwitz survivor and he resists, at least initially, the need to take the history of the Shoah into account while he lives in a completely different reality, in 1980s Brazil. The narrative is constructed from fragments of memories that do not follow a chronological order, highlighting the discontinuity of the representation of the past in memory, especially when this memory was not really communicated across generations. In the book, Michel Laub deliberately mixed biographical data, historical and fictional elements to show that it is autobiographical and at the same time it is not, so that, regardless of whether it is characterized as autofiction or as a third-generation work, the novel, which forges a testimony, offers an intriguing reflection on transgenerational trauma, the imprecision of memory, the working-through of the past, the porosities on the border between the real and the fictional, and the relationship between memory and history.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aarons, Victoria, and Alan L. Berger. *Third-Generation Holocaust Representation: Trauma, History and Memory*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2017.
- Assmann, Aleida. "Memory, Individual and Collective". In *The Oxford Handbook of Contextual Political Analysis*, edited by Robert E. Goodin and Charles Tilly. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Auerhahn, Nanette, and Dori Laub. "Intergenerational Memory of the Holocaust". In *International Handbook of Multigenerational Legacies of Trauma*, edited by Yael Danieli. New York and London: Plenum, 1998.
- Barocas, Harvey, and Carol Barocas. "Manifestations of Concentration Camp Effects on the Second Generation". *American Journal of Psychiatry* 130, n.º 7 (1973): p. 820-821.
- Braga, Sabrina Costa. "O paradigma da Shoah e a historiografia: memória e testemunho sob a ótica do trauma". PhD diss., Universidade Federal de Goiás, 2022.
- Clifford, Rebecca. *Survivors: Children's Lives after the Holocaust*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020.
- Federman, Raymond, ed. *Surfiction: Fiction Now & Tomorrow*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1981.
- Federman, Raymond. *Double or Nothing*. Illinois: Fiction Collective, 1998.
- Federman, Raymond. *Shhh, The Story of a Childhood*. New York: Starcherone Books, 2010.
- Freyberg, Joan T. "Difficulties in Separation-Individuation as Experienced by Offspring of Nazi Holocaust Survivors". *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 50, n.º 1 (1980).
- Fux, Jacques. *Literatura e Matemática: Jorge Luis Borges, Georges Perec e o Oulipo*. São Paulo: Perspectiva, 2017.
- Fux, Jacques. *Georges Perec. A Psicanálise nos Jogos e Traumas de Uma Criança de Guerra*. Rio de Janeiro: Relicário, 2019.
- Grumberg, Jean-Claude. *The Most Precious of Cargos. A Tale*. Translated from the French by Frank Wynne. New York: Harpervia, 2021.
- Hirsch, Marianne. "Past Lives: Postmemories in Exile". *Poetics Today* 17, n.º 4 (1996): 659-686.
- Hirsch, Marianne. *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997.
- Hirsch, Marianne. *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after The Holocaust*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2012.
- Hoffman, Eva. *After Such Knowledge: A Meditation on the Aftermath of the Holocaust*. London: Vintage Books, 2004.
- Horowitz, Sara. *Voicing the Void: Muteness and Memory in Holocaust Fiction*. New York: State University of New York Press, 1997.
- Iadonisi, Rick. "Bleeding History and Owning His [Father's] Story: *Maus* and Collaborative Autobiography". *CEA Critic* 57, n.º 1 (1994): 41-56.
- Jacobs, Janet. *The Holocaust across Generations: Trauma and Its Inheritance among Descendants of Survivors*. New York: New York University Press, 2016.
- Karolle, Julia. "Imre Kertész's Fatelessness as Historical Fiction". In *Imre Kertész and Holocaust Literature*, edited by Louise Vasvári and Steven Tötösy Zepetnek. West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2005.
- Kertész, Imre. "Imre Kertész Nobel Lecture: Heureka!". *The Nobel Prize*, 2002. <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/2002/kertesiz/25364-imre-kertesiz-nobel-lecture-2002-2/>.

- Kogan, Ilany. "On Being a Dead, Beloved Child". *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 72, n.º 3 (2003): 727-767.
- Kogan, Ilany. "Recordação da realidade histórica nas análises de filhos de sobreviventes do Holocausto". *Revista de Psicanálise da SPPA* 15, n.º 1 (2008): 77-89.
- Kogan, Ilany. "The Second Generation in the Shadow of Terror". In *Lost in Transmission: Studies of Trauma across Generations*. London: Karnac, 2012.
- Lacabra, Dominick. *History and Memory after Auschwitz*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998.
- Laub, Dori. "Traumatic Shutdown of Narrative and Symbolization: A Death Instinct Derivative?". In *Lost in Transmission: Studies of Trauma Across Generations*, edited by Fromm, M. Gerard. London: Karnac, 2012.
- Laub, Michel. *Diário da queda*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2011.
- Lejeune, Philippe. *La mémoire et l'oblique: Georges Perec autobiographe*. Paris: POL, 1991.
- Lyotard, Jean-François. *A condição pós-moderna*. Tradução de Ricardo Corrêa Barbosa. Rio de Janeiro: Editora José Olympio, 2009.
- Paul, Herman. *Hayden White: The Historical Imagination*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011.
- Perec, Georges. *W or The Memory of Childhood*. Translated by David Bellos. Suffolk: David R. Godine Publisher, 1988.
- Phillips, R. "Impact of Nazi Holocaust on Children of Survivors". *American Journal of Psychotherapy* 32 (1978): 370-377.
- Schwab, Gabriele. "Replacement Children: The Transgenerational Transmission of Traumatic Loss". In *Memory and Political Change*, edited by Aleida Assmann and Linda Shortt. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.
- Schwarcz, Luiz. *O ar que me falta: história de uma curta infância e uma longa depressão*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2021.
- Spiegelman, Art. *Maus II: A Survivor's Tale: And Here My Troubles Began*. New York: Pantheon Press, 1999.
- Suleiman, Susan. *Crises de memória e a Segunda Guerra Mundial*. Tradução de Jacques Fux e Alcione Cunha da Silveira. Belo Horizonte: Editora UFMG, 2019.
- Trossman, Bernard. "Adolescent Children of Concentration Camp Survivors". *Canadian Psychiatric Association Journal* 13, n.º 2 (1968).
- Vice, Sue. *Children Writing the Holocaust*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.
- Wieviorka, Annette. *The Era of the Witness*. Translated by Jared Stark. New York: Cornell University Press, 2006.
- White, Hayden. *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1987.
- White, Hayden. "Historical Emplotment and the Problem of Truth". In *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the "Final Solution"*, edited by Saul Friedländer. Cambridge: Harvard University, 1992.
- White, Hayden. "The History Fiction Divide". *Holocaust Studies* 20: n.º 1-2 (2014): 17-34.

Referência para citação:

Braga, Sabrina Costa. "Fiction, Postmemory and Transgenerational Trauma: Literary Possibilities through the Shoah Paradigm". *Práticas da História, Journal on Theory, Historiography and Uses of the Past*, n.º 17 (2023): 263-294. <https://doi.org/10.48487/pdh.2023.n17.28468>.