

AUTHORIAL NARRATION OF PHOTOGRAPHS: POSTMEMORY IN ERIKA
DREIFUS'S SHORT STORY COLLECTION *QUIET AMERICANS*

By

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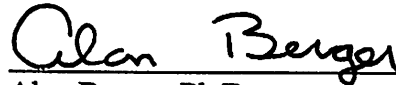
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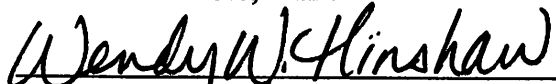
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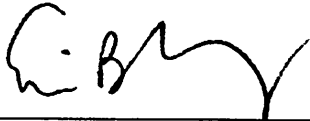
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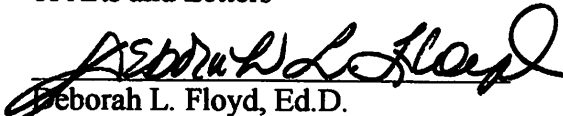
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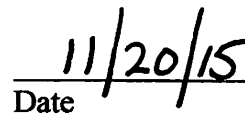
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ABSTRACT

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Postmemory is an interpretive theory that describes the relationship between the children of Holocaust survivors (Second-generation witnesses) and the trauma suffered by their parents. This thesis extends postmemory in two ways: first, postmemory is extended to include refugees who escaped the Holocaust. Thus, refugee families are situated in the three familial paradigms of Holocaust memory. Second, postmemory is extended to Third-generation witnesses (grandchildren of Holocaust survivors and refugees). Manifestations and representations of postmemory in Third-generation refugee families is demonstrated by authorial narration of photographs in third-generation refugee writer Erika Dreifus's short story collection *Quiet Americans*.

DEDICATION

To Candace Yargas Johnson who made this, and so many other wonderful things possible for me.

AUTHORIAL NARRATION OF PHOTOGRAPHS: POSTMEMORY
IN ERIKA DREIFUS'S SHORT STORY COLLECTION *QUIET AMERICANS*

Introduction.....	1
Situating Refugees in Holocaust Memory.....	3
Representation of Holocaust Memory.....	6
Postmemory and the Representation of Trauma in Refugee Writing.....	10
The Role of Photographs in Holocaust Memory.....	19
Postmemory in <i>Quiet Americans</i>	26
For Services Rendered.....	26
Homecomings.....	29
Mishpocha.....	39
Moving from Postmemory to “Moving On”.....	53
Evidence of the Author’s Postmemory	56
Quiet Americans and the Future of Holocaust Memory.....	60
Endnotes.....	64
Works Referenced.....	67

I. INTRODUCTION

“The big question Holocaust survivors want to know is, ‘Will the Third-Generation continue to tell of the destruction of European Jewry, or will the story die with us the survivors?’” -Eva Fogelman

Holocaust memory is presented through various narrative forms: written works, recorded testimonies, film and cinematography, oral stories, and photographs. The latter is the focus of my study. Photographs are crucial elements of Holocaust memory because of their evidentiary qualities. In the case of those murdered, photographs serve as testimony that those people did once exist; concerning atrocities, photographs serve as visual representations of gruesome realities that cannot always be expressed in words. In many instances, photographs are all that remain of the millions murdered by the Nazis. In short, photographs of the dead provide both evidence and memory: while they are evidence that the people portrayed did indeed exist, photographs also memorialize grandparents, great-grandparents, and other relatives who are unknown to their progeny through personal connection. From her vantage point as a second-generation writer, Marianne Hirsch maintains that when “we look at photographic images from a lost past world, especially one that has been annihilated by force, we look not only for information or confirmation, but also for an intimate material and affective connection” (*Generation* 116). The resultant sense of intimacy and affective connection facilitates what Geoffrey Hartman calls “*retrospective witnessing by adoption*” (qtd. in Hirsch *Surviving* 10) that serves as the genesis for postmemory¹ as well as a means for succeeding generations to

use photographs to establish and maintain “a living sense of connection” with familial and cultural histories.

II. SITUATING REFUGEES IN HOLOCAUST MEMORY

In order to examine third-generation refugee writing it is necessary to position refugees in the paradigms of Holocaust memory. Holocaust scholars have categorized Holocaust memory as three mutually interdependent paradigms: The “first” or “witness” generation is that generation who lived through the events and was witness to them in some way. The sons and daughters of the witness generation are the “second generation,” or 2G, and their sons and daughters are termed the “third generation” (3G). Each of these generations produces distinctive literary representations of the Shoah. The three generations portray the Holocaust differently because each of the generations has different memories of, and a different relationship with, the Shoah. The first generation produces “survivor literature” and “witness literature.” The witnesses remember the events through autobiographical memories. The second generation has no personal memories of the Holocaust because it happened before they were born. Instead, the second generation experiences postmemory, a process whereby the trauma of the autobiographical memories of the survivors is transmitted to the second generation through “powerful, often traumatic experiences that preceded their births but that were nevertheless transmitted to them so deeply as to seem to constitute memories in their own right” (Hirsch *Generation* 103). Those traumatic experiences are transmitted through their parents’ personal representations of the events, and by representations and portrayals in art and media. The third generation represents the Holocaust by a variety of means: pilgrimages to Holocaust memorial sites such as the camps at Auschwitz-

Birkenau and Dachau, archival research, and, for some, discussions with their parents and grandparents. Though there are common themes and elements throughout the literary representations of the three generations, each of the generations represents the continuing trauma of Holocaust memory in a way unique to its generational experiences and its generation's understanding of the Shoah.

Jewish refugees who fled Europe in the face of the Nazi onslaught represent a form of Holocaust memory similar to that of the survivors. Though refugees left Europe in time to escape the ghettos and the Nazi camps, they nonetheless suffered great emotional trauma. Manifestation of those traumas in refugee families is, I argue, similar to survivor families in that both groups manifest trauma from the Holocaust and transmit that trauma to succeeding generations. The Holocaust is the reason that refugee families had to flee their homeland, leaving their families and friends and homes and property and possessions. Conventional definitions of "Holocaust survivor" do not include refugees because they were no longer in Europe when Nazi persecution of Jews turned from open discrimination and bureaucratic violence to overt physical violence, forced relocations to ghettos, internment in labor and extermination camps, and, finally, murder. When referring to "Holocaust survivor" this thesis will use the definition offered by Professor Alan Berger who defines Holocaust survivors as "persons who were resident in Europe in 1939 and still alive in Europe in 1945."

The reflections of refugees are a vital, if under-recognized, component of Holocaust memory, and their works are important contributions to the canon of Holocaust literature. I assert that the literature of Holocaust refugees belongs in the three paradigms of Holocaust literature established according to the authors' relationships with

the events, i.e., first, second, and third generation witnesses. Moreover, I assert that the phenomenon of postmemory—Professor Marianne Hirsch’s theory that “describes the relationship of children of survivors of cultural or collective trauma to the experiences of their parents, experiences that they “remember” only as the narratives and images with which they grew up, but that are so powerful, so monumental, as to constitute memories in their own right” (Hirsch *Surviving* 9)—applies to refugee families in ways similar to the ways it applies to survivor families.

American author Erika Dreifus is a third-generation writer whose work is infused with postmemory. She is the granddaughter of Jewish refugees who fled Europe in time to escape the Holocaust. This paper contends that Dreifus’s short stories exemplify Hirsch’s assertion that photographs are the primary medium to establish a “sense of living connection” (*Generation* 104) with a familial and cultural past. Furthermore, Dreifus’s work is illustrative of Hirsch’s assertion that postmemory “strives to reactivate and reembody more distant social/national and archival/cultural memorial structures by reinvesting them with resonant individual and familial forms of mediation and aesthetic expression” (*Generations* 111). In short, Dreifus navigates the boundaries of past and present, and cultural and familial memories simultaneously utilizing the narrative strategy of photography she has inherited from her predecessors, as well as questioning this very strategy (and, therefore, the memories that the photographs represent). Ultimately, by destabilizing and dismantling the iconic power of both familial and cultural photographic images, Dreifus’s works are able to illustrate the effects of postmemory on third generation authors: they rely upon photographs, but are increasingly skeptical about the medium’s ability to capture truth.

Representation of Holocaust Memory

The third generation's Holocaust representation is markedly different from that of the survivor and second generations. Holocaust literature per se began with first-person survivor accounts, and thousands of survivors have published their personal witness. Elie Wiesel attests that these writings constitute the "Literature of Testimony." Elie Wiesel, Primo Levi, Simon Wiesenthal, Nechama Tec, and many others published their personal testimonies about the Shoah. Filip Müller wrote about his experiences as a *Sonderkommando*, and Sara Nomberg-Przytyk told the world what it was like to be a woman in Auschwitz. Survivor testimonies are the essential component of Holocaust memory.

Wiesel maintains that to hear a witness is to become a witness. Aided by their physical proximity to survivors and their temporal proximity to the Holocaust, the second generation, children of Holocaust survivors, became witnesses in their own right. Geoferry H. Hartman terms them "witnesses by adoption" (qtd. in Hirsch *Images* 10). The second generation does not seek to write about the experiences of the survivors or objectivize the Holocaust; instead they represent the effects of the intergenerational transmission of trauma. As Alan Berger puts it: "second-generation witnesses have their own distinctive Holocaust images and ways of bearing witness that reflect *their own* memories of growing up in survivor households" (*Job* 3). Second-generation writing is generally divided into two categories: memoirs and fiction.

Second-generation memoirs are generally characterized by works that are "less on the Holocaust itself than on its continuing aftermath" (Berger *Job* 2). These works tend to address the personal experiences of growing up as sons and daughters of

survivors. Helen Epstein's groundbreaking examination of the relationship between the survivors and the second generation, *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations with Sons and Daughters of Survivors* and Marianne Hirsch's prolific examination of postmemory as the consequence of transgenerational transfer of trauma exemplify this work. Both of these second-generation witnesses were driven to explore Holocaust memory because of their proximity to the history of the Holocaust and their parents' memories of the events.

Second generation fiction tends to speak "to the issue of how Holocaust memory is being shaped in contemporary and Jewish culture" (Berger *Job* 11). These works are characterized by stories that address the aftermath of the Holocaust, such as Nava Semel's *And the Rat Laughed* where the protagonist's memories are distorted until they are unrecognizable, or Thane Rosenbaum's *The Golems of Gotham*, where ghosts of dead survivors make an ethereal return to New York City to rescue a son of survivors from his depression and writers' block. In his analysis of second-generation fiction, Berger holds that "Collectively, their novels are an appeal for a type of *tikkun olam*—a repair or mending of the world—in which all forms of anti-Semitism, homophobia, and racism are abolished. Moreover, these second-generation writers also seek to achieve a *tikkun* of the self whereby they bear witness in a manner that is healing" (*Job* 87).

Second-generation authors are taking tentative steps into the future, carrying their inherited trauma with them. Eva Hoffman, a daughter of survivors, characterizes her peers as the "hinge generation" because this generation stands apart from what is past and what will be the future. Yet the second generation is inextricably linked to both. They did not experience the Holocaust, but they are responsible to ensure that the "received,

transferred knowledge of events is being transmuted into history, or into myth” (Hoffman xv).

The third generation processes their family legacies much differently. Like the second generation, the third generation does not attempt to objectify the Holocaust. Third generation writers tend to address the Holocaust obliquely—if at all. Their writing is undeniably shaped by the familial trauma of the Holocaust, but the works of third-generation writers tend to be “culturally diffuse and tend to be suffused with postmodernist concerns” (Berger *Unclaimed* 157). Fogelman says that a “paradigm shift has occurred from Second to Third Generation. As the world has validated the suffering and resilience of the Holocaust survivors, the central dynamic has shifted from shame to pride” (*Dynamics* 4), and this is evident in the works of the third generation. Professor and third-generation writer, Hilene Flanzbaum writes, “Third-generation writers explore places they have never been, recover what they can and re-create what time has rendered irretrievable” (Flanzbaum 14). This approach is markedly different from the first and second generations who wrote primarily about their personal experiences with trauma. The transition to writing about culturally diffuse topics with postmodernist concerns is a way for the third generation to move beyond their postHolocaust trauma. Berger calls this process a means to “work through their tragic legacy” (*Unclaimed* 157), and Fogelman says it is “the ability to transform the emotional effects of the Holocaust by letting go, thus increasing the quest for meaning in one's life and concern for social issues” (*Dynamics* 4). It is apparent that the third generation is affected by their families’ legacies, and that their works are a method to communicate familial trauma in ways that might achieve universal resonance.

The third generation views their families' histories and legacies much differently than the second generation. The second generation "received their parents' testimony and accepted the mission of transmitting it to their own children, the third generation, and to the world at large" (Berger *Job* 7), but for the third generation, the situation has changed. Abigail Golden, granddaughter of survivors, asserts that the second generation's views of the Holocaust are too simplistic for her generation:

"The narrative of the Holocaust that I'd been taught—that the Nazis were evil, inhuman reincarnations of Amalek, the historical enemy of the Jews, bent single-mindedly on the destruction of our lives and culture—began to seem too dogmatic, and our continued mourning for the six million dead too all-consuming. All my life I had been fed a narrative formed by the second generation's understanding of the Holocaust, a narrative formulated and packaged for children's consumption." (Golden)

Third-generation works reflect the same types of issues that permeate other Holocaust literature—otherness, discrimination, and violence—but their works are meant to transcend the genre of "Holocaust literature," and address a more expansive, mainstream audience. In this way, the legacy of the Holocaust is embedded in popular culture and contemporary consciousness, and their works—even those that do not address the Holocaust directly—are important additions to the canon of Holocaust literature. Yet it is important to distinguish their works from popular-culture works. The works of the third generation represent a transformation of Holocaust memory, not a departure from it. Berger observes the third generation's "Holocaust writings are simultaneously a way of mourning relatives they never knew and an attempt to understand their Jewish identity" (*Unclaimed* 157). Moreover, these writings are also a way for the third generation to incorporate that identity as well as the issues that dominate their families' legacies into mainstream literature where they can reach a much wider audience than those works that

remain constrained as belonging to specific genres. Erika Dreifus writes, “historical research and the creative writing, the (re)constructing of the past in my own excruciatingly informed ways, help me in the process of ‘working through’” (*Ever After* 525).

Postmemory and the Representation of Trauma in Holocaust Refugee Writing

Postmemory is an interpretive theory developed by Professor Marianne Hirsch to describe “the relationship that the generation after those who witnessed cultural or collective trauma bears to the experiences of those who came before, experiences that they ‘remember’ only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up” (Hirsch *Generation* 106). Hirsch developed her theory to explain one of the ways that children of Holocaust survivors were affected by the traumatic experiences their parents endured. However, she specifically notes that “the children of victims, survivors, witnesses, or perpetrators have different experiences of postmemory, even though they share the familial ties that facilitate intergenerational identification” (*Surviving* 9). I argue that Hirsch’s parameters for postmemory includes the children of Jewish refugees who escaped the Holocaust but suffered trauma before, during, and after their migration out of Europe.² Extending Hirsch’s parameters, I assert that postmemory includes the third generation writers of “cultural or collective trauma.” I reason that the familial and affiliative properties of postmemory (discussed in this section) are experienced by the third generation, though the trauma and memories are mediated through additional and different filters—specifically the second generation, the ubiquity and omnipresence of modern media, and the changed nature of the first generation after decades of reflection. Moreover, because the refugees did not experience the Holocaust

firsthand, they too can experience postmemory *affiliatively* through mass media representations as well as *familially* through family members who survived the Holocaust.

Trauma is an important factor in the postmemory demonstrated by refugees and their subsequent generations. Berger reminds us that “Refugee guilt is a complex phenomenon. Not only were there strong feelings in the wake of knowing that, much as in the death camps, for one to live another had to die, there also emerged guilt at not having been in the camps” (*Identity* 84). Australian scholar Egon Kunz, himself a refugee from the communist takeover of Hungary in 1948, wrote extensively about the causes for refugee movements and the effects on refugees. According to Kunz:

In contrast to the purposeful colonizers and the determined revolutionary activists, the ideological orientation of refugee waves composed mostly of majority identified reactive fate-groups is uncertain and changeable. Believing that they share a cause with the majority of their compatriots left behind, many feel guilty for not sharing also their fate with them. This sense of guilt lead some to perceive the existence of an “historic responsibility” which is placed on them, impelling them to work for the cause and compensate for their freedom, by speaking up for those silenced at home. Those in leadership roles among them will be likely to reinforce this sense of guilt and commitment. (46)

The trauma experienced by Jewish refugees of the Holocaust was, of course, widely varied. Doubtless there were some who left Europe in an orderly fashion absent trauma, but it is also beyond question that some refugees found fleeing their homes and, in many cases families, to be traumatic. Jews in pre-war Europe, particularly Germany (where Erica Dreifus’s family fled) were subjected to the trauma of overt and sometimes violent antisemitism.³ Dreifus’s family is part of what Kunz refers to a the “best known examples of events-alienated refugees in modern times,” that is, “the German Jews and

Germans with partly Jewish origin, who, however deeply rooted in German culture, became unwanted aliens in their homeland” (43).

Alienation and displacement by force⁴ are both traumatic, and both of those factors are present in German Jews who abandoned their homeland in the face of the Nazi genocide. Furthermore, after relocating, the “certainty of family nurturing and familiar communal support was replaced by the trauma of separation and constant anxiety over the unknown fate of parents, siblings, and extended family” (Berger *Identity* 84). Many Jewish refugees of the Holocaust endured trauma before, during, or after their flight, and some endured trauma during all three of those phases. That trauma is perpetuated in their families’ postmemory.

Hirsch asserts that there are two types of postmemory: “familial” and “affiliative” postmemory. Familial postmemory refers to memories transmitted directly from family members, most often parents. It is akin to “communicative memory,” which is “‘biographical’ and ‘factual’ and is located within a generation of contemporaries who witness an event as adults and who can pass on their bodily and affective connection to that event to their descendants” (Hirsch *Generations* 110). Refugees transmit their trauma to subsequent generations through familial postmemory in the same ways as survivor families—“by means of stories, images, and behaviors.” Those refugees who were reunited with family members who survived the Holocaust are also able to experience the effects of familial postmemory.

If the second-generation experiences postmemory “by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up,” it is logical that third-generation witnesses can also experience postmemory from stories, images, and behaviors.

Referring to the second generation, Hirsch asserts that postmemory “is a powerful form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through representation, projection, and creation” (*Surviving* 9); the third-generation’s connection to Holocaust memory is also mediated by the same factors, but the third generation has many more sources through which to mediate. The most obvious additional source is the second generation (a familial source), but the third generation has many more affiliative sources to mediate: the third generation grew up with access to many more books, movies, and collections of survivor testimony videos than were not available to the second generation during its formative years. More important than the number of sources available to the third generation are the *different types of sources available to them*. In addition to all of the sources available to the second generation, the third generation also had access to a nearly ubiquitous Internet capable of delivering multimedia messages on demand, as well as Holocaust museums and memorials, most of which were not built until the 1980s. The third generation is not a copy of the second generation because the mediation of representation, projection, and creation of Holocaust memories is different from the mediation by the second generation. The third generation’s familial postmemory is mediated by two preceding generations, not one, and the affiliative postmemory is influenced by many more and different types of media. The result is a related, yet different, form of postmemory.

One of the differences in familial postmemory is the number of generations that must be negotiated. Unlike the second generation, which has to mediate the stories, images, and behaviors of only the first generation, the third generation must mediate the stories, images, and behaviors of the first *and* second generations. The third generation’s

postmemory is determined at least as much by the “stories, images, and behaviors” of the second generation as it is determined by the influences of the first generation. If the “second-generation witnesses have their own distinctive Holocaust images and ways of bearing witness that reflect their own memories” (Berger *Job 3*) based on their experiences with their parents (familial postmemory) and mediation of media, film, and popular culture representations (affiliative postmemory), then it stands to reason that third generation would also have its own distinct “ways of bearing witness that reflect their own memories” based on the same factors—familial and affiliative postmemory. Professor Jessica Lang notes that third-generation writers must cross “not one but two gaps, that of experience and memory” (49). Negotiating an additional generation is not the only familial factor that creates a different form of postmemory for the third generation. Family dynamics and the changed (and changing) nature of the first generation are other important factors that factor in the differences.

The third generation experiences different familial relationships with the first generation for two notable reasons: the familial relationship is different, and the first generation has been changed by time and reflection. The third generation experiences the first generation as *grandparents*, not parents; this is a powerful family dynamic that cannot be overlooked. But the most important familial factor is the changes that the first generation has undergone over time. Hermann von der Dunk notes that the war generation in general was typically reticent about their war experiences: “Both perpetrators and victims continued to suppress their past and people were preoccupied with their own problems and grief, with the aftermath of bombardments, the loss of soldiers and civilians, the unprecedented destruction, the chaos, and the millions of

refugees and displaced persons” (55). von der Dunk’s observation broadens the idea that silence “characterizes many in the survivor community, as well as their descendants, when reflecting on the myriad moral, psychological, and theological questions engendered by the Shoah” (Berger & Milbauer 80). The first generation, like most participants in the war, typically did not speak about the trauma they endured. First-generation silence was a major factor in the postmemory of the second generation, and the eventual break in first-generation silence is a factor in the difference in the postmemory of the third generation.

It was not unusual for victims to be reticent about their wartime experiences. von der Dunk notes, “In the years immediately after the war, commemoration focused on acts of heroism, on military operations and resistance to the Nazi oppressors” (56). The focus on so-called positive aspects of the war left non-combatants in a position of silence about their experiences. This includes refugees who left in time to survive; their reticence may stem from feelings of guilt from having escaped in time to survive while many of their family members remained in Europe and were murdered by the Nazis. Guilt is a trauma in its own right, and is part of the trauma that is passed familiarly from first-generation refugees to second-generation refugees. As time passed, survivors and refugees had opportunity to reflect on their wartime experiences and, to varying degrees, heal from their trauma. After several decades, the “generation that lived through the war was gradually disappearing and people nearing the end of their lives are often inspired to reflect on their past” (von der Dunk 58). As a consequence, many of the first generation began to write or speak about their experiences. Consequently, the third generation heard stories that the second generation had been denied. The differences in the familial

postmemory of the second and third generations contribute to the differences in the ways that the second and third generations manifest affiliative postmemories.

Affiliative postmemory is “the result of contemporaneity and generational connection with the literal second generation combined with structures of mediation that would be broadly appropriable, available, and indeed, compelling enough to encompass a larger collective in an organic web of transmission” (Hirsch *Generation* 115). The reliance on public images and other “mechanisms by which public archives and institutions have been able both to reembody and to reindividualize ‘cultural/archival’ memory” (Hirsch *Generations* 115) is another factor that contributes to the difference in the character of the third generation’s postmemory. The third generation has access to a great many more “structures of mediation that would be broadly appropriable . . . and . . . compelling enough to encompass a larger collective in an organic web of transmission” (Hirsch *Generation* 115). Museums such as Israel’s Yad Vashem and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum have outreach programs to increase awareness and make representations more available to the public; the International Tracing Service in Bad Arolsen, Germany is digitizing its millions of cubic meters of documents to facilitate the widest possible access. The advent of the Internet and digital archives has made representations much more accessible to the public. The second generation grew up in an age of libraries, postal mail, and movies at theaters; the third generation grew up with the Internet, digital media, and on-demand media that can be viewed almost anywhere. Third-generation writer Abigail Golden observes, “an entire generation has now grown up experiencing the Holocaust as much through such established symbols as through its own attempts to understand what is, perhaps, incomprehensible” (Golden). Simply

stated, the third generation has had exposure to more and more varied media than the second generation had, and that exposure contributes to their postmemory being different from that of the second generation.

Postmemory is determined by familial and affiliative factors. Second- and third-generation witnesses experience different familial and affiliative associations, which results in each generation having its own postmemory, similar, yet distinct and different. Hirsch writes that postmemory “is a question of adopting the traumatic experiences—and thus also the memories—of others as experiences one might oneself have had, and of inscribing them into one’s own life story” (*Surviving* 10). Hirsch’s assertion is suitable for the second generation, but the postmemory of the third generation is slightly different: while the second generation inscribes the adopted memories into their own lives, the third generation adopts these memories into larger contexts. Third generation writers’ relationship to the Holocaust can be explained by what memoirist Daniel Mendelsohn calls “proximity and distance.” Mendelsohn explains:

Another way of saying this is that *proximity* brings you closer to *what happened*, is responsible for the facts we glean, the artifacts we possess, the verbatim quotations of what people said; but *distance* is what makes possible the story of what happened, is precisely what gives someone the freedom to organize and shape those bits into a pleasing and coherent whole— to, for example, take three separate quotations, made by one person over the course of three nights, and string them together because when strung together in this fashion they create a dramatic effect more powerful than they could possibly make if you were to encounter them in three successive chapters of a book. (437)

Proximity and distance is how the third generation is able to achieve “universal resonance” while maintaining cultural and familial memories. Mendelsohn holds that the third generation is “just close enough to those who were there to feel an obligation to the facts as we know them,” but notes that they “are also just far enough away, at this point,

to worry about our own role in the transmission of those facts, now that the people to whom those facts happened have mostly slipped away” (433). Third-generation writers honor their familial and cultural past by incorporating them into writing about contemporary issues. Their detachment from the first generation gives them license to “balance and counter these [Holocaust] references with other narrative strategies and counterpoints” (Lang 46) in ways that second-generation writers were unable to because of their closer familial affiliation with the first generation.

Universality is yet another intersection in the similarities in the ways that the second and third generations manifest postmemory. The notion that Holocaust memory is applicable more universally is not a new idea. Alan Berger notes, “The phenomenon of the second generation witness leads inexorably to questions possessing a universal resonance. For example, what does the tragedy of European Jewry have to do with American Jews in particular and American culture at large?” (*Job* 8–9). The third generation assumes and extends the second generation’s effort to find “universal resonance,” which is why their literature tends to address themes of loss, injustice, and the future instead of directly addressing the alleviation of Holocaust-related pain and suffering that the second generation literature addresses. Lang notes, “While for first- and second-generation Holocaust writers the historical experience ‘conveys’ a sense of immediacy and impact, the third-generation writer views those events as an indirect part of the narrative, one balanced by other, also important histories” (46). Lang cites Michael Chabon’s *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Klay* as her example: Chabon “links the theme of physical salvation—escaping Nazi Europe—to the escapist nature found in art, comics, and magic” (46), but the rhetorical strategy is common in the

works of third-generation writers. For example, third-generation refugee writer Margot Singer links the theme of forced relocation of the Jewish victims of the Holocaust with the ongoing Israeli/Palestinian conflict in her award-winning short-story collection *The Pale of Settlement*.

The Role of Photographs in Holocaust Memory

Photographs serve multiple roles in Holocaust memory. They serve as evidence of atrocities, archives for historical memory, and iconic representations of people, places, and events. Most important for this study, photographs of the Holocaust and its victims serve as components of familial and cultural memory. The “that-has-been” (Barthes 77) quality of photographs imbues them with a quality of authenticity and implied truthfulness that is not shared by the spoken or written word. We tend to believe what we see. Similarly, we tend to see what we believe, and it is precisely the interpretive quality of photographs that puts the medium’s reputation for veracity into question. As Hirsch writes, “The fragmentariness and the two-dimensional flatness of the photographic image, moreover, make it especially open to narrative elaboration and embroidery and to symbolization” (*Generation* 117). The interpretive quality of photographs is reminiscent of Socrates’ assertion that the written word is rhetorically inferior to the spoken word because written works cannot defend themselves against misinterpretation or manipulation. Like the written word, photographs are unable to defend themselves from misinterpretation, interpretation, and manipulation by viewers, but it is precisely that interpretive quality that allows each generation to assimilate their families’ Holocaust legacies by interpreting the images in a manner that makes them relevant to each contemporary generation.

Photographs are more than a material, tangible form of memory; they are more than icons; photographs are a narrative form of memory. Photographs provide iconographic memory in the form of frozen moments of time because they are undeniable visual referents to people and events of the past. Consequently, photographs are windows to the past, which we *access iconographically but process as narratives*. In other words, looking at a photograph compels us to produce narratives of the images we see. Photographs are more than mimetic representations of what was captured on film, and they are more than the iconic representations of people or places; they are a form of narrative in their own right. We translate the visual images as narrative because “We tell stories about pictures, all pictures ultimately, in an attempt to gain some semblance of control over them, tapping into their language, their innate grammar, to counter their often uncomfortable silence and, somehow, to make them speak” (Blatt 116). Photographs are both referents to past memories and a narrative space in which the present is interpreted through past events. Because of their power to provide narratives of both the past and the present, photographs are ideal vehicles with which to transmit and perpetuate familial and cultural memories.

Family histories are a form of collective memory. In the case of families whose legacy includes the Holocaust, family memories are interwoven with the cultural memory of the Holocaust, which creates an atmosphere where individual identity is relative to group identity. According to Professor Dan McAdams, “In modern life, constructing one's own meaningful life story is a veritable cultural imperative” (115). Members of Holocaust families must create their individual identities in context with both contemporary society as well as the cultural memory of the Holocaust, and they must do

so in “relation to a normative self-image of the group [which] engenders a clear *system of values* and *differentiations in importance* which structure the cultural supply of knowledge and [the] symbols” (Assmann 131). The second generation, in response to the cultural-memory gap created by the murder of millions and the initial silence of the first generation, relies on photographs as an important rhetorical structure of knowledge to fill the void.

Photographs are a key means of filling that void because “repeated Holocaust photographs connect past and present through the ‘having-been-there’ of the photographic image” (Hirsch *Surviving* 29), which facilitates the aforementioned “*retrospective witnessing by adoption*” (Hirsch *Surviving* 10) that keeps the Holocaust in family legacies. Because photographs have great importance in Holocaust families, it is natural that writers from those families use photographs as rhetorical devices in their storytelling. When second- and third-generation writers use Holocaust photographs in their works, they illustrate Hirsch’s postmemory, which exists in a “moment of looking backward rather than ahead and of defining the present in relation to a troubled past rather than initiating new paradigms” (Hirsch *Generation* 106).

When second- and third-generation writers use non- Holocaust photographs in their works, they are demonstrating Hirsch’s postmemory while simultaneously engaging in Eva Hoffman’s concept of *moving on*.⁵ By *moving on*, Hoffman does not mean the trauma associated with the Holocaust should be forgotten; she means that Holocaust families should “let go” of the trauma and live *beyond* it. *Hoffman’s view is future-centric* (as compared with Hirsch’s “looking backward”) and diverges from Hirsch’s theory of postmemory; she urges those of the second- and third-generation to assimilate

their families' legacies into their lives and contemporary issues while not fixating on the past and its traumatic legacy. Hoffman holds that "In a sense, the very question of memory is moot for me, and perhaps others like myself" (180), referring to other second-generation witnesses. She argues that "if what was conveyed to us was not memory, it was nevertheless something memorable and concrete" (181). Hoffman's views of *moving on* are complementary to the "paradigm shift [that] has occurred from Second to Third Generation" discussed by Fogelman (*Dynamics* 4) that gives the third generation "the ability to transform the emotional effects of the Holocaust by letting go, thus increasing the quest for meaning in one's life and concern for social issues" (*Dynamics* 4).

Hoffman's *moving on* is a departure from postmemory, and her views are supported by Berger's observation that the works of third-generation writers tend to be "culturally diffuse and tend to be suffused with postmodernist concerns" (*Unclaimed* 157). While it seems undeniable that the third generation is *moving on*, the question for the present time is: has the third generation actually moved past postmemory? According to Gerd Bayer,

Holocaust representations are moving beyond postmemory in a two-fold way: first, there is a noticeable decrease in the urgency to keep particular details in perpetual memory; second, and in part resulting from this change, there is a move away from a historical focus on the past and towards ethical concerns directed at future generations. (117)

Perhaps Bayer's observation will be fulfilled by the fourth or fifth generation, but the third generation is temporally and familially positioned to stand with one literary foot in each paradigm. Dreifus is a good example of a third generation writers whose works exhibit both Hirsch's postmemory and Hoffman's *moving on*. Dreifus integrates portions

of the historical past into ethical concerns directed at future generations. In other words, this third-generation writer is *moving on* to a place beyond familial trauma while simultaneously continuing to process the postmemory associated with her family's traumatic legacies.

Bayer warns that one of the keys to moving past postmemory is, "Finding the right balance between presenting traumatic memories and connecting them to the reality of later generations without turning them into nostalgic commodities" (130). Driefus accomplishes this by using the primary medium of postmemory—photographs—while not confining herself to using only the images from the traumatic past. She employs photographs to aid in telling her family's stories, but she does not rely solely on images of the Holocaust or its victims. For example, in "Mischpocha" Driefus engages in detailed discussion of photographs of an American family with no connection to the Holocaust specifically to draw attention to the lack of photographs in a Shoah-devastated family. In "Homecomings," Driefus juxtaposes a pre-war wedding portrait with a photograph of refugees safely landed in New York to illustrate the devastation that occurred in the time between the two photographs. These examples are discussed in detail in the following explication of *Quiet Americans*.

Driefus is using the framework of the past (postmemory) to build the future of Holocaust representation, and in this way she can "simultaneously mourn their loss and work through their legacy in a process which helps them clarify their Jewish identity in the hovering shadows of the *Shoah*" (Berger *Unclaimed*151). Throughout *Quiet Americans* Driefus uses photographs as a means to establish a sense of living connection to their families' histories, but in a unique manner: first, she relates to her family history

through fiction, and, second, she narrates the composition of the photographs in her works instead of actually showing the images to the reader.

It is not uncommon for photographs to be used in fiction because “their reputation for indexicality⁶ confirms our view of what the world, and the world of the novel, is like” (Hart). In other words, photographs provide a type of narrative that is familiar to almost everyone, and their use in stories directs readers’ focalization (the reader’s perspective of the source of narrative). As Carol Guyer notes in response to Walter Ong’s *Orality and Literacy*, “We may have interiorized print (text) deeply, but not to the extent that we don’t think visually (iconographically)” (qtd. in Joyce 328). Photographs transcend the spoken and written word and allow viewers the opportunity to think visually. Guyer’s observation supports Blatt’s assertion that we tell stories about pictures “in an attempt to gain some semblance of control over them.” We think visually, but we attempt to provide narratives for the images we see. Conversely, we create interiorized visual images for the text we read. Dreifus complicates the relationship between print (text) and visual thinking by narrating the composition and content of photographs instead of showing them to the reader. Consequently, her works carry the *power* of visual images without including visual images.

Authorial narration of photographs is essentially the reverse of the process (described by Blatt) where viewers impose a narrative structure onto iconographic images when “reading” an image and interpreting it according to personal frameworks and biases. By narrating the composition and content of photographs instead of allowing readers to create their own individual narratives, Dreifus controls the meanings of the images while controlling the reader’s focalization. In this way, the writer allows the

reader to think visually (iconographically) without using visual images, but directs reader focalization by creating a fixed narrative of the “images” that cannot be reinterpreted or reimagined by individual readers. Authorial narration of photographs adds a dimension to stories that complicates the narrative while making it more accessible to readers through shifting their focalization to iconographic thinking while processing text. Dreifus employs this device to manipulate readers to “see” the photographs the way the author intends instead of allowing the reader/viewer to interpret the photograph.

III. POSTMEMORY IN QUIET AMERICANS

Quiet Americans is a collection of related stories that allow the reader to witness the gradual dissolution and transformation of the Holocaust's enduring impact from generation to generation. While the stories vary in time and place, from Altheim at the border of the Black Forest in 1914, to Mount Sinai Hospital on the Upper East Side of Manhattan in the twenty first century, each depicts characters on a quest for meaning, identity, and healing. More precisely: they search to disentangle a network of complexities in their histories in an effort to reconcile a trauma, pain, heartache, or sense of loss that can be traced back to the Holocaust, suggesting that the atrocity is omnipresent even when it does not explicitly appear in the scene (or, for the purposes of this study, the photographs represented in the scene). Perhaps as an antidote to this chaos and confusion, the collection is also rich with themes of faith, rebirth, familial devotion, and hope for the future. These characters feel nostalgic for simple idea of truth, which may only be resolved by returning to the moment *before* the Holocaust, or finding redemption and closure decades later, after the dust has settled, in future generations. This study examines postmemory and authorial narration of photographs in three stories that feature photographs: "For Services Rendered," "Homecomings," and "Mischpocha."

For Services Rendered

"For Services Rendered" is ostensibly a story about a Jewish refugee, Ernst Weldmann, whose life is spared by Reichsmarschall Herman Göring because of the

medical care Weldmann provides to Göring's two-year old daughter Emma in pre-war Berlin. The story attempts to complicate Göring and the question of forgiveness. "For Services Rendered" is a story about debt, gratitude, and the power of human connection. The protagonist, Dr. Ernst Weldmann, is a fourth-generation Berlin doctor who specializes in treating "the ills of the *young*" (15). Dreifus endows Göring with a degree of benevolence that does not exist in the historical representations of the malevolent Nazi; Dreifus's fictionalized Göring persuades a somewhat reluctant Weldmann to leave his ancestral homeland several months after Kristallnacht⁷. Weldmann ultimately decides to relocate to the United States with his wife and children, effectively saving them, while at the same time putting himself in the horrifying position of abandoning his extended family, and leaving them to ultimately die in the death camps. Weldmann and his immediate family survive the war in New York City.

Photographs play a particular role in the telling of the story of the Weldmann family's escape. Dreifus employs photographs to reveal the frame narrative that is Ernst Weldmann's inner dialog about forgiveness⁸ and personal debt. In this way, Dreifus employs a photograph as a meta-rhetorical strategy to illustrate the third generation's heavy dependence on, and frustration with, ascertaining truth and meaning from the photographic image. Weldmann, a refugee, experiences the trauma of the Holocaust at a relatively safe (albeit still horrifying) remove: he receives the images and information in the newspapers while living in New York. His Holocaust experience is affiliative, as it is mediated by archival, publicized images. Weldmann learns the extent of the German persecution of the Jews through a newspaper article thrust at him by his wife one day in the fall of 1945, shortly after the end of the war. Weldmann immediately realizes that his

sister, Lise, is certain to be among those murdered. In the same newspaper, Weldmann learns that those responsible for the atrocities will be tried at Nuremberg, and that his benefactor Göring is among the defendants. The newspaper article contains photographs of the accused.

Weldmann's personal feelings toward Göring are revealed in the way that he searches the article. Weldmann "scanned until he found the paragraphs of Edda's father" (28) instead of searching for Göring by name or title. This reveals the way Weldmann perceives his relationship with Göring: he thinks of the notorious Nazi as the father of the child that he cared for and about, not as a high-ranking officer involved in the murder of millions of Jews, including Weldmann's family. His first thought is, "How different, this postwar characterization of the Reichsmarschall" (28), and though he chastises himself for using the former title of the accused war criminal, it is evident that Weldmann views Göring as the man who saved him and his family, not as the high-ranking Nazi that the rest of the world knows. Weldmann is conflicted. On one hand, he is horrified and disgusted by the breadth and depth of the German atrocities against Jews—including his extended family—but on the other hand he is grateful to Göring for saving him and his immediate family. Weldmann considers writing a character reference for Göring's wife's trial. He stares at the photograph, interrogating it while he ponders writing the letter: "He held the newspaper closer, as if studying Hermann Göring's visage would provide an insight, an answer" (31). The doctor is reacting to his previous personal fictionalized interaction with Göring, not with the war criminal that he sees in the photograph.

For Weldmann, the photograph of Göring is what Hirsch characterizes as a "screen memory": "images already imprinted on our brains, the tropes and structures we

bring from the present to the past, hoping to find them there and to have our questions answered . . . screens on which we project present or timeless needs and desires and which thus mask other images and other concerns” (*Generation* 120). Weldmann is unable to reconcile what *he knows* with what *he sees*. Weldmann undergoes the process of “recognition, non-recognition and ‘mis-recognition” (Roberts) in his analysis and fixation with Göring’s photograph. The photograph represents Weldmann’s personal memory of Göring, and that personal image does not reconcile with the Göring known to the rest of the world. In light of the factual evidence of Göring’s crimes, Weldmann must “mis-recognize” the Göring of his memory and undergo a phase of “re-cognition” to recognize and accept the terrible reality that is the real Hermann Göring. Because Weldmann is learning about the horrors of the Holocaust through a public, archival image, his revelation is tantamount to a postmemory. Except for the generational component of Hirsch’s definition (“contemporaneity and generational connection with the literal second generation”), Weldmann is experiencing “affiliative postmemory” because he is interacting with “structures of mediation that would be broadly appropriable, available, and indeed, compelling enough to encompass a larger collective in an organic web of transmission” (Hirsch *Generation* 115). Weldmann is a refugee who narrowly escaped the Holocaust, and receives this trauma affiliatively through mass media as a second-generation witness would (though there is a clear experiential difference between refugees and second-generation witnesses). His firm position in the borderland between the generations is revealed through the photograph of Göring.

Homecomings

In the opening scene of “Homecomings,” the protagonist, Nelly Freiburg is

removing her recently deceased mother's belongings from the Beth Israel Home for Elders. Nelly's refugee mother has very few possessions: "Nelly Freiburg's mother had brought along few possessions when she escaped Europe; she'd accumulated few others in Brazil, where she had waited out the war, or in Brooklyn, where she had lived an additional quarter-century before taking that final nap on the afternoon of January 10, 1972" (81). It is established that the room is sparsely appointed—except for a large number of photographs. There are "black and white wedding photographs" (81) of "her parents, back in Germany" (81). There are photographs of "Her own husband, Josef, and herself, surrounded by other refugee friends and relatives in New York, four months after Pearl Harbor. Their son, Mickey, and his Paula, smiling, just six years ago" (81). Dreifus's narrative description of the contents of the photographs creates a frame narrative where the reader is informed of important details through the *author's* description of the photographs instead of showing actual photographs to the reader. In this instance the reader is informed that it is not only Nelly's mother who is a refugee, but Nelly is also a refugee. In this case, both mother and child are first-generation refugees. Nelly's status as a first-generation refugee is important to the structure of the story, and Dreifus establishes this with an economy of words by positioning photographs in the opening scene.

The opening of "Homecomings" establishes that authorial narration of the content of photographs will be an important rhetorical device in the story. A discussion of the ways that photographs are used as a rhetorical device in *telling* this story would be incomplete without a discussion of the ways that photographs were used in the *creation* of this story. "Homecomings" is quite literally a story about the power and limitations of

photographs. The story relies on fictitious representations of people and places, but the author employed real photographs to shape her creative process in the making of this story. In a 2011 guest post titled “Mannheim in Pictures and Prose,”⁹ Dreifus says that “Homecomings” is inspired by the experiences of her paternal grandparents’ immigration in the 1930s, and her grandmother’s similar (and similarly distressing) return to Mannheim in 1972. She also discusses the intersection between photography and literature in her creative process, and her reliance on photography to create a fictionalized world. When Dreifus says, “In writing these paragraphs, I relied not only on memory and imagination. I relied also on photographs,” she suggests that neither imagination nor mere recollection are enough to create a convincing world in words; thus, she finds it necessary to search for photographs of settings, and where there are none, to return to the site of trauma and recreate the historical past by taking a picture. In order for Dreifus to reimagine what her grandmother might have felt in her pre-Holocaust home and in her 1972 homecoming, Dreifus made a trip “back” to Mannheim herself in 1990 (a homecoming of a very different sort based on her status as a third-generation witness) which prompted her to capture key locations in photographs of her grandmother’s pre-Holocaust world that later became central to the setting of “Homecomings”: a florist shop she and her father had often visited (87), her father’s business (87–88), and details of the building on Ifflenstrasse (88).

Dreifus, a third generation refugee, was moved by the physicality of the familial memories that were embodied by the locations and buildings in Mannheim, her familial home. When Dreifus says, “Visiting a location isn’t necessarily essential for every writing project. But I believe that for ‘Homecomings,’ it mattered very much” (Pictures

and Prose), she is affirming Hirsch's assertion that, "The bodily, psychic, and affective impact of trauma and its aftermath, the ways in which one trauma can recall, or reactivate, the effects of another, exceed the bounds of traditional historical archives and methodologies" (Hirsch *Generation* 104). When analyzing Dreifus's actions and statements through the lens of Hirsch's theory, it is reasonable to conclude that Dreifus experienced postmemory affiliatively through physical proximity with public, archival images. To paraphrase Hirsch, the "public image was adopted into the family album" (*Generation* 112) only because of Dreifus's trip to Manheim, or more specifically in this case, the images were adopted into Dreifus's writer album.

Dreifus's use of photographs as "external memory storage" for use in her writing is congruent with the work of professor Janice Hart, a specialist in the history of photography who writes extensively about the intersection of photography and literature. Hart contends that some writers exhibit a pronounced ability to "think photographically: that is, to think in ways that are to do precisely with the ontology of photography and not just with image making as a whole" (Hart). Dreifus recognizes the utility of photographs to supplement memory, but acknowledges their limitations as referential materials: "I am certain that having had the opportunity to see those places myself, and possessing the photographs to revisit, fixed those images in my mind and memory, and enhanced the fictional references" (Path). Dreifus illustrates how the static image contributes to what Brian Roberts calls an "imaginative narrative construction" (Roberts); the possession of the photograph, the fixity of the image, can "foster remembering by the photograph's continued existence thereby, and so help to shape memory of experience" (Roberts). Or, in this case, help create a fictionalized world, which, we are reminded, aspires for only a

degree of verisimilitude and factual accuracy, a semblance of the probable and possible. Dreifus's use of photographs is combined with experiential factors that also contribute to her success as a fiction writer: her Harvard education (doctorate in History), vocation (writer/editor), her trip to Mannheim, and countless familial stories told throughout her lifetime.

While Dreifus uses photographs as evidentiary devices for her writing, she also suggests that photographs, as orchestrated and arranged mediums, are often misleading and thus can be interpreted as tainted or false memories. She recalls photographs of herself taken by her father during their 1990 trip to Mannheim in a poem titled *Mannheim*: "In fact, in the photos my father snapped / to show my grandmother back in Brooklyn, / I am smiling" (*Mannheim*). The irony of the conditioned or false smile, a ritualistic and rote response to being the subject of a photograph, offered for the camera despite the trauma of having, moments before, stood "in the high-ceilinged rooms where my great-grandparents had / withstood the Kristallnacht" (*Dreifus Mannheim*) reveals an emotional device to conceal pain from psychological trauma; this device illustrates that photographs do not always denote what the detached viewer sees. It is a device employed throughout *Homecoming*, most pointedly in the opening scene where the photograph of Nelly's son Mickey and his wife Paula picture them smiling in betrayal of the somberness of the occasion.

On the surface, it appears that Dreifus uses the photographs in *Homecomings* merely as a strategy to introduce the main characters; however, she cleverly uses the photographs as an opportunity to display the family lineage chronologically, drawing specific attention to the connection between the generations, all of whom appear to be

touched by the Holocaust. Together, these photographs, which represent hallmark moments in the family, create a shorthand composite of the family meta-narrative and tell their larger tale as European Jews and Holocaust refugees. However, what is most poignant about this section is not what is portrayed in the photographs, but what is absent, what inhabits the interstices that exist between the photographs. The gap¹⁰ between the first photograph, of Sofie Kahn's marriage in Germany, and the third photograph, a picture of Nelly and her husband with refugees in New York City, is especially significant in implying that the reader is left to imagine the devastation of the Holocaust represented by the gap between the photographs. Marriages represent new beginnings and happy lives, but the Kahn's happiness is made finite by the physical limitations of the photograph and the absence of subsequent photographs between the wedding and immigration to a new land. Similarly, the photograph of the refugees newly arrived on a foreign shore illustrates both the other side of the unmentioned yet ominous gap and a new and uncertain future in a foreign land. Through this seemingly innocuous arrangement of photographs, Dreifus is able to chronicle the arc of a family's fate as well as the genocidal assault on the Jewish people. The gap is silent, yet it speaks loud and clear: Sofie Kahn's life was truncated by force; the Kahn family line was interrupted by violence and forced to join the diaspora of modernity.

The chronicle of the hardships of the Kahn family seemingly ends with Sofie Kahn's grandson Mickey and his wife—the second generation—smiling despite the unfortunate family history that they perpetuate. They are the second generation, the generation removed from the physical violence, yet attached to it through postmemory. Their photograph is positioned third in the line of Dreifus's depiction of the Kahn family

history told in photographs, safe in America after the family's uprooting. Mickey is a generation removed from the physical and emotional terror of life in Germany, safely removed from the dangers of a migration and assimilation in a foreign land. But Mickey belongs in this grouping. He is second generation: born in comparative safety and removed from the events, but first in line for postmemory. Mickey's position on the dresser includes him, and by proxy his generation, in the circle of those directly touched by the Holocaust—the survivor generation who endured the trauma and the second generation who inherited it. The close proximity of the three photographs—grouped together on Sofie Kahn's dresser, and following one another in three successive sentences in Dreifus's story—and their carefully composed content, gives these photographs an indexical quality: they serve to define two generations of the Kahn family and chronicle the family history in a glance. Despite the obvious differences in time and location represented in the photographs, Dreifus's contiguous sequence of images of family members in locations representative of their generational places in Holocaust memory suggests the simultaneity of time and the fabric that holds this family together.

According to Jens Brockmeier, that past and present are “not two distinct entities or operations, but one cultural fabric in which remembering and forgetting are to be reconfigured as two inextricably related aspects” (21). When Nelly collects and categorizes the photographs, she is subjected to familial postmemory, even though she is a first-generation refugee. As Hirsch explains: “family photos, and the familial aspects of postmemory, would tend to diminish distance, bridge separation, and facilitate identification and affiliation” (*Generation* 116). The pictures on the dresser represent the generations directly touched by the Holocaust and its trauma.

When Nelly finishes with the photographs of the first two generations, she turns to “the more colorful images of her baby granddaughter” (81). The third generation is introduced in optimistic language. That the images are colorful somehow separates them immediately from the preceding photographs—which were not described as dull or even subdued, but appear to have those qualities in contrast with “the more colorful images” that Nelly turned to. This change in tone signals Dreifus’s turn from the past to the future. The reader *knows* that the past was dark and foreboding. Sofie Kahn and her husband’s lives were truncated by evil, and their migration was fraught with uncertainty and fear. The third generation, however, is represented as removed from that trauma and affording the family a bright future in America. America is not foreign to this generation; they are natives. Germany, the Holocaust, and the uncertain voyage to a new land are what is foreign. The third generation is represented as being removed—and different—from the family that is represented in the images that are less colorful. The relative brightness of the photographs serves to differentiate a turning point in the family history. They have inherited the familial trauma of the Holocaust, but they are *moving on*.

The third generation is stepping out of their families’ subdued past and into a promising future, and Dreifus illustrates this change by juxtaposing color and black-and-white photographs. Nelly first thinks of her granddaughter as a baby “although Rebecca would be three in June, not such a baby anymore” (81–82). Taken in context with the family history represented by the arrangement of photographs, Nelly’s realization about Rebecca’s growth is commentary on the future of the family and the future of the post-Holocaust generations: they are now safe; they are past the danger of extermination. Like Rebecca, the third generation has outlived the dangers of infancy, and is firmly

established in history. The Kahn family, like Holocaust memory, has survived the chaos and killings, and they have survived the resultant inherited trauma. The line will continue, and the trauma is mitigated.

As Nelly ponders the pictures of her granddaughter, she turns her attention to yet a third category of photographs: those “taped to the wall next to her mother’s bed” (82). Nelly does not remove the photographs from the wall, instead she “peels them loose” (82), separating the memories from their public space. The memories will continue, but in a different way in a different place. They are no longer Sofie’s memories; they are now symbolically Nelly’s memories. Sofie made her contribution: she kept the memories alive, and she passed them to her offspring. It now falls on Nelly to do the same. Nelly’s act of separating the photographs from the wall, “peeling them,” is a physical representation of her assuming the burden of her mother’s memories. This situates the memories as cultural memories, reminding us that “the image of the Holocaust is continually being transfigured” (Rosenfeld 16), and that each successive generation has the responsibility to perpetuate the cultural memories. “She peeled them loose, while she sat on the bare mattress” (82). The bare mattress represents the austerity of the remains of Sofie Kahn’s life. She has left behind her family, nothing more. This is representative of survivors’ most important contributions to the world: the future of Jewry—the propagation of the line. As Helen Epstein characterizes the contribution: “we [the second generation] are, in our parents’ minds, the answer to the Holocaust” (qtd. in Berger *Job* 3). Surviving Hitler and continuing the cultural and familial legacies count as a victory over Hitler’s genocidal campaign against the Jewish people. This scene foregrounds the issue of survivors’ perpetuating their families, their religion, and the cultural memories

associated with both, which Dreifus deals with directly in “Mishpocha,” the final story of the collection. “Homecomings” is a story about familial memories perpetuated through mimetic and iconic representations.

“Homecomings” ends where it begins: with Nelly and the box of her mother’s photographs, and Dreifus ends where she began: with a frame narrative to describe an iconic representation of a family member. The story closes with the box of photographs that Nelly packs away in the opening scene, but a different iconographic device—Sofie Kahn’s brass nameplate—provides the closing frame narrative. The residual memory of the nameplate is twofold: first, it is the family’s effort to memorialize Sofie Kahn while she is alive. The nameplate was a gift to Sofie “from the kids.” It was attached to the door of her room to ensure that any passerby knows who occupies that room in the Beth Israel Home for Elders—Sofie Kahn: wife, mother, refugee. Her family does not permit Sofie Kahn to slip into anonymity; she is important. The second aspect of memory infused into the nameplate resides in Nelly’s attitude toward the object. In the opening scene, she is drawn to keep it: “Something about the task reminded her not to forget the nameplate, affixed to the door facing the hallway, spelling SOFIE KAHN” (82). In the midst of collecting and perusing family photographs, Nelly is drawn to an object that is a different type of iconic representation of her mother. The nameplate clearly represents Sofie Kahn—her name emblazoned in capital letters. Nelly keeps the nameplate, and stores it with the family photographs; clearly the nameplate is a keepsake, an heirloom.

After returning from Germany, where she was re-traumatized by the terrorist massacre of the Israeli Olympic team (once more Jews being slaughtered in Germany), Nelly removes the nameplate from its place of safekeeping so she can present it as “a gift

for her new grandchild” who will be named Sofie after her recently deceased great-grandmother. The name Sofie and the nameplate that ensures that the name will not be forgotten, will be passed to a new member of the third generation. The name will live in the future; the legacy will live into the future. The cultural memories will survive. The nameplate is an iconic representation of the person who fled in time to survive, and it is more durable than a photograph. Photographs can be interpreted and misinterpreted; they can be taken out of context despite their best efforts to provide mimetic representations. The nameplate is unambiguous: Sofie Kahn existed. Sofie Kahn *exists*.

Mishpocha

In “Mishpocha,” the final story in *Quiet Americans*, the question of the future of the Holocaust generations, alluded to often in the previous stories, is addressed directly. Addressing the past in terms of the future is a common device in third-generation literature. “Mishpocha” is a story about identity—not only the identity of protagonist David Kaufmann, but also the identity of the second and subsequent generations. It is also a story about the future of Holocaust representation. Dreifus’s protagonist, David, is a second-generation witness who epitomizes Berger’s assertion that “The witnesses once removed have a plethora of questions about their identity as Jews and as children of survivors” (Berger & Berger 1). David also demonstrates the effects of postmemory on the second generation and the tension of perpetuating his family history by passing it to his children.

The story begins with David in the hospital holding the hands of his unconscious, dying mother, and he wonders “what the EMTs, and then the ER personnel, and then the floor nurses had thought, when they’d seen the numbers on her arm. What questions

they'd had" (127). David's real concern is not, however, about the questions of strangers; he is attempting to reconcile his own unsatisfied curiosity about his mother. He laments that here, at the end of his mother's life, "there were still so many questions. Not that he hadn't tried to get the answers" (127). David's thoughts reveal a familiar behavior pattern between camp survivors and their children, which centers on "issues of intergenerational communications" (Berger & Berger 1). It is not uncommon for camp survivors to be reticent about their wartime experiences. As Diane Wolf noted in 2007:

The past dozen years have seen a burst of Holocaust testimonials . . . in great part due to the survivors' reaching the end of their lives and feeling a sense of obligation to record these histories . . . After living with their stories for fifty years, it is not uncommon for Holocaust survivors to decide to finally speak in reaction to the denials of Holocaust revisionists, or after seeing a film such as *Schindler's List*. (155)

The lack of communication between David and his parents has imbued him with a sense of rootlessness that Lisa Reitman-Dobi says is "a common feeling in the offspring of Holocaust survivors" (qtd. in Fogelman *Generations* 1), and because of his parents' silence, David is exhibiting a typical phenomenon whereby "witnesses once removed have a plethora of questions about their identity as Jews and as children of survivors" (Berger & Berger 1). David's response to his feeling of rootlessness is manifested by his self-appointed position as the "family historian." His role is complicated by the lack of family history, most notably family photographs. This contrasts sharply with the large number of photographs of his wife's family.

Assuming the role of family historian in a family obliterated by the Holocaust is no easy task. How can one historicize what has been destroyed? Jan Assmann holds that there "is no art of oblivion corresponding to the art of remembering," but acknowledges "what ethnologists call 'structural amnesia,'" or "collective forgetting" (qtd. in

Brockeimer 31). Collective forgetting is a device used in oral cultures where no-longer-wanted material is merely omitted from recitations; Assmann says that the counterpart in literate societies is “the willful destruction of commemorative symbols (documents and monuments), including the burning of books, the destruction of inscriptions (*damnatio memoriae*), and the rewriting of history” (qtd. in Brockeimer 31). The Nazis accomplished a forced, albeit partial, amnesia when they truncated or entirely obliterated millions of family histories; the world is fortunate that they were unsuccessful in their bid to completely erase the memories of European Jewry, but the damage inflicted on the history of so many families has left a wide chasm in Jewish cultural memory. This is the magnitude of the void that David Kauffmann seeks to overcome in his pursuit of his family and cultural history. He acts as the family historian in order to discover what his parents have not given him: a family history. At his mother’s deathbed, he laments that his parents had not “filled him in on the stripped-bare branches of the Kaufmann and Rozenblat family trees instead of leaving it all for him to pursue and piece together later” (127). David’s feeling of rootlessness is illustrated in his relationship with his parents and their reticence about all aspects of their lives before he was born (and his having “to pursue and piece together” his family history). Moreover, his rootlessness is materially represented in the absence of material evidence of his family history, most notably family photographs.

In the story, David is essentially surrounded by photographs, but none of them are of his family. The missing photographs are a physical representation of the second generation’s experience that “the Holocaust means the eternal *presence of an absence*” (Berger & Berger 1). Absent are David’s ancestors, absent are photographic records of

their existence; absent is David's understanding of his family. Dreifus accentuates the absence by placing numerous photographs of another family into the narrative: specifically photographs of David's wife's family. Barbara is not the child of survivors; she is "a woman with bloodlines rooted in the land of the free and the home of the brave" (141). The story is filled with tangible representations of Barbara's family, who David has taken to researching so "his children would know such a lot about half their heritage that, just maybe, the lack of information on the other side wouldn't matter that much" (132). Here Dreifus is addressing both the *presence of an absence* and David's belief in the power of photographs as "totem-like visual symbols" (Wright). David's behaviors indicate that he believes in the power of photographs "as cultural memory, the memory of events or persons we could not have experienced firsthand except through photographs, derived from an ingrained belief that every photograph portrays at least the raw material of memory, shows what memory is" (Trachtenberg 7). The photographs of Barbara's family are the raw material for familial and cultural memories; they are evidence that her family existed. The juxtaposition of the abundance of photographs of Barbara's family and the absence of photographs of the Kauffmann family serves to amplify the *presence of an absence* in the survivor family.

Although Dreifus chooses not to explicitly narrate the photographs of Barbara's family, by virtue of positioning them in the narrative after a list of major historical events, the reader is invited to project and imagine preceding histories onto the photographs. In David's mind, the sheer volume of these archival, public records and images literally offer testimony and legitimize Barbara's family's existence, thereby, in comparison, delegitimizing David and his family in the process. This speaks to how

intimately cultural memory is linked to his identity; without a clear sense of the narrative that precedes him, David is unable to complete his personal narrative. Viewed from the structure of postmemory, David is experiencing

how the multiple ruptures and radical breaks introduced by trauma and catastrophe inflect intra-, inter- and trans-generational inheritance. It breaks through and complicates the line connecting individual to family, to social group, to institutionalized historical archive. That archive in the case of traumatic interruption, exile, and diaspora, has lost its direct link to the past, has forfeited the embodied connections that forge community and society. (Hirsch *Generation* 111).

Thus, Dreifus uses the photographs as a rhetorical device to highlight the competing tensions and complexities of David's situation: the painful absence of familial history is amplified by his wife's comparatively "complete" and photographically verifiable history. He feels estranged from himself, his family, and his broader cultural identity, almost as if he were a metaphorical orphan. These feelings are exacerbated when he finds a "set of college yearbooks" with photographs of his wife's grandparents looking "as though they'd stepped directly from the pages of *The Great Gatsby*" (133). The comparison of Barbara's family to characters in F. Scott Fitzgerald's iconic story of success in America serves to reinforce the value of family history while further accentuating David's rootlessness. Left bereft by the lack of photographs that prove his ancestor's existence, David laments that his children will only receive "one half of their inheritance" (133), which will further perpetuate a cycle of disenfranchisement, displacement, and psychic disunity in subsequent generations of the Kauffmann family. The lack of photographs demonstrates an *absence* that will hinder or possibly even prevent "inter- and trans-generational inheritance."

Dreifus also uses the *implied* mention of photographs as a way to illustrate the

connection between photographs and postmemory. In an effort to connect to his cultural heritage and find his family history, David begins online genealogical research. Despite his intense curiosity about his parents' lives before "the Worst" (128), his initial efforts are tentative and his early searches are not for his parents or other relatives: "When, at last, he ventured into the world of Holocaust research, he'd stayed general for months. He might explore databases for instance, but he wouldn't search for his parents within them" (133). David's search from the general to the particular illustrates his thirst for knowledge about his cultural history as well as his family history: he yearns to know the larger picture of what happened to the Jews of Europe as well as his family's (and thereby his own) particular place in it. This passage is a clear example of David experiencing postmemory: through his research, he is attempting "to *reactivate* and *reembody* more distant social/national and archival/cultural memorial structures by reinvesting them with resonant individual and familial forms of mediation and aesthetic expression" (Hirsch *Generation* 111). David has no personal memories of his parents' lives—not even memories of them telling stories—so he is left to mediate his family history through "broadly available public images and narratives" (Hirsch *Generation* 113) by means of "imaginative investment, projection, and creation" (Hirsch *Generation* 107). In researching the "broadly available public images and narratives" of the *Shoah* and his family's place in the events, David is demonstrating what Hirsch calls the "personal/familial/generational sense of ownership and protectiveness" (*Generation* 104) that is a component of second-generation postmemory.

Through his online research, David is able to learn a small part of his parents' stories: "There was no question that it was thanks to the facts revealed to him on his

computer that he'd learned some of what his parents had concealed from him" (134). On the Internet, David discovers transport lists, prisoner records, United Nations documents on DPs, and he presumably captures glimpses of highly evocative publicized images in the process:

he'd discovered the broad outlines of what they'd experienced and could envision just a little more clearly what they had endured. But nothing had helped him solve the puzzle he'd sensed within himself for so long. Even the details he'd discovered about his parents didn't quiet the questioning, the yearning to know who they were before he knew them, before they were his parents, when their definition of family did not yet include him. (134)

While David utilizes the "broad outlines" provided by archival images and data as a mechanism to flesh out his family's narrative, he is left unsatisfied with more questions than answers. The unanswered questions contribute to his feeling of rootlessness. David searches the public archives and images in an effort to find not only his parents, but also himself. Through their silence, Max and Esther Kaufmann have instilled a sense of rootlessness in their son. David's rootlessness is similar to that of Lisa Reitman-Dobi who explains, "The biggest event in my life happened twenty years before I was born. It shaped my mother and therefore shaped me. I grew up the way she did: rootless" (Reitman-Dobi 1). David's search for roots is not satisfied by his genealogical research or by conversations with his parents. Consequently, in a search for roots for himself and his children, he turns his efforts to researching his wife's family.

David is able to easily verify that Barbara's family had immigrated to Philadelphia in the 1830s, and had since maintained an intact photographic record and accompanying documentation: "All kinds of vital records, in clear and modern English, testified to their place in the world, their role in history. They'd fought for the United

States in the Civil War and in World War I, in World War II and in Korea [...] They'd left photographs" (132). Her family's complete and verifiable history is juxtaposed with the lost history of the Kauffmann family for a second time, further accentuating the presence of the absence in contrast to the fullness of his in-laws' family. By emphasizing the *presence of an absence* that is the dearth of Kauffmann-family photographs, Dreifus is emphasizing the importance of family photographs as "as a medium of postmemory [that] clarifies the connection between familial and affiliative postmemory and the mechanisms by which public archives and institutions have been able both to reembody and to reindividualize 'cultural/archival' memory" (Hirsch *Generations* 115). Without family photographs, David is unable to "reembody" his murdered family members, and he has no mechanism with which to "reindividualize 'cultural/archival' memory." In other words, without family photographs, David is unable to situate his family within the cultural history of the Holocaust, and, because he cannot, he is unable to determine his own identity.

Like many of the second generation, David's self-identity is directly connected to the Holocaust. Hoffman holds that the second generation is haunted by the "paradoxes of indirect knowledge," noting that the "formative events of the twentieth century have crucially informed our [second generation] biographies, threatening sometimes to overshadow and overwhelm our own lives" (qtd. in Hirsch *Generation* 106). The *absences* in David's family history prevent him from fully constructing his own identity. According to professor Brian Roberts, "The construction of a self narrative rests fundamentally on the personal ability to make clear linkages between life events so as to make experience intelligible—an attempt to give some coherence" (Roberts19). For

David, as for Reitman-Dobi and many other second-generation witnesses, the seminal life event that must be reconciled is the event that occurred decades before his birth. David struggles—“‘obsessed’ was the word that Barbara used to describe it” (131)—to reconstruct a truncated family history in order to understand himself.

David’s online research leads him to second-generation support groups. Participation in support groups is not an uncommon phenomenon in the second generation. The late Israeli psychologist Dan Bar-On, who studied the effects of inherited trauma on the second and third generations, notes, “Survivor family support groups, however, act as the focal point for memory work and mutual support” (qtd. in Kidron 517). David finds mutual support in online discussion groups where “other members of his Second Generation online discussion group did not share his exact concerns they did, to be sure, provide a comfortable familiarity in their interests and perspectives” (134). David experiences not only mutual support, but also a safe place to explore his rootlessness: “In time, he found safety on this list” (135). A “cluster” from the group decided to meet in person at the annual Jewish-American Genealogy Conference, and, as a result of his participation in the conference, David decides to use DNA testing to help him “fill in the gaps” of his family history. He reasons, “Somehow, somewhere, someone would have to match him. And maybe, then, they could tell him things about his family that his own parents had, whether out of trauma or lack of knowledge, chosen not to share” (145–146). David is attempting to “utilize public archives and institutions” to “reembody and to reindividualize ‘cultural/archival’ memory” (Hirsch *Generation* 115). David is engaging in an exercise to eliminate the *absences* in his family history. If he can “reembody” his ancestry through DNA analysis,

David can position his ancestors in both the historical record, and in the “cultural/archival memory” of the Holocaust, which will allow him, ultimately, to embody his own identity and locate his personal place in that “cultural/archival memory.”

The theme of rootlessness reaches its crescendo when Dreifus reveals that David is not merely a metaphorical orphan but an *adopted* son. Through DNA analysis, David learns that Max Kauffmann is not his biological father. With great trepidation, he gently broaches the subject with Max. Photographs aid Max in cushioning the trauma that will be caused by the telling, and thus aid in his exposé and David’s subsequent confirmation of his identity. In this passage, the photograph is experienced as a portal, and brings forth conflicting and commingling emotions, memories, and questions: “For a quick moment the old man glanced over to the photographs of David and Barbara and their children” (154). This is an important moment: the “quick glance” at once signals that Max wishes to remind himself of (and draw strength from) the strong family ties he sees before him, and it also suggests that he is cognizant that the fabric of his family is threatened by him revealing the secret. In a certain sense, we see a blending of past, present, and future, as Max is grappling with a prescient nostalgia—he is already yearning to return to the moment before the rupture that will be initiated when he tells David the truth.

The images in the photographs initiate a chain of painful associations that lead Max back to the first moments of his secret. He is considering his memories and his perceptions of the past before relating the long-held secret to David. While looking at the photographs of the family that he helped create, Max is reconstructing his memories and experiencing the reconciliation of history and memory that Adams characterizes thusly: “Autobiography is a form of narrative characterized by a desire both to reveal and to

conceal, an attempt at reconciling a life with a self” (Adams 483). Max projects his competing emotions onto images of his son’s family while David reads his father’s face as a reflection of the larger, more complicated context of the photographs: “In his face David saw all the pain of the cries in the night, the question about the numbers, the loss of his wife. Magnified” (154). In this passage, Dreifus demonstrates the simultaneity of the photograph: in this case the photographs are both iconic representations of the people in them as well as symbols of family. As Barthes's asserts: “From a phenomenological viewpoint, in the Photograph, the power of authentication exceeds the power of representation” (89). For Max, the photographs of David and his nuclear family “symbolize the sense of family, safety, and continuity that has been hopelessly severed” (Hirsch *Generation* 116). The continuity of Max and Esther’s families had been severed by the Nazis, but they managed to establish a new family after the war. The photographs of David and his family authenticate Max’s understanding of family and the legacy he will leave behind.

Taking strength from images of the family that he had helped create, Max tells David the story of how he and Esther came to adopt the child of an unwed Catholic girl from Indiana. He tells David that after immigrating to the United States, he and Esther learned that she could not bear children. She had feared that “it had been foolish, maybe, to even hope that after everything her body had endured Over There it would be able to bring forth healthy life” (155). Max finally breaks his silence and gives David a small glimpse of his life in the time *before*. He tells his son,

As bad as they knew the world could be, as much as they knew of the human capacity to do evil, they hadn’t given up. They hadn’t given up on their own survival and now, especially Over Here, where they seemed slowly to be moving ahead into the future, they’d have been willing to

take a risk, to produce something tiny and vulnerable that would be their responsibility to nurture and care for. In their minds they'd each imagined children named for all the Lost, their own beloved parents, especially. They'd imagined taking up once again the chain of life that the Nazis had worked so diligently to break. (155–6)

Max's sharing is a representation of von der Dunk's assertion that "The generation that lived through the war was gradually disappearing and people nearing the end of their lives are often inspired to reflect on their past" (von der Dunk 58). Esther's recent death and David's direct questions about the DNA evidence are the factors that spur Max into finally breaking his silence. It is significant that Max shares only enough about the time "Over There" to give context to the story of how he and Esther came to adopt David. Max is willing to share the story of his son's genesis, but not his experiences "Over There." Berger reminds us that "Listening to survivor tales provides this [second] generation with the means to both connect with their parents and, therefore, better understand their own identity" (*Job* 3). Through what he chooses to share, and, perhaps more importantly, through what he declines to share, Max indicates what he feels is the most important factor in David's identity: the reasons that Max and Esther adopted David. To Max, his and Esther's wartime experiences are not as important as their desire in "taking up once again the chain of life that the Nazis had worked so diligently to break." What is important is that David came into their lives as a means for them to perpetuate their personal, family, and cultural heritages.

Because they were unable to reproduce, Max and Esther considered that the arrival of their pregnant neighbor and the opportunity to raise her soon-to-be-born child might be part of God's plan for them, "That maybe, He would give them a child this way, and help the child's mother" (159). It is significant that there was some chance that the

biological mother would abort the child had Max and Esther not taken him: “she’d confided to Esther what McMahon [the biological father] wanted her to do, now, a mortal sin to compound everything else they’d done” (159). By taking the child, Max and Esther were *saving a life*, and “at the same time there’d be added to the world one more Jewish soul, from which still others might be created [...] to recover all those that had been lost” (159). The Kaufmann’s desire to save a life while creating a life “to recover all those that had been lost” is reminiscent of the Talmudic edict, “Whoever destroys a soul from Israel, the Scripture considers it as if he destroyed an entire world. And whoever saves a life from Israel, the Scripture considers it as if he saved an entire world.”¹¹ Here Dreifus is connecting David, who we learn was born from Catholic parents, to Jewish culture, and to the Jewish legacy of the Holocaust. Berger notes that those in the second generation “inherit the Holocaust as an irreducible part of their Jewish identity” (*Job* 1). David assumes his Jewish identity from his adoptive parents.

By linking Catholic-bred David to Jewish culture, Dreifus demonstrates one of the key elements of third-generation writer rhetoric: to “bear witness to the impetus for renewal and identity within both a particular and universal framework” (Berger *Unclaimed* 157). In this case, the particular framework is Jewish cultural memory of the Holocaust, and all who witness the memory is the universal framework. Dreifus exemplifies Wiesel’s assertion that to hear a witness is to become a witness; she is intimating that Holocaust memory is the responsibility of all people, not solely the responsibility of the Jewish people. David’s interest in the Holocaust is, so to speak, environmentally induced rather than genetically inspired. Referring to third-generation writers, Berger writes, “While treating deeply personal and individualized experiences,

these authors also transmit communal trauma, thereby illuminating the complexity and necessity of memory in the postmodern context” (*Unclaimed* 158). In this passage, Dreifus complicates the question of who, ultimately, is responsible for Holocaust memory.

Dreifus interjects family photographs into Max’s storytelling a second time when Max tells David about his and Esther’s intent to add “one more Jewish soul, from which others might be created” (159). While listening to Max explain how he came to be adopted, David is drawn to memories and photographs of his own children: “here as David listened, the images of his own son and daughter came to him; they appeared first as babies, and then as the adults they’d become, and then his eyes moved to their photographs in his father’s room” (159). These photographs are more than representations of their subjects. Barthes’ “that-has-been” (77) quality of the images is replaced with what Hirsch refers to as “a space of identification for any viewer participating in the conventions of familial representations” (*Frames* 251). The photographs of David’s children are iconic representations of the *future* of David’s family.

This is the final mention of photographs in *Quiet Americans*. The photographs David contemplates while hearing Max’s story are the same photographs that Max contemplates when he musters the courage to tell David the story. Max uses the photographs for the strength to tell his story, and David uses them for strength to assimilate the story into his personal identity. Both men are reconstructing their memories and contemplating possible futures. According to Professor Martin Conway:

As both survival and self representations are among the ascribed functions of memory, it is not surprising that during the act of retrieval people might

reshape and reconstruct the past to support current aspects of the self and match future goals that are coherent with one individual's goals, self image and system of beliefs. (qtd. in Staniloiu 117)

Both Max and David see the photographs as iconic representations of family and continuity of family, and both view the photographs as representations of an uncertain future. Max and Esther had attempted to take up “the chain of life that the Nazis had worked so diligently to break” (155–6), and add “to the world one more Jewish soul, from which still others might be created” (159). David represents that additional Jewish soul, and the photographs of his children represent the others created from that soul. Hirsh reminds us that “Unlike public images or images of atrocity, however, family photos, and the familial aspects of postmemory, would tend to diminish distance, bridge separation, and facilitate identification and affiliation” (*Generations* 117). The photographs of David's children *identify* them as David's children and Max's grandchildren, thereby *affiliating* them with the family legacy of the Holocaust. They are the third generation. They are the future of Holocaust memory.

Moving from Postmemory to “Moving On”

The structure of *Quiet Americans* is itself an illustration of movement from postmemory to *moving on*. There are seven stories in *Quiet Americans*, and Dreifus engages in authorial narration of photographs with representations of postmemory in only three of those stories: the first, fourth, and seventh stories—in other words: the beginning, the middle, and the end. In *Quiet Americans*, the beginning is an exploration of the past, the middle symbolizes transition from the past to the present, and the end represents the transition from the present into the future. The first story in the collection serves to establish a firm connection to the past, and the other two stories where photographs are

narrated are about the deaths of members of the first generation.

The first story, “For Services Rendered” is a story about characters who struggle with “defining the present in relation to a troubled past rather than initiating new paradigms” (Hirsch *Generation* 106). The story explores the Weldmann family’s experiences in pre-war Germany, remembering the conditions that led to their escape from the looming Holocaust, and the characters’ reactions at the end of the war. The expected reaction is voiced by Weldmann’s wife, Klara, who makes it clear that she sees no possibility for forgiveness: “I hope they rot . . . All of them” (29), but Weldmann struggles with moral ambiguities. When Klara grows angry at his suggestion that he is even considering writing a letter in support of Emmy Göring, he reminds her, “Everything is not always so clear!” (32). Ultimately, the reader learns that Weldmann writes the letter of support—an act of *moving* on—but it is clear that he is the exception to popular opinion because he chooses to keep his actions secret.

The second instance of authorial narration of photographs as representations of postmemory is in “Homecomings,” a story about the transition from past to present. The story begins with the death of a first-generation refugee and ends with the birth of a member of the third-generation—a commentary on the end of one era and the beginning of a new one. Between those two events is commentary on the state of post-Holocaust antisemitism, and Israel’s role in Judaism after the Holocaust. Set in New York and Mannheim, Germany in 1972, the defining event in “Homecomings” is the massacre of the Israeli Olympic team in Munich. This event, juxtaposed against the death of one first-generation refugee and a homecoming trip to Mannheim by her daughter Nelly (who also is a first-generation refugee), signals a turning point from the stereotype of Jews

submissively led to slaughter to a new vision of a strong Jewish nation willing, if not eager, to fight for itself. While “For Services Rendered” examines the violent antisemitism that preceded the Holocaust, “Homecomings” examines post-Holocaust antisemitism and its effects on those who had direct connection to the Holocaust. In one scene, Nelly muses that she does not want her granddaughter to “hate all Germans” because her experiences in 1972 Germany were favorable, actually “amazing, especially if you remembered Berlin in ’36, as Nelly did” (91). Abruptly, in the next scene Nelly learns of Black September’s attack on the Israeli Olympic team. She and her German cousins watch Golda Meir tell the world that Israel will never negotiate: “‘If we should give in,’ she said, her voice steady and sure, no Israeli would be safe. Ever. Anywhere” (92). This signals a new era in modern Judaism: an era of strength and self-determination—an era of fighting back.

The final instance of authorial narration of photographs as representations of postmemory is in “Mischpocha,” a story about the uncertain future of Holocaust memory. Again, Dreifus signals the end of an era with the death of a member of the first generation—camp survivor Esther Kaufmann. “Mischpocha” ends with the revelation that David, Esther’s only child, is not a Jew by birth. Even after learning of his adoption, David adamantly proclaims that he and his children are Jewish: “We’re Jews!” (162) he cries vehemently in response to his son’s question about whether or not they might be Catholic because of David’s biological parents. David continues to pursue and protect the Kaufman family’s Holocaust legacy. “And he was hardly about to dispense with—or ever, ever forget—all the research he’d done” (162). Dreifus, in the manner of third-generation writers, is placing the particulars of Holocaust memory into a universal

audience. She is signaling that the Holocaust *should* be a lesson and legacy for all of humankind, not solely the Jewish people.¹²

The stories that include authorial narration of photographs with representations of postmemory are presented in chronological order—the first is set in the 1930s and 40s in Germany and New York, the second in Germany and New York in 1972, and the third in post 9/11 New York. When viewed as a group, the three stories represent the movement of the Holocaust from a distinctly Jewish event (Kristallnacht and violent antisemitism in pre-war Germany) to the question of universal memory and accountability in contemporary America. In all three stories, Dreifus works to move a particular to the universal. In “For Services Rendered” she addresses the universal question of forgiveness by examining the thoughts and actions of a single Jewish refugee. In “Homecomings,” the future of Judaism and antisemitism is explored through one refugee’s fear to travel to Germany almost thirty years after the war. (Her fears, of course, are justified by the Palestinian terrorist group Black September’s attack.) Finally, in “Mischpocha” Dreifus presents the idea that Holocaust memory should be universal, not solely the concern of the Jewish people.

Evidence of the Author’s Postmemory

Erika Dreifus is a third-generation writer acutely aware of her position in her family’s Holocaust legacy, and she has assumed responsibility in the perpetuation of Holocaust memory. *Quiet Americans* is Erika Dreifus’s homage to her family’s experiences as refugees from the Holocaust—from their flight from Germany in the late 1930s, to their experiences in their adopted country (the United States), to her role as a contemporary writer, to the responsibilities of the third generation moving forward. In

her conference paper “Ever After? History, Healing, and ‘Holocaust Fiction’ in the Third Generation,” Dreifus describes her experience as a post-Holocaust writer in an attempt to characterize the generation as a whole. She defines herself as an “elder of third generation,” who has experienced her heritage as a “nightmare” that “needs healing, working through” (525, 528). Dreifus asserts that writing fiction “has become the best way to ‘explain the Holocaust’—and its after-effects—for myself and the world” (527). She writes about her family’s Holocaust legacy to both chronicle the past and help pave the way for the future of Holocaust memory. Her stories in *Quiet Americans* exhibit both Hirsch’s postmemory and Hoffman’s *moving on*—she is looking back at her family history while looking forward to the future of Holocaust memory.

Dreifus is quite open about her desire to perpetuate her family’s Holocaust experiences through fiction. Her Web site explains that she has dedicated a portion of the profits of her book sales to The Blue Card, an organization committed to assisting “survivors of Nazi persecution in the United States” because “All of the stories in *Quiet Americans* are in some way influenced by the experiences of my paternal grandparents, German Jews who immigrated to the United States in the late 1930s, and/or by my own identity and preoccupations as a member of the ‘Third Generation’” (erikadreifus.com). In a 2011 interview by Sage Cohen titled “How Memory Informs Poetry and Prose,” Dreifus says, “The stories my grandmother transmitted and the perceptions that I attached to them, then, manifest themselves—differently—in the two forms” (Cohen). In her commitment to honor her family’s history, Dreifus looks back, engaging in postmemory, using her grandparents’ memories to inform both her self-identity and her post-Holocaust memorial work of her family’s experiences.

Dreifus, a historian with a Ph.D. in European history, is mindful of how the past shapes and informs the present, and is cognizant of the ways that she is influenced by her grandparents' experiences. She says that *Quiet Americans* "stems from the transmitted histories of my grandparents and their families, and how all of that accumulated history is remembered and continues to influence me" (erikadreifus.com). Referring to her characters in *Quiet Americans*, Dreifus says that the "shadows of Nazi persecution remain, whether the main characters are refugee-survivors, people who managed to survive the extermination camps, or children *and grandchildren* of either of those first two groups" (*Ever After* 525). Dreifus's interconnectedness with her grandparents' experiences is a form of postmemory, illustrating that her "connection to its object or source [her grandparents] is mediated not through recollection but through representation, projection, and creation" (Hirsch *Surviving* 9). Dreifus does not limit her writing to stories about her grandparents' experiences; she also incorporates her personal experiences into her stories.

In a 2011 interview by Anne Stameshkin, Dreifus explains how she utilized personal experiences and personal photographs when writing *Quiet Americans*. In "Homecomings," Dreifus drew from her 1990 visit to her grandparents' pre-war home, Mannheim, Germany: "We went back, and I think that's another thing that helped the story. I had been to Mannheim, and I had seen the apartment and the street and the office, and the descriptions of the city itself [...] all the things that are mentioned in 'Homecomings' are based on these real places and what I saw" (qtd. in Stameshkin). Dreifus is unable to fully imagine her grandparents' pre-war lives solely through their stories, so she travels to their former home to personally view the visual representations

of those stories. Dreifus's visit to a place in her grandparents' stories is the type of "embodied experience" that Hirsch asserts is necessary "to reactivate and reembody more distant social/national and archival/cultural memorial structures by reinvesting them with resonant individual and familial forms of mediation and aesthetic expression" (*Generation* 111). Mannheim represents a cultural memorial structure for Dreifus, and seeing it personally was necessary for her to achieve a fuller understanding of her grandparents' pre-war memories. By visiting Mannheim, Dreifus is establishing the "sense of living connection" that Hirsch asserts is necessary to "to reactivate and reembody" the "inherited memories" of "traumatic events that still defy narrative reconstruction and exceed comprehension" (*Generation* 107). Further evidence that her grandparents' memories were not enough for Dreifus to fully appreciate their experiences can be found in the quote above where Dreifus asserts "all the things that are mentioned in 'Homecomings' are based on these real places and what I saw," indicating that she supplemented her grandparents' memories with her own experiences and memories. This is postmemory, albeit one step removed. Instead of receiving her grandparents' memories "so deeply and affectively as to seem to constitute memories in their own right" (Hirsch *Generations* 107) as Hirsch asserts is the case for the second generation, Dreifus, a third-generation writer, *seeks* to reinforce her grandparents' memories and integrate them with her own memories.

Viewing Mannheim and incorporating her personal experiences and memories into her grandparents' stories is but one of the elements of postmemory in Dreifus's personal "homecoming." During her visit to Mannheim, Dreifus took photographs that she used to supplement her memory three years later when writing "Homecomings."

Explaining some of her “commingled thoughts, observations, and imaginings [that] appear in ‘Homecomings,’” Derifus says, “In writing these paragraphs, I relied not only on memory and imagination. I relied also on photographs” (qtd. in Schubert). She discusses a photograph of herself “in front of the office building where my great-grandfather once had his business” and “a picture of me in the courtyard of their apartment building” (qtd. in Stameshkin). Dreifus is illustrating one of the key elements of postmemory: “Photography’s promise to offer an access to the event itself, and its easy assumption of iconic and symbolic power, makes it a uniquely powerful medium for the transmission of events that remain unimaginable” (Hirsch *Generation* 107–8). Dreifus used those photographs to supplement her own memories of Mannheim, but, more importantly for this study, the photographs served to “reactivate and reembody” her postmemories of her grandparents’ pre-war experiences.

Quiet Americans and the Future of Holocaust Memory

Professor Alvin Rosenfeld holds that “The image of the Holocaust is a changing one, and just how it is changing, who is changing it, and what the consequences of such change may be are matters that need to be carefully and continually pondered” (14). For decades it has been almost universally accepted that the responsibility for Holocaust memory is the sole responsibility of the Jewish people. Berger asserts a “twofold particular truth: memory links the generations and, unless the Jewish people themselves bear witness, the world will soon forget the *Shoah*” (*Job* 183). While Berger’s admonition is certainly true, Dreifus and other third-generation writers are suggesting that the answer to keeping Holocaust memory alive after the first generation passes is to place the memories into a larger audience and have the memories resonate universally. This

does not mean that the Holocaust will not continue to be remembered by the Jewish people; it certainly will. But the memories will necessarily be more enduring—and subject to change—if they are perpetuated by a larger audience. The challenge will be to not allow the memories to become diluted or distorted in the process.¹³

Dreifus seems to be inexorably tied to her family history. In “Ever After?” she writes, “Not until reading Israeli psychologist Dan Bar-On’s 1995 *Fear and Hope: Three Generations of the Holocaust*, did I realize that mine were not the only third-generation nightmares” (525–6), admitting that she has not “been able to fully separate from her grandparents’ past” (525). This inability situates Dreifus in what Hirsch calls “an intersubjective transgenerational space of remembrance” which is “linked specifically to cultural or collective trauma” (*Surviving* 10). In the case of the Dreifus family, that trauma originates in fleeing their homeland as events-alienated refugees. Dreifus’s version of postmemory “is defined through an identification with the victim or witness of trauma, modulated by the unbridgeable distance that separates the participant from the one born after” (*Surviving* 10). She not only seems unable to escape her inheritance of trauma, she seems unwilling to let it go—even as she engages in *moving on*.

Dreifus begins *Quiet Americans* with two epigraphs that anticipate the third generation’s themes of being haunted, literally, by horrors of a past, so characteristic of the third-generation writer, and are indicative of her personal philosophy as a third-generation writer as well as her thoughts on the future of Holocaust memory. The first is a quote from Günter Grass’s¹⁴ novel *Crabwalk*: “It doesn’t end. Never will it end.” In a 2011 interview for *Inside Higher Ed*, John Griswold asked Dreifus, “If the story of the Holocaust opens us all to the whole human story, where can we possibly place ourselves?”

How do we proceed?” Dreifus’s response gives clear indication of her position as a third-generation writer located between postmemory and *moving on*: “The whole human story, as you phrase it, demands that we proceed [...] But perhaps it is the historian in me—as well as the granddaughter of German-Jewish refugees—who simply can’t believe that it will ever disappear” (qtd. in Griswold). Dreifus’s response illustrates how she is tied to her family legacy, yet insistent (she uses the phrase “demands that we proceed”) that we move forward. For Dreifus, *moving on* is a necessity, not an option, and her work as a third-generation writer is meant to facilitate that. To revisit Fogelman, Dreifus’s works in *Quiet Americans* has “the ability to transform the emotional effects of the Holocaust by letting go, thus increasing the quest for meaning in one’s life and concern for social issues” (*Dynamics* 4), and it is clear from her writing and interviews with her that Dreifus deliberately engages in that transformation.

The second epigraph, “Which writer today is not a writer of the Holocaust?” is a quote from Imre Kertész’s 2002 Nobel lecture. In the same interview, Griswold situates the quote in its larger context, reminding Dreifus that Kertész goes on to say: “One does not have to choose the Holocaust as one’s subject to detect the broken voice that has dominated modern European art for decades. I will go so far as to say that I know of no genuine work of art that does not reflect this break.” Griswold asks, “With the passage of time and the death of that generation of living memory—my own parents among them—what do you think are the possibilities of the world remembering, honoring, and finding use for knowledge of that “break”? Dreifus responds that she does not “know quite how to respond to the very essential question that you have posed about how the world will remember/honor/find use for the knowledge of the ‘break,’” and asks Griswold, “Surely,

that task is already in progress, is it not?" Despite, or perhaps because of, her inexorable bond with her grandparents' trauma, Dreifus seems determined to tell their stories, and to frame those stories in a manner that will resonate with the widest possible audience. By her creative works, and by her public statements, Dreifus seems to be determined to do her part in the process of perpetuating Holocaust memory among the widest possible audience. As to the possibilities of the world remembering, Dreifus says, "In its own small way, I hope, *Quiet Americans* may contribute to that process and those possibilities" (qtd. in Griswold).

END NOTES

¹ Postmemory “describes the relationship that the ‘generation after’ bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before to experiences they ‘remember’ only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up. But these experiences were transmitted to them so deeply and affectively as to seem to constitute memories in their own right.” (Hirsch postmemory.net)

² For the sake of continuity and brevity, I will refer to “the Holocaust” as the defining “cultural or collective trauma” responsible for postmemory in refugee families. The Holocaust is the defining event in the lives of both those who survived and those who became refugees as a result of it; in both cases, the Holocaust is a part of the families’ legacies. Survivors and refugees will be differentiated where applicable.

³ In this paper, I will follow the example of James Carroll and use “antisemitism” instead of what Carroll calls “the traditional ‘Anti-Semitism.’” Carroll cites Padraic O’Hare and Yehuda Bauer as noting that the hyphenated word “subtly grants the existence of something called ‘Semitism,’” and “thus reflects a bipolarity that is at the heart of the problem of antisemitism” (Carroll 629).

⁴ See: “The Refugee in Flight: Kinetic Models and Forms of Displacement.” by Egon Kunz in *International Migration Review*, 7.2 (1973): 125-146.

⁵ See: Hoffman, Eva. *After Such Knowledge: Memory, History, and the Legacy of the Holocaust*. New York: Public Affairs, 2004. Print.

⁶ According to Charles Sanders Peirce, *indexicality* is a sign modality that transcends language; when an object, independent of interpretation, points to something else, it is said to be indexical. For example, smoke is an index of fire. See Peirce's discussion of "Division of Signs" in *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, edited by Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss, Harvard University Press, 1931.

⁷ Also known as the Night of Broken Glass, Kristallnacht was a series of coordinated attacks on Jews living in Nazi Germany and Austria that began on the night of November 9th 1938 and continued until daybreak on November 10th. The attacks were carried out by the *Sturmabteilung* (aka the SA, Hitler's infamous "Brown Shirts") and anti-Jewish civilians, and were allowed by German authorities. Kristallnacht is widely regarded as the beginning of open, state-authorized violence against Jews by the Nazis. A comprehensive account of Kristallnacht and a good source for additional reading can be found on the United States Memorial Holocaust Museum's Web site at:

<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005201>

⁸ For more on forgiveness and the Holocaust, see *The Sunflower* by Simon Wiesenthal, 1997, Random House.

⁹ See: "Mannheim in Pictures and Prose" in Dory Adams' blog *In this Light: A weekly Blog of Images and Narrative*.

¹⁰ Professors Alan and Naomi Berger refer to these types of gaps as "*the presence of an absence*," and their idea is discussed in greater detail later in this paper in my examination of *Mishpocha*.

¹¹ Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 37a.

¹² When examining why Europe turned so violently against the Jews, James Carroll notes, “Despite an apparently broad cultural preoccupation with the Holocaust over the last generation, this is a question that non-Jews have barely begun to ask” (27). Carroll and other Catholic intellectuals such as John Pawlikowski and Mary Boyd are exploring pre- and post-Holocaust Christian-Jewish relations, and are examining the Church policies and doctrines that contributed to the centuries-old, widespread Jew-hatred in Europe that culminated in the Holocaust.

¹³ For more on the dangers of dilution and distortion of Holocaust memory, see *And the Rat Laughed* by Nava Semel. Hybrid Publishers: Melbourne, Australia. 2008. Print.

¹⁴ Grass is an interesting example of moral equivocality, and a curious choice as an epigraph in the work a third-generation refugee. Grass became famous for his left-leaning antinationalist views and his vehement condemnation of his fellow Germans for their self-serving forgetfulness of German atrocities against Jews, but in 2006, at age 78, he revealed that he had served in the Waffen SS during the war. Grass was a supporter of the German war effort when he enlisted at age sixteen, but later stated that “he only understood the truth when the Nazi War Criminals were tried at Nuremberg” (Vitale). In later years, his politics became increasingly conservative, and he is well known for his condemnation of Israeli foreign policy.

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