

**In the Presence of the Past: 'Third Generation' Germans
and the Cultural Memory of National Socialism and the
Holocaust**

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I herewith certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

Abstract

This empirical study is based on interviews with 26 grandchildren of Nazi perpetrators, followers and *Wehrmacht* soldiers and examines how they remember their Nazi family histories and the Holocaust and the Third Reich more generally. Most studies of this ‘third generation’ are framed in the terms of purely constructivist theories of collective (Halbwachs [1925] 1992) or communicative and cultural memory (Assmann 1999) and thus cannot take account of present but unrecognized aspects of the past. In contrast, this thesis draws on the traumatic realism of Dominick LaCapra and others to examine questions concerning the memory and representation of extreme events and makes use of the psychoanalytic notions of working-through and acting-out/mourning and melancholia. It does so to distinguish between what is remembered and what remains dissociated, marginalized and excluded in the grandchildren’s accounts of their Nazi family pasts. It furthermore draws on this non-binary distinction to acknowledge the two interrelated dimensions that remembering the National Socialist past entails in ‘the double “post” of the postmodern and the post-Holocaust’ (Santner 1990: 18): 1) coming to terms with the absence of essential, unfractured and stable identities, i.e. with what Eric Santner and Dominick LaCapra term structural trauma and 2) mourning the suffering caused by the Nazis and countless ordinary Germans, i.e. what both theorists refer to as historical trauma. This study explores how these two dimensions intersect in the generation of the grandchildren to find that the structural dimension has been receding into the background since German unification. This implies that the cultural and official memory of the Holocaust is increasingly either used for the purposes of national identity building, and thus in a redemptive way, or rejected because it is considered to obstruct a return to an essential and pure national identity. In drawing on recent theories of shame, this thesis argues that efforts of ‘coming to terms’ with the NS past can only be ‘successful’ if working-through structural trauma is part of the process.

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Preface

‘One wants to get free of the past: rightly so, since one cannot live in its shadow, and since there is no end to terror if guilt and violence are only repaid, again and again, with guilt and violence. But wrongly so, since the past one wishes to evade is still so intensely alive. National Socialism lives on, and to this day we don’t know whether it is only the ghost of what was so monstrous that it didn’t even die off with its own death, or whether it never died in the first place . . .’

The sociologist Norbert Elias ([1989] 1996: 16)² remarked in his study *The Germans* that ‘[e]very new generation has to come to terms with the fact that the self image of the Germans is contaminated by the memory of Nazi excesses . . .’ In doing so, Elias already alludes what I will in this thesis treat as the intimately linked issue of how the memory of the Holocaust (i.e. the working-through of historical trauma) and the formation of individual self-identity (i.e. the working-through structural trauma) intersect in the ‘third generation.’ The question I am thus asking in this study is how the ‘third generation’, i.e. the grandchildren of Nazi perpetrators, followers and *Wehrmacht* soldiers, tackles the task of coming to terms with a self-image contaminated by the memory of the Nazi genocide. How do they deal with this contamination? To what extent does it lead them to reject the memory of National Socialism and particularly the Holocaust to keep their self-image as Germans ‘clean’ and to what extent does remembering the Holocaust and NS become part of a process of revising one’s self-image as a German? And relatedly, how do the grandchildren negotiate between the public commemoration of the Holocaust and their family memories of the Third Reich? What is the role of family memory of NS in keeping the self-image of ‘third generation’ Germans ‘clean’?

¹ Adorno ([1959] 1986: 115).

² I am here citing a translation of this extract from Elias ([1989] 1996), which I found in Vikki Bell’s (2002: 65) article *Generation and Genealogy* and consider much better than the one by E. Dunning and S. Mennell.

I began asking myself these questions after I had moved to the United Kingdom at the age of 20 and took a first stab at tackling them in my final dissertation for my BA in History and Sociology. The question, which particularly interested me at that time was a rather narcissistic one – why is it so difficult for young Germans to feel good or proud about their own country – struggling as I myself was with precisely the contamination of the self-image Elias speaks of and that seemed to have occurred only after I had left Germany, but resulted in intense but for a long time unacknowledged feelings of shame.

I subsequently became more and more interested in the grandchildren's family memory of NS. In the process I also gradually became more alert to the way in which the NS past has been and still is dissociated in my own family. It was at this point that a photograph of my paternal grandfather in *Wehrmacht* uniform – displayed in the sitting room at my parents' house – which had always somehow been invisible to me, suddenly emerged and became perceptible as a trace that pointed to another, hidden past, which I sensed was at odds with the very few heroic stories I knew about him. This photograph and an album containing images my grandfather took during the war – among them photographs of occupied Poland, which showed long trains of Polish POWs – then became one of the central means with which I tried to think through various modes of memory transmission in families of Nazi perpetrators, followers and *Wehrmacht* soldiers.



Illustration 1. My paternal grandfather.

In conjunction with thinking about this image and the album, which raised important issues about the Holocaust, memory and representation, I became interested in the exhibition ‘War of Extermination – Crimes of the *Wehrmacht* between 1941 and 1944’ which travelled through Germany between 1995 and 1999. It described in graphic detail – by displaying hundreds of photographs taken by *Wehrmacht* soldiers – the *Wehrmacht*’s active and passive participation in the perpetration of the Holocaust and war crimes. The exhibition and its images have come to play an important and varied role in this thesis. Firstly, as a public event, whose main message pervaded the private realm, the exhibition had the potential to facilitate the revision of family myths about grandfathers as innocent soldiers. The photographs it used thus contained a critical and subversive ‘counter-memory’ (Mösken 2007: 248; Davies & Starn 1989) to the officially cultivated myth of the ‘clean’ army and changed the memory of WWII in Germany.

Secondly, it represented – what Mösen (2007: 243; Hüppauf 1997) calls – a ‘*Bildbruch*’ [iconoclasm] by broadening the condensed established canon of Holocaust images. This canon had fostered a rather compressed view of the Holocaust by limiting itself to images that show the victims and the concentration camps after the murderous machinery of industrialized death had already stopped functioning; by demarcating the actual act of perpetration (in the gas chambers) as an unrepresentable blank space and by only showing individual perpetrators that belonged to a clearly defined group (SS, SA, Gestapo, the *Einsatzgruppen*, etc.) from which one could easily distance oneself. The images of the *Wehrmacht* exhibition evidently break with this visual practice by showing ‘ordinary’ *Wehrmacht* soldiers as perpetrators engaged in horrendous acts of perpetration. In thus enlarging the circle of perpetrators to include ‘normal’ soldiers, it also made it more difficult to distance oneself and one’s family members from the perpetrators. Furthermore, in ‘representing’ what had so far remained largely unrepresented, the exhibition rendered the perpetrators visible and made it possible for their grand/children to get a more concrete idea of what their grand/fathers were involved in and/or witnessed. While the central status the *Wehrmacht* exhibition occupies in this thesis underlines my argument that there is a need to move away from the idea of the Holocaust as ineffable, unrepresentable and incomprehensible, because it contains an exculpatory moment, I will in chapter 2, elucidate how this does not imply a concomitant assertion that the Holocaust becomes a historical event like any other, by endorsing the traumatic realism of Eric Santner (1990, 1992) and Dominick LaCapra (1994, 1998, 2001).

However, the *Wehrmacht* exhibition’s use of perpetrator images and my decision to reproduce some of these photographs in this thesis obviously raise issues relating to an ‘ethics of perception’ (Hüppauf 1997: 26) or an ethical aesthetics (Hirsch 2001), which is particularly concerned about the viewer sharing the same perspective as the perpetrator/photographer – the Nazi gaze – and ‘thereby do[ing] continuing violence to the dead in memory’ (Prager 2008: 23). There is however an ongoing discussion, which seems to be gathering pace with the succession of younger academics (Baer

2002; Bathrick 2008; Hüppauf 1997; Prager 2008) in Holocaust studies, who argue that such images should not be rejected outright. These academics try to find new ways of reading these images ‘against the grain’ (Baer 2002); against the Nazi gaze and regard the use of these images as disruptive of the rather selective visual memory of the Holocaust and thus as potentially educative.

I use these perpetrator photographs not so much as illustrations or evidence, but rather in a constructive sense, as montages, in order to disrupt conceptions of the past as thoroughly and securely past. In a similar way to Walter Benjamin’s idea and method of the dialectical image, which is also based on the principle of montage, I selected and placed a number of perpetrator images in such a way as to upset and unsettle notions of the family as untainted by NS and especially the Holocaust. I did so by juxtaposing family photographs of the time with images of the *Wehrmacht* exhibition and other perpetrator photos. I used this method of montage to expose the family as a ‘tangled site of memory’ (Silverman 2006: 8), which harbours hidden meanings, that can be brought to light through montage. In this way, I aimed to estrange and defamiliarize the familiar object of the innocuous family photograph ‘in order to make [it] relevant for the present’ (Wolin 1982: 125). Thus, I agree with Benjamin (cited in Buck-Morss 1989: 67), who describes montage ‘as a progressive form because it “interrupts the context into which it is inserted” and thus “counteracts illusion”’.

While most of the academic research about the children of Nazi perpetrators and followers is either kept within the theoretical terms of clinical psychoanalysis or is of a more journalistic nature (Sichrovsky 1988; von Westernhagen 1987), most studies on the grandchildren (Leonhard 2002a, 2002b; Kohlstruck 1997; Schneider, Co. 2004; Welzer *et al.* 2002) are framed in social theories of memory, and here especially in the theories of Maurice Halbwachs (1992) and Jan Assmann (1999). However, as I will argue in chapter 2, neither the more or less exclusive focus on the family that the psychoanalytic studies convey, nor the oversocialization of the individual that comes with ideas such as collective and cultural memory, are necessarily helpful when looking at how the ‘third generation’ remembers NS. This is the case as for the latter

the family is no longer the only or most important ‘institution’ of memory, but a highly developed official and (trans)cultural memory of NS and especially the Holocaust – that often challenges, but also, as we will come to see in chapter 5, paradoxically reinforces the often exculpatory stories transmitted in the family – has been tasked with educating the younger generations and encouraging them to remember. On the other hand, I found the use of social theories of memory unsatisfying, because these theories do not have an adequate language with which to understand the continuing presence of the past, because they are primarily concerned with questions of how the past is constructed in the present. What I thus also missed in these theories was a vocabulary that would allow me to make certain normative distinctions between different ways of narrating the NS past. Hence I am in this thesis following the traumatic realist approach of particularly Eric L. Santner (1990, 1992) and Dominick LaCapra (1994, 1998, 2001), which provides me precisely with such a language, allows me to take account of the presence of the past and is not limited to the family.

Especially since the late 1990s, the voices of the ‘third generation’ have become increasingly audible in public debates about the NS past. However, while many commentators find the grandchildren to be sufficiently removed from the past and as having come to terms with it, I am perhaps more hesitant, especially because these increasingly audible voices, such as for example that of Mareike Ilseman, a 23-year old student from Cologne, share much with Martin Walser’s (1998: 18)³ rant against what he called the ‘*Dauerpräsentation unserer Schande*’ [‘constant presentation of our disgrace’] in their ever more vociferous complaints about ‘the *über*-confrontation with the Holocaust’ (Ilseman 1998). Another student, Kathie Gesa Klafke (1998),

³ Martin Walser, an eminent German writer, gave a speech, upon receiving the peace price of the German book trade in 1998 in the Frankfurt *Paulskirche*. In his speech he fulminated against the instrumentalization of Auschwitz by the media, which according to him uses it as a ‘*Moralkeule*’ (moral cudgel) to engender contrition and consternation. He argued for the privatization of the memory of National Socialism, which would allow everyone to remember the time as s/he experienced it. He said he did not want to be reminded of German shame every time he turned on the television, opened a newspaper, or went to Berlin (in reference to the Holocaust memorial). He lamented the political correctness that characterized public memory and described it as alienating him from his more ‘authentic’ childhood memories of the time. It thus brought ‘into sharp relief the divergence between public and private memory of the Nazi era in Germany’ (Schmitz 2007: 4). Like many interviewees, Walser was especially annoyed about the institutionalized and ritualized commemorative culture of the Holocaust and its attendant politics of guilt and contrition, which he and many interviewees feel to be prescribed.

as so many of the young, ‘third generation’ Germans I interviewed for this study, thus pleads for the NS past to become history, rejects the idea of a responsibility that goes beyond the individual perpetrators, and thus views references to transgenerational forms of historical responsibility or obligation towards the memory of the victims of the Holocaust as an accusation of *Erbsünde* [original or inherited sin].

Yet, it must here be added that the grandchildren are caught in a fundamentally contradictory situation, which is represented by the tension that historian Dirk Moses (2007c: 141-42) detects ‘between demanding in the name of multiculturalism that Germany today is too diverse to admit of national modes of identification (i.e., Germany as a community of descent or fate) and’ an insistence ‘that the supposedly ontologically stable entity called “the Germans” must confess guilt, express contrition and atone for the Holocaust’ (Moses 2007c: 141-42). It is thus that many grandchildren see this insistence as nationalistic and use it as an argument for the need to historicize the Holocaust and NS. Yet, this line of argument is often pursued to render German national identity available again for unproblematic and straightforward identification. While, as we will see, the voices of the ‘third generation’ are manifold and include many less resentful, open and tolerant perspectives⁴ than the two mentioned here, a preliminary description of this generation would need to stress that there is a growing desire for national belonging and/or regret that this belonging is not yet or can never be straightforward, unfractured and ‘normal’, because of the Holocaust, prevalent among its members.

Before I proceed to provide a historical overview of the development of an official and cultural memory of the Holocaust and NS in (West) Germany in the following chapter, I want to briefly clarify the term ‘third generation’. The concept of ‘second generation’ emerged out of an initially primarily psychoanalytic concern with the psychological after-effects of the Nazi genocide in the survivors and their offspring.

⁴ For a wide variety of perspectives of members of the ‘third generation’, see especially the edited collections *Das Unbehagen in der ‘dritten Generation’* (Villigster Forschungsforum zu Nationalsozialismus, Rassismus und Antisemitismus 2004) and *Was bleibt von der Vergangenheit? Die junge Generation im Dialog über den Holocaust* (Stiftung für die Rechte zukünftiger Generationen 1999).

What was in the 1980s called ‘second-generation-syndrome’ (Bergman & Jucovy 1982: 18-29) describes how the trauma of the victims and survivors was transmitted to the subsequent generation. Thus the concepts of ‘second’ and ‘third generation’ are often explicitly about the transgenerational transmission of traumatic memories and entail – especially when used beyond clinical psychoanalysis in cultural studies and the wider academic and cultural discourse – a genealogical understanding of history, that has as its origin the ‘first generation’s’ experiences of the Holocaust and NS. The concepts of ‘second’ and ‘third generation’ have also come to be employed to understand the process of memory transmission in families of Nazi perpetrators and followers and have increasingly been adopted beyond psychoanalytic studies. The interdisciplinary and intercultural borrowing of the term ‘second’ or ‘third generation’ is however deeply problematic because it ‘already produces an indifference with respect to the incompatible position of victims and perpetrators – that is, between the descendants of survivors and those that were responsible for their suffering’ (Weigel 1999: 270). Although I still use it, I never do so without putting it in inverted commas, to indicate that the term is not unproblematic. This seemed a more sensible choice than the perhaps even more problematic phrase ‘young Germans’, which implies an ascription of an exclusionary ethnic identity by raising the issue of who belongs to that category and who does not.

Chapter 1: Introduction – A short history of official and cultural memory of the Holocaust and National Socialism in Germany

1.1 Introduction: Two ‘mnemonic orthodoxies’⁵ and their decline

I begin with a history of the memory of the Holocaust in Germany because it helps us to put current developments concerning this memory into context: it also provides the reader with the historical, political and cultural background to the later analysis of the interviews with 26 ‘third generation’ Germans that I conducted for this study. As the memory of the Holocaust represents very different things for the interviewees – for some it constitutes the beacon of an enlightened and moral Germany, for others it is no less than an object of scorn, experiencing it as they do as precluding a return to an untainted national identity – it seems essential to take a closer look, not only at how the Holocaust became an integral part of unified Germany’s cultural memory, but also how it could come to incite such starkly differing reactions.

The old Federal Republic was marked by what Jeffrey Olick (2005: 340) calls the two ‘mnemonic orthodoxies’: on the one hand, the left-liberal model of a postnational identity and a critical memory of National Socialism, whose practitioners wanted to make the Holocaust central to the self-understanding of the FRG,⁶ often also called *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*⁷ and, on other hand, conservative and neo-conservative efforts to defuse the memory of the Holocaust via its relativization in attempts to

⁵ (Olick 2005: 340).

⁶ This is of course a reference to Jürgen Habermas’ (1989b) concepts. In this thesis, I treat Habermas and his conception of dealing with the NS past as an emblem for the left-liberal discourse of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. Like many others, historian Charles Maier (1988: 168) argues that ‘Habermas can be taken as the Federal Republic’s preeminent spokesman for what might be called the liberal-democratic or social-democratic “metanarrative.”’

⁷ This term is usually translated as coming to terms with, coping with or mastering the past. Implicit in the term is the word *bewältigen* which means overcoming, thus suggesting a ‘closure and a break with the past’ (Kattago 2001: 38). This is also why it has been criticized, especially by Adorno ([1959] 1986) in his early and influential piece on the topic of ‘*What does coming to terms with the past mean?*’ in which he proposes the term *verarbeiten* [working-through] rather than *Aufarbeitung* and *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. The former is less ambiguous and translates as ‘critical reappraisal and working through’ (Kattago 2001: 38; see also König et al. 1998).

‘normalize’⁸ national identity. In what follows, I will trace, albeit in very broad strokes, the ascendancy of these two ‘mnemonic orthodoxies’ in the Federal Republic, to then look at how unification destabilized both and inaugurated the rise of a liberal discourse of contrition (Wilds 2000), which seems to be, as we will come to see, much more successful in ‘normalizing’ the NS past via a ritualized and regularized memory of the Holocaust (Olick 1998). I will devote this chapter to the FRG (see Appendix H, page 287, for GDR), firstly because it is to a large extent the latter’s model of memory that unified Germany adopted and, secondly, because the majority of the interviewees grew up in West Germany.

The question of how to write the history of Holocaust memory in Germany is a very difficult one. Unlike the sociologists Levy and Sznajder (2006) in their book *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age*, I do not think that it can be recounted as a progressive narrative which ends on the quasi Hegelian and triumphal note of Germany now – after an initial and long silence – standing at the end of a long, but successful ‘collective moral learning process’ (Moses 2007a: 5); of Germany now having finally worked through its past, by having integrated the Holocaust into its cultural memory and national identity as a negative foundational event. As I will show in chapter 7, many interviewees subscribe to some version of this success story, that ‘normalizes’ the NS past and features the Germans as the leaders in ‘the new moral frame’ of international politics (Barkan 2000: xvi). Yet, as I will contend in the following chapter, working-through the past entails more than the performance of official commemorative days and institutional education, implying as it also does an affective dimension. As David Eng (2010: 171) argues, taking ‘responsibility for a historical event [one] never actually experienced . . . is as much an affective as it is a political affair.’

⁸ The term ‘normalize’ or ‘normalization’ has a very specific meaning in the context of debates about German Holocaust memory and needs to be distinguished from Michel Foucault’s (1979) notion of normalization, which he elaborated as part of his theory of (disciplinary) power, especially in his earlier work, such as *Discipline & Punish*. As we will see below, in the German context, ‘normalization’ during the 1980s, implied the historicization of NS, the universalization of victimhood and ‘[t]he “proper” acknowledgement of German suffering’ (Taberner & Cooke 2006: 7), while after unification ‘normalization’ was understood to reside in the regularization and ritualization of Holocaust memory in Germany and the elaboration of a culture of contrition, which included restitution payments and other reconciliatory efforts. In what follows, I place the concept in inverted commas to indicate the still contested status of the concept.

Neither do I, however, think it is a story of doom and gloom in which unification features as the historical point at which Germans begin to regress back to a dangerous non-civic ethnic nationalism. Rather, I assert that this history of memory is marked by ‘idiosyncratic dialectics’ [*eigenwilligen Dialektiken*]⁹ (Rensmann 2001: 337) between memory and forgetting. In trying to take account of these dialectics, I particularly want to draw attention to the latest episode in this tale, which shows, perhaps paradoxically, how German politicians and cultural producers find in the Europeanization and globalization of the Holocaust also the tools that facilitate their most recent attempts to ‘normalize’ the Nazi past.

However, before I can begin, I want to point out two particular characteristics of the memory cultures considered here. The first is the strong generational dynamic that carried and still carries many of Western and now unified Germany’s mnemonic transformations and, secondly, the at times strong disjuncture between public and private (family) memory, which was particularly pronounced in the GDR, but also present in the FRG, albeit to a lesser extent. In relation to the generational dynamic, Mary Fulbrook (1999: 16; see also Assmann 2006a, 2007a), for example, points out that, in Germany, national identity construction is not only shaped by the political and intellectual elites, but also and particularly different generational experiences ‘serve to transform what it is that the “imagined community” of belonging is felt to consist in’. As we are currently witnessing yet another generational shift, this time from ‘second’ to ‘third’ generation, I am also endeavouring – in anticipation and preparation of chapters 7 and 8 – to draw out some of the changes in memory culture and conceptions of national identity and belonging that accompany such generational shifts.¹⁰

⁹ Or what Atina Grossmann (2000: 90) alludes to as the pull between memory and forgetting when she writes that the entire postwar West German history ‘can be read as a continual oscillation between the drive to forget – to draw the proverbial *Schlussstrich* and aim for “normality” – and the injunction to remember, to commemorate, and to work through questions of guilt and responsibility.’

¹⁰ The link between memory and generation is explored in a large corpus of sociological literature, often drawing on the seminal work of Karl Mannheim (1952), who argued that when age cohorts share particularly formative common experiences during their adolescence they develop a common generational consciousness. This literature suggests ‘that memories [are] structured along the age dimension in ways that allow us to identify various generations’ (Miztal 2003: 86). So similar to class, gender and ethnicity which, to some extent, structure our perception, experience and memories,

This brings us to the disjuncture between public and private memory, which is in many ways at issue in chapters 4 and 5, which look at family memory and chapter 6, which examines how the interviewees experienced their school education about NS and confrontations with cultural representations of NS and the Holocaust more generally. German memory culture of the Holocaust and NS is marked by ‘tension’ (Schmitz 2007: 4), ‘dissonances’ (Fulbrook 1999: 18), ‘asymmetry’ (Assmann 2003: 127) or even disjuncture between communicative memory and official and cultural memory. With respect to the FRG and unified Germany, Aleida Assmann (2003), for example, holds that while cultural memory of the Holocaust finds no support in communicative memory – the Nazi genocide of the Jews and others as absent from or external to family memory (see also Welzer *et al.* 2002; Rosenthal *et al.* 1997 and chapter 4) – the latter is, or rather was until recently largely missing from cultural memory.

In order to think about the relation between these two mnemonic levels, in this chapter, I will draw on the work of Jan (1995, 1999, 2005) and Aleida Assmann (2006a) as well as Harald Welzer (2001). Building on Maurice Halbwachs’ (1992) notion of collective memory, Jan Assmann (1995, 1999) added another dimension to Halbwachs’ distinction between history and collective memory, namely that between communicative and cultural memory. He (1995: 126) maintains that communicative memory, or what he also calls ‘everyday memory’ entails the memories of the recent past and is formed ‘purely through personally authenticated and communicated experience’ (1999: 50). It thus reaches back no further than three to four generations and is passed on in everyday (oral and written) communication. Unlike cultural memory, communicative memory does not presume specialists, but its transmission is secured in informal everyday communication and practice. Harald Welzer *et al.* (2002: 13) draw attention to family memory as a subdomain [‘*Teilbereich*’] of communicative memory.

‘differences in generational perspectives on the “same” event can be seen to be a consequence of varying locations in historical time’ (Schuman and Scott 1989: 378).

Cultural memory, on the other hand, according to J. Assmann (1995: 129), ‘has its fixed points’, i.e. ‘fateful events of the past, whose memory is maintained through cultural formation (texts, rites, monuments) and institutional communication (recitation, practice, observance).’ It is transmitted by experts (intellectuals, teachers, politicians, etc.) in especially designated and ‘meticulous instruction’ (1999: 55) or commemorative rites.¹¹ The knowledge about the past thus imparted across generations serves ‘*formative* . . . [i.e.] “educative, civilizing, and humanizing functions” as well as normative . . . function[s] of providing rules of conduct’ (1995: 132) and its transmission occurs in ‘ceremonial communication’ (1999: 56).¹² Cultural memory thus entails ‘that body of reusable texts, images, and rituals specific to each society in each epoch, whose “cultivation” serves to stabilize and convey that society’s self-image’ (1995: 132), unity, and identity.¹³ What is important to note here is that the young Germans I interviewed – the grandchildren of Nazi perpetrators, followers and bystanders, as well as *Wehrmacht* soldiers – find themselves at the crucial juncture when communicative memory begins to fade and solidify into cultural memory. Although I am hesitant about Assmann’s duo of cultural and communicative memory, which is based on the assumption of unruptured transmission, and is thus too narrowly conceived to take account of silences, dissociations and memory beyond the communicable I will here nevertheless use it as a heuristic device to draw out the changing relation between the two.

¹¹ My own translation: ‘sorgfältiger Einweisungen’.

¹² My own translation: ‘zeremonielle[r] Kommunikation’.

¹³ Assmann (1995: 130) asserts that ‘[c]ultural memory exists in two modes: first in the mode of potentiality of the archive whose accumulated texts, images, and rules of conduct act as a total horizon, and second in the mode of actuality, whereby each contemporary context puts the objectivized meaning into its own perspective, giving it its own relevance.’

1.2 *Official and cultural memory of the Holocaust and NS in the Federal Republic of Germany, 1945-1989-90*

1.2.1 *The victim discourse in the 1950s in the FRG*

While the East German state strictly sanctioned the public articulation of memories of the expulsions of Germans from territories in the East, the FRG was much more accommodating to memories of German suffering. Ruth Wittlinger (2006b: 203) notes that '[u]ntil recently, a consensus existed in academic literature which suggested that the period immediately following the end of the Second World War in West Germany was characterised by silence and amnesia.' Historian Robert Moeller's work, however, demonstrates that this was a very 'selective amnesia' (Wittlinger 2006b: 203) that included only the memory of the suffering that Germans inflicted on others, not their own suffering. Thus, while many historians (Frei 1996; Reichel 2001) who write about the early phase of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* concentrate on political and legal efforts to deal with the perpetrators, they tend to neglect what Robert Moeller (1996, 1998a, 1998b, 2001, 2003, 2005) makes the focus of his studies, namely how German suffering entered the politics of memory of the early Federal Republic. After the Allies' prosecution of Nazis and war criminals at the war crimes tribunal in Nuremberg (1945-49) and their attempts to de-Nazify and re-educate the population, further efforts of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* slowed markedly down until perhaps the late 1950s, when a violent anti-Semitism returned and the *Einsatzgruppen* trial in Ulm (1958) reminded the public of NS.

Although the crimes against Jews were acknowledged on the political level in the ratification of Adenauer's 'financial reparations treaty' [*Wiedergutmachung*] in March 1953 (Rabinbach 1988: 160), many, including high-ranking politicians of all colours saw reparation payments to the victims of NS as competing and interfering with what they thought was the much more urgent task of providing financial restitution to the *Kriegsgeschädigte*, e.g. expellees, bombing victims and POWs. The 'Law for the Equalization of Burdens' [*Lastenausgleich*], was passed in 1952,

showing that bombing victims and expellees were at the top of the agenda. Much of the politics and culture of memory of the 1950s was shaped by notions of ‘competing victimhood’ (Levy & Sznaider 2005: 11) and West Germans were much more concerned about the ‘crimes committed against Germans who were not Jews’ (Moeller 2001: 2-3). This focus on German suffering was furthermore aided by an intensifying Cold War, which facilitated the return of a virulent anti-Communism, which ‘deflect[ed] attention from the Nazi past to the Soviet threat in the present’ (Herf 1997: 297).

While there was some official acknowledgement of the Nazi genocide against the Jews, communicative memory at the time was a memory ‘of fighting and imprisonment, evacuation and expulsion and stories of loss and rape’ (Wittlinger 2006a: 64). ‘By focusing on the experiences of expellees and POWs in the Soviet Union, [West Germans] could talk about the end of the Third Reich without assuming responsibility for its origins’ (Moeller 2001: 3). They furthermore saw themselves as the victims of Hitler and his criminal elite, who started the war, the consequences of which ordinary Germans were now suffering from. Cultural memory was based on films, popular literature and the pulp fiction of the *Landserhefte*,¹⁴ portraying for example *Wehrmacht* soldiers as heroically protecting the ‘Fatherland’ and/or suffering at the hands of the Russian and Allied armies. Official commemoration also propagated an image of the NS past, which turned everyone into a victim. This is evident in the reintroduction of the national ‘People’s day of Mourning’ in 1950, which was designed to commemorate *all* victims of war and tyranny. Moeller (1996: 1013, 2001: 3, 2003: 155) thus argues that ‘in the first post-war decade’ ‘private memories’ of wartime suffering ‘structured public memory’ in the Federal Republic. But he adds that, although the later institutionalization of a memory culture that commemorated the victims of the Holocaust to a large extent displaced these memories of wartime suffering into the ‘private’ sphere, it never did so completely, as many now argue when they invoke the taboo on German suffering.

¹⁴ Extremely popular in the 1950s, these ‘novels’, which came in the form of booklets, could be bought at newsagents. They were explicitly glorifying war, portraying it as one great adventure.

1.2.2 *The 1960s: Protest and democratization*

It is widely accepted among historians of and commentators on postwar West Germany that the year 1968 constitutes a break with the long and silent 1950s. However, historians Gassert and Steinweis (2006) provide an important qualification of this often-repeated but perhaps too simplistic view. Both the date, 1968, and the role of the rebellious students are becoming increasingly contested (see Jarausch 2006; Schildt 2002; Siegfried 2000). The claim that the radical students broke the silence in 1968 with their protests against the perceived fascism and authoritarianism of the FRG is often premised on the assumption that the Nazi past was drowned in the frantic reconstruction effort. Cultural and communicative memory largely corresponded, perhaps until the early 1960s, when the broadcast of the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem in 1961 and the Auschwitz trials in Frankfurt am Main 1963-1965 marked something of a turning point. During these trials the public was for the first time confronted with the gruesome details of the industrialized mass murder committed in the concentration and death camps (Siegfried 2000: 94). Social historian Axel Schildt (2002) thus claims that, almost a decade before the student protests reached their pinnacle, the crimes of the Nazi period were increasingly subjected to greater public attention and a more pluralistic and democratic political culture gradually began to evolve.

In 1967, psychoanalysts Margarete and Alexander Mitscherlich published their famous study *The Inability to Mourn*. It diagnosed Germans with a repressed collective melancholy, arguing that this led them to deny and de-realize their recent murderous past. It became hugely influential among the students. This book, in conjunction with critical theory, and the teachings of the 're-immigrants' Adorno and Horkheimer at the Frankfurt School of Social Research was a great inspiration to the students at the time, the 'children of the rubble who had been raised on tales of a suffering Germany' (Moeller 2005: 170). It was thus that many students began to view their fathers, professors and the entire war and perpetrator generation as fascists. Hence, with the 1960s' generational shift from 'first' to 'second generation', attention also began to shift from German victims to German perpetrators and their

victims. Although the politically radical part of the children's generation instrumentalized the Nazi past in their generational conflict with their guilty parents – by employing it as a weapon in their violent attempts to dissociate themselves from them and their generation, in a quest for an innocent origin – it is not solely due to the radical students of 1968 that a more critical engagement with the Nazi past developed in West Germany (Jarausch 2006: 21; Schildt 2002: 129; Siegfried 2000: 99-105; Wittlinger 2006: 67). Even though the students radicalized and intensified the debate about the NS past and in their attacks on the FRG's authoritarianism, inaugurated and accelerated the process of democraticization (especially in the educational system), they did not necessarily instigate it (Siegfried 2000: 104).

The students turned the question of their parents' guilt into a central issue. However, they did so by politicizing it: by attacking the 'fascist' behaviour of the FRG's authorities, they carried their thinly-veiled hate of their parents into the public sphere. Radicalized at the universities and sensitized to the structural continuities with the Third Reich, the students began to perceive the FRG as a fascist state, not much better than the National Socialist state itself and organized in the SDS (Socialist Students Union of Germany) and APO (extra-parliamentary opposition). Against the then common theories of totalitarianism – advocated by the 'quasi-official guardians of the cultural imperatives of the Cold War' (Rabinbach 1988: 177) – the students' endorsement of the theory of antifascism can be seen as a reaction against this conservative consensus. Yet, this endorsement also functioned as a form of self-defence, as seen through the prism of their 'psychoanalytically informed antifascism' (Rabinbach 1988: 175), the students displaced the Nazi genocide of the Jews that Adenauer had recognized in the reparations treaty by stressing Nazism's authoritarianism and anticommunism and overemphasizing the continuities between fascism and capitalism.

Hence, Peter Schneider (cited in Schlant 1999: 84), a writer and member of the generation of 1968 retrospectively assesses: 'If National Socialism was the "conspiracy" of a couple of powerful industrialists, our parents, no matter what they had done, were the victims of the conspiracy.' Furthermore, as Siobhan Kattago

(2001: 44; Rabinbach 1988: 175) maintains in her study on *The Nazi Past and German National Identity*, the German New Left, which grew out of the student movement, not unlike the official anti-fascism in the GDR, ‘universalized National Socialism into fascism, thereby omitting the Holocaust as the defining moment of German fascism.’ This constituted what she calls ‘a second kind of repression’. By impregnating themselves with abstract theories of fascism, the students not only spared themselves the confrontation with their parents’ concrete actions during the Nazi period, but also to some extent reversed the trend which had become apparent in the Federal Republic’s dealing with the Nazi past in the early sixties, and decontextualized the Third Reich again (Jarausch 2006: 22; Schildt 2002: 130). Many members of the children’s generation, especially those who were politically active, identified with the victims of their parents. However, this (over-)identification often led to a strange reversal: while the students identified with the victims of the Holocaust and saw themselves as the victims of their parents’ entire generation, violently accusing and attacking it, they at the same time protected their parents by adhering to theories of fascism (Schlant 1999: 83).

1.2.3 The 1970s and the beginnings of the institutionalization of the memory of the Holocaust and National Socialism

The term *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* not only signifies the complex political and judicial processes of dealing with the consequences of the transition from the Nazi regime to democracy and thus to matters concerning restitution, justice, and re-integration, but also indicates a collective and individual ‘cross-generational political-ethical obligation’ to come to terms with the past (Reichel 2001: 21). Thus, it also implies a normative demand. With the growing distance from the past, the juridical dimensions of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* receded, while the educational and ethico-political aspects increasingly came to the fore. This became obvious, for example, in the political speeches that Social Democratic Chancellors Brandt (SPD, 1969-1974) and Schmidt (SPD, 1974-1982), as well as President Scheel (FDP, 1974-1979) held on days of commemoration, such as 8th May. The question of how younger Germans

were to deal with the past was a recurring theme in these speeches and although these politicians did not regard them as guilty, they acknowledged that younger generations still had a particular responsibility towards the past (see Olick 2007: 68-71).

During the 1970s, the victims of the Nazi genocide, especially Jewish victims, were increasingly officially and culturally acknowledged. Olick (1998, 2007) furthermore argues that this decade saw the growing institutionalization and ritualization of commemorative practice and public discourse about NS. The Holocaust gradually became, as Levy and Sznajder (2006:102; see also Olick 1998) assert, ‘an integral component of official German memory culture.’ Important here, above all, is Brandt’s – the first social democratic Chancellor of the FRG – hugely significant symbolic act of falling to his knees before the Warsaw Ghetto Memorial in December 1970. Subsequently, acts and days of commemoration, such as the 8th of May 1945 – increasingly commemorated as a day of liberation rather than defeat (Olick 2007: 55-85) – and 9th November 1938 (*Kristallnacht*), became more institutionalized and ritualized. Yet, while the historian Bill Niven (2002: 5; see also Levy & Sznajder 2006) attributes enormous importance to Brandt’s commemorative gesture, arguing that it ‘marked the beginning of a discourse that makes the ‘critical memory of Germany’s crimes a cornerstone of German national identity’ (cited in Fuchs 2004: 175), thus endorsing a progressive, redemptive narrative, the sociologist and historian Olick (1998: 551) injects a critical note when he adds that although this represented the beginnings of the FRG constituting itself as a ‘moral nation’, it also sowed the seeds of the current discourse of contrition (Wilds 2000) which ‘normalizes’ the past via ritualized commemoration.

Perhaps even more significant than Brandt’s genuflection was the broadcast of the American mini-series *Holocaust* in 1979 on West-German state television. It was watched by about 15 million people (Levy & Sznajder 2006: 117) and not only introduced the term Holocaust¹⁵ into the German vocabulary, but, as many argue

¹⁵ It is also interesting to note here that ‘Holocaust’ more or less coincided with the *Hitler-Welle* – a wave of cultural products that concentrated purely on the person Hitler (Caplan 2000: 151) and was subsequently ‘matched’ by a German answer to the series: in 1981 state-owned television broadcast a three-part television series, which detailed experiences of flight and expulsion (Moeller 2003: 164).

(Neiman 1992; Huyssen 1980; Landsberg 1997; Zielinski 1980), instigated Germans to empathize with the suffering of the victims of the Nazi genocide, thus provoking an emotional reaction hitherto not shown by the public in relation to this past.¹⁶ Levy and Sznajder (2006: 117), like Huyssen and Zielinski, argue that in its appeal to emotions and inviting viewers to identify with individual victims, the series had an enlightening effect and ‘played a big role in making the Holocaust central to debates about German identity’. With these and other political and cultural events and developments, a ‘Holocaust-centred memory regime’ (Langenbacher 2003: 14) became increasingly established and accepted. But it never became hegemonic, as some critics claim, because it was repeatedly challenged and contested, especially during the 1980s, leading to public scandals such as Helmut Kohl’s and President Reagan’s visit to the Bitburg military cemetery (1985) and the Historians’ debate (1986/87), to which I will now turn.

1.2.4 The ‘geistig-moralische Wende’ and the Historians’ Debate: A debate about ‘the Federal Republic’s self-understanding’¹⁷

The increasing readiness to acknowledge responsibility and commemorate the victims of the Nazis was not shared by conservatives, who ‘saw calls for a “mastering” of the past (*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*) as an insidious feature of New Left ideology . . . and sought to reformulate this term as a code word for German self-hatred, a condition that undermined a positive identity’ (Olick 2007: 69). So when, in 1982, the Christian Democrat Helmut Kohl was elected Chancellor, the return of a conservatism which championed a politics of memory that was eager to rehabilitate an untainted and more positive version of German ‘tradition, history and identity’ (Wilds 2000: 86) was programmed. This politics of memory was marked by a desire ‘to establish contemporary west German “normality” via a relativisation of the

¹⁶ Neiman (ibid.: 129) writes: ‘. . . the series had achieved something which years of more informed *Vergangenheitsverarbeitung* had not. . . . it unleashed a storm of emotional discussion among the populace at large. Amid all scholars’ scorn, Günther Anders praised the film precisely because it reduced the abstract fate of 6 million to the story of a particular family, enabling millions of Germans to shed tears, for the first time, for the people next door. . . . Maybe tearjerkers are needed in a land where rage is so easy, mourning so hard.’

¹⁷ Habermas (1989b: 250).

damaging legacy of the NS past’ and to broaden the perspective on German history (Wilds 2000: 87; see also Olick 1998). Eager to be fully integrated into the Western alliance as an equal partner, ‘Kohl pursued a symbolic rehabilitation of German identity and history that demanded from Western powers a gesture of forgiveness for the Nazi past – indeed, of forgetting it’ (Olick 2007: 71).

This strategy became particularly obvious during the Bitburg affair (1985) when Kohl and U.S. President Reagan visited the Bitburg military cemetery, where *Waffen-SS* members were buried alongside “ordinary” *Wehrmacht* soldiers, to perform a highly controversial act of reconciliation. In order to assuage critics, a visit to the former concentration camp Bergen-Belsen was hastily added to the itinerary to also acknowledge the suffering of the victims of Nazism. Hence this act of reconciliation aimed to universalize victimhood, while ‘normalizing’ national identity by turning Germany into a regular ally of the Americans. Although growing outrage in the U.S. and Germany turned the whole endeavour into a public relations disaster, Reagan (cited in Olick 2007: 73) did Kohl a huge favour when in defending his decision to visit Bitburg; he said that the ‘soldiers’ buried at the cemetery ‘were victims, just as surely as the victims in the concentration camps.’¹⁸

While Kohl tried to free politics from the constraints of the past at Bitburg, a number of historians attempted to liberate historiographical and public discourse from these very same constraints. In 1986, the left-liberal paradigm, represented by one of its most outspoken supporters, the philosopher and social theorist Jürgen Habermas, met head on with conservative historians in the public forums of the *feuilletons*. ‘[T]he central issue’ of the debate was ‘whether Nazi crimes were unique,’ and thus so radically evil that they could not be compared to any other historical atrocity in the past and as a consequence ‘irreparably burden[ed] any concept of German nationhood’, or whether they could be compared (to Stalin’s Gulags) (Maier 1988:

¹⁸ Thus Rabinbach (1988: 180) notes that this ‘commemorative incident’ revealed ‘that the Kohl government was the first to abandon the *singularity* postulate and to publicly relativize the Holocaust in relation to all other suffering inflicted by “the war”’.

1). If the former were the case, German national identity would be irredeemably tainted; if the latter were the case, it could become ‘normal’ again.

The Historians’ Debate was sparked by the publication of Andreas Hillgruber’s (1986) book *Zweierlei Untergang. Die Zerschlagung des deutschen Reiches und das Ende des europäischen Judentums*.¹⁹ While the ‘end of European Jewry’ was relegated to a short essay at the end of the book, in the bulk of it, Hillgruber recounted the *Wehrmacht*’s defense against the Red Army from the perspective of the latter and its soldiers. Furthermore, he ‘sought to justify the *Wehrmacht*’s bitter resistance against the advancing Soviet forces’ (Maier 1988: 19), without acknowledging that this also facilitated the continued mass murder in the concentration camps and on the death marches. In rejecting a distanced and moral view of NS and inviting identification with the *Wehrmacht* and its soldiers, ‘Hillgruber has pressed into service a flawed historicism . . .’ (Maier 1988: 25; Schmitz 2006a), and opened the door to an equation of Jewish and German victims (see Friedlander 1993). In June 1986, historian Ernst Nolte’s (1993) notorious article *Vergangenheit die nicht vergehen will*²⁰ appeared in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. There, he suggested that the Gulag Archipelago was “more original” than Auschwitz, for which it provided the precedent. No longer unique, Auschwitz becomes not only comparable to Stalinist communist terror, but is turned into a pre-emptive self-defense against what Nolte (1993: 22) calls the more original “‘Asiatic’ deed’.

Historicism was also the issue in a largely separate and less public debate between Saul Friedlander, survivor and eminent historian of the Holocaust, and Martin Broszat, then director of the Munich Institute for Contemporary History. While Broszat (1990), who is not to be counted among the above conservative historians, in his article of May 1985 entitled *Plädoyer für eine Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus*²¹ argued for the removal of the moral boundaries guarding

¹⁹ ‘Two sorts of demise: The shattering of the German Reich and the end of European Jewry’.

²⁰ ‘The Past that will not Pass: A Speech that could be written but not delivered.’

²¹ ‘A Plea for the Historicization of National Socialism’.

interpretations of NS, for the Third Reich to be embedded into the *longue durée* of the history of modernity and thus for treating this period like any other, Friedlander rebutted that this would amount to a careless neglect of the Holocaust as the core of NS. I devote so much attention to the Historians' Debate because it raises one of the central issues of the analysis of the empirical material in chapters 5 and 6: Hillgruber, Nolte and Broszat, like the majority of the interviewees are eager to remove the moral boundaries surrounding interpretations of the Holocaust – the limits of representation – and to open up the NS past to a plurality of narrative perspectives and interpretations. In a similar way to Broszat, who rejects moral questions determining historical research agendas in order to advocate an oral history-based approach to NS, called *Alltagsgeschichte*, which concentrates primarily on the everyday life of 'ordinary' Germans during the Third Reich, many interviewees do the same in order to rehabilitate their grandparents' perspective on NS.

In distinction to the conservative historians, for left-liberal historians and commentators, Auschwitz remained unique. Unlike the former, Habermas claimed that history could only be used as an educator and admonisher, and never for the purposes of *Sinnstiftung* [creation of meaning]. It must always be 'mediated by the self-critical reflection of indigenous national traditions and normative values' (Wilds 2000: 88-89). Habermas (1989b; see also Huyssen 1995a) thus charged the conservative historians and politicians with aiming to recover history and tradition as compensation for the insecurities and 'damages entailed by modernization' (Maier 1988: 44). While left-liberals sought to keep Germany's political identity separate from its pre-political cultural identity, conservatives sought to return to a continuous and heroic narrative of the nation's past cultural and historical achievements without having to acknowledge the Holocaust as unique. An ardent advocate of the Enlightenment and 'Kantian normative liberalism' (Maier 1988: 39), Habermas (1989c) was concerned about 'apologetic tendencies,' evident in this conservative turn in German historiography and politics. Rejecting Hillgruber's use of the hermeneutic method of *Verstehen* [empathy], Habermas rather stressed the importance of social, political and economic analysis, "'critical reflection" . . . [and] "reflective memory"' (Maier 1988: 43) during the debate. He (1989b, 1991)

continuously stressed that Auschwitz made any conventional German national identity, that took a continuous national history as its basis, impossible, and asserted that the only viable options left to post-Holocaust Germans were the adoption of a postnational identity and a ‘constitutional patriotism’ while ‘any proper coming to terms with the past (*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*) . . . was’ for Habermas, a member of the Hitler-Youth generation, as well as for many 68ers ‘predicated on the end of the German nation state’ (Huyssen 1995a: 68).

1.3 Unification and post-Wende challenges to the ‘mnemonic orthodoxies’: The rise of the ‘discourse of contrition’²²

While Habermas may have emerged victorious from this intellectual battle, his victory was a pyrrhic or at least an ambiguous one (LaCapra 1998: 71; see also Olick 2007: 53; Nolan 2001: 115). With the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the end of the Cold War, and German unification in 1990, the geopolitical constellation changed dramatically and not necessarily in favour of left-liberal leanings, as unification implied ‘the restoration of Germany as a nation’ (Kattago 2001: 117): no longer ‘a civic state-nation’ (Habermas 1991: 87) but a nation-state. Furthermore, the almost immediate discrediting of East German antifascism added a second past, that needed to be ‘worked through’, to the register. One consequence was the return of totalitarian theories or as Nolan (2001: 116; Moller 2003: 77) puts it, ‘neototalitarian comparisons’, especially in conservative circles. The traditional ideological positions and securities, particularly of the left but also the right – entailed in the two mnemonic orthodoxies, elucidated above – thus suddenly saw themselves becoming redundant, outwitted as they were by history.

Andreas Huyssen (1995a: 67) in his essay on ‘*German identities after unification*’ notes that the ‘anti-nationalist’ or postnationalist ‘consensus’ entailed in the left-liberal tradition of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* which had shaped much of the political culture and cultural memory of the FRG was challenged to the core, even

²² (Wilds 2000).

‘clearly delegitimised’ (Wilds 2000: 92) by the events of 1989/90. And although conservatives continued to pursue their customary memory politics, especially evident in their proposal of the *Neue Wache* as unified Germany’s central ‘memorial to all victims of war and tyranny’, thereby ‘neither [distinguishing] between dictatorships nor between perpetrator and victim’ (Kattago 2001: 129), they soon realized they had to change their tactics.

In addition to the debate about the *Neue Wache*, the 1990s witnessed a veritable eruption of events, debates and scandals relating to the NS past. Unlike ten years earlier at Bitburg, the commemorations of the 50th anniversary of the end of WWII in 1995 showed the world that Germany had become very well versed in a discourse of contrition (Wilds 2000) and a commemorative practice that had by now ‘solidified the ritualistic “normalcy”’ (Olick 2007: 79). Furthermore, there was the release of *Schindler’s List* (1994), the publication of Goldhagen’s hugely successful *Hitler’s Willing Executioners* (1996), the institution of ‘a National Day of Remembrance for the Victims of National Socialism on 27 January 1996’ (Wilds 2000: 94) – which has been commemorated Europe-wide as *Holocaust Memorial Day* since 2000 (Leggewie 2009) – the *Wehrmacht* exhibition (1995-98), the Walser-Bubis debate (1998), and the ten-year-long debate about the Memorial for the murdered Jews of Europe²³ to name but a few.

This eruption of the past into the present can, however, be seen as entailing a paradox or contradiction since, as many (Kansteiner 2006; Olick 2007; Wilds 2000) have observed, the mid-1990s also marked a ‘decisive turning point’ (Kansteiner 2006: 290-91), when German politicians, especially conservatives, came to the realization that their goal of ‘normalization’ was not well-served by silence about the Holocaust, nor indeed by inappropriate and offensive comparisons but was much

²³ Critics of the memorial often remarked that the memorial was less about the victims of the Holocaust and more about the Germans themselves (see Ball 2008a; Kattago 2001: 141), who in their appropriation of Jewish Holocaust memory managed to reinvent themselves as moral. Controversial from the outset, among other reasons because of its exclusive focus on Jewish victims, but later also because of its size and location in the middle of Berlin, it was initiated by a private initiative in 1988. One outspoken critic of the memorial, German-Jewish journalist and writer Henryk Broder, argued that its purpose was rather to clear the consciences of Germans and ‘to publicly display [to the world] their acceptance of history’ (Kattago 2001: 147; see also Ball 2008a).

better advanced by acknowledgements of responsibility and expressions of regret and contrition. In the geo-political climate of the post-Cold War world 'the Soviet empire could no longer lend legitimacy to Western democracies, and the West turned to its own shameful past as a source of self-validation' (Kansteiner 2006: 290-91). Within this new and increasingly global 'culture of self-incrimination and humanitarian intervention' (ibid.; see also Barkan 2000; Olick 2007) nations, rather than hiding their crimes and emphasizing their own suffering and heroism, 'now competed for the privilege to confess their crimes to the world' (ibid.). This new moral international politics provided Germans and their politicians with the opportunity to go beyond 'the polarised discourse over the German past' by integrating 'the critical consciousness of National Socialism . . . [as] a central tenet of contemporary formulations of national identity' (Wilds 2000 83).

Levy and Sznajder (2006: 83; see also Niven 2002) see in this development a move toward greater self-reflexivity, as the national narrative becomes de-heroized and skeptical. Kansteiner (2006) however remains unconvinced, detecting as he does in this an instrumentalization of the Holocaust for the validation of a more assertive German national identity, while Rensmann (2001) argues that one of the consequences of the institutionalization of the memory of the Holocaust is the return of socially and politically reactionary forces. Olick (1998) points out that ritualization constitutes a much more successful form of 'normalization', which has its roots in the 1970s.²⁴ Wilds (2000: 95) also notes that politicians like Germany's first Social Democratic chancellor Gerhard Schröder soon realized 'that the articulation of German "normality" is best served not by denying the crimes of the past but by displaying to the world German contrition and thereby regaining a domestic sense of collective self and enabling a more assertive international representation of national interests.' The institutionalization and regularization of the memory of the Holocaust in memorials, days of commemoration, a public Holocaust pedagogy and a more or less ritualized repetition of official statements of contrition

²⁴ Olick (1998: 553) distinguishes between two forms of 'normalizing' the past; firstly through ritualization and institutionalization, secondly 'normalization' through relativization. A prime example of the latter is the Historians' Debate.

and regret, allowed for a simultaneous expression of a more assertive, even proud national identity, based on a sense of moral obligation and mission that arose out of an acknowledgement of the NS past. This is best exemplified in the Red/Green coalition's (1998-2005) response to the Kosovo conflict. In this instance, Auschwitz was invoked not to argue against any German participation in the military intervention because of the horrors of the past, but the Holocaust was referred to precisely in order to legitimize the *Bundeswehr* participation in the NATO operation.

Interlude:

The exhibition '*War of Extermination: The German military in World War II 1941-1944*' (1995-1999): The 'ordinary' soldier as collaborator and perpetrator

As chapters 4 and 5 examine how the grandchildren I interviewed narrate their Nazi and war family histories, and how the *Wehrmacht* exhibition in showing 'ordinary' German soldiers as perpetrators and collaborators influenced family memory, the exhibition about the crimes of the *Wehrmacht* deserves extra attention here. However, before beginning to discuss the reception of the exhibition, I will first briefly elucidate the 'social history' of the myth of the 'clean' army, as it not only facilitated the re-integration of former soldiers into post-war social structures, especially the family, but was also functional and foundational to the new Federal Republic (Naumann 2000; Moeller 1998). In the course of West Germany's post-war history, the myth took on a variety of meanings. In the immediate postwar period, it was 'the ostensibly "apolitical and supra-political" role of the *Wehrmacht* . . . , its "clean" and chivalrous" way of waging war, and the secondary role it played (to Hitler) in decision-making' that the myth stressed 'in an effort to defend [the *Wehrmacht*'s] professionalism and elite standards,' (Naumann 2000: 418) thereby providing the basis for a thorough distinction between the war the *Wehrmacht* fought and the mass murders committed behind especially the Eastern front, by the SS, SD and the *Einsatzgruppen* (mobile killing squads). Within the context of an escalating Cold War, the myth emphasized the victimization of the 'ordinary' soldier by the Red Army and/or Hitler's regime as well as his distance to the Holocaust and massacres of other

civilian populations (ibid). The soldiers were seen as victims of the time, fatefully caught in a disastrous war, rather than in their actively destructive role as violent aggressor and occupier. Essentially, WWII was divided into two different and unrelated wars.

Apart from the few *Wehrmacht* generals indicted for war crimes at the Nuremberg trials, the rest of the army was soon after the war absolved from any responsibility and involvement in the Nazi genocide (Niven 2002: 146). Furnishing the institution *Wehrmacht* and its former members with a clean image was a precondition for German rearmament in 1955, based as the *Bundeswehr* was on a strong personnel and ideational continuity with the *Wehrmacht*. In the immediate post-war period returning soldiers were put on par with the rest of the civilian population, which was portrayed almost exclusively in its role as victim. In this way the myth relieved families from having to raise the issue of potential participation in war crimes and the Final Solution of returned husbands and fathers and enabled them to draw on common experiences of suffering. The myth remained unscathed by the social and cultural upheavals of the 1960s as well as by advancements in historical research on the Holocaust and the Second World War. Thus historian Geoff Eley (2000: 28) describes it as ‘perhaps the most obstinate of all the fictions blocking discussion of Germany’s responsibility after 1945.’

This changed with the arrival of the exhibition – curated and financed by the privately-run Hamburg Institute for Social Research – in Munich in 1997, where it was greeted by public uproar, instigated by members of the CSU regional government, who saw it as an attempt to dishonour the *Wehrmacht* and its soldiers. Yet, this only helped its popularity: between 1995-1998, ‘more than 550,000 visitors in . . . twenty-six cities in Germany and Austria’ saw the exhibition, making it ‘the contemporary history exhibition in the Federal Republic: the longest-lasting and the most-visited’ (Heer 1998b: 188). In claiming that the *Wehrmacht* as an organisation as well as many of its soldiers were directly and indirectly involved in the perpetration of the genocide of the Jews and war crimes against especially Russian POWs, the exhibition can be seen as part of a wider trend at the time that

drew attention to the willingness of ordinary Germans, soldiers, and policemen to actively participate in the persecution and murder of Jews and other minorities. Atina Grossmann (2000: 116) thus sees Daniel Goldhagen's book, to which I would add the exhibition, as part of a (brief) shift in German cultural memory towards looking at the perpetrators, and argues that '[t]his attention complemented, if it did not displace, a preceding and often romanticized fascination with *Opfer* (victims), especially Jews, [and] Jewish culture.' Like Goldhagen's book, which argued that the perpetration of the Holocaust involved the willing and active 'participation of hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of "ordinary" Germans' (Eley 2000: 5) and not only the Nazi elite, the *Wehrmacht* exhibition drew attention to the active and passive participation of 18 million *Wehrmacht* soldiers.

In stark contrast to the predominantly exculpatory family narratives of NS, the exhibition showed the gruesome and brutal everyday of this war – by drawing on three locations: the war against 'partisans'²⁵ in Serbia, the 6th army on its way to Stalingrad, and the occupation of Ukraine – thereby making the barbarous actions of the *Wehrmacht* and its soldiers shockingly visible. Furthermore, it exposed the 'Wehrmacht-run POW camps' as 'sites of mass-killing' (Niven: 2002: 145).²⁶ It also called into question the convenient distinction between SS, SA, the *Einsatzgruppen* and the army and showed how the *Wehrmacht* directly and indirectly assisted these Nazi paramilitary organizations in committing genocide, by supporting the SS, SD and mobile killing squads with the army's manpower and infrastructure. The *Wehrmacht* provided guards, personnel assisting in 'selections' and mass executions, as well as transport. In full knowledge of the intentions and consequences,

²⁵ The term 'partisan war' stood for the execution of civilian populations. 'In the general directive defining the "practice of wartime military Jurisdiction" in the "Barbarossa" [codename for the German invasion of Russia] area issued on the 13 May 1941, the civilian population was removed from the jurisdiction of the military courts and placed under the direct control of the ranks. Should civilians act as "guerrillas" exercising violence against German soldiers or installations, . . . , they were to be eliminated' (Heer 2000b: 100). It was under the banner of the "war against partisans" that massively exaggerated acts of reprisal and collective punishment against civilians were carried out.

²⁶ 'Of 5.7 million Soviet prisoners, 3.3 million died in *Wehrmacht*-run POW camps' (Niven 2002: 145).

Wehrmacht town commandants issued the proclamations, ordering Jewish residents to gather at certain points and times, often cordoning off ghettos or killing sites.²⁷

The exhibition made extensive use of private and official photographs (1,433) taken by soldiers and *Wehrmacht* propaganda units. It also included soldiers' diaries and letters. In using these images, it drew attention to the perspective and mentality of the photographer/bystander/perpetrator. Hundreds of images showing similar crimes were repeated over and over 'serv[ing] as evidence of widespread involvement in a murderous norm' (Niven 2002: 153). Sociologist and psychotherapist Gabriele Rosenthal (1998: 116; Hüppauf 1997) notes that the exhibition would not have had the same impact on its visitors had it not relied so extensively on these photographs. Unlike in Goldhagen's book (1996a) which invited readers to identify with the victims and repudiate 'the motives and choices that underlay the horrifying acts of the killers' (Caplan 2000: 161),²⁸ the exhibition, controversially, invited its visitors to take the perspective of the bystanding photographer, who 'comes to symbolize the position of those many German soldiers who observed crimes, or knew of them, yet did not protest' (Niven 2002: 154).

Like the mini-series *Holocaust*, Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners* was credited with facilitating empathy with the victims by engaging in 'repeated "thick" descriptions of the subjective experience of killing' (Caplan 2000: 161), which were aimed at inducing 'both negative and positive identifications' with the perpetrators and victims respectively 'on the part of the reader (ibid.). A visit to the *Wehrmacht* exhibition, on the other hand, was akin to scrolling through the grandparents' family

²⁷ '[C]ooperation between SS Kommandos and the 6th army was a routine matter. When towns with sizable Jewish communities were occupied, town and city commanders conferred with the SD Einsatzkommando. Proclamations produced by the propaganda company and issued by the town commander ordered the Jewish population to gather at a certain time. SS and police escorted the victims from the collection point to the murder sites' (Boll & Safrian 2000: 253). Before the most horrendous mass execution, perpetrated in the ravine of Babi Yar near Kiev, where 33,771 Jewish men, women and children were killed by police battalions, SS and the Sonderkommando 4a on 29th and 30th September 1941, this 'Aktion' was planned and discussed with the *Wehrmacht* town commandant (Niven 2002: 146; Boll & Safrian 2000: 254-255).

²⁸ Omer Bartov (2000: 55) makes a similar point when he writes that 'In demonizing the perpetrators, Goldhagen makes no attempt to understand them; his focus is on portraying them as sadistic murderers who enjoy their "work" of torturing and killing Jews . . . Goldhagen, for his part, calls forth sympathy, pity, and compassion for the victims, and anger and frustration vis-à-vis the killers.'

album, because the format of the images was that of the conventional private photographs of the time:

‘In this way, the photographs of the *Wehrmacht* exhibition symbolized the normality and similarity of those portrayed with the viewer *as well as* the inexcusable crime. The feeling of being torn between identification and rejection that emerged while looking at the images must have been disturbing and must have decisively influenced the reactions to the *Wehrmacht* exhibition’ (Mösken 2007: 244).²⁹

Thus, although similar to Goldhagen’s book, in drawing attention to ‘ordinary’ Germans as perpetrators, who had agency and choice, yet still committed such horrendous acts of cruelty, the exhibition did not allow for a total or radical differentiation between the viewer and the perpetrator and bystander. In doing so, it also unsettled identifications with innocent victimhood. Furthermore, since nearly every second German male at the time served in the *Wehrmacht*, the exhibition raised questions of collaboration and perpetration much more forcefully than Goldhagen, whose focus was primarily on the police battalions. It was thus much more successful in raising suspicions among family members about grand/fathers (Boll 1999: 181). Grossmann (2000: 124) asserts that, in debunking the myth of the ‘clean’ army, the exhibition ‘force[d] a confrontation [with the past] that Germans cannot divert by saying “But my family were not Nazis.”’

The exhibition is thus often credited with having ‘broke[n] the decades-long silence about the Eastern Front’ (Nolan 2001: 122) and having instigated dialogue between the generations which either led to a process of increased engagement with and disclosure of family histories by the younger generations, or to aggressive defensive reactions, such as justification, trivialization, and exculpation. While Niven (2002: 144), Rosenthal (1998) and Heer (2004) assess the exhibition’s impact as largely positive, Christian Schneider (2001) and Lars Rensmann (2001) are more cautious, even pessimistic, in their evaluations, concerned as they are about a coalition forming between the grandparents and their grandchildren against the moral demands of an

²⁹ My own translation.

institutionalized cultural and official memory of the Holocaust (see also Grossmann 2000: 127-128). Helmut Schmitz (2006a: 103) summarizes these concerns concisely when he writes that ‘despite its critical and controversial nature, the exhibition triggered communication between the generations’, thereby ‘engendering a process of reconciliation through empathy with the perpetrators.’ I will return to this issue of empathy between the generations in chapters 4 and 5.

Due to growing criticism about its emotionalism and one-sidedness (Nolan 2001), from right-wing and increasingly mainstream historians, newspapers and politicians, who raised doubts about the authenticity of some of the images, the exhibition was taken down in November 1999 and completely revised.³⁰ It began travelling again at the beginning of 2000. The second exhibition, however, refrained from the extensive use of (perpetrator) images and was largely built around text-based exhibits, discussing the question of the legality of the war in the East. Thus, it lacked the emotional impact of the first exhibition (Heer 2004; Nolan 2001). As a member of the generation of 1968 and former member of the SDS, military historian Hannes Heer, who conceptualized the first exhibition, stood for everything that the Federal Republic’s effort to come to terms with its Nazi past entailed and which was now, in the ‘Berlin Republic’, deemed obsolete, even counterproductive (Klotz *et al.* 2001: 161). Heer was accused of having ‘pursue[d] “a politics of guilt,”’ and the exhibition was said to have been characterized by ‘“the politics of history of the generation of 1968”’ (Medicus cited in Klotz 2001: 161).

It thus becomes apparent that the exhibition, although it had ‘profoundly positive effects’, also paradoxically led to strong, even aggressively defensive reactions; and in the way it found its end, heralded the renewed ‘disappearance of the perpetrators’ from cultural memory (Niven 2002: 144; Heer 2004).³¹ These reactions ‘to evidence

³⁰ Less than 20 of the 1,433 photographs were found not to show crimes committed by the *Wehrmacht*, but by the NKVD, the Soviet secret police (Bartov *et al.* 2000: 81).

³¹ Whereas the first exhibition was premised on the assumption of the illegality of the war in the East, driven as it was by racist and anti-Semitic Nazi ideology, its second instalment perceived only aspects of the war, as criminal. By doing so it reinstated a line dividing the ordinary soldier from the criminal Nazi organizations. Also, by taking down most of the disturbing images, the perpetrators literally disappeared again.

of complicity, however' show, as Jarausch and Geyer (2003: 9) argue, 'how difficult it [has] remained for Germans to encounter themselves in the past, prompting new strategies of distancing' and erasure. While German historians roundly dismissed Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners* as 'simply a bad book' (Jäckel 1996),³² younger Germans received it very positively. They did so because, in arguing that Germany was now free of any trace of what he called eliminationist anti-Semitism and had faced up to its genocidal past, it was now not only like every other Western democracy, but had become *the* model for other transitional democracies, 'Goldhagen had compiled a morally satisfying account of German guilt and redemption' (Caplan 2000: 159; see also Goldhagen 1996b, 1998). In this way, LaCapra (2001: 122) adds, Goldhagen may have made it easier for young Germans 'to dissociate themselves from the perpetrators of the past, [and] cathartically identify with the victims.' The *Wehrmacht* exhibition, on the other hand, did not lend itself as easily to such redemptive accounts because it made explicit a long and continuing culture of silence.

1.3.1 European integration and the transnationalization of the memory of WWII and the Holocaust

“The project of a united Europe will probably require the readjustment of historical narratives – and possibly the recasting of various collective memories from East to West”³³

Leggewie and Meyer (2005: 44) observe that 'parallel to unification a process, which one could call the "globalisation of the Holocaust" occurred.'³⁴ So while Germans were mired in discussions about the particular responsibility of 'ordinary' Germans, increasingly concerted political and cultural efforts to use the memory of the Holocaust as a (negative) founding myth for a (still lacking) cultural identity of a united Europe were undertaken (Diner 2003; Dubiel 2003; Probst 2003, 2006: 70;

³² They did so, mainly because Goldhagen used a very emotionally tinged language to describe in graphic detail horrendous scenes of mass murder. In doing so, he did not subscribe to the objective and distanced approach that historians are usually proud to uphold (see Ball 2008a).

³³ Jan-Werner Müller quoted in Assmann (2007b: 11).

³⁴ My own translation: 'Parallel [zur Wiedervereinigung] vollzog sich ein Prozess, den man "Globalisierung des Holocaust" nennen könnte.'

Leggewie 2009). The European Holocaust Conference of 2000 in Stockholm is testament to such efforts by state politicians to construct and institutionalize the Holocaust as a transnational or cosmopolitan memory both on the pan-European as well as on respective national levels. At this forum, 22 heads of state decided on ‘a common framework for commemorating and teaching the Holocaust’ (Assmann 2007b: 13). Thus, 27th January, the day Auschwitz was liberated, was instituted as ‘the first (official) European commemoration of the third millennium’ (Levy & Sznajder 2002: 102). Furthermore, as Levy and Sznajder (2002, 2006) argue, the Holocaust has, in the wake of the end of the Cold War, become increasingly institutionalized as a moral basis of an international or global politics of human rights.³⁵ It serves as an analogy in efforts to legitimate military and humanitarian interventions against human rights abuses and genocides around the world, for example during the Kosovo conflict, because it is thought to entail a universal moral lesson.

Unified Germany, which was engaged in ‘find[ing] a new political and cultural place in Europe’ (Levy & Sznajder 2002: 97) during the 1990s, performed a double movement, in which the Holocaust was made both an integral part of its national identity and history, while it was at the same time displaced by positing it as a European historical catastrophe. Or, as the historian Wulf Kansteiner (2006: 326) puts it: ‘the dictum of the Holocaust’s uniqueness was only fully accepted by German politicians when it was recast as a common European legacy that no longer set Germany aside from its European partners and former victims.’ He argues that the move to render the memory of the Holocaust an integral part of German national identity was accompanied by projecting the lessons to be learnt from this historical catastrophe onto the European plane, on which ‘the Germans were the model students of history in a large collective of anti-Nazis’ (Kansteiner 2006 262). In this context the Germans, no longer a pariah nation, have become not only ‘memory partner[s]’ but also ‘occasionally memory tutor[s]’ in and of the new Europe

³⁵ They (2006b: 293) write that ‘The ultimate justification for Human Rights, thus, is neither human nature, nor some Enlightenment optimism in the rationality of mankind, but memories of catastrophe and trauma.’

(Kansteiner 2006: 278). *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* has become *the* model for dealing with criminal pasts around the world (Olick 2005: 338-39).

Recasting the Holocaust as a European catastrophe fosters a view of Europe as the aggressor against the Jews, and thus of everyone as guilty. It also facilitates the universalization of the category of victimhood, as Levy and Sznajder (2006: 202) point out. The increasing universalization of the Holocaust that occurs as part of its appropriation by European heads of state and leaders around the world has thus provided German politicians, as well as Germans more generally with the opportunity to ‘forget’ their roles as perpetrators and collaborators, raised so forcefully by the *Wehrmacht* exhibition and during the 1990s, and to return to memories of German wartime suffering instead. I will return to this in the following section.

Levy and Sznajder (2005: 6) argue that a European memory of the Holocaust is about the future, not the past, and not about Jews and Germans but ‘about human beings and the brutal and most extreme violation of their human rights.’ The Holocaust, thus dislocated from space and time – de-contextualized and de-historicized – has shifted from being an atrocity that involved Germans as perpetrators and Jews as victims, to an atrocity of which everyone could potentially be a victim. Yet, this account underestimates the extent to which the Holocaust does not become a common memory, but rather serves as ‘the paradigm or template through which other genocides and historical traumas are very often perceived and presented’ (Assmann 2007b: 14). Meyer and Leggewie (2005: 332), much less optimistic than Levy and Sznajder, thus argue that the Holocaust is still far from constituting a common transnational European memory, because the national histories of individual European countries are still too strong. Also, although Levy and Sznajder acknowledge that the cultural globalization of the Holocaust can ‘result[ing] in its inscription into other acts of injustice and traumatic national memories across the globe’, they do not pay enough attention to how this can serve a re-nationalization of collective memory. Chapter 5 thus analyzes how Holocaust tropes have found their way into the interviewees’ family narratives of NS and are used to emphasize the

grandparents' wartime suffering. In contrast to Levy and Sznajder I am thus more skeptical about the effects of the Europeanization and globalization of the Holocaust.

1.4 Conclusion: The post-Wende (re-)emergence of memories of German wartime suffering and victimhood

'[T]he institutionalisation of the memory of the Holocaust at the heart of contemporary German historical identity' (Schmitz 2007b: 4) and increasingly at the heart of a European cultural identity are accompanied by a roughly concurrently occurring 'almost antithetical[ly]' (ibid.) development, namely the return of memories of German victimhood. Although never completely vanished, the victim discourse returned with a vengeance in the late 1990s. Importantly, it posited that the generation of 1968 had instituted a long taboo on the articulation of memories of wartime suffering and on empathizing with the grand/parents.

At the 50th anniversary of the end of WWII in 1995, it also became discernable that the German Left was (re-)discovering memories of wartime suffering – further evidence of the demise of the mnemonic orthodoxies of the FRG – when Antje Vollmer, then party leader of the Green Party, condemned the expulsions and 'pronounc[ed] a very public *mea culpa* on behalf of the 1968 generation for having ignored the plight of the expellees . . . ' (von Oppen & Wolff 2006: 204-205). While since the late 1960s efforts to rehabilitate Germans' experiences of wartime suffering had increasingly been rejected as attempts to relativize the Holocaust, this has changed since 1989 and especially since the Kosovo crisis. At the time, Kosovar refugees were not only 'compared to Jews, but they were also victims, like Germans being expelled from the homeland' (Levy & Sznajder 2005: 7). This meant that, finally, 'Germans could join the universal brotherhood of victims through the prism of "ethnic cleansing"' (ibid.).

During the first decade of the new millennium, debates about the expulsions erupted with the head of the *Bund der Vertriebenen* (League of Expellees) Erika Steinbach's

(CDU), and Peter Glotz's (SPD) efforts to build a 'Centre against Expulsion'³⁶ in Berlin. These attempts coincided with the final stages of the construction of the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin, which was opened to the public on 12th May 2005 and show that the Germans as victims discourse often sees itself in competition with the memory of the Holocaust. This shift towards memories of German victimhood was also detectable on the cultural level: Günter Grass (2002) published his book *Im Krebsgang* [*Crabwalk*] and W.G. Sebald (2001) his *Luftkrieg und Literatur* [*Air War and Literature*], both of which were credited with breaking the 'taboo' on German wartime suffering. The publication of Jörg Friedrich's (2002) controversial book *Der Brand* [*The Fire*], which draws on highly recognizable Holocaust terminology, such as 'Einsatzgruppen', 'Zivilisationsbruch' [rupture in civilization] and 'Gaskeller' [gas chamber] (cited in Heer 2004: 293) to describe in graphic detail the Allied bombings of German cities, further invigorated the debate.

In addition, the cultural sphere was inundated with auto/biographies, television documentaries, films and talk shows in which the personal experiences of contemporary witnesses were the central issue. A sheer countless number of auto/biographies and fictional memoirs written by grand/children of *Wehrmacht* soldiers, Nazi perpetrators and followers, dealing with their family histories and the lives of their grand/parents swamped the book market.³⁷ Levy and Sznajder (2006: 133) see this migration of 'private forms of remembrance', such as memoirs, autobiographies, and testimonies, into the public space as part of the process of changing memory cultures in high modernity, when collective memory becomes individualized and denationalized. In contrast to 1968 when, as we have seen above, the students politicized their family past and largely viewed their parents, especially their fathers, as fascists, we now seem to be witnessing the privatization of the

³⁶ Leggewie and Meyer (2005: 323) see Steinbach's demands for symbolic and material recognition and restitution as a paradoxical and unintended consequence of the debate about the Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe. 'The main aim of the *Vertriebenen-Bund* is the creation of the mirror image of the Holocaust memorial by erecting a Centre against Expulsion, which is primarily dedicated to German victims and also to be located in Berlin' (ibid.).

³⁷ Uwe Timm (2003) *Am Beispiel meines Bruders*, Reinhard Jirgl (2003) *Die Unvollendeten*, Stephan Wackwitz (2003) *Ein Unsichtbares Land: Ein Familienroman*, Dagmar Leupold (2004) *Nach den Kriegen*, Stephan Wackwitz (2004) *In den Augen meines Großvaters*, Monika Maron (1999) *Pawel's Briefe*, Karen Himmler (2006) *Die Brüder Himmler*, Alexandra Senft (2007) *Schweigen tut weh*, Ulla Hahn (2003) *Unscharfe Bilder*, Tanja Dückers *Himmelskörper* to name but a few.

political, as Claus Leggewie and Erik Meyer (2005: 317) assert: ‘The political has here become private – like the swing of the pendulum of the 1960s and 1970s, when the private was declared the political.’³⁸ However, as I will argue below, this ‘privatization’ of memory in personal but nevertheless public narratives of suffering is anything but apolitical and thus cannot be regarded, as Levy and Sznajder do, as purely positive.

Ruth Wittlinger (2006b: 205) points out that the re-emergence of memories of German wartime suffering is novel insofar as it does not restrict victimhood to the family but ‘has entered mainstream’. It seems that the increasing political institutionalization of the memory of the Holocaust is attended by a growing pluralization of cultural narratives of the past. This in turn might be related to the growing convergence between history and memory since the 1980s, instigated by the successes of oral history, *Alltagsgeschichte* as well as the concomitant ‘general valorization of memories and oral transmission’ (Assmann 2006: 47).³⁹ Furthermore, in the postcolonial and posttraumatic situation the history of ‘hard facts’ (Schmitz 2007b: 5) is seen as having reached its limits, beyond which memory – above all, in the genre of ‘the subjective testimony’ of the witness – remains the only access to the past (ibid.).

In their examinations of unified Germany’s cultural memory, Wittlinger (2006b: 201) and Schmitz (2007b) thus argue that a new consensus has been achieved: while Germany’s responsibility is institutionalized and Europeanized, German wartime suffering is increasingly recognized both on national and European levels. Wittlinger in particular argues that the interlude of the mid-1990s, when cultural memory was concerned mainly with questions and representations of collaboration and perpetration, was very short-lived and was soon *replaced* or *displaced* by a focus on German wartime suffering. She (2006b: 210; see also Heer 2004) maintains that the perpetrators become ‘increasingly conspicuous by their absence’, and now mainly

³⁸ My own translation: ‘Das Politische ist hier privat geworden – wie ein Pendelschlag der 1960er Jahre und 1970er Jahre, als das Private für Politisch erklärt wurde.’

³⁹ My own translation: ‘grundsätzlichen Aufwertung von Erinnerungen und mündlicher Tradierung’.

appear in their role as victims. She is thus extremely skeptical about ‘how much the new consensus actually encompasses in terms of responsibility and guilt.’ She views the latter as primarily limited to ‘politically correct expressions of “culpability” in political leaders’ speeches and the construction and maintenance of memorial sites without having much presence in individuals’ historical consciousness.’

In direct contrast to Wittlinger’s pessimistic assessment of the new consensus, which I to a large extent share, A. Assmann (2006b) and Levy and Sznaider (see also Niven 2006: 20; Fuchs & Cosgrove 2006a, 2006b) assert that memories of guilt can be synthesized with those of suffering. Assmann (2006: 197-198) suggests a hierarchization of memories in order to facilitate the integration of ‘divergent and even contradictory memories into a generally acceptable framework.’ According to her (2006b: 198), the memory of the Holocaust provides ‘the normative framework into which all the other memories have to be integrated.’ She (ibid.) goes on to write that ‘as long as this framework remains in place, the diverse memories of suffering, guilt, and resistance can co-exist side by side without necessarily cancelling each other out.’ Similarly, Fuchs and Cosgrove (2006: 17) argue that ‘as long as the new pluralism is accompanied by a healthy critical response, this is a sign of the fruits of the pedagogy of remembrance that has informed unified Germany’s public discourse since the early 1990s.’ Furthermore, Levy and Sznaider (2005: 1) see memories of crimes and suffering as being entangled when they criticize ‘[m]ost interpretations of the destruction of European Jewry and the expulsion of ethnic Germans from Poland and Czechoslovakia and their corresponding memory cultures’ for ‘treat[ing] these memories as mutually exclusive manifestations of competing perceptions of national self understanding.’ Rather, they (ibid.) ‘suggest that memories of both the Holocaust and expulsions are entwined.’ These authors are thus of the opinion that the memory of German suffering can (harmoniously) co-exist with the memory of the Holocaust, without challenging, perhaps even displacing the latter. They argue that the institutionalization of the Holocaust memory and ‘historical responsibility of German perpetration’ (Schmitz 2007b: 13) provides safeguards and limits against revisionism and contestation.

These scholars, however, regard the return of memories of wartime suffering in the form of autobiographical and personal narratives of suffering in memoirs, films and documentaries, as apolitical and purely cultural and/or therapeutic. Aleida Assmann (2003: 138; Niven 2006: 8, 20), for example, argues that now that these memories have become detached from any political claims and consigned to the public, the German legacy of suffering can rightfully claim its space in cultural memory without displacing the Holocaust. I, however, argue that the cultural articulation of traumatic memories, even if they are expressed in personal narratives, nevertheless always remain political as ‘through their telling and retelling’ they “enter the vocabulary of the larger culture where they become tools for the construction of national myths” (Tal cited in Radstone 2005: 142).

Less optimistic scholars (Heer 2004; Langenbacher 2003; Salzborn 2003; Schmitz 2006a, 2007b; Seidel-Arpaci 2005: 26; Welzer 2003a, 2003c; Wittlinger 2006b) are thus much more skeptical, anxious as they are about personal and family memories of National Socialism, challenging and contesting official and cultural memory of the Holocaust. Helmut Schmitz (2007b: 2), for example, regards the ‘recent surge in representations of German suffering’ as ‘the greatest shift in German memory discourse since 1979’ – the year the television series *Holocaust* was broadcast on German television. Laurel Cohen-Pfister (2005: 125) argues that this resurgence of memories of German wartime suffering constitutes ‘a break with official cultural memory of the Federal Republic and its generally sensitive reflection on the Holocaust.’ Welzer *et al.* (2002) in their study ‘*The Holocaust and National Socialism in Family Memory*’ show that, while the Holocaust is almost completely absent from the latter, it is particularly the memory of wartime suffering that is cultivated within the family. With these memories becoming increasingly inscribed into cultural memory, Welzer (2003a) is concerned about an impending transition ‘from a perpetrator to a victim community’. In a similar vein, Heer (2004: 8, 248) speaks of a ‘reversal in the politics of history,’ and a return to the 1950s, when personal memories of wartime suffering shaped cultural memory of NS.

Schmitz (2006a: 105-106) writes that '[i]t is . . . possible to describe the current mass representation of German suffering as a form of "belated" or displaced collective empathy in which the children and grandchildren of the "perpetrator collective" empathize with their suffering ancestors'. He (ibid.) regards as '[t]he turning point . . . the issue guilt', since '[w]ith the institutionalisation of the memory of the Holocaust as a national responsibility and the shift from second to third post-war generation, the question of guilt and repression that determined so much of German memory discourse is no longer central to the historical imaginary.' This, in conjunction with increasing 'historical distance', has 'open[ed] up the potential for empathizing with the "German experience"'. Chapter 4 thus looks at how the interviewees narrate their NS family histories to find that these narratives are in most cases not recounted in the mode of critical distance, but in an empathetic mode that tells the story from the grandparents', i.e. the war and perpetrator generations', perspective. Chapter 5 examines the consequences this shift entails in terms of the content of narrative family memory of NS, to find that it implies that most interviewees consider their grandparents almost exclusively in their role as traumatized victims and/or heroes of an everyday 'resistance' against Nazism, while they often completely neglect their grandparents' political and active roles during the Third Reich.

Chapter 6 can be understood as a bridge between the first two empirical chapters on family memory and the last two on cultural memory and (national) identity. It returns to the questions raised in this section to explore how the interviewees relate their family narratives to what they learnt about NS and the Holocaust at school and elsewhere. Due to the at times outright rejection of the latter in their wishes to historicize the Holocaust in conjunction with the generally uncritical re-telling and valorization of the grandparents' past suffering, I here side with those scholars, who are more skeptical about the recent turn to memories of German victimhood. Chapters 7 and 8 continue to think about the historicization of the Holocaust and its limits: while chapter 7 looks at the various ways in which the majority of the interviewees 'normalize' the NS past – either through relativization or regularization – and with it German national identity, chapter 8 analyzes a number of interviewees'

experiences of shame as disruptions to such ‘normalizing’ efforts. As such the final chapter also functions as an empirical conclusion, as it shows how the NS past cannot be disposed of in ‘normalizing’ efforts. In the following chapter, I will provide the theoretical background that informs my argument against a wholesale historicization of the Holocaust and ‘normalization’ of German national identity.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Between memory and forgetting: The ‘seething presence’ of the past⁴⁰

‘It is the third generation in particular which reflects one of the contradictions of German society, the “constant seesaw between learning and forgetting”.’⁴¹

2.1 Introduction

‘The signs are contradictory and confusing’, writes Atina Grossmann (2000: 127) in her appraisal of the enthusiastic reception of Daniel Goldhagen’s (1996a) book *Hitler’s Willing Executioners* among young Germans. If they were confusing in the mid-1990s, they are even more confusing in the new millennium: on the one hand, there are those for whom the Holocaust remains a pivotal part of German cultural memory while, on the other hand, there is a growing number of young Germans, who are increasingly resentful towards an institutionalized and ritualized memory of the Holocaust and keen to rehabilitate their grandparents’ personal memories of NS. In the light of studies, such as Harald Welzer *et al.*’s (2002) which found that the grandchildren are primarily interested in their grandparents’ personal experience of wartime suffering, rather than their active participation in the NS regime and its crimes, one is now, it seems, forced to reassess the perhaps overly positive assessments of the ‘third generation’ which circulated at the time Goldhagen’s book was published and which optimistically argued that its members ‘want[s] to confront what their parents did not want to look at’ (Körner 2000: 69).

Although there are several exceptions, the interviews I conducted with ‘third generation’ Germans suggest the need for a broader reassessment of the way in which

⁴⁰ Gordon (1997: 17).

⁴¹ Lars Rensmann (1999: 74).

this generation remembers NS and the Holocaust. They furthermore imply that the cultural memory of the Holocaust and NS still provokes strong – albeit increasingly negative – emotional reactions in the interviewees. This in turn draws attention to the limits of purely constructivist (and cognitivist) notions of memory, which dominate social memory studies and the sociology of memory. In addition, many of these reactions demonstrate the insufficiency of views like those of sociologists Levy and Sznajder (2006) – shared by many interviewees – which argue that, in integrating the Holocaust into its official and cultural memory, Germany and Germans have now finally worked through their ‘unmasterable past’ (Maier 1988) and have become ‘normal’ again. In contrast to the widespread endorsement of this perspective, also within academia, I will argue that the Nazi past needs to be worked through and cannot be shoved aside in ‘normalizing’ or otherwise comforting and redemptive narratives of Germany’s triumphant return into the heart of the family of enlightened nations, because it will return to haunt.

The interviewee Julia for example, vehemently champions such a view of Germany as ‘normal’ and NS as history. Yet, the limits and contradictions of her perspective become audible in the way she chooses to open the interview: ‘It [NS] is a topic that still haunts/persecutes⁴² [*verfolgen*] us’. This remark and her agitation and resentment towards the way the Holocaust is officially and culturally remembered speaks a very different language, namely that of unintegrated affect in the form of unacknowledged shame, which has morphed into resentment and anger (Retzinger 1996). Thus I assert that the studies about the grandchildren of Nazi perpetrators and followers (Leonhard 2002a, 2002b; Kohlstruck 1997; Schneider, Co. 2004; Welzer *et al.* 2002) which draw on social theories of memory miss a vital aspect of how this generation remembers the NS past, when they only look at how its members construct it in narrative.

I will begin by critically examining theories of collective, cultural and social memory, which leave little to no room for considerations of the presence of the past beyond current constructions of it. I will then proceed to discuss the literary genre and

⁴² *Verfolgen* can mean both to haunt and to persecute.

historical methodology of traumatic realism as a mode of apprehending and representing memory, which allows us to take account of the presence of the past beyond its immediately visible and knowable manifestations. I will subsequently examine the theoretical tradition that has grown out of social-psychological concerns about how to affectively work through the Nazi past, as evident for example in the work of the four intellectual heavyweights of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, Theodor W. Adorno ([1959] 1986), Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich ([1967] 1975) and Jürgen Habermas (1989a, 1989b, 1989c). With Dominick LaCapra (1994, 1998, 2001) and Eric Santner (1990, 1992) I will, however, argue for a less rigid and more fluid distinction between mourning and melancholia, than is apparent in Adorno, the Mitscherlichs and Habermas' work, in order to reconfigure the concept of working-through.

In following LaCapra and Santner, I can take account of what they assert to be the two interrelated dimensions that working-through in 'the double "post" of the postmodern and the post-Holocaust' (Santner 1990: 18) entails, namely taking leave of the idea of identities as stable, essential and unfractured, i.e. structural trauma, as well as the recognition and mourning of the suffering caused by the Nazis, *Wehrmacht* soldiers and countless ordinary Germans, i.e. historical trauma. While both dimensions are equally important and, to some extent, interrelated, I think the former has receded into the background since unification, thus putting into question endeavours like *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, which have degraded into efforts to be redeemed in and through the ritualization and institutionalization of the memory of the Holocaust and thereby become 'normal' again. In the final discussion of shame, I argue that especially individual efforts at *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* can only be 'successful' if working-through structural trauma is part of the process and it is accepted that the past cannot be fully *bewältigt* [overcome].

2.2 *The limits of social memory studies*

Although written from within the discipline of sociology, this thesis – like memory⁴³ and Holocaust studies – is an interdisciplinary undertaking, also drawing on sources and debates that lie clearly beyond traditional sociological competence in the fields of cultural and literary theory, history and psychoanalysis. These forays into other disciplines have come to inform a more critical relationship to my home discipline's rather reductive ideas of memory. Much, perhaps too much, has been written about memory of late, that assumes rather than defines and problematizes the term. Yet, this remains important, inspite of the exponential, even 'metastatic growth' (Olick 2008: 26) of academic literature about memory, because what memory connotes still largely remains dependent on disciplinary and theoretical affiliations.

With the help of Susannah Radstone (2005: 136-37; see also Till 2006), we can identify two different – albeit increasingly interrelated – strands of theory. On the one hand, there are the more sociological and anthropological studies, which concentrate on the social construction of collective and individual memory in discourse and practice (J. Assmann 1995, 1999; Connerton 1989; Edwards & Middleton 1990a, 1990b; Fentress & Wickham 1992; Halbwachs [1925] 1992; Misztal 2003; Narvaez 2006; Nora 1989; Olick & Robbins 1998; Olick 2007; Jedlowski 2001; Welzer 2001). On the other hand, studies undertaken in literary studies (Rothberg 2000), cultural studies (Bal 1999; Hirsch 2008; Santner 1990), philosophy (Lyotard 1990) and history (Friedlander 1993; LaCapra 2001, 1998, 1994) often apply 'terms associated with personal memory to domains beyond the personal' (Radstone 2005: 137), particularly psychoanalytic notions like trauma,

⁴³ There is some disagreement as to whether memory studies already qualifies as an interdisciplinary field, with its own canon, 'systematic methodologies and unique theoretical perspectives' (Hoskins et al. 2008: 6). While Olick (2008) and Roediger and Wertsch (2008) are reluctant to describe it as such, still preferring the term multidisciplinary, Karen E. Till (2006: 326) identifies memory studies as having 'emerged as an interdisciplinary field in its own right' in the past decade. In any case, the publication of the first issue of the journal *Memory Studies* (January 2008), specialist degree programmes and conferences seem to point the way into the direction of it becoming an interdisciplinary field in its own right. In the light of this, Radstone (2008: 36) is already concerned with the 'hardening orthodoxies' of memory studies, by which she means writings on trauma and testimony and their tendency to privatize memory. Thus, she (2008: 35) suggests that 'memory research might currently be most productively practiced within the disciplines from which media and cultural studies borrow, rather than within the transdisciplinary space of 'memory studies.'

mourning and working-through, to investigate what these theories argue is a very complicated relationship between an (extreme) event, its experience and its representation (Till 2006: 331).

The first strand – which Olick and Robbins (1998) call ‘social memory studies’ – conceives of memory as an inherently social phenomenon. This is particularly evident in the theory of collective memory of one of its founding fathers, the Durkheimian sociologist Maurice Halbwachs. In critique of Sigmund Freud’s and Henri Bergson’s purely psychological notions of memory as individual mental capacity to retrieve the past, Halbwachs’ notoriously vague notion of collective memory ‘lay[s] to rest the idea of an inner memory’ (Niethammer 2000: 77) by rendering autobiographical memory dependent on the ‘frameworks of collective memory’. He ([1925] 1992: 182) claims that ‘[t]he individual calls recollections to mind by relying on the frameworks of social memory.’ Personal memories can only survive if they are articulated within socially recognizable terms and conventions of the group(s) the individual belongs to, otherwise they are lost. This presentist view of memory was recently reiterated by cultural psychologist Kenneth Gergen (1994: 90): ‘for whatever the past might have been, its present rendering must be poured into the mold set by the cultural rules of narrative.’ This implies that, for Halbwachs and his followers – among them Welzer *et al.* (2002), the authors of the influential study on ‘German’ family memory, entitled *Grandpa wasn’t a Nazi* – the past does not exist beyond present interpretations and constructions of it.

Halbwachs’ ideas greatly influenced the sociology of memory and extended into cultural psychology (Edwards & Middleton 1990a), with many psychologists (Bruner 1991, 2004; Fivush & Haden 2003; Gergen 1994; Neisser 1994; Shotter 1990) now endorsing the view of memory as social rather than individual. For Edwards and Middleton (1990b: 10-11), both psychologists, memory is constructed in casual social practices, such as ‘ordinary conversation’. They (*ibid.*) claim that ‘[r]emembering and forgetting are to be taken as activities that are embodied and constituted within the pragmatics of ordinary social and communicative practices’. Discourse, especially narrative, are here seen as ‘crucial in binding an individual into

culture – and, in doing so, it [narrative] simultaneously re-creates culture . . . in what traditionally is viewed as the *individual* mind’ (Brockmeier 2002a: 11, 2002b). Cultural psychology thus however, fosters a notion of the individual as an effect of ‘conventionalisation and acculturation’ (Papoulias 2003: 121), i.e. as more or less wholly determined by culture.

In their study entitled *Social Memory*, anthropologist James Fentress and historian Chris Wickham (1992) similarly focus on the practice of memory in the (ritual) oral transmission of narrative, myth and legend and how these practices construct community identity. Paul Connerton (1989), whose focus is less on narrative and discourse (i.e. representation) than on commemorative performance and bodily habit, seeks to lend more specificity to Halbwachs’ general theory in his influential work *How Societies Remember*. There, he goes beyond Halbwachs’ focus on collective representations, to look at how individuals *embody* collective memory through commemorative ceremonies, rituals and bodily practices – i.e. through what he calls habit memory. Jan Assmann’s (1995: 127) notion of communicative memory,⁴⁴ as we have seen in chapter 1, derives from Halbwachs’ idea of collective memory and asserts that, through everyday communication, ‘each individual composes a memory which . . . is (a) socially mediated, and (b) relates to a group.’ Assmann’s notion of cultural memory, on the other hand, is broad enough to include both representational and performative aspects of how societies shape their relation to their past.

While Halbwachs’ idea of collective memory, however, ‘render[s] the individual a sort of automaton, passively obeying the interiorised collective will’ (Fentress & Wickham 1992: vii; Gedi & Elam 1996), notions like social and cultural memory, which often try to avoid Halbwachs’ presentism, nevertheless tend to drown the individual in language-like structures.⁴⁵ There is little room for considerations of

⁴⁴ Welzer *et al.* (2002: 19-20) endorse this notion to argue that family memory consists less in the content of stories transmitted, than in their ritual repetition, through which the family (re-)affirms its coherence and identity.

⁴⁵ Consider, for example, Fentress and Wickham’s (1992: 7) statement that ‘[i]n and of itself, then, memory is simply subjective. At the same time, however, memory is structured by language, by teaching and observing, by collectively held ideas, and by experiences shared with others.’ Or the cultural psychologist Brockmeier’s (2002b: 18) idea of cultural memory as ‘a connective structure that organizes a considerable body of thought and knowledge, beliefs and concepts,’ thereby linking it to notions such as Bourdieu’s ‘habitus’, or Foucault’s ‘episteme.’ Klein (2000: 130-31) in his widely

change and transformation other than the ‘creative reinterpretation’ (Papoulias 2003: 124) or (re-)citation of the already given. In much of cultural psychology and the sociology of memory, individual subjectivity is evacuated, replaced as it is by narrative structure and/or other (communicative) social practices. In her defence of psychoanalysis against social theories of memory, Constantina Papoulias (2003: 114-115) thus argues that the concept of social memory ‘suppress[es] and neutralis[es]’ ‘the more radical psychoanalytic accounts of subjectivity’. This is the case, as social or collective memory is seen to exist only ‘*between* subjects and not *within* them’ (Welzer 2008: 5); ‘it emerges as a site of intersubjectivity’ (Papoulias 2003: 117), neither purely individual nor purely collective.

It is, however, not so much the location of memory in the (social) space of intersubjectivity that I take issue with, but rather the fact that these social theories of memory leave no room for considerations of forms of mediation and transmission of memories that occur beyond the symbolic. A host of scholars has also found this view of memory wanting, unable as it is to take account of what happens when memory fails or cannot be articulated, is denied and repressed or deliberately silenced. In an effort to think about such failures of memory, especially in the wake of the Holocaust and other extreme atrocities, many have turned to psychoanalysis to theorize the workings of individual and collective memory at and beyond the limits of what can be represented.

It is in this area that literary critic Cathy Caruth’s (1995, 1996) and others’ (Felman 1995, Laub 1995) notion of trauma as an overwhelming ‘experience that is not fully owned’ (Caruth 1995: 151) and cannot be represented, unfolded its now increasingly contested influence on memory studies (see Ball 2000, 2008a; Kansteiner 2004a; Mandel 2006; Leys 2000; Radstone 2005, 2007; Weigel 1999, 2003). Yet although contested, the notion of trauma provided memory studies with the theoretical framework to think about ‘gaps in the transmission of memory’ (Till 2006: 331) by

cited piece ‘On the emergence of *memory* in historical discourse’ thus notes that often conceptions that consider memory as inherently social end up ‘mak[ing] memory a structural rather than individual phenomenon.’

putting forth the idea that traumatic memories remain present (in their literality (see Caruth 1995, 1996)) both for the traumatized subject and posttraumatic culture in fantasies, dreams and compulsive re-enactments. It is, however, the idea that we as post-Holocaust subjects can partake in and witness the survivors' trauma by listening to their testimonies, and/or by looking at Holocaust photographs or films – that trauma is culturally transmittable – that has met with particular opposition, for various theoretical, political and above all ethical reasons, which I will discuss below.

This antirealist approach in Holocaust studies, as literary scholar Michael Rothberg (2000: 4) calls it, views the Holocaust as unknowable and unrepresentable; as an event 'beyond discourse and knowledge'. Too overwhelming to be understood as it occurred, the Holocaust is argued to have precipitated a crisis of witnessing and representation. Caruth (1995: 5; emphasis in original), for example, thus appeals to the notion of trauma with which she tries to undertake 'a rethinking of reference [that] is aimed not at eliminating history but at resituating it in our understanding, that is, at precisely permitting *history* to arise where *immediate understanding* may not.' History is here located in the silences, gaps and fissures that speak of unintegrated experience and becomes per se traumatic. According to Caruth and many others, including intellectual historian Dominick LaCapra (2001), we can only 'understand' extreme events such as the Holocaust when language and representation fail; we can never gain full access to this event via representation, as it will always exceed such efforts.

To many scholars adhering to the antirealist approach, it is in 'the "collapse of witnessing . . . [that] trauma opens up and challenges us to a new kind of listening, the witnessing, precisely, *of impossibility*"' (Caruth 1995: 10; emphasis in original). This new kind of listening is no longer marked by choice, but by being 'chosen by it [the 'testimony' of trauma], before the possibility of mastering it with knowledge. This is its danger – the danger of the "contagion", of the traumatization of the ones who listen' (ibid.). At the point when language collapses, it is argued 'one

disorientatingly feels what one cannot represent' (LaCapra 2001: 41-42),⁴⁶ one is affected by (a muted or belated) trauma that turns those born after into secondary witnesses and 'coowners of the traumatic event' (Leys 2000: 269; Lyotard 1988; Ball 2003).

However, the issue that divides trauma theorists in Holocaust and memory studies is to what extent traumatic memories can and should be worked through and integrated in (narrative) representation. Caruth (1995: 154; emphasis in original) tends towards viewing representation and speech as dangerous, containing as it does the possibility of misrepresentation and the loss 'of the event's essential incomprehensibility, the force of its *affront to understanding*.' In her influential book *Trauma: A Genealogy*, historian of science Ruth Leys (2000: 251-54) thus charges Caruth with sacralizing trauma and overvaluing silence, while Gillian Rose (1996: 43; see also Mandel 2006) argues that the idea of the Nazi genocide as ineffable leads to a 'Holocaust piety', which dares not understand the Holocaust 'because we fear that it may be all too understandable, all too continuous with what we are – human, all too human.'

Yet, while I sympathize with Rose's critique, which is reminiscent of what Rothberg (2000: 3-5) terms the realist position⁴⁷ in Holocaust studies (which posits the Holocaust as understandable and representable with the means we have currently at our disposal, and regards the Holocaust not as a break in civilization but rather as an outgrowth of modern rationality), I will below examine the traumatic realism of Dominick LaCapra and Eric Santner as a possibly much more fruitful path to pursue. The latter provides a position between antirealism and traditional realism by arguing that even though the Holocaust represents a rupture and a serious challenge to knowledge and understanding, this break needs to be worked through and adequate ways of representation and comprehension need to be found. Representation can, however, only be adequate as long as it remains aware of its limits, they (LaCapra 2001; Santner 1992) add. This position furthermore helps to avoid confusion

⁴⁶ Lyotard (1988: 13, 111, 121) similarly describes the differend as that which cannot (yet) be represented and rather manifests itself through a feeling.

⁴⁷ This position is represented, for example, by Hannah Arendt's (1963) *Eichmann in Jerusalem A Report on the Banality of Evil* and Zygmunt Bauman's ([1989] 2000) *Modernity and the Holocaust*.

between a ‘Holocaust piety’ or what is also sometimes called *Bilderverbot* (image prohibition), i.e. ‘what *must not* be represented’ and the limits of representation, i.e. what remains difficult, perhaps impossible to represent (Ball 2008b: 166).

In the discussion below regarding the ideas of post- and prosthetic memory, which are based on the idea that trauma is culturally transmittable, I will argue that the notion of cultural trauma is unhelpful, especially if used in the German context. This is especially so if it is *not* teamed up with an idea of working-through, not only because it can provide an ethical mandate for silence and encourages conceptions of competitive victimhood, but also because it contributes to seriously blurring the distinctions between victims and perpetrators, victims and non-victims. I will, especially in the final section on shame, draw on Avery Gordon’s (1997) notion of haunting as a way of knowing, or better learning about the past (of the other). Although also informed by the idea of an affective knowing, a way of sensing the past’s presence, haunting comes with less baggage, is less politically fraught and refrains from drawing on terms used to understand the individual psyche to the social and cultural sphere. In addition, haunting also allows us to avoid the assumption of social memory studies that memory is social only if it is transmitted and that it can only be transmitted if it is articulated (Fentress & Wickham 1992: 47), by reconsidering the process of mediation between the individual and its collective past as working in often unspecified sensuous ways, i.e. through hauntings.

While social theories of memory display little patience for more complicated relationships between past and present and ‘the dialectics of presence and absence’ (Van Wagenen 2004: 287), and the idea of cultural trauma allows comprehension to arise mainly where history and representation fail (Caruth 1995, 1996; Felman 1995; Hirsch 1999, 2001), Gordon’s ‘epistemology of haunting’ (ibid.: 288) and traumatic realism make room for the *ghostly matters*, the traces of the past ‘that reside in the shadows, the margins, in the barely visible’ (ibid.) but nevertheless ‘demand to be read’ (Santner 1990: 12). On the other hand, social theories of memory, especially Assmann’s theory of communicative and cultural memory (see chapter 1) leave no room for considerations of ruptured processes of transmission or of traces of the

past that cannot find a home in an inhospitable present, which is deaf and blind to their presence. I am thus arguing that they are ill fitted to take account of the workings of memory in the context of the ruptured ‘double “post” of the postmodern and the post-Holocaust’ (Santner 1990: 18).

2.3 *Memory and representation in the wake of ‘the age of extremes’:⁴⁸ (The family) Home as a ‘tangled site of memory’⁴⁹*

This purpose is much better served, I claim, by exploring intellectual historian Dominick LaCapra’s (1994, 1998, 2001) and others’ (Friedlander 1992, 1993; Rothberg 2000, 2002; Santner 1990; Silverman 2006) traumatic realist projects which, not unlike Gordon’s epistemology of haunting, are lodged between a radical postmodern (de)constructivism and an uncritical realism. With the former, traumatic realism shares a ‘distrust of representation’ (Rothberg 2002: 67) while nevertheless being receptive to the ‘seething presence’ (Gordon 1997: 17) of the past. It also wants to remain committed to ‘[s]ome claim to truth’ (Friedlander 1992: 3) and the idea of a historical reality that can and must be – even if never fully – confronted, represented and documented. While it asserts that traditional realism and positivism are inadequate ways to represent and know the genocidal past – as is a radical constructivism – because they keep its affective impact at bay, traumatic realism must also be understood as a critique of arguments put forward by trauma theorists like Caruth (1995, 1996), Felman (1995) and Laub (1995) and film director Claude Lanzmann (1995) who declare the Holocaust incomprehensible and unrepresentable.

This theoretical and ethical project not only provides a critical language that allows me to distinguish between various forms of narratives of the Nazi past, but also enables me to take account of ‘intimations, hints, suggestions’ (Radway 2008: x) and other traces of the past in the interviewees’ family narratives. Interviews, like the one with Julia, which testifies to a wide gap between what she alludes to as her family history, deeply marred by Nazi collaboration and perpetration – evidenced, for

⁴⁸ Eric Hobsbawm (1994).

⁴⁹ Max Silverman (2006: 8).

example, in a casual reference to a missing photograph, a present absence, in her grandfather's album, beneath which the caption reads 'near Treblinka'⁵⁰ – and the way she narrates it, namely in the terms of a coherent story of her grandparents' wartime experience and their suffering, convinced me of the necessity of a traumatic realist approach.

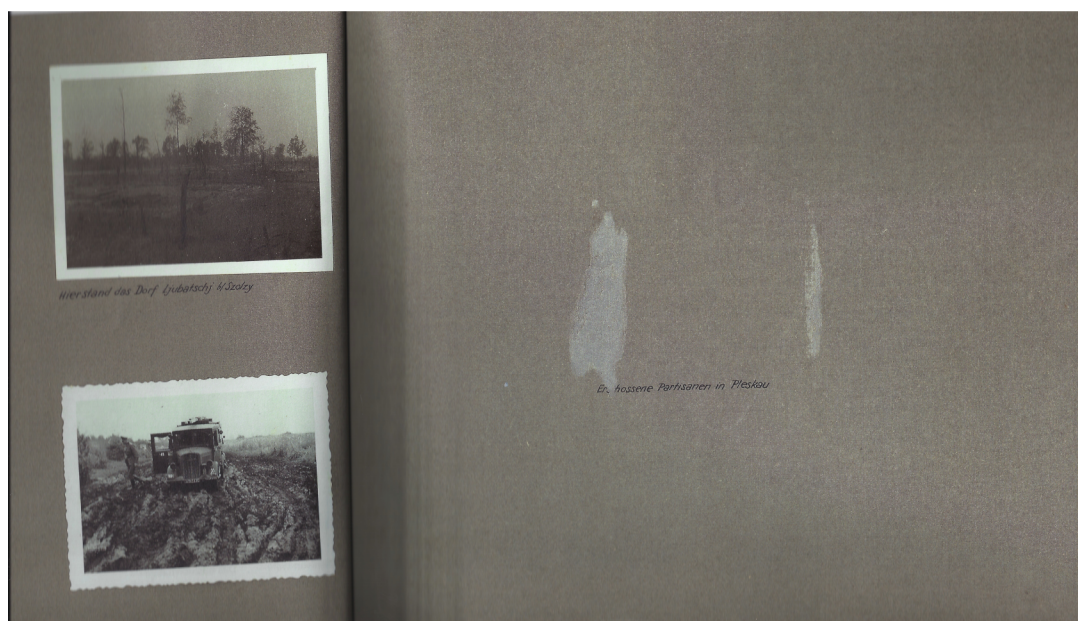


Illustration 2. This is a page out of a private photo album of a *Wehrmacht* veteran, which documents the 'murderous everyday life' (*Zeit Geschichte* 2011: 15) of the invasion and occupation of Russia. The caption beneath the missing photograph reads: 'Shot partisans in Pleskau' (*Zeit Geschichte* 2011: 15).

However, like most other interviewees, Julia remains unhaunted by this absence and is uninterested in reading this trace and in '[f]ollow[ing] the ghost[s] [which] is about making a contact that changes you and refashions the social relations in which you are located' (Gordon 1997: 22). Here, the encounter with the present absence of the past does not result in a haunting, nor does it entail a process of working-through. Thus it becomes clear that while such traces of the past *might* become hauntings, they do not necessarily have to do so. Chapters 6 and 7 will thus look in more detail at the consequences of not working-through, which can be detectable in many

⁵⁰ Treblinka was one of the extermination camps in Nazi occupied Poland. '[T]he camp's precise location was 2.5 miles (4km) northwest of the village and railway stop of Treblinka' (Gutman 1990: 1482). 'The mass extermination program at Treblinka went into effect on July 23, 1942' and continued until April 1943. '[T]he camp was shut down, in the fall of 1943'. 'A total of 870,000 people', the overwhelming majority of whom were Polish Jews, 'had been murdered there' (ibid.: 1486).

interviewees' rejection of cultural representations and the commemoration of the Holocaust because they are experienced as unjustified accusations of (collective) guilt.

The traumatic realist approach is particularly well suited to my concerns in this thesis because it rejects the idea of the Holocaust as unrepresentable and, thus, of an absolute distinction 'between ordinary life on the one side and its unimaginable opposite on the other' (Sebald cited in Silverman 2006: 6), i.e. the industrialized mass murder of millions, as well as dismissing attempts to portray the extreme in the terms of a pastoral everyday, i.e. in traditional realist terms. Especially in Germany (see Erdle 1999), the idea of the Holocaust as unrepresentable and the attendant "'decision for silence" [often] serves as an exculpatory mechanism through which rhetorical gestures toward the limits of comprehension effectively masquerade as ethical practice' (Mandel 2006: 62). The Holocaust as unrepresentable then 'constitutes a framing in which these links [between the extreme and the everyday, A. H.] remain concealed as *silenced* or *invisible facts*' (Erdle 1999: 44; emphasis and translations in original).

Particularly Friedlander's ([1982] 1993, 1993), LaCapra's (1994, 1998, 2001) and Santner's (1992) perspective, however, has to also be understood as aimed at representational strategies of historiographical methodologies like *Alltagsgeschichte* [history of the everyday], and the aesthetics of cultural products like Edgar Reitz's 1984 film *Heimat*, which marginalize the extreme, i.e. the Holocaust, in their accounts and portrayals of everyday life under NS. The concepts developed in their critiques, to which I shall turn below, are very helpful in analysing the grandchildren's family narratives of NS, which, to a large extent, focus on the mundane of their grandparents' experience of the Third Reich and the war both at home and at the front.

In order to think about how the extreme remains present 'within the otherwise normal domesticity of the present' (Santner 1990: 43) the work of cultural theorists Silverman and Rothberg is helpful. Their emphasis on 'the survival of the extreme

into the everyday world' (Rothberg 2002: 67) of today speaks of their desire to make visible and audible such material and symbolic traces via representational strategies such as surrealist montage, which defamiliarize familiar everyday objects, thereby exposing hidden layers of meaning and 'transforming the clarity of these objects into tangled sites of memory' (Silverman 2006: 8). Gordon (1997: 200) adds that '[s]uch a tangle – as object and experience – is haunting.' In this way the home, the familiar and *heimlich*, manifested in everyday objects, such as a family photograph of the grandparents in which the grandfather wears a *Wehrmacht* uniform, is rendered *unheimlich* [uncanny] when juxtaposed with perpetrator images of the *Wehrmacht* exhibition.



Illustration 3. An unknown *Wehrmacht* soldier and his bride (private possession). The soldier pictured here is not the one who shoots in the scene shown in the photograph of illustration 4.



Illustration 4. This private photograph shows *Wehrmacht* soldiers committing mass executions of Jews in the Ukraine (Pohl 2011: 55).

Furthermore, such juxtapositions of the everyday with the extreme take the Holocaust out of the circumscribed and separated space of the concentration camp (Brink 2000: 146) and do not content themselves with silence or harmonizing narrative, but facilitate the contamination of the present with the past. Thus focusing on the everyday is necessary to counter tendencies to view the Holocaust as unrepresentable and incomprehensible, but should not be valorized to the detriment of the extreme.

In a similar way to Walter Benjamin's (1968: 262) view of historical materialism which, unlike historicism's "'eternal" image of the past', frozen in time and disconnected from the present, 'supplies a unique experience with the past', traumatic realism, as a mode of representation, not only asks the question of how to 'represent' past atrocities, especially the Holocaust, but also endeavours to affect the reader/viewer. In this sense the traumatic realist project also seeks to base engagements with past atrocities on an affective encounter with the latter that

produces knowledge of it, i.e. to restructure the relation to the past, rather than merely represent it. As Rothberg (2000: 140) writes: ‘The traumatic realist project is an attempt not to reflect the traumatic event mimetically but to *produce* it as an object of knowledge and to *transform* its readers so that they are forced to acknowledge their relationship to posttraumatic culture.’

2.4 *What does working-through the past mean and is it still necessary?*

2.4.1 *Critical theories of working-through: Between structure and history*

The theories reviewed below are part of an intellectual tradition that has vitally contributed to rendering the suffering of those murdered by German hands, especially that of the Jewish victims, central to postwar (West) Germany’s self-understanding. Furthermore, it has resulted in a large corpus of work on the question of how to work through the Nazi past, also in the younger generations (Brendler 1997; Rensmann 1999, 2001, 2004; Schneider *et al.* 1996). I am here of course referring to Theodor W. Adorno’s ([1959] 1986; see also [1966] 1997) early and famous text ‘*What Does Coming to Terms with the Past Mean?*’ and psychoanalysts Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich’s ([1967] 1975) *The Inability to Mourn* that have variously engaged with Freud’s ([1957] 2001) distinction between mourning and melancholia in order to analyze the lack of affective responses of Germans to the Holocaust and the end of the Third Reich (see also Arendt [1950] 1993). However, this approach is now increasingly attacked, especially because it is seen to be normatively prescribing mourning and thereby compounding moral and therapeutic arguments, as well as collectivizing and ideologizing what is seen as an at least to some extent unconscious, spontaneous and open-ended individual affective process (Ball 2008a; Moser 1992; Jureit & Schneider 2010: 173). In order to accommodate such critiques, I will endorse LaCapra’s and Santner’s more nuanced and less rigid ideas of working-through, to examine the question of what different modes of family narrative might tell us about the subjectivities of the narrators.

In drawing on what I call critical theories of working-through, the question of the normative inevitably arises: To what extent can and should one demand that the grandchildren incorporate the Holocaust as a central event into their family stories and thereby mourn the past? By endorsing aspects of these critical theories, I am arguing against Aleida Assmann's (2006a: 202-203) suggestion of a hierarchization of memories, which implies that it is only on the national political level that a 'normative regulation' of memories is necessary, while on the social level 'heterogeneous memories of suffering, guilt and resistance can exist next to each other, without displacing the whole structure.' However, as I will claim below, this bypasses the important dimension of structural trauma. Furthermore, as indicated in the introduction, I will contend – especially in chapters 4 and 5 – that this view of family narratives of NS as purely therapeutic and apolitical misjudges the situation. Rather, I assert that family stories can become deeply political, especially when they are set in contrast to what the interviewees often perceive as an imposed public memory of the Holocaust, that is felt to be delimiting what and how they can speak about their family's past. However, this position does not imply that what is practised as cultural and official memory of the Holocaust in Germany is beyond critique. Especially in chapter 6, I analyze how education and official and cultural memory of the Holocaust, in its quest to instill certain moral emotions in the students as the correct ones, often misses its mark of instigating the process of working-through.

Freud ([1957] 2001: 244-45) distinguishes between a healthy and a pathological response to loss: while in mourning the subject gradually detaches itself from the lost object, thus eventually adapting to the reality of its absence; in melancholia, the lost object – often 'of a more ideal kind' (ibid.) – and what the subject has lost in the object remains unconscious and thus ungrievable [*nicht betrauerbar*]. Freud ([1914] 1958) formulates this psychic logic slightly differently in his earlier paper '*Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through*' where he distinguishes between repeating or acting-out and working-through. There he ([1914] 1958: 150) defines acting-out as a form of memory, whereby the person compulsively and

unconsciously repeats the past in the transference (with the analyst). He writes that remembering in such instances is unmediated and proceeds via action (and thus the performative): ‘the patient does not *remember* anything of what he has forgotten and repressed, but *acts* it out.’ Crucially, Freud states that this form of memory is not based on representation, but on action. Working-through is the process by which such action is then rendered conscious and the person begins to take control of and integrates memory into (narrative) representation. It thus enables the remembering self to obtain a certain distance to the past; he or she is no longer possessed or haunted by it. This, however, begs the question: to what extent can the past be worked through? Can the subject become conscious of and take responsibility for the whole past in narrative and discourse, as Freud’s (1973: 112) idiom of ‘[w]here id was, there ego shall be’ seems to suggest, or will there always be an unconscious remainder, haunting us?⁵¹

Although Adorno is more pessimistic about the prospects of enlightenment than the Mitscherlichs, these three Frankfurt School members in different ways continue in the Enlightenment tradition of the modernist Freud, who believed that psychoanalysis could render what has remained unconscious conscious by strengthening the ‘rational mastery of self-reflection’ (Elliott 2000: 25). They assert that the rupture with National Socialism in 1945 was superficial and that the latter was/is still present the Germans’ smoldering unconscious and thus unmourned identifications with the Nazi regime and its ideology, which have to be made conscious and mourned. According to Adorno ([1959] 1986), this can only be achieved through ‘conscious critical reflection’ [*bearbeiten, durcharbeiten*], which needs to be distinguished ‘from a bureaucratic *Erledigung* (dispatching) of an unpleasant obligation spurred by a longing for easy transcendence and narcissistic redemption’ (Ball 2008a: 151).

⁵¹ While Habermas (1989b; Schneider & Jureit 2010: 128) sides with the modernist Freud and seems to suggest that we can take account of our entire past in narrative and that we only become responsible when we do so, in my discussion of shame, below, I tend much more towards the position Judith Butler (2005) takes in her book *Giving an Account of Oneself*. In advocating the idea of a relational self, she does away with the normative requirement of a fully conscious and self-transparent self, that Habermas champions. Yet, she argues (2005: 18-19) that the idea of a relational or split self does not preclude responsibility: even though the subject is disrupted by something that is external to itself, external norms do ‘not act unilaterally or deterministically upon the subject’, but ‘set[s] the stage for the subject’s self-crafting.’

Stunned by a total lack of any affective reckoning with the past, of any feelings of guilt, shame, empathy or shock, the Mitscherlichs ([1967] 1975) diagnose the Germans with a collective *Inability to Mourn*. They argue that the Germans, who had narcissistically identified with Hitler, now collectively denied, repressed and de-realized the recent past to ward off a fall into melancholia and claim that Germans first had to mourn the loss of their collective ego-ideal, Hitler – what Santner (1990) below calls the structural trauma of shattering primary narcissism – in order to mourn the victims of the Nazi genocide (historical trauma). While Adorno ([1966] 1997) insisted that ‘individual enlightenment was not sufficient’ (Wood 1999: 42) and that one had to take the existing objective social conditions into consideration if one wanted to prevent the return of fascism, he also agreed with the Mitscherlichs that the strengthening of the subject’s self-consciousness and the development of a strong ego, which would be able to adapt to reality⁵² – a ‘reflexive, self-critical appropriation and working-through’ to integrate the loss of the narcissistic object (Lohmann 1987: 112) – nevertheless remained essential to this endeavour.

Consequently, much more than the Mitscherlichs, Adorno ([1966] 1997, 1970) championed the importance ‘of the confrontation with Auschwitz in the public sphere of democratic education’ (Rothberg 2000: 58). Habermas (1989a, 1989b, 1989c), a second generation member of the Frankfurt School, takes this much further in his interventions during the *Historikerstreit*, in which he also addresses the question of working-through in the younger generations. Habermas contends (1989a: 232-233; emphasis added) that, also for the children and grandchildren of Nazi perpetrators and followers, there exists a transgenerational ‘collective joint liability’ which consists of the obligation ‘to keep alive . . . *not only in an intellectual form* the memory of the sufferings of those who were murdered by German hands.’ This, what he calls ‘indebted memory’ (ibid.), which is centred on the victims, grants them

⁵² Adorno (2003: 20-21) thus writes: ‘Since the possibility of changing the objective – namely, societal and political – conditions is extremely limited today, attempts to work against repetition of Auschwitz are necessarily restricted to the subjective dimension. By this I also mean essentially the psychology of people who do such things . . . what is necessary, is what I once in this respect called the turn to the subject. One must labor against this lack of reflection; one must dissuade people from striking outward without reflecting on themselves. The only education that has any sense at all is an education towards critical self-reflection.’

‘the weak anamnestic power of a solidarity that later generations can continue to practice only in the medium of remembrance that is repeatedly renewed’ (ibid.).

This transgenerational historical liability has another dimension: it mandates the critical appropriation of (national) traditions, which should only be continued if they can withstand the scrutiny of universal values, and the adoption of a postnational identity and constitutional patriotism (Habermas 1989b). Gerard Delanty (2000: 64-66; Markell 2000) succinctly summarizes both of these notions: A state or identity ‘is post-national in the sense that it does not attempt to anchor itself in the state as such or in territory or in cultural [or historical] heritage, or more generally in shared conceptions of cultural community.’ Postnational identity is based on residence and citizenship and takes shape in an identification with the abstract and normative foundations of the constitution, i.e. constitutional patriotism. Habermas (1989b: 257) describes this as a ‘more sober political identity’, which ‘has detached itself from the background of a past centred on national history.’

Habermas suggests that working-through the National Socialist past can only be effective, i.e. facilitate the development of postconventional or autonomous ego-identities (Habermas 1984, 1989b), if it is carried out in the public sphere. As LaCapra (1998: 62-63) puts it, Habermas proposes public memory as ‘a prerequisite for any process of working-through.’ Yet, the latter’s insistence on a more abstract postnational identity in conjunction with obliging Germans to ‘remember their continuing responsibility for Auschwitz’ (Moses 2007a: 237), which implies that they understand themselves precisely as members of a historical cultural community based on descent, produces what historian Dirk Moses (ibid.) terms ‘a glaring contradiction’. Habermas’s position is thus increasingly not only criticized for rendering a critical and indebted Holocaust memory the basis of a cleansed [*geläutert*], transformed, European Germany (see Habermas 1999; Ball 2008a: 57; Moses 2007a, 2007c), despite his rejection of the logic of redemption and *Sinnstiftung*, but also for implying that the past can eventually be fully worked through (Jureit & Schneider 2010: 124-128). It is at this point that Habermas’s account converges with the progressive narrative of Levy and Sznajder (2006: 126),

in which Germany and Germans have become effectively denationalized and self-reflexive, a “skeptical” nation’. Thus, his position is sometimes in danger of ‘cannibalizing the memory of victims for the purpose of reconstructing German history’ (Geyer & Hansen 1994: 190) and reconstituting postwar identity as European and non-German and thus attacked for using the Holocaust ‘for the “negative creation of meaning” (*Sinnstiftung*)’ (Moses 2007a: 242).

While Adorno and the Mitscherlichs wrote their seminal texts in the late 1950s and 1960s at a time when Germans were still preoccupied with their own suffering and/or the economic miracle, and the victims of the Nazi genocide had not yet gained official and public recognition, the writings of LaCapra and Santner have to be situated within a thoroughly different cultural, historical and theoretical context. Both scholars are concerned with recontextualizing the Holocaust into its specific historical and cultural context because, as they argue, it has become decontextualized in a poststructuralist discourse, such as in the work of French philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard (1988, 1990) and a trauma theory, e.g. in the writings of literary critic Cathy Caruth (1995, 1996), which employ the trauma of the Holocaust – regarded as an event without witnesses (Lyotard 1988; Laub 1995) and thus not representable – as a ‘metaphor for the failure of representation’ generally (Kansteiner 2004a: 205). LaCapra and Santner are thus concerned about how poststructuralism tends to (mis)use Auschwitz as a metaphor for the unintegratable, nonrepresentable *differend* to exemplify an inherent gap between representation and reality.

What such accounts like Lyotard’s thus argue needs to be mourned are modern man’s ‘phantasm[s] of total mastery, full ego identity, definitive closure, “totalitarian” social integration, redemption, and radically positive transcendence’ (LaCapra 2001: 71). In Lyotard’s work in particular, but in poststructuralist theory more generally, the search for identity, foundations, coherence, and totality, which is seen to be responsible for the horrors of twentieth century history, must be abandoned in favour of the play of difference; fantasies of mastery must be mourned and the subject, forever split, must be able to deal with ambivalence, difference and contingency. Here, the particular historical catastrophe of the Holocaust is degraded

into a cipher for the failure of the project of Enlightenment and modernity, while working-through/mourning is rejected because it is regarded as geared towards redemption. Mourning is said to foster redemption ‘by claiming to know the dead and their location, thereby silencing ghosts in the gestures of a certain present, a certain there’ (Gunn 2006: 82).

While Santner (1990: 29) argues that poststructuralism/postmodernism thereby ‘*displace[s]* and *disperse[s]* the particular historical tasks of mourning . . . with what might be called structural mourning, that is, mourning for those “catastrophes” that are inseparable from being in language’, both he and LaCapra nevertheless value the poststructuralist/postmodernist idea of a split subject, insofar as the latter thereby becomes open to the experiences of others. Yet, in order for the experiences of others not to be appropriated, they stress the importance of working-through. The conflation of historical trauma with structural trauma, a charge LaCapra also levels at Caruth, however results in melancholic or sublime acting-out. Santner’s and LaCapra’s appreciation of the importance of mourning historical losses grows out of the recognition of the importance of normative distinctions, such as between victims and perpetrators. Other efforts to displace the tasks of mourning historical losses (as well as structural absence), they see manifest in the concerted efforts to decontextualize and universalize the Holocaust by conservative historians during the Historians’ Debate in the 1980s.

It is within this context that Santner and LaCapra’s concern with historical specificity and the particular tasks of mourning loss that their distinctions between structural and historical trauma, between absence and loss, are to be understood. Their return to aspects of the modernist Freud – evident especially in LaCapra’s (1994: 213) argument that ‘in post-Freudian psychoanalysis’ the idea of working-through ‘has been underemphasized and relatively underdeveloped’ – and the critical theories of Adorno, the Mitscherlichs and Habermas serve several purposes. Firstly, it allows them to resurrect what they argue is the agentic and responsible subject from a poststructuralist discourse, which they charge with having buried precisely this subject; secondly, it permits them to reformulate the question of whether the

Holocaust can be represented at all into the question of how it can and should be represented adequately (Dean 2002: 247) and ethically; and thirdly, to connect this question to issues relating to subjectivity.

Although LaCapra (1998: 46-47, 2001: 47) himself describes the distinction between structural and historical trauma as problematic and adds that it should not be conceived of in binary terms, both scholars argue that structural trauma is located on the transhistorical level and refers to the traumatic shattering of 'those narcissistically charged cultural constructions' like 'the *Volk*, the nation, the clean, the healthy; but also: man, home, the self, being, and so on' (Santner 1990: 18). Historical trauma and loss, on the other hand, are 'the consequence of particular events' (LaCapra 2001: 64) and, on this historical level, losses can and should be worked through by engaging in enabling and reconstituting public labours and rituals of mourning. Mourning allows for both the recognition of the past in the present while, at the same time, also establishing *some* distance to it that permits one to distinguish past from present as well as facilitating critical judgment manifest in the ability to discriminate between victims and perpetrators, for example. While LaCapra (1998: 65) charges Habermas with overemphasizing mourning and historical trauma to the detriment of considerations of the role of the unconscious and structural trauma, poststructuralism is seen to gravitate too strongly in the opposite direction.

Both scholars thus try 'to create a position that avoids redemptive narrative and sublime acting out' (Berger 1999: 575). In order to do so, Santner (1992) distinguishes between narrative fetishism and mourning and LaCapra (2001: 65-85) between acting-out and working-through as different responses to historical loss. Narrative fetishism is a strategy that avoids the labours of mourning, i.e. the 'process of elaborating and repeating the reality of loss or traumatic shock by remembering and repeating it in symbolically and dialogically mediated doses' (Santner 1992: 144). Following the Mitscherlichs, Santner (1990: 32-33) argues that such a (public) mourning of the victims of the Nazis is only possible if the Germans are willing to master the 'more primitive labor of mourning', which consists of shattering primary narcissism (structural trauma), and entails 'the mastery of the capacity to say "we"'

nonnarcissistically[,] [and] the integration of the *unheimlich* into the first person plural’.

The response of narrative fetishism, on the other hand, renders apparent the consequences of not working-through the past. It is, as Santner (1992: 144) explains, ‘the way an inability or refusal to mourn enplots traumatic events; it is a strategy of undoing, in fantasy, the need for mourning by simulating the condition of intactness, typically by situating the site of loss elsewhere.’ It refuses to reconstitute identity on the ruins of a shattered narcissism and rather wishes to return to untainted, pure forms of (national) identity. Here, the Holocaust and the memory thereof are seen to preclude such a return. It constitutes ‘an inclination to reinvoke prematurely a condition of normalcy’ (Santner 1992: 148). In chapters 4 and 5, I show how some interviewees’ emplotments of their families’ Nazi histories as sentimental stories of wartime suffering and heroism constitute a form of narrative fetishism.

Although LaCapra enters the problematic from a slightly different angle – he wants to set certain standards for how histories of trauma are to be written – he, like Santner, regards harmonizing and ‘normalizing’ narratives, such as those of the conservative historians during the Historians’ Debate, as testaments of denials of the traumatic impact of the past and a refusal to work it through. This is the case, as such objectifying and distancing strategies deny the author’s/subject’s transferential relation to the past. The subject must ‘recognize its own implication in the act of understanding’ and representing the past (Goss & Handwerk 2002: 438), and thus acknowledge its transferential relation to it in what LaCapra (2001: 41-42) calls ‘empathic unsettlement’. The latter requires ‘a disciplined empathy with the traumatized’ (ibid.; see also Ball 2008a) that consists of ‘attending to, even trying, in limited ways, to recapture the possibly split-off, affective dimension of the experience of others’ (LaCapra 2001: 40). It involves efforts to take on ‘the traumatic experience of others’ (ibid.) as a virtual and not a vicarious one, i.e. the secondary witness/historian should not fully identify with the survivor’s traumatic experience, but should recognize and respect its difference/alterity. Witnessing the testimony of survivors, he argues, should be experienced ‘as emotionally and intellectually

disruptive' (Goss & Handwerk 2002: 438), perhaps even induce a 'secondary trauma' (LaCapra 2001: 41) in the witness/historian. It is here that the distinction between structural and historical trauma to some extent dissolves, involving as the process of working-through does, empathic unsettlement or secondary trauma in the witness. Yet, empathic unsettlement 'at the very least, . . . , poses a barrier to closure in discourse and places in jeopardy harmonizing or spiritually uplifting accounts of extreme events from which we attempt to derive reassurance or a benefit' (LaCapra 2001: 41-42).

In making empathic unsettlement or muted trauma, or in Santner's terms the traumatic shattering of primary narcissism, a 'requirement or precondition of working-through' (LaCapra 2001: 71), both argue that working-through may necessarily involve acting-out and that the latter may 'perhaps never [be] fully overcome' (LaCapra 1994: 205); it cannot and 'does not provide full enlightenment or definitive liberation from the constraints of the past' (LaCapra 1998: 186). While not completely distinguishable from acting-out, working-through is nevertheless vital to LaCapra's (1994: 209) account because it 'involves a mode of repetition offering a measure of critical purchase on problems and responsible control in action which would permit desirable change.' However, acting-out (or melancholia) can also, as he (1994: 213; Santner 1990) points out, hinder processes of mourning and coming to terms with the past. This danger becomes real when melancholia 'becomes excessive or functions as an object of fixation' (ibid.). Hence it is LaCapra's and Santner's explicit but *non-binary* distinction between structural and historical trauma that makes their theories so much more useful than those of Adorno, the Mitscherlichs and Habermas.

This is the case as the Habermas' focus on consciousness and rationality has led to the neglect, even dismissal of the role of the unconscious in processes of working-through. Furthermore, LaCapra's and Santner's claim that the past can never be fully worked through is a welcome and necessary counterpart to an underlying redemptive streak in the Mitscherlichs and Habermas which suggests that in memory and mourning there lies freedom from the past. In particular Habermas's emphasis on

historical trauma, to the detriment of structural trauma, thus leads to a privileging of public memory as the primary site of critical engagements with the NS past and the Holocaust. And although LaCapra and Santner, in a similar way to Habermas, argue that mourning the victims of the Holocaust must be public and associated to ‘ethical and political considerations’ (LaCapra 1994: 210) – it must become not only ‘a desirable process’ (1998: 196) but a ‘regulative ideal’ (ibid.) or obligation⁵³ – the importance they accord to structural trauma for efforts to work through the past to be effective renders their accounts much more useful and less normatively restricting than Habermas’s.

Although I do not want to dismiss the importance of Holocaust education and memory, in the section on shame, as well as in chapters 6 and 8, I will show that the public and institutionalized memory, especially education, often seems to be failing in this respect. This is corroborated by recent empirical research (Brendler 1997; Meseth *et al.* 2004b: 142; Staas 2010: 14), which shows that Holocaust education and institutionalized memory often only manage to instruct the young in how to speak about the Holocaust properly while failing to facilitate a ‘deep intellectual and emotional response in the pupils with serious consequences for the formation of identity’ (Borries 2004: 268).

2.4.2 *Post-memories in post-Wende Germany*

LaCapra (2001: 64) and historian Wulf Kansteiner (2004a: 195) distinguish ‘between trauma and the culture of trauma’ (ibid.) and the former sees arrested melancholia manifested in a trauma culture that renders everyone (equally) a victim and history per se as traumatic (see Caruth 1996). Here, particular historical atrocities and losses are drowned out in a memory culture that vastly generalizes specific events, which, in turn, remain unconscious and unmourned. The problem with Caruth’s work and, by extension, with the idea of culturally transmittable trauma is, that trauma becomes

⁵³ LaCapra (1998: 69) writes: ‘In this sense, mourning should be understood and felt to be an obligation as well as a gift of which not everyone deserves to be a recipient.’

unlocatable and the distinction between victims and perpetrators, victims and (secondary) witnesses becomes seriously blurred. It is in contending that “‘victim’ is not a psychological’ but ‘a social, political, and ethical category’, in stressing the distinction between historical and structural trauma and the process of working-through, even if it can never be finalized, that LaCapra (2001: 79) tries to prevent such conflation between victims and perpetrators, victims and (secondary) witnesses.

While the generation of 1968, largely congruent with the parents of the interviewees, tend(ed) to sacralize the Holocaust and overidentify with its victims (Jureit & Schneider 2010: 206; Schneider 2004), the majority of their children seem to move into the opposite direction of universalizing the Holocaust, which allows for a rehabilitation of their grandparents’ wartime suffering as (equally) traumatic as the Holocaust. With the decontextualization and deterritorialization of the Holocaust (Levy & Sznajder 2006) as part of the globalization of culture more generally, and an attendant universalization of the trauma concept/diagnostic in academia and popular culture, comparing the Holocaust to other historical and present atrocities is no longer the controversial undertaking it used to be.

The globalization of culture and of the Holocaust in particular proceeds, however, not via homogenization and the imposition of the universal onto local memories, that are eradicated and silenced in the process, as sociologist Anthony Smith (1990, 1991) contends, but rather via ‘a transformation of the national through a more complex relationship between the global and the local’, opening up ‘new “memory scapes”’ that allow ‘solidarities and mutual responsibilities [to] transcend territorial boundaries’ (Levy & Sznajder 2006: 10). ‘Global culture does not wipe out local memories; instead it mixes with them’ (ibid.: 15). As Lawrence Grossberg (1996: 185-6; Featherstone 1990, 1995) puts it, globalization is about ‘the various ways people are attached and attach themselves (affectively) into the world. It is a question of the global becoming local and the local becoming global.’ In discussing cultural historian Alison Landsberg’s (1997, 2004, 2009) idea of prosthetic memory and Marianne Hirsch’s (1997, 1999, 2001, 2002, 2008) notion of postmemory, I

want to think about the relationship between (public) memories of the Holocaust and (private) memories of German victimhood and wartime suffering. In particular, I want to reflect on the way in which some interviewees wittingly or unwittingly evoke an increasingly globalized Holocaust iconography – inscribed ‘as universal victim narrative into a (western) transnational collective memory’ (Schmitz 2007b: 6) – to narrate their fragmented and nebulous family histories of NS and WWII as stories of traumatic suffering. While the trend in memory studies is increasingly towards transnational and transcultural perspectives (Rothberg 2009, 2006; Landsberg 2004) it, however, needs to be kept in mind that decontextualized or globalized historical and cultural memories can be used to strengthen not only transnational/cultural solidarities, but also national identities.

Both post- and prosthetic memory are overdetermined notions (Long 2006: 151) as they describe a structure of intergenerational memory transmission that is ruptured by atrocity and/or migration, as well as an ethics of memory. Akin to what LaCapra terms empathic unsettlement, the concepts post- and prosthetic memory aim to take account of ways in which we can try to reembody, reactivate or ‘adopt the traumatic experiences of others as experiences that we might ourselves have’ (Hirsch 2008: 114). The position of the postmemorial witness is shaped by an ‘obligatory effort to create an “identification with the victim or witness of trauma”’ (Heckner 2008: 68), a ‘disciplined empathy’ (Goss & Handwerk 2002: 439). However, unlike LaCapra, they (see Landsberg 1997: 83) are less concerned with how the Holocaust can be worked through and much more with the impossibilities of mourning. Following Caruth (1995, 1996) and Felman (1995) in their endorsements of performative theories of representation, Hirsch (2001: 236) for example argues that photographs of the Holocaust do not ‘represent the Nazi genocide, but they *produce* the traumatic effect that this history has had on all who grew up under its shadow.’ Landsberg (2004) similarly asserts that acts of receiving visual representations of traumatic histories, especially films, have an intrinsic potential to traumatize the spectator. It is thus that, through technologies of mass culture, trauma is transmitted and particular experiences and memories become widely available (for consumption).

In explicit opposition to Halbwachs' idea of collective memory or Assmann's notion of cultural memory, which have increasingly become synonymous with a concept of 'culture as an unproblematic, integrated pattern of common values' (Featherstone 1995: 89), and beliefs and practices that define a collective, Landsberg (2004: 19) argues that technologies of mass culture 'creat[e] a portable, fluid and nonessentialist form of memory' by opening up 'a world of images outside a person's lived experience.' Especially Landsberg's (2004: 23) theory sees in public and mass mediated memories the substance on which generations growing up with variously incomplete and fragmented family histories can draw to construct 'genealogies that they, too, might be able to inhabit.' Furthermore, these technologies thus help to 'structure "imagined communities" that are not . . . geographically or nationally bounded and that do not presume any kind of affinity among community members' (ibid.: 152). Rather, 'the role of "distant suffering" and newly formed "victim cultures"' play a vital role in the formation of such imagined communities or what Levy and Sznajder (2006: 18) term cosmopolitan memoryscapes. Similarly, for Hirsch (2008: 114; see also Levy & Sznajder 2006: 133), 'postmemory is not an *identity* position but a *generational* structure of transmission deeply embedded in' personal and familial forms of mediation (i.e. testimony, family photographs, personal memoirs, etc.).

It is, however, precisely this 'increasingly emotionalised and individualised approach to history', which coincides with the globalization of the Holocaust that Schmitz (2007b: 6) argues facilitates the return of memories of German wartime suffering. As transmission of family memory is ruptured, remembering the family's past is not based on recollection but on 'imaginative investment and creation' (Hirsch 1997: 22), and 'identification and projection' (Hirsch 1999: 8-9) and, therefore in large parts shaped by fantasy. In a number of interviews, we thus find fragments of Holocaust narratives, with the help of which the family's NS past is imagined. These imaginative investments, however, often work like screen memories (Freud 2006: 454), insofar as they 'associatively *displace[d]*' rather than completely silence threatening hints and allusions to the grandparents' active Nazi collaboration and perpetration. The much more comforting memory/fantasy of the grandparents as

having suffered a trauma is thus furnished with fragments of a memory culture, in which innocent victimhood is valorized, while perpetration remains utterly incomprehensible and radically evil (Radstone 2007: 104). However, by emplotting the family Nazi past in a seamless story of suffering, working-through (structural and historical trauma) is again displaced by engaging in a '[n]arrative fetishism [which] releases one from the burden of having to reconstitute one's self-identity under "posttraumatic" conditions: in narrative fetishism, the "post" is indefinitely postponed' (Santner 1992: 144).

Both Landsberg (2004: 152) and Hirsch (1999: 9) contend post- or prosthetic memories can also 'serve as a model' for 'an *ethical* relation to the oppressed or persecuted other' (ibid.). They seek to conceptualize how one can 'adopt the traumatic experience – and . . . memories – of others as one's own' (Hirsch 1999: 9), yet without appropriating the other's experiences and 'annihilating the distance between self and other, the otherness of the other' (ibid.). Thus they want to counteract the kind of 'appropriations' described above and in chapter 5: hence, Hirsch's (1999: 7-10) differentiation between heteropathic and idiopathic identification and Landsberg's (2004: 149-155) between empathy and sympathy. Heteropathic identification/empathy signify an 'identification-at-a-distance' (ibid.), which does not incorporate the other within the self, but moves beyond the self and its 'cultural norms to align [it]self, through displacement with another' (ibid.). This identification 'requires an act of imagination' (Landsberg 2009: 222-223) which, however, must remain aware of the 'unbridgeable distance that separates the participant from the one born after' (Hirsch 2001: 221) in order not to turn into idiopathic identification/sympathy, based on narcissistic-looking and self-sameness (Hirsch 1999: 10). However, with LaCapra (2001: 41) and Radstone (2007: 104 see also Ball 2008a; Mandel 2006) I contend that 'the position of witness is a complex one that can exceed an empathic identification with victimhood' and can, perhaps must also include 'heteropathic identification with perpetration' (ibid.: 110).

A memory culture based on witnessing and 'reliving' trauma via personal and familial forms of mediation can lead to such appropriations and competitive victimhood

(Mandel 2006: 50; Rothberg 2006, 2009). As Elke Heckner (2008: 65-66; see also Berlant 2007) reminds us in her discussion of the notion of postmemory: ‘an affective-empathetic approach will often give rise to a politics of identification.’ The way in which some interviewees reject the Holocaust’s place in Germany’s cultural memory as too prominent, and the terms in which they narrate their family histories of wartime suffering, which are at times uncannily reminiscent of Holocaust testimonies, suggests what John Movitt (2000) describes as ‘trauma envy’ to be at play: this shows that such transcultural memories, which concepts of post- or prosthetic memory describe, can furnish not only ‘cosmopolitan landscapes of memory’ and ‘nonessentialist nonidentity politics’ (Landsberg 2004: 152), but also precisely an essentialist politics of identity. Trauma envy ‘signif[ies] the *ressentiment* that seeks a wound to legitimate itself morally in keeping with the structure of identity politics’ (Ball 2000: 38). The trauma of German wartime suffering, especially if it is set in a competitive relation to the suffering of Holocaust victims, is often evoked in order to lend legitimacy and moral authority to a unified German identity and community.

Composing one’s Nazi family history (exclusively) in the terms of a therapeutic discourse – especially the notion of trauma – can furthermore work to displace history with ‘individual drama’ (Antze & Lambek 1996: xxiv). Particularly relevant to my analysis of the grandchildren’s re-narrations of their grandfathers’ war experiences in chapters 4 and 5 is Allen Young’s (1995, 1996; see also Hacking 1996; Leys 2000; Tal 1996) critique of the inflationary use of the diagnostic of post-traumatic stress disorder since the Vietnam war, which has facilitated ‘the medicalization of individual experience’ and the evasion of collective guilt and questions of collaboration and complicity in, and perpetration of, war crimes by (ex-)soldiers and, thus, ‘a shift in moral focus from collective obligations’ and individual guilt ‘to narratives of individual suffering’ (cited in Antze & Lambek: xxiv). The medicalization and sentimentalization of historical ‘public violence’ (Seltzer 1997: 8) in (publicly articulated) narratives of the individual and personal suffering of veterans is in its undermining of ‘public concerns with private ones’ (Misztal 2004: 81); nevertheless deeply political, because it facilitates a belated empathy and full

identification with the ancestors as victims, thereby ‘produc[ing] a national collective’ (Schmitz 2006a: 108; Berlant 2007: 309).

2.5 *In Shame lies responsibility: Working-through reconsidered*

The problems associated with notions like post- and prosthetic memory become particularly pronounced in the complex context of postwar Germany, which clearly brings to light the potentially conflictual relation between postmemory as a structure of transmission and an ethics of memory. In rendering the postmemorial position universally available via the cultural transmission of trauma to secondary witnesses, Ruth Leys (2000: 296-97; see also Weissman 2004) writes that victimhood becomes ‘unlocatable in any particular person or place’ and can ‘spread contagiously to others.’ This process of adopting the other’s experience as one’s own, is thus prone to various forms of unethical appropriation of the other’s suffering, as I will show in chapter 5.

Furthermore, as Long (2006: 149-50) notes, the emphasis on the imagination stands in marked conflict with the ethical relation to the victims, because it ‘contain[s] the possibility of unregulated fantasy that need pay no attention at all either to historical accuracy or to the otherness of the other.’ In chapter 5, I will show how allowing fantasy to reign freely fosters a continued dissociation of the Nazi family past. For example, Anna’s refusal to engage with accessible historical and legal documentation about her maternal grandfather’s role as a member of an execution squad in a concentration camp, in favour of imagining how he must have felt at the time, results in her construction of him as a passive victim. Empathy’s reliance on fantasy (see Douglass & Vogler 2003: 38), if unchecked by some measure of distance and objectivity, tends to end up in such wish-fulfilling projections as Anna’s fantastic stories about her maternal family’s heroic resistance against Hitler and victimhood. The interview with Anna and others thus alerts us to the importance of working-through.

Although I find LaCapra's and Santner's distinction between structural and historical trauma incredibly useful, what they term muted or secondary trauma or the shattering of primary narcissism (structural trauma), I argue, might in the present context be better described as shame. As, according to both scholars, working-through historical loss in 'the double "post" of the postmodern and the post-Holocaust' (Santner 1990: 18) must also entail a coming to terms with absence – the absence of absolute foundations and full identity – I suggest that some experiences of shame can induce just such a process of mourning structural trauma, which both Santner and LaCapra assert is a precondition to being able to work through historical trauma. I am thus to some extent, reversing Habermas's argument, which asserts 'that only memory's constant performativity in the public sphere can' (Wood 1999: 40) facilitate the development of what he (1984) calls postconventional individual identities that are able to tolerate and live with difference. In chapter 6, I thus try to demonstrate that this emphasis on public memory and historical trauma, although absolutely necessary and important, because victims need to be publicly named and recognized and anything else would be an 'effective mandate in favor of a generalized melancholia' (Butler 2004: 36-37), is not necessarily enough.

Beyond public education about and commemoration of the Holocaust, I argue a blow to narcissistic national identification that occurs in shame is necessary to serve the tasks of mourning in 'the double "post" of the postmodern and the post-Holocaust'. This is especially the case, as Michael Kohlstruck (1997: 10, 92; see also Schneider, C. 2004: 280-81) finds in his study, that an 'im- or explicit sense of belonging [*Zugehörigkeitsgefühle*]' plays an important role for the 'third generation's' relation to NS. The NS past is thus often primarily relevant to them in a collective sense. This in turn is related to the fact that the 'third generation' is, as Aleida Assmann (2007a: 64-66) writes, the first transnational generation, whose members are on their travels around the world as well as in an increasingly multicultural Germany confronted with difference in a way that their parents never were. It is this particular characteristic that shapes the experiences of most members of the 'third generation', certainly of those I interviewed, which I see contains the possibility of inaugurating a

more sustained working-through of the past; at the same time, if shame remains unacknowledged, it can also comprise the seeds for a return to defiant national pride.

In my focus on shame I am here following historian Dirk Moses' (2007a, 2007b, 2007c) important work which has shifted the focus from discussions of (collective) guilt to stigma and its 'emotional product[s]' shame, which is seen by many (see Strote 2009: 333; Probyn 2005) as much more productive than guilt. The experience of shame is particularly well-disposed to instigate processes of working-through, especially structural but also historical trauma, because, as social philosopher Helen Lynd (1958: 37) observes, it often entails '[t]he loss of the identity one thought one had'. Elspeth Probyn (2005: 2) in her recent book on shame concurs: '[s]hame makes us feel small and somehow undone'. Philosopher Giorgio Agamben (1999: 106; see also Sedgwick 2003: 37) notes the 'double movement' of 'both subjectification and desubjectification' that the experience of shame entails. Shame tends to be particularly virulent when one finds oneself literally out of place (Probyn 2005: 37-41) and in a different cultural space or, as Lynd (1958: 35) puts it 'out of key with one's environment'. 'Shame is [thus] not only an intrapsychic process but also an interpersonal one; it occurs *within* persons as well as *between* them' as Retzinger (1996: 17; emphasis in original) remarks. As such, it is a deeply social emotion, involving a real or fantasized reflection '*of how we look in others' eyes*' (ibid.: 13; emphasis in original; Taylor 1985). In shame, one sees oneself through the eyes of another and is thereby exposed to oneself as something or someone other than expected or previously known, and mostly as in some way failing (an ideal) and defective. Shame estranges one from oneself.

Hence, it is often noted (Taylor 1985: 59; Lynd 1958; Probyn 2005) that experiences of shame produce a particularly heightened state of self-consciousness, as they entail becoming conscious of parts of our selves that have so far remained unacknowledged and unconscious. In distinction to Agamben (1999: 106; see also Levinas 2003 [1982]), who regards shame as an 'ontological sentiment', fundamental to shaping our subjectivity, I want to draw attention to the productive and transformative aspects of *acknowledged* shame. Although I share Judith Butler's (2004, 2005) view that we

can never be *fully* conscious of and transparent to ourselves, I also agree with LaCapra and Santner that we can try to become *more* conscious of ourselves. Thus I argue with Suzanne Retzinger (1996: 14) that as long as shame remains unacknowledged, it breeds resentment because ‘it is the ‘other’ who is experienced as the source of hostility’ while acknowledged shame can indeed ‘lead to greater awareness of both self and the social world’, (ibid.: 18) because it is through the other and with the recognition of one’s inherent social relatedness that one conducts one’s search for self-identity.

In stressing shame’s transformative and productive aspects, Probyn and other shame theorists (see Sedgwick 2003) correct an often one-sided view of shame as regressive (e.g. Benedict [1946] 1967; Branscombe & Doosje 2004; Brendler 1997; Leys 2007, Rensmann 2004). The latter view is especially concerned about an implied ‘shift of attention away from questions of human agency to questions about the attributes of a subject’ that is found to be ‘at stake in the general valorization of shame and depreciation of guilt’ (Leys 2007: 150). While (collective) guilt is associated with action, cognition and intention as well as deeds judged as transgressive by an internal moral authority – the subject feeling guilty as the ‘largely inner-directed creature[s] of the Protestant conscience and Kantian moral autonomy’ (Parker 1996: 2-3) – the subject feeling shame is seen to be responding primarily to ‘external sanctions’ (Benedict: 156-57).

The crucial difference between guilt and shame is, however, the notion that guilt can be relieved by ‘confession[,] . . . atonement’ (Benedict: 156-57), ‘punishment [and] forgiveness’ (Taylor 1985: 90), and/or by rituals of (inner) purification (Jaspers [1947] 2001), or (public) rituals of mourning (Habermas 1989a), while shame ‘lingers deep within the self’ (Probyn 2005: 2) leaving wide open the question whether one can ever “‘deshame” oneself” (ibid.: 7). Shame can return ‘long after the particular moment of shaming has passed’ (Probyn 2005: 46). However, as the experience of shame involves the whole subject, not only its transgressive (in)actions, the theoretical move to shame is anxiously viewed as an abnegation of questions of individual and collective responsibility because it is seen to ‘replace[s] . . . concerns

about accountability with an emphasis on the question of our personal attributes' (Leys 2007: 185).

Yet, while this view of responsibility as tied to conscious action and guilt is very limited, in drawing on Judith Butler's recent work, I argue that it is precisely in (acknowledged) shame that responsibility emerges, albeit not necessarily a self-consciously accepted one. The often unexpected nature of shame (Lynd 1958: 27-34), that speaks of the capacity of something outside of ourselves to overwhelm us, reminds us that we are social beings and precisely not completely autonomous. In chapters 7 and 8, I thus suggest that ethical agency and responsibility emerge not as the result of our autonomy from our social context, but precisely within 'the context of an enabling and limiting field of constraint' (Butler 2005: 19) that is marked by what preceded the subject, i.e. by its history. It is in the experience of shame that the 'self [becomes] *affiliated with* the horrors of its history' (Mandel 2006: 218; emphasis in original). I furthermore assert that we become affiliated with and aware of the horrors of our history in shame because it speaks of what has not yet – and perhaps can never be – fully mourned, worked through and incorporated into a public iconography of memory. The shame felt by some of the interviewees in my sample might be interpreted as the unassimilable remainder or the reminder of the unassimilable (LaCapra 1998: 187) that makes itself felt rather than immediately available to conscious knowledge.

The way I here conceptualize experiences of shame comes close to what Avery Gordon (1997, 2004) specifies as haunting. Like haunting, which 'describe[s] those singular yet repetitive instances when home becomes unfamiliar, when [our] bearings on the world lose direction, when the over-and-done-with comes alive, when what's been in [our] blindspot comes into view' (Gordon 2004: xvi), in shame 'we become strangers in a world where we thought we were at home' (Lynd 1958: 46), highlighting 'hitherto unrecognized aspects of one's personality . . . [and] one's society' (Lynd: 183). The *Heim[at]*, the home suddenly becomes *unheimlich*, uncanny (Freud [1919] 1959). Thus, I argue that in shame we can have that unique experience with history that Benjamin speaks of, in which the past enters into 'a

tension-filled constellation with the present' (Buck-Morss 1989: 218) and is blasted out of the continuum of the 'homogeneous, empty time' (Benjamin 1968: 261) of history and becomes present.

As shame is an inherently social emotion (Scheff 2003: 256) because it constitutes 'a threat to the social bond' that comes with being exposed (as defective or lacking), it also tells us that we care about the state of the particular social bond threatened. 'Without interest' or care, Probyn (2005: 14) and Retzinger (1996) write 'there can be no shame'. '[C]onversely, shame alerts us to things, people, and ideas that we didn't even realize we wanted. It highlights unknown or unappreciated investments.'

I want to end this chapter with a few remarks about reconciliation. Unlike what is currently practised as reconciliation in Germany, i.e. reconciliation as 'normalization' and universalization of trauma, which eradicates difference in an eagerness to render everyone a victim, shame, '[u]nlike empathy,' Probyn (2000: 57) contends:

'does not permit any automatic sharing of commonality: it is that which poses deep limits to communication. Shame can be made to insist on the specific nature of the acts that caused it; it can be made to mark the awesome materiality of its own condition of possibility. It stakes out the moments of possible reconciliation without losing sight of the conditions, which have produced their specific feeling and modality. The possibilities of connection are many, but they are also always circumscribed by the finite localised action, of reconciliation performed in local realities that brings the past into the present.'

At the end of chapter 5, I thus borrow Ole Frahm's (2004) phrase of 'the shamelessness of the German victim identification' to argue that *idiopathic* identifications with one's Nazi perpetrator, follower and *Wehrmacht* soldier grandparents as victims are shameless, because they leave the family, the home, the past and national identity intact, marginalize and exclude traces of the extreme, of collaboration and perpetration and thus avoid the reconstitution of identity in 'the double "post" of the postmodern and the post-Holocaust' (Santner 1990: 18). 'It is the shamelessness of identifying oneself as victim, in order not to have to face the responsibility for the deeds' (Frahm 2004a: 375).

2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I tried to lend a theoretical basis to my argument for a continued relevance, perhaps even urgency, of the tasks of working-through the Nazi past in the generation of the grandchildren. Considerations of these tasks have however increasingly fallen by the wayside both in academic studies and journalistic commentary, dismissed as they are as ideological relics of the generation of 1968 and the old Federal Republic. Although certain theoretical assumptions underpinning the idea of collective and individual working-through of the Nazi past are in need of serious reconsiderations and reformulations, this should not lead us to throw out the baby with the bathwater. In distinction to the holy trinity of the tradition of German *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* – Adorno, the Mitscherlichs and Habermas – I thus stressed the importance of what LaCapra and Santner term structural trauma and the reconstitution of identity as open to relatedness and difference that occurs when shame is acknowledged. Only when we no longer experience haunting – as Julia does – as persecution but as an invitation to follow the ghosts, the present absences, and what they might reveal, are we able to begin with the overwhelming task of ‘mourning’ the suffering of the victims of Nazi Germany. This focus on the limits of representation – on the margins and exclusions of the family stories of NS that the interviewees recount – that this focus on haunting entails, raises a series of methodological questions, which I will examine in the following chapter.

Chapter 3: Methods

At the limits of narrative: Analysing family and life stories of the grandchildren of the war and Nazi perpetrator generation in Germany

3.1 Introduction

Narrative has made an ‘astonishing “comeback”’ (Hinchman & Hinchman 1997: xiv) in the humanities and social sciences in the last two decades. Although definitions of narrative vary greatly, it can be broadly ‘defined as temporal sequencing of events’ (Andrews *et al.* 2000: 3). While there is much disagreement about the extent to which we shape narrative or narrative shapes us and the events we recount, narrative allows us to view the self ‘as a psychosocial phenomenon’ (ibid.: 1) at the crossroads between individual and society. Scholars who are dissatisfied with structuralism and poststructuralism, which drowns the self-shaping individual in social structures and discourses, thus particularly endorse the concept of narrative. Although embedded in and dependent on its social context, theories of narrative identity conceive of the individual as having a certain leeway over how it interprets its own experience. Yet, although the ‘narrative turn’ thus fits well with Santner’s and LaCapra’s agenda to resurrect some form of the agentic, responsible individual, LaCapra (2001) in particular takes issue with the view championed by strong narrativists in history (White 1992), literature (Young 1988) and psychology (Bruner 1991, 2004, Brockmeier 2002; Brockmeier & Harré 2001) which asserts that meaning inheres in narrative structures which produce historical accounts and identities. This strong view of narrative thus raises issues concerning historical truth and the limits of narrative – to which I shall return in the final section of this chapter – as it begs the question of how to arbitrate between competing narratives of the same event and whether there is a reality beyond narrative.

Before doing so, however, I want to devote the first part of this chapter to a method that is curiously absent from almost any of the academic works on the memory of the Holocaust written by children or grandchildren of Nazi perpetrators or fellow travellers, namely auto-ethnography.⁵⁴ Although there has been a veritable surge of (fictional) autobiographies by the grand/children of the war and perpetrator generation, this widespread trend towards greater self-reflexivity does not seem to have reached German academia just yet. And while academic literary criticism and commentary of this autobiographical output is swelling rapidly, the old scholarly habit of strictly separating between the personal and professional seems to remain obstinately. I find this absence particularly curious not only because, as Raul Hilberg (cited in Welzer *et al.* 2002: 10) once remarked that the Holocaust is family history in Germany, but also ‘as far as memory . . . is concerned, private and public turn out in practice less readily separable than conventional wisdom would have us believe’ (Kuhn [1995] 2002: 4). After having considered my personal investments in this project and how they have shaped it, I will elucidate the recruitment process, the make-up of the sample and the interviews themselves, to return to the analytical questions raised above.

3.2 *Auto-ethnography as method: the self as a ‘fieldwork tool’*⁵⁵

Shulamit Reinharz (1997: 4) notes that it is ‘through understanding the relevance and creation of different characteristics of the researcher in the setting that the self becomes the key fieldwork tool.’ It is thus that, in this section, I would like to pose two questions. Firstly, as I am writing this thesis about the grandchildren of Nazi perpetrators and followers while being myself such a grandchild, how did I use auto-ethnographic/auto-biographical writing as a method during the course of this project? ‘Being native’ furthermore raises the important issue of distance to and intimacy with the field. How did I navigate this fraught line between the personal and the

⁵⁴ The only exception here is Schneider *et al.* (1996).

⁵⁵ Reinharz (1997: 3).

‘professional’ academic? Secondly, to what extent and how will my own self become part of the text? What genres and conventions are most appropriate and useful in this context? However, before I can begin to think about these questions, a few methodological remarks about the nature of the subject itself, i.e. the Holocaust, are in order.

3.2.1 The Holocaust as an object of study

The Holocaust makes it very difficult, if not impossible, even for an academic, to approach it completely neutrally and objectively; to remain totally unaffected by it (see Bos 2003: 50). Dominick LaCapra (1994, 1998, 2001) has written extensively about the methodology of Holocaust historiography to claim that ‘[t]he Holocaust represents the historian with transference in the most traumatic form conceivable – but in a form that will vary with the difference in subject-position of the analyst’ (1994: 45-46). While he argues that one can neither remain completely objective when confronted with the Holocaust – a stance he (1994: 70-71) calls a deceptive objectivity – one also should not give free reign to unchecked identification with either victims or perpetrators when producing works about the Holocaust. As we have seen in the previous chapter, he renders empathic unsettlement a precondition for working-through the past, but asserts that it should be followed by a critical engagement ‘with the problem of one’s relation to the past’ (ibid.: 57). While my problem during the course of this project was perhaps less with what LaCapra calls deceptive objectivity than with unchecked identification with the victims, it needs to be noted that the resulting ‘sense of moral obligation and selfless effort’ (Bos 2003: 50), that informed my interviewing and writing for some time, can, however, be just as deceptive, particularly because it can engender a false sense of security by absolutely and conveniently separating oneself from the perpetrators.

An overidentification with the victims can hide the fact that our positions and investments are in most instances ‘much more complex’ (Bos 2003: 50-51) and complicated than we are inclined to admit. This is particularly so, I would argue, for

descendants of Nazi perpetrators and followers. Questioning the un-self-reflexive adoption of such an identification with the victims, Bos (ibid.: 51) for example argues that ‘whereas our emotional investment in this work seems undeniable, the nature of this investment and the kinds of work to which it leads us, have often been left unexamined.’ My own initial, but obstinate, over-identification with the victims of the Holocaust and the adoption of this ‘safe’ but, in my case, at times quite moralistic, even dogmatic, position has sometimes made me quite self-righteous in the interviews and their analysis, but I shall discuss this in more detail below. Yet, as a young German woman, with a family history marred by active Nazi collaboration and perpetration, I felt obligated to side with the victims in defending an anamnestic memory that I consider as increasingly under threat. However, in taking this position and the way I remained (narcissistically) attached to it, I at the same time neglected the fact that in doing so I also conveniently distanced and dissociated myself from this family history as well as not realizing that this position was not without its own evasions and disavowals.

This does not mean that I am rejecting an identification with the victims; rather, I want to show an awareness of its ambiguity and perhaps also its historicity. Christian Schneider (2004) helpfully puts into historical context the moralism that has come to guide many efforts at *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* and which is manifestly influenced by the generation of 1968. He (ibid.: 247) notes that the generation of 1968 engaged in what he calls a ‘hysterical identification with the murdered [Jews] – and . . . claim[ed] to speak accusatorily in their name.’ Yet, while Schneider (ibid.) argues that this counter-identification [*Gegenidentifizierung*] with the victims was a necessary social psychological passage, he agrees with LaCapra that it needs to be worked through to be able to distinguish between empathy and unchecked identification. To be able to draw that distinction and get closer to what LaCapra (1994: 70-71) regards as a ‘defensible mode of objectivity’, which is ‘achieved in and through an explicit, theoretically alert resistance to projective or wish-fulfilling tendencies and an attempt to engage critically the problem of one’s transference relation to the past’, I was thus compelled to practice ‘*Wissenschaft in erster Person*’ [‘science in the first person’] as Schneider *et al.* (1996: 14-15) put it.

3.2.2 *The self in the field*

They (ibid.) furthermore assert that, if one wants to write a history about Germany's post-Holocaust generations as a 'native', it is necessary to relinquish 'the lofty restraint of the scientist'. It is thus that the method of auto-ethnography lent itself to this project, as it rejects the idea that the researcher can and should remain hidden from the research process and the production of the scholarly text (see Denzin 1989: 34) and allows for the self to be 'recognized as a salient part of the research process' (Spry 2001: 711). As Reinharz (1997: 3, emphasis in original) puts it 'we both *bring* the self to the field and create the self in the *field*.' Although the precise terms of what auto-ethnography is or should be remain contested, I will here refrain from discussing matters of definition and adopt Reed-Danahay's (1997: 9) notion of auto-ethnography as 'a method and a text' which 'can be done by either an anthropologist who is doing "home" or "native" ethnography' or 'by an autobiographer who places the story of his or her life within a story of the social context in which it occurs.'

Let me begin by addressing the issue of my status as 'insider' or 'native'. Obviously, the choice (if we can really speak of choice here) of the subject for this study is in one sense a deeply personal one. I would thus agree with Ruth Behar's (cited in Motzafi-Haller 1997: 210) statement that 'You don't choose to write the books you write, any more than you choose your mother, your father, your brother, your children', more because the family metaphor she uses to describe the relation of the researcher to his/her subject captures so very well how I came to this project, rather than because of its perhaps more stringent broader methodological implications. I am thus not arguing that 'being native' provides some kind of privileged access to knowledge. Rather, I simply want to point out that, in a similar way to Vieda Skultans (1998: x), a medical anthropologist and a Latvian émigré to the United Kingdom, who conducted a study on biographical narratives in post-Soviet Latvia, this project emerged out of a mixture of 'necessity with coincidence'. Skultans (ibid.: ix) recounts how being a trained anthropologist and Latvian by birth (thus speaking

the language) not only turned the country into ‘a natural fieldwork destination’ but also how her own family history pulled her to studying how Latvians narrated their life stories, fractured by political upheaval and terror. It is in allowing, perhaps even fostering, this ‘bridging of the domains of the personal and the public’ that Radstone (2008: 33) sees one of the great strengths – and dangers – of memory studies, as work in this field often emerges out of a ‘felt urgency’ of questions that arise from ‘personal or familial links’ (ibid.).

The way I came to this project has, however, an added affective dimension: my interest in family memory of NS was primarily instigated by the intense shame I felt in the wake of my move abroad. It was only in London, where I experienced my ‘German identity’ as something shameful and to be hidden, that I gradually and increasingly became interested firstly in the Holocaust and secondly in my own family history. Only from the ‘safe’ distance of the island, was I able to ask my family and myself questions relating to NS.⁵⁶ The fact that I grew up in Germany with two absent and yet very present grandfathers shaped my initial path into this study. Both of my grandfathers died after the war but before I was born. In attempting to get closer to the ‘truth’ about their past, and have my burning question to what extent they were actively involved in committing crimes answered, I submitted requests for information with the Berlin Document Centre, the *Deutsche Dienststelle* WAST⁵⁷ in Berlin, and the *Zentrale Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen zur Aufklärung nationalsozialistischer Verbrechen*⁵⁸ in Ludwigsburg about their time in the army as well as my paternal grandfather’s NSDAP membership. As part of these researches, I learnt that my paternal grandfather was an early (Nov. 1932) member of the SA and the National Socialist party (NSDAP), had two denazification proceedings and was eventually classified as fellow traveller. He was also a *Wehrmacht* soldier in Poland, France, Luxemburg and Greece, while my maternal

⁵⁶ These questions were largely debated between my parents and myself, as my paternal grandmother had a severe stroke when I was twelve years old, which rendered her paralyzed and mute. I had one conversation with my maternal grandmother about her experiences of NS shortly before she died in 2005.

⁵⁷ The official archive housing the records of members of the former *Wehrmacht*.

⁵⁸ The Central Office of the State Justice Administration for the Investigation of National Socialist Crimes.

and much younger grandfather did not join the Nazis but fought for the *Wehrmacht* (6th army) on the Eastern front. My initial focus on the *Wehrmacht* exhibition was thus in many ways driven by a very personal desire to find out what my grandfathers had done before and especially during the war.

Disappointed by the lack of more detailed information available and disheartened by an increasing awareness that I would not be able to get any quick answers – perhaps never get any answers – my method began to shift from archival research to psychoanalysis. My interest turned from historical questions about what ‘really’ happened to questions concerning the after-effects of the historical events as well as issues of memory transmission and the representation of the past. I began to ponder my grandmothers’ pasts and their relation to NS. My grandparents’ Wilhelmine and National Socialist childrearing practices became one way of thinking about how the Nazi past shaped the childhood and personal development of my parents and myself (see Chamberlain [1997] 2003). Then questions such as how my grandparents’, but also my parents’, dissociation of and silence about both family’s Nazi and war past influenced our family and my personal life became relevant. I became intensely interested in the psychopathologies of post-war family life in Germany (Schneider 1984) and particularly in the psychological and psychodynamic defense mechanisms structuring the process of the transmission of the memory of National Socialism and the Holocaust through the generations. Devouring the psychoanalytic literature on this topic (Bergmann & Jucovy 1982; Bohleber 1990; Grünberg & Straub 2001; Eckstaedt 1982, 1986, 1989, 1992; Rosenthal *et al.* 1997a), I found myself increasingly unable to distinguish between my efforts to analyze my family and myself and the academic project. At that time, I saw my analytic (sociological) vocabulary shrink to a few basic psychoanalytic insights and my concern about understanding the ‘field’ drastically recede into the background.

It took a long time before I could begin to disentangle the ‘personal’ from the professional and academic, while also recognizing that they can never be separated completely. Although I believe this phase of the research process was thoroughly necessary, the delay it caused also somehow makes me sympathetic to those arguing

that too much self-reflexivity has the potential to become narcissistic and self-indulgent and hence detract from the field as well as possibly depoliticize both subject and object of study.⁵⁹ What was helpful here was Reinharz's (1997: 18) position, which, not unlike LaCapra's, argues that '[u]nderstanding the self in fieldwork releases us from the epistemological tension between unreflexive positivism, on the one hand, and naval gazing on the other.' So, what I want to stress here is that feminist methodological insights helped me regain some distance and assisted me in striking a balance between 'unreflexive positivism' and 'naval gazing', by allowing me to take seriously the idea that my own personal experience and self is not only an obstacle to be overcome, as Rosenthal (2007: 47)⁶⁰ implies and is common in so much of 'German' mainstream sociology, but can, perhaps even must, be used as a central resource and tool.

Following Coffey (1999), I find it very helpful to view this submergence in the field not as entailing the total loss of analytical distance, but as in potentially many different ways, 'pedagogically fruitful' (31) and 'methodologically and personally significant' (34). Her idea that there is no necessarily right or wrong way of treading that fraught line between the personal and the professional is thus very helpful here, allowing as it does for a broader view of the possibilities and limits of and in the field. Coffee describes the relation between the personal and the professional as 'not an easily negotiated, emotional balance – between seeking and losing an identity' (ibid.) and goes on to argue that:

'[i]t is impossible to differentiate the subjective, embodied self from the socio-political and the researcher-professional. Our own sense of personhood – which will include age, race, gender, class, history, sexuality – engages personalities, histories and subjectivities of others present in the field. Our own subjective personality is part of the research and is negotiated within the field (ibid.: 57).'

⁵⁹ Bell (2007: 64; see also Radstone 2008) notes that this approach can be critiqued for its potential 'to encourage the political subject into an endless navel-gazing, [and] applauding procrastinations that ultimately render her *apolitical*.'

⁶⁰ She (ibid.) writes that '[n]arratives concerning National Socialism are characterized in the first place by denials, reinterpretations and formation of myths, so analysis demands that the researcher exercise a permanent methodological doubt and overcome his or her own West German socialization.' Although she is right to point out that these narratives are full of denials and evasions and that one is well advised to exercise permanent methodological doubt, she is unable to even allude to how the overcoming of one's West German socialization would look like.

Easier to tackle is perhaps the methodological and aesthetic question of how to incorporate the self into the study itself, i.e. is it to be contained within the preface and the methods chapter, or is it to become part of ‘the whole text’ (Coffey 1999: 6) as well as ‘the subject of study or analysis’ (ibid.: 122)? Coffey (ibid.: 122) calls the former textual and methodological strategy ‘partial autobiographical accounts’ and the latter ‘tales of the self’ (ibid.: 123). Although I think it is important to be self-reflexive, I will here refrain from taking the auto-ethnographic approach beyond the methods chapter, because I do not want to detract from the interviews themselves.

3.3 *Interviews*

3.3.1 *Sample and recruitment*

Although not identical, as some constructionists (see Bruner 1991, 2004; Denzin 2000) claim, memory and narrative are nevertheless intimately related, as much of what we remember is in narrative form. Furthermore, the self is to a large extent a narrative production. Thus, I have chosen to explore the question of how young Germans remember the Nazi past and how they shape and are shaped by this past by conducting interviews. What discourses and conventions do they draw on and what interpretive tools do they use to structure and give content to narratives of the National Socialist past, especially that of their families? Interviews seemed the most adequate method in this case because, interested as I am in these ‘third generation’ Germans’ subjectivity and how they live and experience their ‘German’ identity, this method would provide me with their self and family narratives. I refrained from also interviewing other family members of these young Germans, i.e. their parents and grandparents, or conduct family conversations with three-generation families, not only because this would have seriously prolonged the recruitment and interviewing process, but also because the studies by Rosenthal *et al.* (1997) and Welzer *et al.* (2002) have already done exactly that. Rather, it is my exclusive focus on the

grandchildren, which goes beyond the familial realm to include considerations about cultural memory and national identity that distinguishes my own study from their work. The unit of analysis is thus not the family, but the individual. This, however, does not mean that I am not interested in family memory, but rather that I am keen to find out how the relation between ‘private’ family memory and ‘public’ historical memory plays itself out in the generation of the grandchildren.

It is at this point that a definition of the term generation becomes vital because it determines who counts as a potential interviewee. In my definition of generation I am following Rosenthal (1997c, 2000), whose analysis of the constitution of generations takes into account both people’s historical location as members of age cohorts or historical generations (see also Mannheim [1928] 1952; Miller 2000) as well as their genealogical position within the family. Accordingly, it was not only the age of the interviewees – they were born between 1964 and 1986 – that was decisive, but also that at least one of their grandfathers was a *Wehrmacht* soldier. The interviewees thus roughly coincide with what Rosenthal (1997c: 71) calls ‘the generation between consumption and crisis’ (1962-1970) and what A. Assmann (2007a: 64-66) labels the generation of 1985 (1965-1980). This generation, Assmann asserts, defines itself against the values and interpretations held by their political parents, the student rebels of 1968.

I did three rounds of interviews in Germany, one in spring 2006, another in November 2006, and the third round in March and April of 2009. Additionally, I interviewed four young women (Dagmar, Yvonne, Alberta and Julia) and one young man (Dieter) in London between August 2006 and October 2009.⁶¹ I went on an initial two-month research trip to Germany, stopping in Hamburg and a smaller South Western town to conduct the first batch of interviews. I selected Hamburg as a destination because it is home to the *Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung*, which commissioned the *Wehrmacht* exhibition – one important focus of the study. The

⁶¹ I interviewed Dagmar and Dieter in August 2006, Yvonne in May 2009, Alberta in June 2009 and Julia in May 2009 and again in October 2009. I am not using the interview with Dieter, because it was conducted in a busy café, and is of extremely poor sound quality.

smaller South-Western town was selected because a lady ('second generation') I met at a conference in Germany was kind enough not only to volunteer to be interviewed but also to help me recruit a number of her friends and acquaintances in the town. During the first trip I conducted 20 interviews,⁶² of which I am using 15 in this study, as two of those interviewed were members of the children's generation and the other three lacked the richness of later interviews. I returned to Hamburg in November 2006 to re-interview three interviewees (Ilka, Sebastian and Fabian).⁶³ The rationale for this second trip was to learn whether the first interview had triggered anything in the interviewees, e.g. a desire to find out more about their Nazi family histories and/or instigated family conversations about NS. During these second interviews, I also became interested in the question if, and what difference the FIFA World Cup that had taken place in Germany in the summer of 2006 had made to these interviewees' self-conceptions as Germans.

Having begun to analyze the interviews and to write the first empirical chapter, I realized I had only asked a minority of those fifteen interviewees I was going to include in the study a host of questions that emerged as very important after the first close reading of the interviews. These were especially questions concerning national identity and belonging, the cultural memory of the Holocaust and guilt and shame. The earlier interviews, i.e. those conducted in Hamburg and in the South West of Germany and some of those in London (Dagmar, Silke), concentrated in large parts on the interviewees' family dynamics and Nazi family histories. So, I went back to Germany for a third time in 2009, to conduct another fifteen interviews in Berlin, seven of which I am using. These interviews are much more extensive in their focus on 'German' national identity, Holocaust memory and guilt and shame.

I interviewed 39 people altogether, 25 of which I am using. There are eleven men and fourteen women in the sample. Of these, twelve interviewees were in higher

⁶² All names are pseudonyms and all dates and names of places have been altered to protect the identity of the interviewees. Fourteen of these interviews were conducted in Hamburg and five in the smaller South Western town. For a full list of the interviewees and their biographical data see Appendix I, page 289.

⁶³ I re-interviewed two of the Hamburg interviewees in the spring 06 – Caspar and Anna – during the course of my first stay there.

education at the time of the interview, thirteen had already graduated from university and one (Yvonne) has no university education, but a General Certificate of Secondary Education [*Realschulabschluss*]. So the sample consists of highly-educated,⁶⁴ widely-travelled⁶⁵ young people, who come from a lower to upper middle-class background. With such a skewed sample, this study is obviously in danger of reproducing a stratification that already exists in society: well-educated people are (assumed to be) also the ones who decisively shape the production of cultural memory. However, such a view, neglects the fact that cultural memory is to various degrees shaped by all groups in society; that cultural memory is always ‘a field of contested meanings’ (Sturken 1997: 2) or ‘a field of cultural negotiation through which different stories vie for a place in history’ (ibid.: 1). It is thus that I need to acknowledge this methodological shortcoming, that prevents me from being able to make any larger general claims about the generation of the grandchildren, which I would be able to make were my sample a more representative one.

What might perhaps be more problematic is that the sample is also highly skewed in terms of interviewees who grew up in former East or West Germany. There are four interviewees, Sebastian, Sabine, Johanna and Yvonne, who grew up in the former GDR and were children or young teenagers⁶⁶ when it collapsed in 1989-90, while the rest of the sample grew up in various parts of former West Germany. Although there are differences between the former GDR and the FRG in how the Nazi past was spoken about in families and how it was taught at school, the work of Sabine Moeller (2003) shows that the Holocaust is equally marginalized in families on either side of the former East/West divide. Furthermore, the interviewees were quite young when the Wall came down and were thus mainly educated about the Holocaust and NS in

⁶⁴ Everyone in the sample, except one interviewee, already had or was in the process of doing a BA equivalent higher education course [*Diplomstudium*] at the time of the interview, two were in the process of doing a Masters degree and five already had or were doing a PhD.

⁶⁵ Sixteen interviewees spent at least six months living abroad, many of them much longer than that. Seven interviewees have travelled extensively in Europe and elsewhere but had never lived abroad and five do not mention any experiences of travelling or living abroad. This is however due to the fact that these interviewees were among the first to be interviewed and the question of national identity and how of they experienced themselves as Germans abroad were not yet asked.

⁶⁶ Sebastian (1977) was twelve, Sabine (1984) five, Johanna (1982) seven and Yvonne (1980) nine years old in 1989.

unified Germany, which, to a large extent, adopted the FRG's curriculum (Moller 2003: 186).

Most interviewees are self-selected, with the exception of Horst, his wife Evelyn, Alexander Fiebert and Silke Turner, who were recruited through friends and acquaintances. Those interviewed in London were recruited via an Internet forum called *Deutsche in London* [Germans in London],⁶⁷ where I posted⁶⁸ two calls for interviewees. Most interviewees were, however, recruited via posters (see Appendix A, page 277) that I put up on the notice boards of the universities of Hamburg and Berlin (Humboldt University and Free University), stating that I was 'looking for members of the generation of grandchildren (between the ages of 20 and 37 years) of the German war (and perpetrator) generation, who would volunteer to be interviewed about the National Socialist past.' I also explained that I was doing my PhD in sociology at Goldsmiths College, University of London, and that my work was about 'German family memory of National Socialism and the Second World.' Fabian, my first interviewee gave me some 'wise' feedback on the posters, advising me to remove the word perpetrator [*Täter*] because it had initially frightened him off. Since I was anything but successful in finding interviewees at the beginning, I followed his advice and removed the word perpetrator from all posters. Although I am hesitant to put the subsequent ease with which I managed to recruit interviewees down to the removal of this one word, I am nevertheless certain that it greatly facilitated the whole process. The eagerness to speak about family histories that I then encountered in the grandchildren was striking.

The interviewees came to the interview with a host of different agendas and expectations (see Corbin & Morse 2003: 342). While some wanted to learn something about themselves and/or become aware of certain silences,⁶⁹ this 'risky' endeavour, that was the interview, was at times also seriously undermined by an

⁶⁷ <http://www.deutsche-in-london.net/>

⁶⁸ I submitted two calls for interviewees, one on 20th August 2006 and one on 1st May 2009.

⁶⁹ As oral historian Alessandro Portelli (1997: 4) points out in relation to the oral history interview, which he argues 'implicitly enhances the authority and self-awareness of the narrator, and may raise questions about aspects of experience that the speaker has never spoken or even seriously thought about.'

often equally strong desire to defend and protect the grandparents and remain oblivious to silences and gaps in family narratives. In any case, many seemed to look for a protected (anonymous) space that allowed for a (relatively) open conversation about the Holocaust and Nazi family histories, which neither the family, nor school or friends could provide. The American psychologist Vamit Volkan (2002: 150), who has worked extensively with descendants of Holocaust victims and Nazi perpetrators, notes that there are still few ‘places that German people [can] go to discuss personal issues and psychological problems related to the Nazi era’. He (ibid.) continues: ‘[b]ecause contact between ethnic Germans and German Jews can easily be avoided in everyday life, people are rarely required to expose themselves to the emotional influence of the Nazi past.’ If school tends to be pervaded by a culture of authority and truth and the familial space often tends to be quite intolerant towards diverging and potentially dangerous interpretations of its Nazi past – dangerous because possibly threatening the community of the family with disintegration (see Rosenthal *et al.* 1997a; Welzer *et al.* 2002) – the question becomes: what kind of space did I want the interview to be?

I argue that the interview provided and created another, different, space of memory – or, as Schneider *et al.* (1996: 25) put it, a “space of possibility” – perhaps less impeded by these usual restrictions. It could offer such a space because it was an anonymous encounter between two complete strangers, and thus hospitable to efforts to be challenged; to exploring one’s family’s Nazi past without having to fear repercussions and to discussing personal issues relating to the impact of the past. It can be regarded as having provided the interviewees with the opportunity – which not everyone took – to (re-)narrate their family Nazi past in a way that was different, even contrary to how it is usually recounted and/or silenced in the family. In some instances, the interview thus had a discernible impact (see Reinharz & Chase 2003: 77), interrupting habitual ways of narrating oneself and one’s family history. In the case of one interviewee (Melanie), for example, it became a moment of recognition in which she became aware of her own implication in the continuation of the dissociation of the family’s Nazi past.

Yet, the fact that the interview itself also represented a kind of taboo, or at least a risk, with regards to family cohesion,⁷⁰ problematizes this ‘naïve’ idea of the interview space as one of free, unrestricted speech and raises the question to what extent feelings of family loyalty and ideas of family honour influenced it. For many, the interview was nevertheless the first time they had ever put their Nazi family histories into words and narrative. As the oral historian Alessandro Portelli (1997: 4; emphasis in original) asserts:

‘What is spoken in a typical oral history interview has usually never been told *in that form* before. Most personal or family tales are told in pieces and episodes, when the occasion arises; we learn even the lives of our closest relatives by fragments, repetitions, hearsay. Many stories or anecdotes may have been told many times within a narrator’s immediate circle, but the whole story has hardly ever been told in sequence as a coherent and organized whole.’

The interview thus led some to the realization that they hardly knew anything or much less than they thought about their family’s Nazi past. However, such lack of reliable knowledge did not prevent many interviewees from forming a coherent narrative. Often, the interview was also the first time the interviewees were critically asked about the absence of any acknowledgement of the persecution and annihilation of Jews in their family narratives, and thus to consider their grandparents precisely within the context of the murderous NS regime from which many wanted to keep them separated.

3.3.2 *Between confrontational and empathic interviewing*

At the beginning of the interviewing process, I seemed to have been on a ‘detective’ mission eager to discover the ‘truth’ about the interviewees’ Nazi family histories, thus emphasizing ‘truth and validity rather than meaning’ (Bornat 2006). I was very eager to discover Nazis in my respondents’ family histories and this ‘detective’ style led to several quite confrontational, even antagonistic interviews, particularly with

⁷⁰ A number of interviewees did not and were not going to tell their parents and/or grandparents about the interview, or were only going to tell them after it had already occurred. Furthermore, one potential interviewee was prohibited from being interviewed by her mother.

Sebastian and Fabian. Thus it often got in the way of my aim of wanting to provide an open, perhaps even therapeutic space during the interview. While I acted like an inquisitor rather than facilitator (see Bornat 2006) in these interviews, I slowly began to realize that this confrontational style might not necessarily be all that helpful. So my interviewing style began to oscillate between a confrontational and a more empathetic style. Although I do agree with Portelli's (1997: 12) argument in favour of a '(respectfully) antagonistic interviewer', I have come to the conclusion that this interviewing style is indeed helpful if the aim is to draw out someone's 'true' or controversial political and social views, but it might be less useful if the interview is about the delicate matter of Nazi family histories as well as guilt and shame about them. With regards to the latter, I found deploying interviewer self-disclosures and establishing reciprocity and similarity, or what Abell *et al.* (2006: 225) call 'shared experience'⁷¹, more helpful in getting people to open up about their Nazi family histories and (shameful) feelings of guilt and shame.

While the confrontational interviewing style produced some rich and interesting interviews, it has also made me in some respects deaf, intolerant, even moralistic. While I condemned my own grandparents (albeit in their absence), many of my interviewees were eager to understand their grandparents; a desire that I, in turn, could not comprehend. I was afraid that, if I were to empathize too much with the interviewees, I was going to end up understanding their and by extension my grandparents and their immoral and/or criminal (in)actions and with them the entire war and perpetrator generation. This was the slippery slope of understanding, often described by members of the generation of 1968 (Schneider *et al.* 1996; Schneider 1997), which I definitely wanted to avoid. Thus, the difficulties I had in relating to the interviewees were perhaps similar to those encountered by Schneider, Stilke and Leineweber (1996) in their study on families of NAPOLA⁷² students.

⁷¹ They (*ibid.*) describe 'establishing shared experience' as 'those instances where interviewer self-disclosure is presented and received as an account of shared experience, and functions to provoke further talk from the respondent.'

⁷² The abbreviation for the boarding schools, founded by the Nazis after 1933 to educate and physically train those who were chosen to become the Nazi elite. Although officially called *Nationalpolitische Erziehungsanstalten* (NPEA) they are usually referred to as *Nationalpolitische Lehranstalt* (Napola).

In the introduction to their study, they describe how the question of how to relate to their interviewees, not so much the members of the perpetrator generation but especially the members of their own 'second generation', challenged their own working relationship to the core. As members of this 'second generation' and the student movement, the authors (1996: 17) characterize themselves in terms of their past and present 'moral intransigence in the handling of National Socialism and the generation of perpetrators and fathers', as well as 'the categorical judgment in relation to political questions – and finally the secret fear to be “contaminated” by the legacy [*Erbe*] of the fathers.' For them, the option of understanding members of the war and perpetrator generation, as displayed by some of their interviewees, remained a taboo until their tacit agreement on this issue was challenged to the point of jeopardizing the conclusion of the whole project by one interviewee. 'To understand oneself simply as a child of a father, whose influence by National Socialism was beyond all doubt, to understand and identify with him, was the embodiment of the prohibited, while at the same time being of seductive attractiveness' (Schneider *et al.* 1996: 19). I would argue also my 'conflict revolved around the question of whether such an understanding was *possible*, without its subject [the subject that does the understanding, i.e. I, the researcher] surrendering itself as a moral person, being corrupted by the object [the member of the war and perpetrator generation] of understanding, so to speak' (ibid.: 21).

Having written a first draft of the first empirical chapter (chapter 4) and presented it at a seminar, I was confronted with my own 'moral intransigence'. Having analyzed the interviewees' empathetic and unsuspecting re-narrations of their grandparents' exculpations in a very critical way, I was asked why I was so afraid of allowing the interviewees to speak for themselves and thus 'silencing' what were in essence re-narrations of testimonies of Nazi perpetrators, followers and *Wehrmacht* soldiers. It seemed that I found comfort in morally judging the interviewees because, as Judith Butler (2005: 45) reminds us, judgment 'establishes a clear moral distance between the one who judges and the one who is judged.' In our eagerness to judge and condemn, Butler (ibid.; emphasis in original), although careful not to advocate the

expendability of judgment, urges us not to ‘forget that we are related to those we condemn, even those we *must* condemn’, otherwise ‘we loose the chance to be ethically educated’. I was thus compelled to find a space between an easy condemnation of those grandchildren who were, in my view, not critical enough of their own grandparents, and falling into the trap of uncritically colluding with them (and by extension their and my own grandparents). It was at this point that I found Les Back’s (2007) text on the ethical and political complexities of researching racists and white supremacists very helpful. In the context of contemplating ‘what is at stake when we, as researchers, expand our moral imagination to incorporate the racist into the realm of understanding,’ he (ibid.: 257) writes that ‘[t]he challenge is to think beyond such an either/or logic, refusing both [the ‘moral high ground’ of] a vanguardist position and the confessional narcissism of apologia.’ He (ibid.: 260) points out that this approach ‘necessitates a kind of ethical ambivalence’, highlighting the fact that this ambivalence involves a tension (between condemnation and understanding) that can and should not necessarily be resolved.

3.3.3 *From the standard in-depth interview to the biographical narrative interview*

Until the interview with Dagmar (interview Nr. 22, 28/08/2006) in London, the interview questions (see Appendix D, page 281) mostly concentrated on what and how much the interviewees knew about their grandparents’ NS and war past, how the latter was talked about and/or silenced within their families, as well as on family dynamics, i.e. how the respondents experienced their relationship to their grand/parents, and so on. Before the interview with Dagmar, I changed the interview style from a ‘normal’ semi-structured in-depth interview to something more akin to a ‘biographical-narrative interview’ (Rosenthal 2007: 50; see Appendix E, page 283) because I became increasingly conscious of how the structure of my questions was limiting, and perhaps even inhibiting, the narrative flow of the interviewees.

The ‘biographical-narrative interview’ is initiated by the interviewer’s ‘initial narrative question’ (Rosenthal 2007: 50),⁷³ followed by the interviewee’s autobiographical narrative and his or her family narrative. After finishing with their family and self-narratives, I asked the interviewee ‘*internal narrative questions*’, i.e. questions that arose out of these narratives to then pose more generic questions or ‘*external narrative questions*’, which were more in line with the particular interest of the study and derived from the ever more evolved and extended list of questions (Rosenthal 2007: 52). Thus, with the adoption of Rosenthal’s (2007, 1993) narrative-biographical interviewing style, I no longer asked a number of very specific questions about the interviewee’s family history but left the task of putting the past into a more or less coherent and meaningful narrative to the interviewees themselves. I also gave them the choice of whether to begin with their own life story or their family history. This method allows the interviewees’ to ‘structure the narration according to the criteria they themselves find relevant’ (ibid.). This was helpful insofar as it showed that what structures most of these narratives of family history is the perspective of the interviewees’ grandparents and, much more rarely, a distanced and critical perspective that includes condemnations and/or judgments of their grandparents’ morally reprehensible and/or criminal (in)actions during Nazism (Friedlander 1993; Schmitz 2007a; Welzer *et al.* 2002).

3.3.4 *The active interview(er)*

The interviews conducted in Berlin differ quite markedly from those undertaken in Hamburg three years earlier, not only with respect to the ‘biographical-narrative interview’ style, but also because the ‘external narrative questions’ of what it means to be German in the light of the Holocaust and NS became much more of a priority in the later interviews. During the earlier interviews, I often did not really listen to people when they wanted to talk about anything other than their family histories.

⁷³ I began these narrative interviews with the following question (see also Rosenthal 2007: 51): ‘Could you please tell me about your family history and your personal history? I am interested in your whole life and in whatever you can think of. I won’t ask any questions to begin with and will only make some notes about the things I might want to ask you about later.’

This made me miss a number of opportunities when interviewees had a different agenda and wanted to speak about public Holocaust memory and/or German national identity and/or guilt and shame. However, as I do not think that there is anything like a ‘neutral’ interviewer who, by remaining as removed and unbiased as possible manages to produce ‘uncontaminated’ interview data (Rapley 2007: 19), I do not regard this ‘deafness’ necessarily as a mistake but as in part arising out of the particular ‘social encounter[s]’ (Holstein & Gubrium 1995: 3; see also Enosh & Buchbinder 2005) between the interviewer and the interviewee. Although semi-structured, I conducted the interviews and regard the data they yield as the product of ‘interactional events’, ‘constructed in situ’ and ‘a product of the talk between interview participants’ (ibid.: 2). I would also argue with Holstein and Gubrium (1995: 4) in that both interviewee and interviewer are active participants in the interview and the construction of meaning.

Although each of my various identities, became relevant during different interviews, it was my ethical subjectivity and with it my status as a (competent) social researcher that was perhaps most often and most explicitly at issue and contested. In the interview with Sebastian – at the time also a sociology student – we leave the question-answer format and slide into a discussion about how to evaluate and interpret the Nazi past. While I argue that NS, to some extent, remains radically evil, he asserts that it was not purely bad and redeems several positive and progressive aspects of NS. He then advises me that, ‘one should indeed look at this [NS] in a more differentiated way, you should perhaps also/ . . . if you write an academic [*wissenschaftlich*] work about this, then you . . . have to view it in a more differentiated way.’ Thus, by challenging my competence as a social researcher because of my lack of objectivity, my ethical subjectivity comes into conflict with his conceptions of what a good social scientist should be.

Furthermore, I began most interviews with a self-disclosure⁷⁴ (see Appendix C, page 280) about my own Nazi family history and how it is dealt with in my family. I did

⁷⁴ Although its exact wording varied, I always told the interviewees what I knew about my grandfathers and often referred to my researches about their war and Nazi past. I also mentioned that I

this to make it easier and less embarrassing for the interviewees to tell me about their own grandparents' Nazi past. Reinharz and Chase (2003: 79; see also Abell *et al.* 2006) describe 'interviewer self-disclosure' as 'take[ing] place when the interviewer shares ideas, attitudes and/or experiences concerning matters that might relate to the interview topic in order to encourage respondents to be more forthcoming.' Abell *et al.* (ibid.) draw attention to the potential 'interviewer self-disclosure' may have, namely to 'prompt reciprocal talk on the part of the respondent, especially in relation to potentially "delicate" matters.' Although this strategy was successful in most cases, my initial self-disclosure compelled some interviewees to take up a more defensive position, feeling as they did that they had to defend their grandparents against an accusation that all *Wehrmacht* soldiers were perpetrators, which they seemed to detect in it. Furthermore, some seemed intimidated by my researches about my grandfathers' past, which made them feel less entitled to speak as they thought they lacked enough knowledge about their grandparents' past.

So, although one could say that I engaged in what is now variously called 'an *engaged, active, or collaborative* format of interviewing' (Rapley 2007: 22) in which 'interviewer and respondent tell a story together', I tried to contain my self-disclosures to points when I thought that references to my own experience might be helpful in explaining a particular question or might make it easier for the interviewees to speak about a shameful or embarrassing experience.⁷⁵ In the later interviews, I often refrained from the initial self-disclosure and took a more intuitive approach to self-disclosing in the interview more generally. So I eventually came to agree with Reinharz and Chase (2003: 80) who argue that interviewers should not adopt 'an abstract commitment' to self-disclosing, but should rather 'think about whether, when, and how much disclosure makes sense' in reference to each specific interaction. At the end of each interview I asked each interviewee to complete a questionnaire about their own, their parents' and grandparents' most important biographical data (see Appendix B, page 278).

assumed that they at the very least knew about, but most probably also witnessed and were actively involved in war crimes and the annihilation of Jews. I furthermore informed them that this past was and is barely spoken about in my family.

⁷⁵ Rapley (2007:23) refers to this as 'intimate reciprocity.'

3.4 *Methodology and analysis*

3.4.1 *Biographical methods and narrative analysis*

The biographical narrative approach, which developed out of the humanist and idealist philosophies of science and the *Verstehen*-based social science methods as practised especially by the Chicago School and social interactionism, is often regarded as a reaction against positivist, functionalist and structuralist strands of social science (Bertaux 1981b: 31; Rustin 2000: 43). While the latter ‘have tended to omit the “humanity” of the individual in the pursuit of causal accounts, objective study of general patterns of human behaviour and standard features of individuals drawn from natural science . . .’ (Roberts 2002: 4), biographical methods have allowed for a return to some form of the self-shaping individual. The biographical narrative approach, ‘which responds to the disintegration of master narratives as people make sense of experience, claim identities, and “get a life” by telling and writing their stories’ (Kohler Riessman 2008: 17) thus lends itself particularly well to memory research, which often has a very similar agenda.

Narrative has become progressively more important both as a concept that is employed to ‘emphasize[s] the active, self-shaping quality of human thought, the power of stories to create and refashion personal identity’ (Hinchman & Hinchman 1997: xiv; Kohler Riessman 1993), as well as that which (temporally) structures the identities and auto/biographies of individuals (Andrews *et al.* 2000; Holstein & Gubrium 2000) but also as a form of data analysis⁷⁶ (Andrews *et al.* 2007; Cortazzi 1993; Lieblich *et al.* 1998; Kohler Riessman 1993, 2008). Narrative analysis is thus

⁷⁶ Kohler Riessman (2008: 6) makes similar distinctions between three meanings of narrative: first, ‘the practice of storytelling,’ which is ‘a universal way of knowing and communicating,’ ‘narrative data’ and ‘narrative analysis’.

concerned with how people ‘interpret things’ and, as it emphasizes human agency, ‘it is well suited to studies of subjectivity and identity’ (Kohler Riessman 1993: 5).

Hence it comes as no surprise that many biographical researchers have found in psychoanalytic and psychodynamic approaches a rich resource with which to theorize this active subject (see Chamberlayne 2000; Hollway & Jefferson 2000). Chamberlayne *et al.* (2000: 8, citing Wrong 1961) argue that ‘to attempt to deepen our understanding of individual agency as *historical* means avoiding an excessively present-centred and functionalist ‘over-socialised concept of man’. Rustin (2000: 41-42) makes the same complaint about the almost total loss of individual agency in the wake of the ‘cultural turn’. Yet, Chamberlayne *et al.* (*ibid.*: 9) also warn of an equally unhelpful overemphasis of individual agency that can come with the adoption of the classical, modernist model of psychoanalysis, that I critiqued in the previous chapter, ‘in which personal self-understanding moves from self-defensive, unconscious mystification to self-aware understanding of real personal history, from illusion to truth’. The individual can only ever be conceived of as an ‘acted-upon agent’ (*ibid.*: 8), never fully conscious of him or herself.

The question of ‘What can be done with life stories?’ posed by one of the pioneers of the biographical approach Daniel Bertaux (1981a: 1), almost 30 years ago still remains very pertinent. What analytic status do the narratives produced during the interviews have? Although I am making use of a number of methodological tools in the ‘biographical methods’ (Apitzsch & Inowlocki 2000; Bornat *et al.* 2000; Miller 2000; Roberts 2002) tool box, e.g. auto-ethnography and a version of the ‘biographical-narrative interview’, I am thereby not stipulating that I am expressing my inner, true self nor am I positing the interviewee’s life stories and family narratives as the true reflections of their experiences and of their family’s past. As narratives always ‘draw on taken-for-granted discourses and values circulating in a particular culture’ they can never simply ‘speak for themselves, offering a window into an “essential self”’ (Kohler Riessman 2008: 3). Yet, narrative nevertheless ‘grants a more radical role to individuals in the shaping of their lives’ (Skultans 1998: 22).

Miller (2000) identifies three approaches to analyzing narratives: the realist, the neopositivist and the narrative approach. While the former two are concerned with validating an objective external reality, the latter deals with subjectivity and how the individual lends meaning to his or her life. I am here following what Miller (2000: 17, emphasis in original; see also Welzer 1996) terms the narrative approach:

‘Realist and neo-positivist life and family *histories* may be contrasted with narrativist life and family *stories*. In the narrative approach it is the manner in which the life or family story develops and is related during the course of the interview, that which the realist and neo-positivist approaches strive to eliminate, which provides the essential avenue to understanding.’

Although Miller’s classification is initially helpful, it does not allow us to perceive some vital analytic distinctions within the narrative approach itself as it puts Harald Welzer et al.’s (2002) and Gabriele Rosenthal’s (1997) methodologies in the same category, despite important differences. Rosenthal and Welzer *et al.* have each produced very influential studies about how families of Nazi perpetrators and followers remember the past. Both studies present similar findings, namely that these families tend to remember the anecdotal and the innocuous aspects of the grandparents’ everyday lives under NS, and tend to stress the latter’s experiences of suffering. Yet, Rosenthal and Welzer are methodologically quite far apart. While Welzer *et al.* argue that there is no reality outside narrative (and representation more generally), thus rejecting the idea that the denied past needs to be worked through, Rosenthal asserts that there is such a reality, which needs to be worked through and integrated in narrative. So, as Rosenthal (1994, 1995, 2006a) distinguishes between life history and life story and consequently also between truer and less true narratives, for Welzer *et al.* (2002) this distinction plays no role in the analysis. Thus, whereas Rosenthal (1991, 1997a, 2002b) is concerned with the silences, justifications and lies in narratives of NS recounted by members of the war and perpetrator generation and their offspring, Welzer *et al.* are only interested in the way the latter construct the past in narrative.

The life story is ‘the account given by an individual about his or her life’ (Miller 2000: 19). While the more traditional view of a life history regards the latter as an externally validated life story, i.e. triangulated with official records, newspaper articles, etc., the more recent view of life history simply sees it as ‘a series of substantive events arranged in chronological order’ (ibid.) no longer requiring external validation. Endorsing this distinction, Rosenthal (1993: 68) argues that her analytic procedure can identify silences and lies by way of a very elaborate and detailed methodological practice called ‘hermeneutic case reconstruction’. The latter includes the analysis of biographical data,⁷⁷ which constitutes the ‘first step’ in reconstructing ‘the actual chronology of the life history itself’ which then ‘becomes the backdrop for the *thematic field analysis*,’ i.e. the analysis of the life story, allowing her ‘to see which biographical data are blown up narratively and in which sequence they are presented’ (ibid.).

Thus, she (1995: 17) assumes a ‘correspondence of narrative structures with structures of experience; of the structures of the sedimentation of experience with the organisation of the narrative.’ So, ‘not only the presentation of the life history [the life story] produces the order [of the narrative] but also lived life history provides a structure’ (Rosenthal 1995: 20-21). This ‘does however not imply a homology between the narrated and the experienced’, but rather a dialectic between the two (ibid.). Although I agree with Rosenthal and others (see Craib 2000; Friedlander 1992), that it remains important to distinguish between truer and less true narratives, I am perhaps more hesitant when it comes to sharing her (2003) enthusiasm for ‘[t]he healing effects of storytelling’.

This will become more apparent in the analysis of the family stories in chapters 4 and 5, where the often premature rush to narrative coherence and closure in the light of very fragmented knowledge about the family’s Nazi past is interpreted as a form of dissociation. It is thus not enough, as some (Spence 1982) argue, to attain narrative truth rather than historical truth. The idea of narrative truth is content with finding an

⁷⁷ Biographical data is ‘all data that can stand more or less independently of the narrator’s own interpretation’ and ‘are extracted from the interview’ (ibid.) itself.

adequate narrative fit or home for experience and memory, i.e. a coherent and rhetorically persuasive version of the past, which does not necessarily have to correspond to historical reality. I am thus arguing against Welzer, that it is not sufficient to simply look at how the past is constructed in narrative but one needs to discriminate between different ways of narrating the past, as well as to pay attention to what certain stories of the past leave unformulated. Rather, I agree with Holstein and Gubrium (1997: 113) when they state that ‘qualitative inquiry must take a middle ground that sustains a sharp focus on lived realities. It should appreciate reality’s interactional constitution while reining in postmodernism’s unbridled concern with representational practice.’ Welzer’s analysis not only implies a rejection of the idea of historical truth, but also does not leave any room for considerations of what cannot (yet) be contained in narrative (or discourse).

Furthermore, both Welzer *et al.*’s (1997, 2002) ‘hermeneutic dialog analysis’ and Rosenthal’s hermeneutic case reconstruction are – although quite different – very formal analytic procedures derived from the German sociologist Ulrich Oevermann’s objective hermeneutics (see Jensen 2004). It was developed ‘to find qualitative alternatives to traditional scientific principles’ (Roberts 2002: 81) and is in its ‘elaborate and codified procedure’ (Welzer *et al.* 1997: 37) and its aim of finding ‘the latent structures of meaning [*Sinnstrukturen*] of the interaction’ between the interlocutors not unlike conversation analysis. While Rosenthal’s (1993) rendition of objective hermeneutics is much more influenced by phenomenology, Welzer *et al.*’s (1997: 17-39, 2002: 216) does indeed look a lot like conversation analysis as they are eager to find out how meaning is intersubjectively established and maintained within conversation (Peräkylä 2007: 156; Psathas 1995: 45; Welzer *et al.* 1997). The emphasis is thus on the structure of the interaction, i.e. ‘to convey conversation in terms of observable sequential exchanges, not internal or dispositional motivations’ (Holstein & Gubrium 1997: 218) and its ‘descriptions of action tend to rely upon textual forms that distance subjectivity’ (*ibid.*: 217). While reality is here in danger of being collapsed into representation, the interest in lived experience recedes drastically into the background. Consequently, Welzer *et al.*’s interest lies in uncovering the structure and content of intergenerational family conversations about NS while I, on

the other hand, became increasingly interested in the subjectivities of young Germans and how they related to NS and their national identities. I chose narrative analysis instead of conversation or discourse analysis because it is less formal, concentrates less exclusively on interactional structure and more on how individuals interpret things, and hence lends itself better ‘to studies of subjectivity and identity’ (Kohler Riessman 1993: 5).

3.4.2 *Family narrative, subjectivity and national identity*

I first engaged in what Lieblich *et al.* (1998: 12; see also Kohler Riessman 2008: 53-76) call a ‘categorical’ or thematic narrative analysis, in which ‘the original story [or interview] is dissected’ into fragments and the interviews are analyzed thematically across the sample. I used this form of analysis in chapter 4 and particularly chapter 5 about family memory of NS, to identify the common themes in the interviewees’ family narratives. I summarized family stories that were similar in content and that frequently appeared across the sample under common themes. This showed that both war stories and stories about the home front can be divided into two kinds: firstly, narratives of wartime and postwar suffering and, secondly, narratives of everyday ‘resistance’ against the Nazis. While these narratives occur most frequently across the sample and are recounted in an elaborate way and with great pathos, stories or even references to the grandparents’ Nazi collaboration and perpetration are not only much rarer, but are usually kept vague and general and are often voiced in a justificatory and/or exculpatory tone. The two interviewees who spoke directly about especially their grandfathers’ collaboration and suspected perpetration do not use narrative to do so, but rather revert to the description or reporting of acts of atrocity, thereby disrupting seamless narratives. This thematic analysis also made apparent the frequent use of the term trauma to underscore the severity of the grandparents’ suffering. Yet, what is perhaps most striking is the employment of iconic Holocaust tropes, such as barbed wire, hastily-buried bodies, overcrowded trains, again to emphasize the grandparents’ wartime suffering. It is particularly in

these stories that the Holocaust in its function as a globalized cultural script for stories of suffering becomes apparent.

What particularly struck me in the analysis not only but especially of interviews, in which Holocaust tropes were used, was the interviewees' unconcern about the validity of their family narratives. While a small number of interviewees considered their grandparents' active Nazi collaboration and perpetration and seemed much more self-reflexive about the limits of their family narratives and their knowledge about their family's Nazi past, acknowledging gaps and silences, most interviewees were eager to tell a coherent story that elided precisely such gaps and absences. The insistence on such stories in the face of extremely flimsy evidence led me to think about the function such narratives of suffering and heroic resistance perform. It is thus that I began to think about how narrative can be employed, not only to construct but also to obstruct meaning (see Craib 2000; Freeman 2000; Skultans 2001; Stern 2003). With the help of Donnel Stern's (2003) concept of narrative rigidity as dissociation and Eric Santner's (1992) idea of narrative fetishism, I interpret the use of such coherent and rigid narratives, despite or perhaps because of a fragmented and hardly known Nazi family past, as a form of dissociation that aims to keep insecurity and anxiety at bay by remaining within a very circumscribed and safe field of meaning. Especially publicly available and recognizable narratives such as those deriving from the history of the Holocaust, as well as the long-standing persistent myth of the 'ordinary' soldier, are drawn on to gain a coherent family narrative that manages to dispel the worst doubts and fears and protects the grandparents.⁷⁸ I agree with Santner (1992: 151) who writes about representations of the Holocaust and NS in Germany that '... these events must be confronted and analyzed in their capacity to endanger and overwhelm the composition and coherence of individual and collective identities . . .' Thus, I argue that coherence in the face of such histories is to be understood as a sign of an unworked through past and narratives that recount the grandparents' NS past as a coherent story of suffering,

⁷⁸ Vieda Skultans (2001: 4) writes: 'Sometimes the public narratives we take hold of can obstruct as well as construct meaning.'

especially if they are drawing on Holocaust tropes, are shameless, as the experience of shame disrupts and unsettles the self and compels it to narrate its past differently.

Shifting attention to the mode and form of the interviewees' family narratives, it became increasingly clear that a distinction between those recounted in a critical and distanced way and those told in an empathic and compassionate way needed to be made. Although this distinction is not a categorical one, because many interviewees recount different parts of their family history (maternal or paternal), in these differing modes, it is nevertheless vital because these narrative forms decisively shape the content of the narrative and are thus testament to a changing relation to and interpretation of the Nazi past in the majority of the grandchildren interviewed for this study. Family narratives of NS recounted in an empathic identification with the grandparents are rarely disrupted by doubts, criticisms or acknowledgements of the limits of understanding, tend to marginalize and exclude the criminal character of the NS regime and bring forth the grandparents' status as suffering victims. In terms of plot, this means that most family stories deal very cursorily, if at all, with the rise of NS and their grandparents' actual or potential role in it, but tend to focus on the end and immediate aftermath of the war. While condemnation, as Judith Butler argues above, installs a safe distance between the condemned and the person who condemns, I argue with Harald Schmitz (2007a) and LaCapra (2001) for a critical empathy with perpetrators that nevertheless remains aware of its limits.

In thinking about the function these family narratives might perform within the economy of the interviewees' self-narratives, I began to perceive the limits of thematic narrative analysis and the way it fragments interview narratives. I argue that these findings about 'third generation' family narratives of NS can tell us something beyond the structure of the intergenerational familial communication about NS, namely about the subjectivities and identities of the narrators. It is thus that I began to devote attention to the interviewees' self-narratives and descriptions. At this point, I began to think about the great importance many attached to their family stories and the emotionality with which they recounted their grandparents' past, especially their suffering. What does it mean when the balance between public and

private memory shifts and private histories (of suffering) become the basis for continuity and identity? As chapter 1 showed, there has, since the early 1960s, always been a tension between public and private memory in West Germany. Welzer *et al.* (2002: 9-10) argue that the descendants of Nazi perpetrators and followers bring these differing memories into accord with each other by assigning their grand/parents a role within their historical consciousness that excludes them from the criminal aspects of NS, that feature so prominently in public memory. Emily Keightley (2008: 177) thus seems to agree with Welzer *et al.* when she writes that:

‘[t]he memory text is a construction created in . . . the ‘liminal space’ between public and private pasts and as a result should always be considered as a mediation between the two . . . Memories are constructed by the multiple positionings of the remembering subject, but also in the communicative act, perform those positions and in doing so help reconcile them.’

Keightley (*ibid.*), however, adds that although we need ‘to allow for a more contingent notion of memory that can incorporate our multiple social positionings’, we should not forget that some of these positionings ‘may conflict with each other’. She (*ibid.*) continues that memory can also ‘be an act of resistance, actively rejecting the collective cultural codes of which it is shot through, repositioning the subject in new coordinates of time and space and meaning.’ To what extent does the telling of these narratives of the grandparents’ suffering and victimhood (in the interview) perform an act of resistance against the public memory of the Holocaust, on which many of these narratives nevertheless draw? The fact that ‘narrative *can* be a form of resistance to dominant frameworks of understanding’ (Day Sclater & Bradbury 2000: 197) is not sufficiently dealt with either by the analysis of Welzer *et al.* or Rosenthal. With this question in mind, I became increasingly interested in how far the shift from a critically distanced view of the Nazi past to one informed by full empathy with the bystanders, Nazi followers and perpetrators in which the ‘recovery’ of the grandparents’ ‘alternative’ memory of NS not only becomes an act of ‘resistance’ against the memory of the Holocaust, which is experienced by many interviewees as external obligation (chapter 6), but also in how this very act of resistance is legitimized by the use of tropes, images and narratives we recognize as part of the public history of the Holocaust. It thus seems that these narratives constitute a way

of reclaiming a different relation to oneself, one's familial past and thus they are part of a reconfiguration of identity – or to be more precise national identity – which rejects the passage through alterity and desires a more immediate relation to itself.

So I began to think about how to link the interviewees' family narratives to how they discursively positioned themselves as Germans, Europeans, and/or cosmopolitans. In distinction to Rosenthal and Welzer, who both concentrate on family dialogue, I am here following a form of narrative analysis that is not only more hospitable to considerations of subjectivity, but to a subjectivity which is perhaps not fully captured in and by discourse and narrative. I began by 'reading the personal narratives for the identity claims in the stories' (Day Sclater 2007: 101) and thus, also, in a more holistic way (Lieblich 1998: 12). Furthermore, I became increasingly interested in how the emotions of guilt and/or shame are linked to how the interviewees experience their (national) identity. In chapter 7, I thus grouped the interviewees according to how and why they disclaim any affective impact of the past. While a number of interviewees do so to return to an untainted national identity, others reject any personal feelings of guilt and/or shame precisely because they claim a moral national identity through the acceptance of a collective *political* guilt or responsibility. In the third group, I discuss interviewees who claim a European or cosmopolitan identity and a universal *moral* responsibility. I interpret all of these identity claims as manifestations of unacknowledged shame, as they allow the interviewees to either leave the past behind as something that has been worked through on an official and political level, or 'flee' it in the move to a more universal European or cosmopolitan identity. In the final chapter, I examine those interviews in which the interviewees either speak about experiences of shame as transformative because they are disruptive of taken-for-granted identities and self-conceptions as in shame the past intrudes into the present, or acknowledge shame in the interview itself. It is thus that I argue that 'there are always aspects of self [and the past] that narrative cannot capture' (Day Sclater & Bradbury 2000: 194).

3.5 *Conclusion*

In this chapter, I particularly wanted to draw attention to how my own positionality influenced and shaped the thesis, because the subject position of the author does make a difference in this instance. Much of what I have mentioned here in terms of auto-ethnography will hopefully elucidate some of the theoretical and analytical choices performed throughout the thesis. In moving to the empirical chapters, the first two of which look at family narratives of National Socialism, I want to emphasize again my argument against an analytic approach that concentrates purely on narrative. The following chapter will argue against Rosenthal's endorsement of the idea of the transgenerational transmission of trauma and its use of the notion of denial because it tends to foster a somewhat naïve idea of the silenced past as simply to be recovered or discovered rather than constructed in language (narrative). However I am not joining Welzer and others in their radical constructivism, which equates memory with language, particularly narrative, thereby implying that, memories, which are not articulated and put into narrative are not remembered. I will develop my position between a radical constructivism and a naïve realism by following Santner's and LaCapra's traumatic realism (see also Friedlander 1993; Rothberg 2000).

Chapter 4: “You should really ask me about the war!”⁷⁹

Reconsidering the post-war silence in families of Nazi perpetrators, followers and *Wehrmacht* soldiers

4.1 Introduction: The paradox of denial

If we now return to Julia's nonchalant reference to the missing photograph and the caption 'near Treblinka' in her grandfather's photo album, we are compelled to rethink both traditional psychoanalytic accounts of the transmission of the Nazi past in families of perpetrators and followers (Bergmann & Jucovy 1982; Bohleber 1990, 1998; Eckstaedt 1982, 1986, 1989, 1992; Faimberg 2005a; Grünberg & Straub 2001; Rosenthal *et al.* 1997a; Eickhoff 1986; Hardtmann 1982, 1989, 1992, 1998; Hauer 1994, Müller-Hohagen 1989, 1993, 2005; Roberts 1998; Rottgart 1993), which draw on theories of the transgenerational transmission of trauma, as well as those works that apply social theories of memory (Kohlstruck 1997; Leonhard 2002a, 2002b; Welzer *et al.* 2002) to this context. In casually telling me about the absent photograph without any comments, doubts or fears, Julia 'knows' about it, though without allowing herself to grasp the potential meanings and implications of it. In the light of this, the classic psychoanalytic theories are no longer necessarily adequate; firstly, because they often paint a picture of a more or less all-encompassing silence, in which such families envelop themselves. While this might indeed often still be the case, these theories remain unable to take account of the elaborate stories about the Nazi past that are just as frequently recounted as well as of what is 'known' about it and how this knowledge is used. Secondly, in relying on terms such as repression and denial, they cast the dissociation of the NS past as an individual process that, if it can be overcome, would render the person able to (fully) integrate the past and counter

⁷⁹ This demand was addressed to Carolin by her grandmother, a former NSDAP member, could perhaps be read as an emblem for the different relation the grandparents have to their grandchildren when it comes to speaking about their NS past.

the tendency to act out. However, as I argued in chapter 2, for social theories of memory, it becomes difficult to acknowledge such absences.

Theories of the transgenerational transmission of trauma, originally devised to deal with the symptomatology of the children of Holocaust survivors, posit that members of the war and perpetrator generation have not confronted their past, which they unconsciously passed on to their children, who were ‘burdened with a task stemming from a past reality that was incomprehensible to them, . . . [and] could only act out, what had been engraved, but not integrated, in their [grand]parents’ memories’ (Eckstaedt 1982: 225). The basic claim of most of these theories is that the generations remain interwoven on the level of the unconscious; the past, although silenced, remains present in dreams, fantasies, and actions of the grand/children. The latter are left with a heavy burden of a dark inheritance in the form of a prior unintegrated fantasmatic reality and guilt feelings that are not their own (Rosenthal 1997a: 354; Bohleber 1998: 260). Rosenthal *et al.* (1997a: 22-23; emphasis added) thus writes that, because the descendants only have very fragmented, partial knowledge about their grandparents’ lives during Nazism, they ‘often unconsciously . . . form very detailed fantasies about the *not recounted stories* and family secrets.’ She (*ibid.*: 355) adds that these fantasies ‘correspond in terms of their content in a remarkable way to the concrete experiences of the generation of the grandparents’. I will challenge this idea that the gaps in intergenerational memory transmission instigate the grand/children to develop fantasies that *correspond* to the denied past in chapter 5.

In this chapter, I want to re-think the unconscious, which these theories posit as the ‘property’ of the individual, which is colonized by the unintegrated history and affects of their grand/parents (Faimberg 2005a, 2005b; Kestenberg 1982, 1989), in social terms. I propose that we might get further if we enlarge the unconscious here to include social practice and material culture. Such an endeavour also needs a different conception of the process of denial than that put forth by the theories of the transgenerational transmission of trauma, which tends to skirt the paradox that is inherent in the term. In his book *States of Denial*, Stanley Cohen (2001: 5-6; see also

Stern 2003: 115) writes that '[i]n order to use the term "denial" to describe a person's statement "I didn't know", one has to assume that she knew or knows about what it is, that she claims not to know – otherwise the term "denial" is inappropriate.' He (ibid.: 22) adds that this 'doubleness – knowing and not-knowing – is at the heart of the concept.' The concept of denial is thus contradictory as it assumes that one knows about what is being denied, while remaining unconscious of this knowledge or even the fact *that* one knows. While it is often unclear what denial actually refers to – external reality, interpretations and ideas or emotions, and/or internal drives – it is vital to the idea 'that the whole process of denial is unconscious,' while allowing for 'a partial awareness . . . of disturbing perceptions being banished to the zone of unawareness' (Cohen 2001: 29-30). So '[a]fter an initial awareness (which may be denied) the 'loss' of information over time is unconscious' (ibid.).

Harald Welzer (1996: 587) shows that this use of the term denial in the context of studies of post-war Germans and the Nazi past implies that people on some level were or became aware of their guilt after 1945, but had to deny it because it was too difficult to confront; this is also the thesis of the Mitscherlichs. Not only can this perspective not account for a very sizable part of the German population that never saw anything wrong with much of National Socialism, but it can also lead to such counterintuitive arguments as the one championed by literary critic Ernestine Schlant (1999: 10) who is not shy to claim that because 'every strategy, conscious or unconscious, employed in the service of this denial [the Germans' denial of NS] is also an acknowledgement.'

Psychoanalyst Donnel Stern's (2003) notion of 'unformulated experience' as dissociation might be more helpful in the present context, because it allows us to think about silence and denial as social processes; the family as enacting silence rather than viewing each individual member as someone in denial. But, unlike the social theories of memory, 'unformulated experience' also lets us retain an idea of present absences or unrecognized presences. It furthermore permits us to view the interviewees as members of their families, actively involved in the dissociation of the

Nazi past and to approach ‘that-which-we-do-not-know’ ‘as a broad social phenomenon, not as the unexpressed implication of the individual consciousness’ (Stern 2003: 132). The unconscious thus becomes social (and material) rather than purely individual and memory becomes also ‘a culturally mediated material practice that is activated by embodied acts and *semantically dense objects*’ (Seremetakis 1994: 9; emphasis added). My reservations about the notion of denial thus echo Avery Gordon’s (1997: 48-49) hesitations about Freud’s formulations of the unconscious as the property of individuals which, as she argues, sits uneasily with his descriptions of experiences of the uncanny, which is ‘where the unconscious rejoins its animistic and social roots, where we are reminded that what lies between society and psyche is hardly an inert empty space.’

4.2 *Transmission in not of silence: Narrative and degrees of dissociation*

So I am here trying to re-think silence as something other than an acknowledged (and known) but individually denied absence; an absence which is always necessarily ‘experienced as massively present’ (Bohleber 1998: 260). In Stern’s work, the content of what is repressed and denied is not known before it is denied – is not made up of fully-formed and interpreted perceptions – but remains unclear, shape- and formless until perceived and interpreted. This, however, does not mean that it does not exist. Stern (*ibid.*: 37; emphasis added) defines unformulated experience as ‘the uninterpreted form of those raw materials of conscious, reflective experience that *may* eventually be assigned verbal interpretations and thereby brought into articulate form.’ ‘It is content without definite shape’ (*ibid.*: 39). Prior to interpretation, experience exists in various different modes, such as that of affect or it is encoded in practice, and not always is it possible, he writes, to fully translate unformulated experience into consciousness and language. Similarly, Gordon (1997: 46) describes the unconscious as ‘another region or field where things are there and yet hidden, where things stand gaping, where the question of how we present a world, . . . becomes a question of the limits of representation.’

In Stern's (2003: 87; emphasis in original) version of dissociation, then, 'the basic defensive process' is 'the *prevention of interpretation* in reflective awareness, not the *exclusion from awareness* of elements that are already fully formed.'⁸⁰ This is evident in Julia's case: here the Nazi past is present but in an unformulated state, in a state of dissociation, because her account of her family's Nazi past, although mentioning the absent photograph, does not interpret this absence and make it part of the narrative, a feat which in turn would demonstrate the insufficiency and limits of this very narrative. Unformulated experience can be used as defense *and* as a creative resource. In the case of the former, 'interpretation is avoided' (ibid.: 51), either by 'Not-Spelling-Out' – 'dissociation in the strong sense' – or through 'Narrative Rigidity' – 'dissociation in the weak sense' – while in the case of the latter imagination and speech are allowed to reign (more) 'freely.' 'Defensively unformulated experience is a lack of clarity and differentiation permitted or encouraged in conscious experience that, in more fully articulated form, would raise the danger of noxious (or at least undesirable) interpersonal consequences' (ibid.: 51).

What is dissociated cannot be fully known before it is not also reflected on in language, but its presence can often be felt. Yet, what remains dissociated and if and how unformulated experience can be brought into the realm of 'reflective meaning', Stern (ibid.: 101) argues, is dependent on the interpersonal field. The dissociated experience or memory here exists in a pre-reflective, "unstoried" state; lingers in a "ghost" existence" (Stern 2003 citing Loewald (1960): 94). It is 'a case of inarticulate experiences, of symptoms and screen memories, of *spiraling affects*, of more than one story at a time, of the traffic in domains of experience that are anything but transparent and referential' (Gordon 1997: 25; emphasis added). This becomes evident in the Nazi family histories to which I shall now turn, which often continue to linger in a pre-reflective ghost-like existence and remain unformulated. These family histories are histories of forgetting, histories of ghosts, as Eng (2010: 184) puts it and are often 'channeled through the realm of affect in order to gain

⁸⁰ So his conception of dissociation is markedly different to how many trauma theories consider it. For Stern (2003: 87), dissociation is 'an active defensive process' while, in many trauma theories dissociation 'represents an inability to reflect on experience, not an unconscious avoidance of doing so'.

epistemological and ontological traction.’ While, in this and the next chapter I am more interested in how family memories are dissociated, especially via rigid conventionalized narratives, I will return to ‘spiralling affects’ in chapter 8, to look at how the past makes itself felt in and through the affect of shame.

In turning to how memories of National Socialism and the Holocaust are dissociated in families of Nazi perpetrators and followers, as well as *Wehrmacht* soldiers, I will argue that, while the members of the generation of the children mostly dissociate(d) their parents’ Nazi past by not spelling it out, their children engage in the double movement of both wanting to know more about their grandparents’ past while also often dissociating it by emplotting it in rigid and conventionalized narratives that expunge the traces of the ghosts that they themselves have often awoken. So even though many grandchildren are interested in their grandparents’ Nazi and war past, making certain connections and interpretations their parents have not dared to make – however, in the process often blurring fact and fiction – their imaginations frequently remain within certain very confined limits.

In adopting Stern’s model of unformulated experience I am given the necessary tools with which to think through the dialectical process of an ‘opening’ of the familial dialogue about the Nazi past that is often assumed to have begun in the wake of the *Wehrmacht* exhibition and with the grandchildren, while also seeing this very ‘opening’ as in many cases containing the seeds for a different form of dissociation of this very past. Much less rigid than the concepts of denial and repression, which imply that the breaking of silence reveals the ‘truth’ of the past and is thus always necessarily positive and liberating, unformulated experience can account for dissociation in narrative form. Thus, while Rosenthal *et al.* (1997a: 356) argues that the generation of the grandchildren is much more prone to acting out the symptoms that correspond to the Nazi past of the family than their parents, and thus begin with the uncovering of and dealing with the past, I would argue that this ‘uncovering’ often happens in the terms of sentimental stories of everyday heroism and suffering, rather than in following the ghosts.

4.3 *Enacting silence in the family*

Stern (ibid.: 151) argues that the interpersonal field determines how the past is constructed, i.e. what can be spoken and imagined and what cannot. I am here conceptualizing the interviewees' families (as well as the interview situation itself) as such a field. This implies as Stern (ibid.: 154) argues that '[w]hat we can imagine fully, and what remains dissociated, is a function of the field we are inhabiting at the moment.' As implied in the title – Carolin's grandmother, a former NSDAP member demanding her granddaughter to ask her about the war – in many cases it is less the grandparents and more the parents who the interviewees feel obstruct the dialogue between the generations. As we will see below, the parents' refusal to thematize their own parents' Nazi and war past with their own children and their often condemnatory approach to the latter can lead to what Christian Schneider (2001: 335) calls 'a strange coalition of a jointly affirmed innocence' between the grandchildren and the grandparents. This coalition allows them to circumvent the moral demands of the parents' generation and to identify with the grandparents, who are experienced as affectionate old people.

Daniel Meier, a young history student, for example, tells me that he feels his parents do not know anything about their own parents' past, but that they do read a lot of books about Nazism and the Holocaust. He continues by describing how his father, a 68er, used to interrupt his own mother in indignation when she spoke positively about her experiences of Nazism. While he accuses his parents of having denied the past, he is much more conciliatory and understanding towards his grandmother's collaboration with the Nazis and her positive testimony. Horst Endress, a PhD student of history, speaks of his father's efforts to educate his own father, when the former used to get annoyed with the latter's attempts to trivialize the past in his ritually repeated monologues about his war experiences at the Eastern Front. He also recounts how he and his brother, who was doing his PhD in history on National Socialism, only ever talked about the Nazi past on a 'professional' historical level with their father and between themselves, never touching the more concrete questions of their grandfather's actions and whereabouts during the Third Reich. However, in a

similar way to Daniel, Horst, who has a very close relationship to his paternal grandparents is also much more understanding than his father, as we will see below.

Julia Hartwig tells me how her father distanced himself from his own Nazi family past and demanded his mother put away the photographs of her time in the BdM [*Bund deutscher Mädel*]⁸¹ that she proudly wanted to show the family. Dagmar Schneider detects that the conversations between both of her parents and their respective parents never left the safe realm of discussing the daily routine. Carolin Dietrich explains that while her parents ‘were actually very drastic in terms of educati[ng]’ her and her brother ‘about what happened during the Second World War, it was always kept general, it never went into the specific family history.’ In these cases and most other interviews the grandparents’ active and passive support for the Nazis is not something that seems to be thematized between the interviewees and their parents, but their conversations remain confined to the abstract and general aspects of National Socialism as history. As Ilka Pilcher relates, she could always ask her father, a history teacher, whose areas of expertise are the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich about National Socialism ‘as long as it wasn’t linked to the family.’

Unlike Ilka and Carolin, most interviewees however do not consider this as constituting a form of dissociation but rather as a form of confronting the past. Albrecht, in whose family issues relating to his grandparents’ Nazi and war past are hardly ever talked about, nevertheless maintains that Nazism was not ‘a taboo topic at home’ because it was always ‘clear that the Nazi time was a terrible time, [and] the crimes were never relativized.’ In a similar way, Melanie Kerner relates how the Third Reich played a big role in her family and that she grew up being told by her father that ‘the Nazis are very bad and evil’ while her mother fed her with stories of Melanie’s grandparents’ traumatic wartime experiences. In some respects then, the process of transmission also seems to be gendered as the fathers are often described as completely silent or as only talking about historical facts, while many interviewees portray their mothers as very communicative. Yet, they either speak about the flight,

⁸¹ The League of German Girls, the female section of the National Socialist youth organization, the Hitler Youth.

the bombing and wartime suffering more generally or some mothers, e.g. Carolin's, Ilka's and Teresa Helwig's, dealt with the past of their parents by learning about the Holocaust and (counter-)identifying (Schneider 2004: 240) with the victims, at the same time as they kept this history disconnected from that of their own parents. Teresa, for instance, imparts that she and her mother travelled to Israel and visited Yad Vashem when she was about fourteen. The only personal thing, however, her mother told her was that her own father never talked about the past and the aim of the trip seems to have been an educational one.

Many interviewees notice that, if their parents did at all speak about or deal with their own parents' past, this happened on a rather abstract historical level. Rosenthal *et al.* (1997a: 351) confirms this observation when she asserts that the children of Nazis and their followers tend to focus on the 'anonymized murder in the gas chambers and less on the situations, in which perpetrator and victim faced each other directly, during the brutalities in the ghettos, during *Aktionen*, during massacres and during mass executions.' Furthermore, many members of the children's generation dissociated their families' NS past when they took the position of 'a militant innocence and moral superiority' against their own parents (Koenen 2001: 95;⁸² Schneider, Ch. 2004; Schneider, M. 1984; Wittlinger 2006). As Michael Schneider (1984: 12) argues, 'it was almost as if the children had been divinely appointed to be the judges of their own parents,' and saw them 'only as political subjects who had either actively or passively supported the most criminal system of this century.' Thereby 'they often forgot – or wanted to, or forced themselves to, forget – that these former . . . Nazis were, in spite of everything, still their fathers and mothers' (ibid.).⁸³ That this way of 'viewing the Nazi epoch [solely] from the perspective of

⁸² My own translation. The original reads: 'einer militanten Unschuld und moralischen Superiorität.' A little later in his book, Koenen (ibid.: 119) writes "“Our generation“ thus cleanly separated itself from the contaminated “Nazi-generation.“ This biological dividing line spared one to have to personally and concretely deal with the experiences and involvements of the parents during these times – and thus possibly become embroiled in painful emotional conflicts or dangerous self-reflection . . . One impregnated oneself with universal Fascism ideologies and made oneself invulnerable.'

⁸³ In her book, *Das grosse Schweigen*, Gabriele von Armin (1989) writes about how she realized that she herself and her whole generation was engaged in a form of dissociation (see also Schneider, Ch. 2004). Psychoanalyst Tilman Moser (1992: 400) writing about Armin, himself and the children's generation, notes: 'Very slowly the anger of the standardized accusation is ebbing away, and gradually it becomes clear, that her [Armin's] own generation also protected itself by denial, namely by not wanting to descend from guilty parents. It was a purification of one's own identity through a splitting

its criminal core' (Friedlander 1993: 36) can also work to dissociate the past was, however, rarely acknowledged by the parents' generation.

Furthermore, the 'double bind of having to identify with figures of power one also at another level needs to disavow . . . leads to what the Mitscherlichs . . . referred to as "*Identifikationsscheu*", a resistance to identification with parents and elders in the second generation' as Eric Santner (1990: 45) notes. Silke's father, Sophie's father and Anna's mother, for example, all become communists in the 1960s and chose an anti-bourgeois and anti-authoritarian life style that was in direct opposition to that of their parents. Contact between the generations, as these interviewees remember, was kept to a bare minimum, while their parents' personal relationships to their own parents was marked by a complete absence of emotions, even severe coldness.

Interlude: Histories of forgetting

By looking at one interview in particular, I would now like to examine in more detail the consequences this form of intergenerational communication has for the grandchildren and their way of dealing with Nazi family histories. Although this case is quite remarkable, I believe it shows very well how many members of the children's generation refuse to spell out their parents' Nazi past, i.e. 'dissociate it in the strong sense' to avoid the double-bind Santner that describes. This, however, leaves the task of formulating dissociated Nazi family histories to the grandchildren. Dissociation in the strong sense, Stern (2003: 114) asserts, 'refers to an active defensive process' that evades 'the verbal articulation of certain kinds of experience that already has some kind of nonlinguistic unconscious structure', an experience that exists in the mode of action, affect or is contained in material objects. He (ibid.) adds that 'it is not

of the image of the parents: "This is also why we are so aggressive, shaming and accusing the parents, assailing them with reproaches, not with questions." The *Väterliteratur* was marked precisely by such reproaches and accusations, as Aleida Assmann (2005: 375) notes. It celebrated the break from the parents and the past and its 'thematic centre is the confrontation, the conflict, the reckoning with the father . . .'

the nonverbally organized experience that is denied reflective consciousness, but all or some of the verbal interpretations that could be made of it.’

I first interviewed Julia Hartwig, a very young-looking woman in her mid twenties, in May 2009 in London. She had already studied in the UK and was now living and working in Reading. She tells me, almost proudly, that she knows quite a lot about her family history because her *maternal* grandfather carried out genealogical investigations and still possessed many albums containing war photographs, which she inherited when he died. But she also already alludes to her *paternal* family’s very active commitment to Nazism. This, she surmises, must have also been the reason why some members of the paternal side, in fear of being brought to justice by the Allies, killed themselves shortly after the war. As her paternal grandfather died in the 1960s, what she knows about this family’s past remains limited to her grandmother’s positive and justificatory stories about her achievements as a BdM-*Führerin* and the fun she had going dancing with soldiers. Although hesitant to describe her grandmother, with whom she always had a good relationship, as a Nazi, Julia does admit that she was very ‘brown’ and ‘quite deeply involved.’

The only other thing Julia tells me about the paternal side is that some older members of the family gave her father a dagger with a Nazi insignia as a present for his confirmation and as a reminder of ‘the good old time’. As a child, Julia found this dagger, whereupon, as she remembers, her father, whom she earlier in the interview described as a 68er, tells her ‘how crazy it was that our family continued to uphold this for so long.’ Like Albrecht and Melanie above, Julia is rather unphased by this material remnant of the past and adds that her father ‘was from the beginning, when I was a small child, very open with me about this and also told me a lot about the Nazis generally [and] also tried to show me how terrible it was.’

Five months after this interview, I get a surprise email from Julia to inform me that she had visited her paternal grandmother in Germany, who told her the ‘whole’ story about the suicides. We meet for a second time in early October 2009. During this interview, it transpires that, this time, Julia had visited her grandmother by herself,

without her father or aunt, who usually accompanied her. During the course of her conversation with her grandmother, Julia, tells me, they spoke about her struggles to finance her Palestinian husband's university studies. The two women discuss the advantages and perils of female independence, and the grandmother tells her granddaughter how she was also left to fend for herself after the war, while her husband was in English captivity. Her grandmother, Julia continues, then started her own small business, something that greatly impresses her. Trying to explain to her granddaughter why she could not expect any help from her husband's family, the grandmother divulges that what Julia had always believed to have been suicides had actually been murders; her great-grandfather had killed all of his sons, except Julia's grandfather who was still in captivity at that point. On that trip to Germany, Julia then also learns that her great-granduncle was an infamous Nazi intellectual and in one of her emails to me she writes: 'All the stuff that one finds out by inquiring! There's a lot of brown sauce bubbling amongst my ancestors.'

Ilka, who, like Julia was motivated by the first interview (May 2006) and requested archival research about her grandfathers, also finds herself confronted by her parents' dissociation. To be able to request this information from the archive she needs the written permission and personal information about her grandfathers from her parents. Upon receiving the completed requests back from her parents, she reads that her father had written on her paternal grandfather's form 'My father's career in the *Waffen-SS*.' Both Ilka and Julia thus learn that their parents had always known about these aspects of the past, but had never told them about it. Yet, while Ilka does not learn about this directly from her father but only via the request form, and they subsequently never speak about it, Julia relates that her father justified his silence by arguing that when she was younger he did not want to burden her with it "'and after that it wasn't really a topic anymore, it never arose'" she paraphrases him. She continues: 'He was aware of it, but as said, because he also obviously distanced himself very much from this whole family history . . . it wasn't really a topic anymore for him later on.' But unlike Ilka, who has a long-standing interest in the Holocaust and has lived in Israel for more than a year, Julia has never shown such an obvious interest about either the history of NS and the Holocaust or her own family

history. Although these ‘discoveries’ spark an interest in Julia, she regards her family’s past as simply a very exciting and fascinating history, which she however feels no longer, has anything to do with her.

While Julia understands her father’s reluctance to speak about the Nazi past, Ilka finds it very frustrating. Yet it is not a stone walled silence, as she explains:

‘He would never withhold something like that from me, well not consciously somehow conceal it or keep it secret . . . and it’s also not that he says ‘I don’t want to speak about it or something like that, but he simply doesn’t do it.’ He changes the subject or he doesn’t say anything but waits until my mother says something ((laughs)) or no idea, well, it simply creates an atmosphere that one doesn’t want to ask, that one doesn’t feel like it because one thinks it doesn’t lead anywhere.’

Many interviewees speak of this atmosphere that prevents them from asking their parents and/or grandparents those ‘precarious questions’ (Horst) that relate to direct, active collaboration with and participation in the Nazi movement and its crimes. Often the elders’ unwillingness to speak about such matters is used as an excuse or justification for never having asked at all. Unlike Ilka, and in a similar vein to Julia, few of the interviewees find this troubling or experience their lack of knowledge and the failure to thematize those ‘precarious questions’ as a silence or absence that is massively or intrusively present. Anna Seybold makes this explicit when she establishes that she did not experience her grandparents’ skirting of the Holocaust as a silence, because they spoke a lot about the past, especially the war and the flight.

Ilka also never connected her interest in the Holocaust to her own family history until after the first interview, when she learnt about her grandfather’s membership in the *Waffen*-SS. However, as we will see in chapter 5, especially the grandparents’ reluctance to speak about matters relating to their collaboration with the Nazis, is in many cases no longer understood as a form of denial or dissociation and a refusal to admit to guilt or shame, but rather as signifying their trauma. Furthermore, for most,

especially the men in the sample (see also Kohlstruck 1997),⁸⁴ the family's Nazi past no longer represents an emotional burden. Alexander Fiebert, for example, declares 'my personal relation to this time is marginal', while his interest lies much more in how Nazism is represented (see chapter 6). For Silke, as for the interviewees we will encounter in section 4.4.2, the transmission of the family past is not, like it was for their parents, about dishonesty and disguise, but about trying to understand 'what happened to the people . . . how it felt.' It is in frustrating such attempts at understanding and empathizing with the grandparents that gaps in family Nazi and war histories are thought to be frustrating.

4.4 Weak dissociation and narrative rigidity: recounting the grandparents' Nazi and war past

In many cases, the children of *Wehrmacht* soldiers, Nazi perpetrators and followers left it to their own children to take on the dissociated Nazi past. In a similar way to Rosenthal above, Santner (1990: 45) places much hope in 'the third generation's grief and outrage over the effacement' of the ghostly revenants in the form of material and symbolic remnants and traces of Nazism and the Holocaust 'within the otherwise normal domesticity of the present' (ibid.: 43-44) to bolster the second generation into confronting the past. The trace is here to be understood in the terms of Walter Benjamin's (1968) philosophy of history as the discarded detritus of history, which resists integration into a continuous conventional (historical) narrative (see Pensky 2004; Buck-Morss 1989) or that defy what Santner (1992) calls narrative fetishism. The latter is defined as '[t]he construction and deployment of a narrative consciously or unconsciously designed to expunge the traces of the trauma or loss that called that narrative into being the first place' (Santner 1992: 144). Narrative is used as fetish, working-through is postponed and the fragmented past is emplotted in a seamless story that, however leaves various important parts unformulated, as Stern notes

⁸⁴ His study shows how the National Socialist past in general constitutes a personal and emotional issue or problem only for a minority of his sample. It must be added, however, that Kohlstruck only interviewed men.

when he elucidates dissociation in the weak sense, that works by constructing rigid and conventional narratives. He (2003: 133; emphasis added) writes that in weak dissociation:

‘[t]elling a story – and listening to one – requires a “drawing in of awareness to a (relatively) small mental content, *leaving . . . important, but to-be-unattended-to, events sort of in a marginal, shadowy, not quite-complete condition. That “marginal, shadowy, not quite-complete” byproduct of telling a story is unformulated experience . . .* It exists relative to the stories we tell, and thus relative to language. It is composed of all the stories that fall within our grasp, all those narrative roads we could have taken but did not, all the potential interpretations that might have been articulated and in many cases still might be.’

Thus ‘*what is unformulated in unformulated experience, . . . is meaning*’ (ibid.: 48-9). Traces of the family’s Nazi past, more often than not remain the sole task of the grandchildren to read, as Ilka’s father’s refusal to speak about the past makes evident, or they are expunged in the construction of conventionalized and continuous narratives. Thus the joint effort, that also includes the grandchildren, as we will learn below, here consists of ‘*keep[ing]* certain material unformulated in order not to “know” it’ (Stern 2003: 56; emphasis in original). While many interviewees seek out or stumble on traces of their families’ Nazi past, such as for example, Fabian, who encounters his father’s *Persilschein*⁸⁵ in the cellar of his parents’ house, or Horst who finds a pile of magazines, all featuring Hitler on the front page hidden on his grandparents’ farm, or Martina von Selbig who mentions her father’s allusion to a memory of his own father in SS-uniform, or indeed Julia’s reference to the absent photograph, in most cases these traces are not viewed as problematic, but are expunged in rigid conventional narratives which portray the grandparents as engaged in nothing that goes beyond ‘normal’ fellow travelling and/or are described as engaged in heroic actions of resistance and/or victims of the war (see chapter 5).

⁸⁵ *Persilscheine* were de-nazification certificates, which attested that the person that was issued the certificate had not committed any crimes and had no seriously comprised Nazi past. Fabian’s father (1916), who married a second time and had Fabian and his older brother when he was already in his 50s, actively participated in WWII.

Yet, Fabian Hoffmann's description of how he felt when he came across the *Persilschein* illustrates 'a way of encountering the ghostly presence, the lingering past, the . . . presence of the seemingly invisible' (Gordon 1997: 205). It shows how such encounters turn the home into a 'tangled site of memory' (Silverman 2006: 8) and thereby potentially render the homely uncanny. Fabian recounts how at that point he felt that 'one has this National Socialism suddenly in one's house, suddenly it's no longer abstract history, suddenly it becomes touchable [*anfassbar*], it's not something that only happens in films, but it was reality, [and] plays into the present of my life.' In her anthropology of everyday life, which links material culture and the emotions, Nadia Seremetakis (1994: 12-13) shows how such 'sensory-affective experience[s] of history' (Claes 1995) are 'moment[s] when the buried, the discarded, and the forgotten escape to the social surface of awareness . . . [i]t is the moment of exit from historical dust.' She (*ibid.*) describes '[w]hat was previously imperceptible and now became "real"' as 'in fact always [having been] there as an element of the material culture of the unconscious.'

Crucially, however, Seremetakis (*ibid.*) adds that what is '[i]mperceptible has a social structure based on culturally prescribed zones of non-experience and canceled meaning.' While an exclusive focus on the grandparents' everyday experience of the Third Reich, as I will show in the following chapter, contributes to dissociating the past, an awareness of how today's everyday harbours the past is essential, as Seremetakis shows. She (*ibid.*: 20) argues that,

'[t]he split between public and private memory, the narrated and the unnarrated, inadvertently reveals the extent to which everyday experience is organized around the reproduction of inattention and therefore the extent to which a good deal of historical experience is relegated to forgetfulness.'

While, as we have seen, the children often distance themselves from their parents' Nazi past by precisely prescinding the past from the everyday and the family home, by concentrating on NS and the Holocaust as abstract history, the grandchildren are tasked with interpreting the material and symbolic detritus of the grandparents' NS past, the latter's self-justificatory stories, the often meager fruits of their own

(re)searches in family and other archives as well as having to make sense of blind spots and gaps. In relation to the difference between the *Väterliteratur* and the literary output of the grandchildren, often called *Familienromane* [family novel] to indicate their focus on continuity rather than break, and the family as a whole rather than simply the (grand)father, Aleida Assmann (2005: 375) writes that the latter are driven by researches which are often supplemented by ‘materials of the family archive and other documents.’ Elsewhere, she (2006b: 193-94) notes that the grandchildren are:

‘developing new memory profiles and [are] articulating new demands on identity. After the conflicts and breaks of the second generation with their parents, this third generation, is now much more concerned with seeking its place in a continuous family history, however troubled and ruptured that continuity might be.’

Furthermore, as Alison Landsberg (2004: 23) comments on the entirely different but also ruptured context of African-American family histories: ‘the production and transmission of memory fall to the [grand]children whose task it becomes to produce genealogies that they, too, might be able to inhabit.’ Yet, in the context of Nazi perpetrator and follower families in Germany, ‘[t]he postwar generations face the [added – A.H.] complex task of constituting stable self-identities by way of identifications with parents and grandparents who, in the worst possible cases, may have been directly implicated in crimes of unspeakable dimensions, thereby radically impeding their totemic availability’ (Santner 1990: 35).

In their efforts to create ‘inhabitable genealogies’ via continuous family histories, the grandchildren often tap their grandparents as direct sources, in most cases without asking those ‘precarious questions’ (Horst). Furthermore, as Kohlstruck (1997: 85) points out, ‘dealing with the grandparents is generally less burdened and tense’ for the grandchildren than for their children. Johanna, Horst and Rainer are a testament to that when they speak of their very close relationships with their grandparents and impart how the latter tell them things they would have never told their own children. Those without any grandparents left frequently find themselves piecing together the

past from sources found in archives and at home, such as documents, photographs and other memorabilia (Assmann 2005).

The grandchildren interviewed for this study have '(re)solved' the dilemma of having to negotiate between break and continuity in broadly two ways: Firstly, there are those who largely follow the example set by their parents and the '68 generation more generally and, although they are perhaps less condemnatory, they do continue to (emotionally) distance themselves from (some of) their grandparents, insisting as they do on certain 'limits of understanding' [*Grenzen des Verstehens*] (Assmann 2005) and although not completely averse to empathizing with the grandparents, this empathy has its boundaries. Their family stories are interspersed with critical comments and articulations of their doubts about their veracity and authenticity. Yet, unlike their parents, they are more prepared to acknowledge, spell out and picture more concretely their grandfathers as perpetrators and their grandmothers as *Mitläufer*, and thus to bring history and memory into contact with each other, without one engulfing the other. In this sense, their narrations of their grandparents' Nazi past in many respects enact what Schmitz (2007a) in his analysis of recent exponents of the *Familienroman* genre has called 'critical empathy' in distinction to both a 'sentimental and historicist empathy' and the position 'of condemnation or judgment' (2007a: 215) of many 68ers. While 'sentimental historicist empathy' closely resembles what Hirsch and Landsberg describe as idiopathic identification or sympathy, and LaCapra (2001: 40) denotes as 'unchecked identification', critical empathy is more akin to what these theorists have variously called heteropathic identification (Hirsch 2001), empathy (Landsberg 2004) and empathic unsettlement (LaCapra 2001).

Secondly, there are those who embed the fragmentary family past into more or less coherent, even rigid, narratives, such as that of the 'normal' soldier or stories vividly re-creating war-time suffering. In these narrations, the interviewees skirt absences and gaps and show an eagerness, even strong desire, to understand and empathize with their grandparents both as Nazi perpetrators, collaborators, and *Wehrmacht* soldiers, but also and especially as victims of the bombing war, flight and Nazism more

generally. Here, empathy with the grandparents has no limits and in many cases ends in full identification with perpetrators and *Mitläufer* as victims, and thus in what Schmitz (2007a) calls ‘sentimental historicist empathy’.

4.4.1 *Between condemnation and ‘critical empathy’*⁸⁶

The three interviewees who recount their grandparents’ Nazi past in this critical, even distanced mode are Caspar Reinhart, Ilka Pilcher and, to some extent, Silke Turner. These interviewees, unlike the ones in the next section, are not averse to considering the possibility of their grandparents, especially grandfathers, having been at least *Mitläufer*, witnesses and/or perpetrators of crimes. Especially Caspar and Ilka are aware of and to some extent troubled by their own lack of knowledge about their grandparents’ past. While Silke is understanding towards her maternal grandmother, about whom she speaks very fondly and with whose war stories she grew up, she refuses to extend such a stance towards her paternal grandmother, whose positive BDM stories she finds totally unacceptable. This becomes evident in the way she recounts a family gathering at her paternal grandmother’s house:

S: ‘My grandma was, when she was a teenager, in a summer camp with the BDM and talked very positively about this woman there, who was so fantastic and super and the great things she did with them and that was a typical situation / well the form in which she spoke about it was unacceptable and my uncle was also at the table I think, and it was clear to everyone there that the way she speaks about it was unacceptable and is a no-go and no one said anything about it because . . . there is no room to talk about it and then the topic was simply changed, [yet] this didn’t constitute a form of suppression but rather in the form of resignation.’

As Ilka has never known any of her biological grandfathers⁸⁷ or her maternal grandmother and knows very few stories about either family’s past during the Third Reich, she has to rely to a large extent on her imagination and historical knowledge. In the first interview before learning about her grandfather’s *Waffen-SS* membership, she thinks aloud about what her grandparents could have been involved in:

⁸⁶ (Schmitz 2007a).

⁸⁷ Her paternal grandparents separated very shortly after the war and both married again. Since her own father did not know who his real father was until his early twenties, Ilka’s father’s and her whole family’s relationship to him was never really existent.

I: 'As I said, I can hardly imagine, that one didn't participate in anything . . . the question is was it normal in quotation marks warfare . . . about which one could say 'well at least there was only another soldier on the other side' or was it not like that and that's difficult to say. I do believe that none of them was some bigwig, because I think that one/ well I can hardly imagine that they [grandparents and parents] would've totally silenced [*totgeschwiegen*] that. I think one would've noticed [*mitbekommen*] it, but I also don't imagine that they were sitting there well-behaved and twirling their thumbs . . . on the other hand I am also of the opinion that the women who stayed home also . . . had their opinions and I know my grandmother . . . well, she's not rightwing somehow, at least not anymore . . . but I know how shocked she was when my aunt had a black boyfriend.'

This extract from the first interview is relevant because it shows that Ilka never suspected that her family history would yield anything unexpected, or anything beyond normal *Mitläuferschaft* [fellow travelling]. But for her, 'mere' fellow travelling is not an excuse and although hesitantly, she does allude to her grandmother's racism. It furthermore shows that Ilka allows for ambiguity to remain and is not rushing to disambiguate what is transmitted in fragmented, vague and uncertain terms by adopting a conventional narrative. This becomes even more apparent in the second interview and now, with the knowledge of her grandfather's *Waffen*-SS membership, we talk about what she imagines he might have done during the war. As we will see in the next chapter, these fantasies closely match some of the perpetrator images displayed at the *Wehrmacht* exhibition, showing mass executions. When I ask Ilka whether she would want to know more about her grandfather's past, she replies,

I: 'I would like nothing more than find this out, because I think it's a strange thought to think about [that] it could perhaps be like that and not to know whether it's like that or not . . . but on the other hand, I do know that there's the possibility that it can't be ascertained . . . and of course one never knows whether this person was then also personally involved, but one can definitely establish the relative likelihood or improbability if one knows he was at this point in time at a particular location and at that time this and this happened, then it's at least within the bounds of possibility . . . that's so weird to have this half-knowledge [*Halbwissen*], well, especially now that I know that . . . the possibility definitely exists that he participated in such things, which I never considered beforehand.'

Caspar, at the time of the interview a student of pedagogy, had as a child and teenager an unusually close relationship with his maternal grandmother, in which, as he explains, he was treated as a substitute for his grandmother's deceased husband and was constantly compared to him. He recounts that this relationship markedly cooled down after she told him that his maternal grandfather, whom she always portrayed in a very idealized way as an anti-fascist and member of the labour movement, witnessed mass executions in Poland. He says the following about how he reacted when his grandmother revealed this to him:

C: 'For me it was pretty unimaginable, because my grandfather was always portrayed to me as very idealized and at this point I could no longer comprehend. One somehow has a particular image in one's head about how life was at the time and before I knew this I thought he was drafted and he would've risked his life if he hadn't done that and I thought "well he laid tracks and he had to do that" and at this point . . . that was indeed a shock, and I thought "how can one then go home on holiday and then go back there [to the front] and live a normal life. Well *that was no longer comprehensible to me.*'

He is here particularly disturbed by the interrelation, 'the awful proximity' (Silverman 2006: 6) between the horror and the ordinary, between his grandfather witnessing mass executions and then returning to his 'ordinary' family life back home. This also becomes evident in his remark about his realization that the 'fancy baby things' which, he was told, his grandfather sent from France to his daughter, Caspar's mother, must have come from plunderings. When he is told about the mass executions, Caspar's empathy with his grandfather, about whom he until then always had a very concrete image and saw as a victim of the circumstances, has obvious limits and he emotionally distances himself from his grandmother. While Silke takes the position of condemnation and resignation that relieves her from having to further deal with her paternal grandparents' Nazi past, Ilka and Caspar are clearly unsettled by the intrusion of the past into the present. Especially for Caspar, 'far from being reassuring, the retrieval of the past into the present is profoundly dislocating, disorientating' (Probyn 1996: 114) and sets in motion a long process of dealing with the Nazi past and his own family's, especially his parents', dissociation of it.

4.4.2 ‘Sentimental and historicist empathy’⁸⁸

Unlike Caspar and Ilka, Horst Endress, a PhD student in history at the time of the interview, Rainer Binder, a trainee accountant, and Johanna Müller, a young politics student who grew up in the GDR, are much more understanding. The grandfathers of all three interviewees were soldiers on the Eastern Front; Johanna’s was also a member of the infamous Hermann Göring division.⁸⁹ These interviews demonstrate how falling back on rigid and conventionalized narratives, such as that of the ‘normal’ soldier,’ and others that are traded within the family and beyond, relieve these grandchildren of having to consider their grandfathers as having potentially witnessed and/or committed (war) crimes.

All three relate that their grandfathers told them a lot about the war. Although Johanna and Rainer have seen and Horst knows about the *Wehrmacht* exhibition and all concede that one cannot separate the ‘clean’ army from the criminal SS, *Einsatzgruppen*, and Gestapo, they return to various versions of the narrative of the ‘normal’ soldier in order to keep their doubts at bay – which, in Rainer’s and Horst’s cases, are quite substantial and evident in their allusions to their grandfather’s stories as ‘incomplete’ and lacking – in order not to have to spell out other possible narratives. Additionally, Horst, as a historian, is also very skeptical about relying on the memories of individuals, like his grandfather in order to learn about the past and refers to them as saturated by lies and half-truths.

Rainer, whose father died when he was a small child, spent much of his childhood at his grandparents’ place and his grandfather became a sort of *Ersatz*-father for him. He saw the first *Wehrmacht* exhibition and registered absences in his grandparents’ stories, especially his grandfather’s depiction of the war as ‘clean.’ He says that ‘when I visited the exhibition I was already seventeen or eighteen years old and at that time it was already completely clear that it’s not possible that you have one

⁸⁸ Schmitz (2007a).

⁸⁹ Various regiments of the Hermann Göring division were involved in war crimes in Italy and at the Eastern Front as well as in the brutal crushing of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising.

organisation which commits all the evil and the others have nothing to do with it.’ Having asked him specifically about the war stories his grandfather tells him, he answers:

R: ‘It’s interesting, now that you mention it, I notice again how/ well it’s also definitely the case that what was always generally said about the *Wehrmacht* as basically a clean organization, which had nothing to do with *that* [Holocaust? – A.H.] .. actually now that you ask concretely I am struck by how their [grandparents’ – A.H.] choice of topic made it actually very clear from the start that they had nothing to do with *that*, well *that’s* .. actually omitted.’

Horst has the same insight when he asserts that, ‘it was indeed clear to me that one has to be careful with such distinctions; the *Totenkopfverbände*⁹⁰ were the evil guys and the normal *Wehrmacht* didn’t do anything.’ Johanna speaks of ‘deficient answers’ in relation to what her grandfather tells her about his past as a *Wehrmacht* soldier on the Eastern Front. All of them also admit that their grandparents’ stories always omitted the Holocaust and they claimed not to have known anything about it until after the war was over. Yet, Johanna’s grandfather also tells her that he knew about the Warsaw Ghetto and the uprising, in the crushing of which members of the Hermann Göring division were actively implicated, and how he also encountered a concentration camp when retreating from the front. Horst’s grandfather speaks of ‘partisan activities’,⁹¹ the defeats of which, he tells his grandson, “‘of course weren’t always pretty”” and that “‘from chipping come chips””.⁹² All three adopt their grandfathers’ narratives of themselves as ‘normal’, even particularly humane and fair soldiers. So, contrary to what Horst said earlier in the interview about individual memories as untrustworthy sources, he quotes his grandfather as having always said the following when asked about the *Wehrmacht’s* participation in the Holocaust:

⁹⁰ ‘SS-Death’s Head Formations’. These were self-contained divisions within the SS, whose main task was running the concentration and death camps within the territory of the ‘Reich’ as well as in annexed Austria and occupied Europe (Snyder 1976).

⁹¹ ‘*Partisanenaktivitäten*’

⁹² “‘*wo gehobelt wird fallen Späne*””. This is, as Schmitz (2007a: 213) adds in his analysis of Uwe Timm’s *Am Beispiel meines Bruders*, in which the author includes ‘italicised typical vocabulary of the ‘war experience’ in the East like *Gefrierfleischorden*, *Hitlersäge*, *Heimatschuss*’ to ‘remind[s] the reader of how much the soldier’s jargon still accompanied his 1950s childhood, reflecting ‘gleichermaßen Verrohung und Verdrängung in der Sprache’ (AB, 96)’ [in equal measure brutalization and displacement within language’].

H: “My god we had to do with Russians and . . . with guns and pistols and what have you but we didn’t notice any Jews there” he [grandfather] said, well and these are also things, where I perhaps didn’t continue to probe him because it somehow fitted quite well with what I knew at the time; that probably many of these villages were in fact already *judenfrei* [lit. ‘free off Jews’] so to speak and . . . he was with the artillery, the artillery of course also well .. / *that’s at least how I always imagined it*, doesn’t participate in the really hard-core combats at the front . . . but they were lying in their trenches.’

So at the end of the interview, Horst, the historian, reverses his initial skepticism and says ‘one has to say in conclusion that I simply believed him what he told me about it [the war].’ In a similar vein, Rainer convinces himself that his grandfather did not witness and/or perpetrate any crimes:

R: ‘It could of course also be like that. *I believe* .. my grandfather was drafted relatively early on *as far as I know* and .. during the war, *if it’s true*, he then also of course has had relatively little dealings with any Jewish fellow citizens [*Mitbürger*] .. none at all, as an officer at the front you didn’t have much to do with *that* .. except if you’d been .. / were present at *Säuberungsaktionen* [purges] which were committed, I believe, only by select groups.’

Like Rainer, who argues that his grandfather, ‘as an officer at the front,’ was far removed from the crimes, Johanna imagines her grandfather as having spent the war equally far removed from any crimes, namely ‘lying in the trenches and shooting at an enemy one doesn’t see’ and ‘occasionally returning a prisoner.’ In relation to the latter task, Johanna recounts how her grandfather told her ‘with a heavy heart’ how he once had to ‘return’ a Russian soldier to a *Wehrmacht*-run POW-camp, those ‘sites of mass-killing’ (Niven 2002: 145) (see introduction, page 38):

J: ‘On his way he met another [soldier] and the prisoner was somehow injured and wanted to sit down and then the other guy: “don’t sit down, stand up!” and then my grandfather said: “he you could be a bit humane for once, why don’t you let him sit down” and then he only said to him “if I were you, I’d shoot him, no one will ever care about him afterwards.” And that was an event, which really totally shocked him [grandfather] because at that point he still believed he was doing something just.’

Johanna tells this story to show how her grandfather remained humane and decent within an otherwise unspecified historical context. The war of extermination and the

Wehrmacht's treatment of Russian POWs is not an issue here; instead the aim is to demonstrate how her grandfather had a moment of conversion and insight. These three interviews also show what will become even more obvious in the analysis of the interviews below, namely that history and memory remain unconnected, and 'perpetrator' or bystander 'testimony' is held as more authentic and true than 'history.' In trying to question Johanna's adoption of her grandfather's justification of '*Befehlsnotstand*'⁹³ within the context of her allusion to her grandfather's knowledge of the Warsaw Ghetto and the uprising, I refer to Christopher Browning's ([1993] 2002) book *Ordinary Men*, to show that the thesis of '*Befehlsnotstand*' is not necessarily persuasive, as the police men and soldiers were in many cases left with much more choice about whether to participate in crimes or not. She however counters my historical reference by arguing that:

J: 'My grandfather said that disagreeable [*unliebsame*] people were indeed assigned to such tasks and that violations of orders were handled relatively rigidly. Order is order, that's how it was and I believe that there was some leeway within that but if someone ordered you to . . . shoot him then you had to do that.'

She thus validates her grandfather's version with his 'physical, living presence *during* the events narrated' (Mandel 2006: 102; emphasis in original), by 'an uncritical appeal to "experience"' (LaCapra 1998: 50) and disregards her earlier qualms about her grandfather's justifications. Personal experiences of historical events and by extension memories of these experiences thus attain a status of authenticity and validity that 'overrid[es] any problems with accuracy arising from an original misperception or from distortions introduced in the lapse of time' (Megill 1998: 47). In this way, all three grandfathers are turned into 'normal' soldiers in the accounts of their grandchildren, who earlier on in the interviews had expressed their doubts about their grandfathers' versions of events.

Furthermore, both Santner (1992: 147) and Stern (2003: 60) note that narrative fetishism and narrative rigidity are means to avoid anxiety that could potentially 'throw off a whole system of self-definition' (ibid.) that, is built around these gaps,

⁹³ Compulsion or necessity to obey orders.

and absences, as well as keep ‘noxious interpersonal consequences’ at bay. The ‘sudden awareness of one of them could be devastating, disequilibrating’ (ibid.) for the self. Santner (1992: 147) adds that ‘[f]ar from providing a symbolic space for the recuperation of anxiety, narrative fetishism directly or indirectly offers reassurances that there was no need for anxiety in the first place.’ It is thus that such narratives signify the postponement of working-through structural trauma as the self and the family are kept fully intact.

The grandchildren’s relationships with their grandparents are also less burdened because, like Johanna below, the majority of interviewees explicitly state that, in their conversations with their grandparents and their researches about them, they are no longer looking for a culprit, but want to understand their grandparents and their experience of NS. Johanna puts it in the following terms:

J: ‘It was really very important to me and I wanted it to come through in the conversations, I didn’t want to find a culprit, that was never the case with me, I simply wanted to understand it, because it’s something I never experienced. I only ever saw peace in my world . . .’

This extract shows the desire to understand (even re-experience) what the grandparents experienced. That this often happens via a ‘sentimental historicist empathy’ will become clear in the following extracts, but also and particularly in chapter 5.

Like Horst, who says he changed from an accusatory to a more understanding attitude towards his grandfather when he left puberty, Anna Seybold tells me about how she stopped challenging her grandmother’s stories when the latter’s health deteriorated with advancing age. She describes her paternal grandparents as life-long and staunch Nazis, who denied the Holocaust until they died. During her teenage years, Anna who, at the time of the interview was about to finish her university degree, considered these grandparents as ‘awful old Nazis’. Later on, however, she increasingly asked her grandmother about the NS past, particularly questions like ‘how were you feeling and . . . how was it for you?’ She continues: ‘I had the feeling

if I had displayed doubts . . . it would've been condemnatory and I think she would not have continued to recount.' Unlike her sister who, finds it necessary that the perpetrators admit to their crimes and recognize the suffering of the victims, she does not think in terms of victims and perpetrators and considers her grandparents 'equally victims, victims of the time, of the regime.'

The majority of interviewees no longer want empathy with their grandparents to be blocked by a distanced and moral view of their past (Santner 1992: 148-9). This less condemnatory and more understanding way of communicating with the grandparents, which is detectable across the sample, with only two exceptions,⁹⁴ also elicits different stories: Anna's grandmother tells her about her fear of the Russians, about women being raped and the flight more generally; Horst and Dagmar Schneider learn more about their grandparents' personal stories, particularly the stories of their grandparents' love and how it withstood the adversity of war. These interviewees – and the majority of the sample – thus recount their grandparents' Nazi past in a non-judgmental and compassionate way as personal stories of mainly suffering but also heroism. Acknowledging their own 'moral incapability' (Schmitz 2006b: 159) in their often-total reluctance to judge and opting for an uncritical empathy, the grandchildren often end up accepting 'the collective status of [their grandparents'] generation as victims of the war' (ibid.).

Anna extends this compassion towards her perennially silent but authoritarian maternal grandfather, even though she knows that he 'worked', as she puts it, in a concentration camp where he was also present at – or indeed participated in – mass executions.⁹⁵ She learnt about this when she was in her early twenties and her grandfather was suddenly summoned to give evidence as a witness⁹⁶ at a trial, shortly, after which he died. Although initially shocked by this revelation, this

⁹⁴ The exceptions are Caspar and Ilka and, to some extent, Carolin and Silke. While Silke condemns her paternal grandparents, she shows much more understanding towards her maternal grandparents, especially her grandmother.

⁹⁵ Anna is contradictory about whether her grandfather participated in or witnessed these mass executions. While she tells me that her mother told her that he himself never fired a shot during these mass executions, she also once refers to her maternal grandfather as having shot people.

⁹⁶ It remains unclear whether the grandfather was a witness or a defendant at the trial. Initially, Anna says he was summoned to trial as a witness, but later on in the interviews she reveals that – and she knows all of this from her mother – he was afraid of being convicted and sent to prison.

information has – unlike in Caspar’s case – no impact on her relationship with her grandfather, whom she describes, inspite of her earlier portrayal of him as obsessively pedantic and brutal, as ‘the dearest grandfather of all.’ And even though her father, a lawyer, had access to the files of the trial, she does not know and does not want to know more about her grandfather’s case, but restricts herself to the few bits and pieces her parents, especially her mother, tell her. She recounts that her mother said that her grandfather had been very young at the time, had come from a broken home, and was forced to witness/perpetrate these crimes. Due to the fact that her grandfather bound her father to professional confidentiality, by which the latter more or less abides, Anna’s knowledge of her maternal grandfather’s criminal past is very limited indeed. She shares her mother’s compassionate view of him and in doing so, she dismantles the distinction between victims and perpetrators, and her account, free of any references to the victims, portrays her grandfather as a victim of these ‘barbarous times’.

This works to disqualify history as a source and to dissociate the past, refusing as she does to take into account other (potentially easily) accessible information. Rather, she adopts the familiar family narrative, which casts her grandfather as a witness to these executions, who never fired a shot himself. Large parts of the family’s Nazi past remain defensively unformulated, which allows Anna to stay within ‘the well-worn channels’ of observing, feeling and thinking – within the familiar – and avoid interpretation (Stern 2003: 51). This becomes particularly evident when I ask her whether she knows the name of the concentration camp in which her grandfather ‘worked’, as she puts it. She answers:

Anna: ‘No

A.: Hm ... doesn’t that interest you?

Anna: No, not that much. Well, *I am much more interested in how he must have felt* at the time; to be there as a seventeen year old and to be present at mass executions or how it happened that he landed there, but I don’t know that but that’s because he simply didn’t talk about it .. but which concentration camp and in which city, no that never interested me, I don’t think that’s that important.

A.: You also don’t know how he ended up there?

Anna: No, but that's because I am not so much interested in history per se but more in the personal stories of the people.'

More interested in the personal history of her grandparents and their emotional experience of National Socialism, she explicitly rejects the validity of information about the past derived solely from documents. Talking about her desire to know more about the exact life stages [*'Lebensstationen'*] of her maternal grandfather, who as a Volga German first fought for the Russian army, then defected to the *Wehrmacht* and then 'worked' in a concentration camp, she says 'that one can only get such information by directly talking to contemporary witnesses.'⁹⁷ Like Dagmar, a young German living in London, who has devoured her maternal grandmother's memoir and was 'very moved', Anna describes herself as having been deeply touched by her maternal grandfather's story. Dagmar relates the memoir 'didn't contain many details, but this subjective style of writing [and] the partly very childlike naïve perspective . . . were nice to be able to put it into context, which is its definite advantage to pure school lessons.'

Similar to Anna, Martina von Selbig and Karin Ingbert are also very interested in their family history. The interest of both women, however, ranges much broader than their grandparents' experiences of the Third Reich, for example to include in Martina's case her mother's family's Baltic German origins and in Karin's case a strong interest in Silesia, the *Heimat* of her paternal family. Martina, who has an aristocratic background, is also not uninterested in her family's Nazi past and has researched the latter quite extensively as part of her history studies at university. While her father was always adamant that none of the von Selbigs were members of the NSDAP, Martina finds out that her paternal grandfather was not only a party member but also

⁹⁷ In the following extract from the interview with Anna, it becomes clear that the grandchildren often feel frustrated about the gaps in family history not because they might harbour some dark secret but because these gaps exacerbate their attempts to understand how they have experienced the Third Reich and how they felt: 'In relation to my paternal grandparents, I don't feel I know little, perhaps not many facts. But those can/ I would have to ask my father and then I could write down some facts, but somehow this isn't my main interest, that's why I feel that I am supplied with enough information, at least in relation to the topics which I am interested in; how they experienced the time. I am really more interested in the emotions. In relation to my maternal grandfather, I find it very sad; in his case, I would have liked know how it was for him to work in a concentration camp and how he dealt with it, if he later thought about it again, how it was to see such pictures on television when documentaries were on and in this case I would have liked to know much more about how he felt and everything that is related to it.'

an early member of the SS, while her great-uncle was a member of Hitler's cabinet and was tried at Nuremberg. Yet, the emphasis of her family narrative lies on her paternal grandfather's death as a prisoner of the Russians in the former concentration camp Sachsenhausen in 1946.⁹⁸ In her quest to find out who her family – the 'von Selbigs' – are, she finds an old photo album and is ecstatic 'that we [she and her siblings] actually now at least have something, I think it's great when these people [her grandparents] who are actually only names . . . get a life somehow . . . and then I prefer to see it without the uniforms, so it looks like a completely normal widely ramified family.' Like Anna, she prefers to stay within the familiar and expunge the uncanny.

The separation of the political from the personal and familial also becomes evident in Anna's answer to my question about how and when she became interested in National Socialism and her family history:

A: 'I've always been interested in my own family history, I have to say . . . with my family, very early on we travelled to the places where my [paternal] grandparents were when they fled . . . and to be honest, I am actually not interested in National Socialism, particularly, less perhaps than other Germans who approach it very politically . . . I am more interested in the emotion and what people actually thought and felt.'

In a similar way to Martina, Karin, who condemns her maternal grandfather as a Nazi and has broken off all contact with him a long time ago, wants to go to Silesia and find the origins of her paternal family there. She adds that, because her father and grandfather have thoroughly closed that chapter, she finds it particularly interesting and 'important to know where I come from [*woher ich komme*].' Explicitly

⁹⁸ At the beginning of the interview, Martina says her researches were guided by the desire to find out whether her grandfather was a perpetrator or victim. Yet, in what she subsequently asserts, she seems to already answer that question quite decisively: ' . . . this split between, on the one hand, in a SS-uniform, but on the other hand starved to death at Sachsenhausen, I can't even hate him, I can't even say "you're guilty!" On the contrary, I have a grandfather who starved to death, who was unlawfully imprisoned in a concentration camp, never mind the uniform [*Uniform hin oder her*]. She continues by telling me that she gained 'a very multifaceted image' during the course of her researches, but it seems that her grandfather's role as a victim outweighs his SS and NSDAP membership. This becomes evident again at the end of the interview, when she returns to her grandfather's death at Sachsenhausen: 'Well this step that I said that he was in Sachsenhausen because he was a pig, I never thought that and I also don't want to think that. He was in Sachsenhausen because he was the lord of the castle and because the Russians plugged [*reinstopfen*] him in there.'

describing herself as feeling rootless, she has made it her new project to trace her paternal grandparents' past in Silesia. These nostalgic ventures⁹⁹ into the past differ from Ilka's and Caspar's endeavours into their family histories insofar as they seek a 'chronological ground' (Probyn 1996: 122) to stabilize the self and its identity, rather than be unsettled by memory.

4.5 *Conclusion: Fantasy and the uses of memory against history*

In this chapter I have tried to show how the parents of the young Germans I interviewed often left it to their children to interpret the dissociated Nazi family past. The grandchildren interviewed for this study have tended to do this in broadly two ways, which I described, following Schmitz (2007a) as firstly ranging between condemnation and critical empathy and secondly as a 'sentimental historicist empathy'. The current popularity of and interest in family memory harbours both a unique opportunity to begin processes of working-through the past, as well as further dissociation. It is, however, especially the 'sentimental historicist empathy' that shapes the narratives of the grandchildren and, in its full identification with the grandparents, shows a certain disregard for other sources and the ghosts of the past, while staying within the narrow confines of their grandparents' personal experiences of the Third Reich. However, this popularity must be linked to a more general valorization of memory, that has followed in the wake of '[t]he decline of the role of national and religious memories' which 'reopen[ed] the space for the search for both authentic identities and usable pasts', as Barbara Misztal (2004: 68) notes. While for Caspar and Ilka, the retrieval of the past into the present is dislocating and disorienting, the interviewees in section 4.4.2 venture into their family pasts in search for continuity and identity. This is a point also made by Cornelia Blasberg (2006)

⁹⁹ See here Boym's (2001) distinction between reflective and restorative nostalgia. I would interpret the above-described ventures into family history as restorative nostalgia. Reflective nostalgia 'does not pretend to rebuild the mythical place called home' and narrates the past in inconclusive and fragmentary ways, while restorative nostalgia 'proposes to rebuild the lost home and patch up the memory gaps' (ibid.: 41). I would here like to draw attention to the massively resurgent interest, especially among 'third generation' Germans, in the formerly Eastern provinces, such as Silesia and East Prussia, that accompanies the turn to family memories (see *Der Spiegel Geschichte*, Nr. 1, 2011, *Die Deutschen im Osten Auf den Spuren einer verlorenen Zeit*). This would however merit a thesis in its own right.

who, in relation to the popular *Familienromane* and their emphasis on continuity, argues that these literary efforts represent less what LaCapra's and Santner's theories identify as working-through but rather signify a nostalgic reaction against the uncertainties of late modern life (Santner 1990: 52).¹⁰⁰

With the trend moving 'from stable 'hard' *history*' to 'changeable 'soft' *memory*' (Douglass & Vogler 2003: 36; emphasis in original), the grandparents' status as contemporary witnesses, gains significantly in importance. The privileging of the grandparents' testimony by the interviewees who recount their Nazi family past in the 'sentimental historicist' mode is related to a valorization of the witness that has attended the rise of memory. With respect to the witness' 'physical, living presence *during* the events narrated' (Mandel 2006: 102; see also Welzer & Domansky 1997: 7) his or her testimony attains the status of authenticity and truth. It is in relation to the grandparent or indeed the parent as a witness that I will return to the grandchildren's compassionate or 'therapeutical mode of listening' (Schmitz 2007a: 200) in the following chapter in order to analyze the content of their family narratives of the Nazi past and look at how the term trauma is used not only to turn the grandparents into victims but also to authenticate highly implausible and inconsistent memories.

In conclusion to this chapter, I would like to emphasize that the change in the attitude of listening from condemnation to a 'therapeutical attitude of listening' (Schmitz 2007a: 200), described in this chapter, is far from innocent. Not only does it facilitate a blurring of the distinction between perpetrator and victim but '[t]his "uninhibited" historicist perspective, . . . , is [also] problematic because it is always "pre-politicised"'; it claims to be beyond politics. Yet, as Schmitz (ibid.: 207) notes this claim is deceptive since '[i]t does not exist independently of an always already polarized field of public discourse of German politics of memory', in which

¹⁰⁰ Eigler (2005) concurs: 'With regard to family narratives published at the close of the 20th century, this tension between radical discontinuities and the search for continuities and identities helps to explain the popularity of these texts: at a time when the unified German state repositions itself in European and global contexts, these literary texts privilege the familial over the political; they seek to recreate and narrate family stories within a discontinuous and violent collective German history.'

representations of private family memories, especially of wartime suffering ‘belong increasingly to a nationalising imaginary that attempts to figure National Socialism without its extermination politics’ (ibid.: 216). Like Landsberg (2004: 90), Schmitz thus draws our attention to the fact that such genealogical endeavours as those analyzed above are always also political. Yet, Landsberg’s optimism in respect to attempts to ‘re-experience’ the past of others, which rests on the subject’s ability to recognize difference, is not necessarily apt here, since many of these grandchildren’s ventures into their families’ past end in full identification with the grandparents and thus cannot be linked to a progressive politics. Landsberg’s (ibid.: 90) designation of such genealogical endeavours as progressive is related to the possibility of the personal and family narratives they yield to ‘expand the national narrative’. Yet, the pluralization of national memory in Germany is ambiguous, since these family narratives of NS can and often do enter into a competitive, even combative relation with the memory of the Holocaust and thus serve as the basis for a form of identity politics founded on wartime suffering and trauma.

As already pointed out in chapter 2, concepts like post- and prosthetic memory ‘describe the increasingly constructed nature of memory for generations born after the Holocaust’ (Fuchs & Cosgrove 2006a: 11) and other disruptive historical events. In the following chapter, I will look in detail at how the grandchildren interviewed for this study invest the remnants of the Nazi and war past, i.e. archival documents, family memoirs, photographs and anecdotes, ‘with varying degrees of imaginative fantasy and employ fictional strategies in order to produce a family narrative that bridges the generational gap’ (ibid.). But like Schmitz, Fuchs and Cosgrove (ibid.) add their reservations, when they argue that ‘the fictionalizing perspective of the belated generation often succumbs to the temptations of sentimentalizing narrative [and] thus revises history from a subjective perspective.’ Thus, I will return to the importance of working-through historical trauma in chapter 6.

Chapter 5: Family memory of National Socialism and the Holocaust: Trauma and the everyday experience of the Third Reich

5.1 Introduction: 'Borrowed Memories'?

The infamous Holocaust 'memoir' *Fragments: Memories of a Wartime Childhood* supposedly written by the Jewish child survivor Benjamin Wilkomirski about his experiences of the Holocaust was not too long after its publication in 1995 discovered to be a fake, penned by Bruno Doesseker, a Swiss adoptee. I begin with the Wilkomirski scandal because it relates closely to my concerns in this chapter: in a similar way to a number of interviewees below, who recount their family narratives of wartime suffering by drawing on Holocaust tropes and imagery, Doesseker based his memoir 'not on his experiences but on his fantasies and on the memories of others' (Suleiman 2000: 549). Literary and cultural critic Susan Suleiman (2000: 554; Huyssen 2003), like many others, observes that the Holocaust has 'become, in today's Europe and America, the ultimate signifier of' '[t]rauma, horror, [and] a sense of absolute victimhood.' As such it is often inscribed into or becomes the vehicle for the expression of other traumatic experiences and memories. In her discussion of the Wilkomirski/Doesseker affair, Suleiman thus raises the question of who the Holocaust belongs to, as well as that of whether and to what extent it can and/or should be appropriated by others. This links to the discussion of the concepts of post- and prosthetic memory in chapter 2. Especially prosthetic memory is marked by the idea that technologies of mass culture render memories transportable and deterritorialized, thereby seriously undermining the idea and claim of familial, cultural or ethnic "'natural" ownership' and authenticity of memories, which now, so it is argued, no longer belong to anyone but to everyone (Landsberg 2004: 2; Levy & Sznaider 2006: 8). Thus deterritorialized and decontextualized, memories of the Holocaust are said to have become 'icons of destruction' (Brink 1998, 2000), the Holocaust 'a global icon' (Levy & Sznaider 2002: 97).

Both Landsberg's concept of prosthetic memory and Hirsch's notion of postmemory are explicitly designed to take account of ruptured intergenerational processes of memory transmission. Landsberg (2004: 2), in particular, suggests technologies of mass culture as 'alternative methods for the transmission and dissemination of memories' to the increasingly inadequate 'traditional modes of transmitting cultural, ethnic and racial memory – both memories passed from parent to child and those disseminated through community life'. They also contend that it is both possible and desirable that particular familial, cultural or ethnic memories become 'available across existing stratifications of race, class and gender' (Landsberg 2004: 22; Hirsch 2001: 220). Both scholars thereby problematize the distinction between private, family memory and public cultural memory. Landsberg (2004: 19), for example, writes that prosthetic memories are:

'. . . privately felt public memories that develop after an encounter with a mass cultural representation of the past, when new images and ideas come into contact with a person's own archive of experience. Just as prosthetic memories blur the boundary between individual and collective memory, they also complicate the distinction between memory and history.'

Hirsch (2008: 114) also agrees when she contends that 'family life, even in its most intimate moments, is entrenched in a collective imaginary shaped by public, generational structures of fantasy and projection and by a shared archive of stories and images that inflect the transmission of individual and family remembrance.' As those living in contexts where the process of intergenerational memory transmission is ruptured have to rely heavily on fantasy and creation, as Hirsch and Landsberg point out, this chapter will look at how the grandchildren's imaginary of their NS family past is structured. The essentially creative, imaginative and constructive nature, of especially the grandchildren's family memory of NS, will become particularly evident in this chapter. This not only provides another argument against those theories of the transgenerational transmission of trauma that posit a correspondence between the grand/children's fantasies and the denied past of the grandparents (see Rosenthal *et al.* 1997a: 355), but at the same time draws attention

to the limits of such theories of trans-cultural/-national memory put forward by Landsberg and Levy and Sznajder.

Harald Welzer *et al.* (2002) already hint at these limits. Where Landsberg, Hirsch and especially Levy and Sznajder concentrate on the positive and progressive aspects of the Holocaust as transnational and transcultural or global memory, Welzer *et al.*'s study shows us what Welzer (2006) himself calls the 'collateral damage' of Holocaust education and a successful enlightenment [*Aufklärung*] that shaped especially the educational and cultural experiences of the grandchildren. The study (2002: 91) shows how, in the communication about the past within families of Nazi perpetrators, followers and *Wehrmacht* soldiers, family members wittingly or unwittingly draw on the cultural archive, and here particularly on representations that derive from the context of the history of the Holocaust to narrate their Nazi family histories as stories of suffering and victimhood. Welzer *et al.* (*ibid.*) argue that these mass-mediated representations are used as templates [*Vorlagen*] to fill in the gaps and to render meaningful 'the peculiarly fragmented and nebulous' (*ibid.*: 108) family stories about the Nazi past. They serve to do away with contradictions and doubts and render the meaning of such fragmented and contradictory stories easily recognizable. This process of appropriating the 'frame characteristics' [*Rahmenmerkmale*] (*ibid.*: 82) of representations of the Holocaust, Welzer *et al.* (*ibid.*: 81-105) call *Wechselrahmung*.

Much more explicitly than Welzer *et al.*, Helmut Schmitz (2007b: 6) links this phenomenon to the globalization of the Holocaust, seeing as he does the return of 'German memories of wartime suffering as' an ironic consequence of the globalization of the Holocaust in the form of a universal victim narrative. Andreas Huyssen (2003: 14, 16) helpfully draws our attention to the ambiguity of the Holocaust as a global metaphor for traumatic histories around the world: 'While the comparison with the Holocaust may rhetorically energize some discourses of traumatic memory, it may also serve as a screen memory or simply block insight into specific local histories.' He (*ibid.*: 16) urges us to scrutinize 'whether and how' the Holocaust as global metaphor may both 'help and hinder' 'local memory practices and struggles'. In the

present context it becomes clear that in helping to articulate memories of German wartime suffering, it can also contribute to hinder memories of perpetration to surface.

So what Welzer *et al.* identify as the phenomenon of *Wechselrahmung* raises similar issues as those brought up during the Wilkomirski/Doesseker affair and Suleiman's (2000: 554) question about whether and where we should draw a line 'between personal memory and imagined "borrowed" memory'; it compels us not only to think about the possible ethical and political implications of the presence of such "borrowed memories" in the interviewees' family narratives, but also forces us to critically re-examine concepts such as prosthetic and post-memory. What does the blurring of the boundary 'between individual and collective memory' that Landsberg (2004: 19) welcomes imply in the context of 'third generation' Germans and their family memories of National Socialism? This returns us to the last section of the introduction and obliges us to ask whether this constitutes a part of what some consider the current paradigm shift – from perpetrators to victims – in German memory culture and politics, or whether this is to be regarded, as Aleida Assmann argues, a broadening of perspectives? Does this constitute a form of appropriation or is James Young (1988: 133) right when he argues that it might be better to have an 'abused memory . . . which might then be critically qualified, than no memory at all'? I will return to this in the conclusion to this chapter.

Since all 'third generation' family narratives have to rely on the imagination, I will begin by looking at three interviewees, who portray their grandfathers as perpetrators (and victims) without succumbing to 'sentimental historicist empathy' (Schmitz 2007a). However, as the previous chapter tried to show how the move from a more or less condemnatory and/or judgmental mode of apprehending the Nazi past of family members to a therapeutical or compassionate one also implies the return of what Schmitz (2007a: 207) calls an 'uninhibited' historicism' or Caplan (2000: 161) terms a 'vulgar *verstehen*, a distorted and reductive form of historicism', I will here return to the question of historicism to look at how it allows for the possibility to remember the Nazi past without needing to acknowledge National

Socialist discrimination, persecution and extermination; how it allows for a family memory of the everyday without the extreme. In doing so, I will discuss Harald Welzer et al.'s (2002) work, especially their concept of cumulative heroization, and embed the analysis within a longer trajectory of developments concerning the representation and historicization of NS. It is within the context of this discussion that I will come back to the questions raised above to look at interviews in which representations of the Holocaust function as *Vorlagen* or templates to illustrate the grandparents' suffering.

In the last section, I will draw attention to the frequency with which the term trauma is invoked in some of these narratives. I will argue that the importance of the discourse of trauma emerges precisely in relation to a lack of validity, working as it does as a rhetorical marker that establishes memory as true and authentic. As we will come to see, Douglass and Vogler's (2003: 15-16) claim that 'the belief that trauma provides a criterion of authenticity for the "real", and that memories not somehow defined and authenticated by trauma cannot be trusted,' is very widespread. References in the interviews to trauma thus perform exactly this function, i.e. to validate and authenticate highly suspect and implausible 'memories' and stories. I am thus in this chapter particularly interested in the interviewees' stories of their grandparents' past as performative acts, i.e. in these stories as '*produc[ing]* what they claim to be *re-presenting* and *re-covering*' (Fortier 2000: 38), namely the grandparents as traumatized survivors of war.

5.2 *Remembering and imagining the extreme*

In her analysis of how the use of the idea of the Holocaust as unspeakable inhibits the production of meaning, literary critic Naomi Mandel (ibid.: 64) suggests that what is needed is 'more meaning, not less'. I would here add that the perpetrator images of the *Wehrmacht* exhibition might perhaps be a way of doing precisely what Mandel proposes, namely of 'imagining the unimaginable' and removing this past from its state of total incomprehensibility and unrepresentability. As Niven (2002:

153) points out, these images ‘were more shocking than the films shot by the Allies on liberating the concentration camps’ of which many stills have become ‘icons of destruction’ (Brink 1998, 2000), providing an extremely condensed, even misleading view of Nazi extermination; ‘misleading because they show the camps at the moment the Allied troops marched in’ (Sontag 2003: 75), the camps had stopped functioning and most perpetrators, except for a few remaining ones, had already disappeared.



Illustration 5. 'Survivor in Bergen-Belsen, April 1945' (Zelizer 1998: 120).

The photographs displayed at the exhibition are very different to the liberation photographs because they ‘were photographs taken *immediately before, during and after* acts of murder’ (Niven 2002: 153). Thus, they do not allow the viewer the ‘comfort’, which the liberation pictures usually provide, namely of ‘document[ing] the consequences of violence but sav[ing] the viewer the sight of killing and being killed’ and ‘remov[ing] the events to [the] vaguely defined places’ of the concentration camps (Brink 2000: 146; Möskén 2007: 241). Thus these ‘icons of destruction’ ‘serve[d] [and still serve] as an *alibi*’ (ibid.) for postwar German society.

The *Wehrmacht* images, however, do not allow for such comforts, showing as they do ‘victims in direct and visible relation to their perpetrators, unlike the typical photographs of the dead in Bergen-Belsen’ (Niven 2002: 153). They rendered the perpetrators and their terrible deeds visible and no longer allowed the displacement of the Holocaust beyond German society into the gas chambers of the death camps, where annihilation proceeded ‘anonymously’ (Mösken 2007: 249). Controversially, these images invite visitors to take the perspective of the bystanding photographer (or perpetrator), who ‘comes to symbolize the position of those many German soldiers who observed crimes, or knew of them, yet did not protest’ (Niven 2002: 154).



Illustration 6. *Wehrmacht* soldiers committing mass executions in Kragujevac, Serbia (Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung 1996: 57).

As Caspar Reinhart did not hesitate to call his *paternal* grandfather (not the one discussed in chapter 4) a fascist, was very critical about how this side of the family, including his father, glorified the Nazi time, and emphasized his emotional distance to his paternal family, I felt I could ask him about what he imagined his grandfather might have done. His reply is not in narrative form but consists of stringing together a host of criminal deeds: ‘ . . . one fantasy are lootings in villages, for example. Well, invading a village and simply to ravage and yes, to kill, to torture, to rape, to rob.’ Ilka is even more graphic, but also more explicit as to the source of her imagination. To my question of whether, since she has learnt about her paternal grandfather’s

Waffen-SS membership, she has ever thought about what he might have been involved in, she answers:

I: ‘Well, honestly, when I heard *Waffen*-SS, I immediately thought about those executions [*Erschiessungsaktionen*] in the East . . . I thought about these big excavated pits and the people standing in front of it are being shot and fall into it, that was the first thing I thought about or, these small villages somewhere in Russia where they hung all the people from roof beams. . . . I never saw the *Wehrmacht* exhibition but one also got to see some of these images at other places, . . . I sometimes thought, . . . that he could have participated in things like that.’



Illustration 7. *Wehrmacht* soldiers committing mass executions in Weißruthenien in the autumn of 1941 (Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung (1996: 119).



Illustration 8. Public execution of Jews – watched and committed by *Wehrmacht* soldiers – in Shitomir, Ukraine, August 1941 (Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung 1996: 71).

Caspar and Ilka's accounts are not in narrative form; rather they list criminal deeds or describe images. LaCapra (2001: 41) makes it clear that empathic unsettlement does not only relate to the experiences of victims and survivors but also to perpetrators, whose experiences and behaviour, he continues, should be attempted to be understood as far possible, without however overidentifying with them. In chapter 4, we saw how both Caspar and Ilka are critical of their grandparents' stories, while not totally dismissive of them. In evoking the perpetrator images of the *Wehrmacht* exhibition in their efforts to imagine their grandfathers' deeds, they do take up the invitation inherent in these images to position themselves as bystanders and/or perpetrators, yet crucially without overidentifying with this position. Furthermore, in Silke's narrative about her maternal grandfather, also a soldier on the Eastern front, it becomes evident that it is possible, as Schmitz's (2007a: 202) notion of critical empathy tries to show, that 'attempt[s] to approach the "perpetrator generation" with understanding and empathy' do not necessarily have to end up in 'sentimental

historicist empathy' (sympathy, or full/ idiopathic identification). Silke always had a strong bond to her maternal grandparents. Although she never spoke to her grandfather about his past, her mother told her, that he, upon returning home from the front, found his parents' house bombed and his own father dead. He then, as Silke continues:

S: 'ran out of the village into a field, I believe with some other people, but I am not entirely sure, and there was someone, I believe a British paratrooper . . . anyway they shot him, [but] I am actually quite sure that my grandfather shot him . . . which made him a war criminal and he should've been officially convicted, [but] after the war my grandpa went to France into hiding for five years.'

She recognizes her grandfather's suffering without either turning it into a justification for his act of perpetration, nor does she trivialize the latter in exclusively focusing on his suffering.

5.3 *Purging family histories: From perpetrators to heroes and victims*

While much has been written in recent years about the return of a victim discourse in Germany, it is the work of Harald Welzer *et al.* (2002), which is particularly relevant in the present context. Having analyzed 40 family conversations and individual interviews with three generation families, the team found that particularly the grandchildren tend to 'overhear' their grandparents' allusions to Nazi involvement, witnessing and perpetrating crimes, and/or their anti-Semitic statements and rather turn them into heroes and victims of war (see Tschuggnall & Welzer 2002: 142). The grandchildren's extended knowledge of National Socialism and the Holocaust produces in them the desire to remove their grandparents from any involvement in the NS regime and adjust the latter's past (in)actions and characters to present-day moral standards, they (*ibid.*) argue. Welzer *et al.* (2002) call this process of embellishing stories and anecdotes in the process of transmission 'cumulative heroization'. Yet, I would like to go further than Welzer *et al.*'s claim that the grandchildren's family memory of the Third Reich as one of victimhood and heroism

is a side-effect of a successful Holocaust education; instead I wish to draw attention to the fact that their family narratives have much in common with an *Alltagsgeschichte* or *Heimatgeschichte* that emphasizes the normal aspects of life under NS, concentrates on local and regional areas and seeks a more ‘differentiated’, less morally inflected view of the past. This is important because, as I will show in the following chapter, such a personal and familial view of the Nazi past is often counterposed to either a dry, facts-based knowledge or a too emotionalized approach that is propagated at school.

5.3.1 *Remembering and imagining the everyday without the extreme*

The interviews abound in stories about how grandparents courageously resisted the Nazis. However, if probed, many interviewees cannot specify how they came to know these stories. The interview with Albrecht Richter who works in the creative industries and is much more interested in how the 1968 generation represents the Nazi past in his eyes, in a too moral and Manichean way, provides an example of this. He begins to narrate his *maternal* family history by stating that his grandfather ‘never sympathized with the National Socialists . . . because he was more SPD orientated.’ He argues that his grandparents’ antipathy towards the Nazis is evident in such actions as listening to BBC radio in the last months of the war and using Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* as heating fuel after the war, rather than keeping it as his paternal grandparents did. Although he portrays parts of his paternal family as having strongly ‘sympathized’ with the Nazis, he remains very vague about it. So we return to the maternal side and Albrecht reveals that he believes that his grandfather, a *Wehrmacht* soldier on the Eastern front who was flown out of Stalingrad because he had malaria [*Sumpffieber*], became a guard in a local forced labour camp upon his recovery. A little later in the interview I return to this, to confirm it:

A: ‘ . . . your [maternal] grandfather . . . after he came back from Stalingrad became an inspector I mean guard in a forced labour camp?’

U: Well, I believe he worked there in the capacity of a paramedic.

A: Ah okay.

I: Well, I [said] guard earlier but I believe it was in the paramedic sector, but I can't/ these are always the things which one picks up somewhere.'

Albrecht quickly retracts his statement that his grandfather was a guard in a forced labour camp and turns him into a paramedic, and thus into a member of the helping professions, and a 'good' German, without however knowing whether any of it is true. Asking Albrecht about the existence of other family stories about NS, he replies, that apart from anecdotes about furlough, and bombing raids:

U: ' . . . there're sometimes stories, which I think are very exciting, that my [maternal] grandmother . . . wanted to name her daughter . . . Ruth. But she was then of course forbidden to do so, because it was a Semitic name . . . but for me that's a sign . . . that the claim that on that side one didn't sympathize is actually believable because one actually didn't buy into that ideology at all . . . however when we play Chinese Checkers there're sentences like "chuck out the Jew".'

Undeterred by such contradictions, Albrecht prefers to attend to indications that this side of the family 'didn't sympathize.' Similarly, Sebastian asserts that his great-grandfather was sent to a concentration camp because 'what they were doing was already opposition' without being able to specify what this opposition consisted of. When I, during the second interview, return to the alleged imprisonment of the great-grandfather in a concentration camp, Sebastian Merle admits that when he asked his mother in between the interviews, this turned out to be 'incorrect information'. Carolin Dietrich, although she prefaces her family narrative with the announcement that all her information about it is second-hand and she does not know whether any of it is true, then goes on to recount her paternal grandfather's past as a continuous story, documenting his resistance to the Nazis. The fact that he kept a diary during the war, in which he noted that he heard about concentration camps but also that he was an "upstanding German" is construed as resistance because it could have potentially landed him in a concentration camp, since it was, as Carolin believes, forbidden to keep diaries. In the beginning of the narrative, she alludes to her grandfather having perhaps been a member in the Socialist Party, while further into the narrative he is already a 'diehard socialist', who was sent threatening letters by the SA because he did not attend a compulsory event celebrating the incorporation of

the firm he worked for into the SA. Johanna Müller tells a story about how her grandfather and a comrade passed a concentration camp on their way home from the front, to portray her grandfather as a ‘loyal and solidary man,’ who was against the regime, because he did not, like his friend, spit against the fence of the camp. Dagmar proudly recounts a story about her paternal grandfather who, as a commanding *Wehrmacht* officer in occupied France, demanded to pay the bill, after his regiment had stayed a night in the most expensive hotel in town.

The interviewees recount these stories to illustrate how courageous, moral, humane and fair their grandparents acted during the Third Reich. Yet, as Welzer *et al.* (2002: 103) point out, ‘the frame of the described action is just as little taken to be problematic as the function, in which individual protagonists appear.’ Either ‘[t]he persecution and expulsion of the Jewish population are within these stories simply taken as facts, which are neither in need of further explanation nor somehow problematic’ (ibid.) or references to persecution and violence, if they appear at all in these stories, do so only at their very margins. The interview with Horst makes this very clear. Like many interviewees, he emphasizes that his grandparents lived in the countryside, where there was, according to his grandmother, no persecution because there were no Jews and expresses his interest in the everyday history of his local era in the 1920s and 30s. Both the wedding photograph of his grandparents, which shows his grandfather in *Wehrmacht* uniform and the latter’s *Feldpostbriefe* [field post letter], which Horst inherited from his grandpa, are read primarily as ‘striking document of their [the grandparents’] love’ and Horst explicitly states that the Holocaust and the war were never in the foreground of his inquiries of both his grandparents’ past nor of local history.

Revisiting the question of the continued absence of the Holocaust and the extreme within ‘German family memory’, I would argue that much can be gained by returning to the Friedlander-Broszat debate about the historicization of National Socialism. As a ‘side-show’ to the *Historikerstreit*, historians Saul Friedlander and Martin Broszat discussed the issue of how and to what extent NS can and should be historicized. Broszat (1990: 87) in his article *A Plea for the Historicization of National Socialism*

argued for the ‘complete moral quarantine of the Hitler period’ to be lifted to be able to gain a more differentiated view of National Socialism. In championing an approach called *Alltagsgeschichte* – a history from below, based largely on oral history interviews with subjects usually excluded from traditional historical accounts – Broszat (ibid.: 78) wanted to reintroduce ‘the pleasure of narration’ into the historiography of NS. *Alltagsgeschichte* aims to do so by looking at NS *not* through the lens of Auschwitz and a focus ‘on the political sphere and . . . its criminal dimension’ (Friedlander 1993: 36) but, like these family narratives, rather endeavours to integrate this past ‘by reintroducing the continuities of daily life and the normal dimensions of those years’ (ibid.) and focusing on provincial and rural areas. In its emphasis on continuity, it highlights ‘the noncriminal, non-ideological, and non-political aspects of the epoch, that is, among other things . . . daily life . . . and the ordinariness of many aspects of the Third Reich’ (Friedlander 1993: 76). While I agree with the historian Charles Meier (1988: 92-93) that historicization in the form of, for example, *Alltagsgeschichte* does not necessarily have to lead to exculpatory accounts and is to a certain extent necessary in order to be able to take account of the extreme within the everyday of the Third Reich, it must be added, as both Friedlander (1990, 1993) and Maier (1988: 92-93) point out, that *Alltagsgeschichte* carries the seeds of ‘a reviewed *Historismus* [historicism], hostage to subjectivity’ (Meier 1988: 93).

However, what is even more relevant to our concerns here is that *Alltagsgeschichte* introduced the concept of resistance [*Resistenz*] to conceptualize ‘an intermediate category of behavior, in between active opposition and total conformism’ (Friedlander 1993: 76). As we have seen above, it is of such forms of ‘resistance’, of small acts of everyday ‘resistance’ that these grandchildren’s tales of heroism speak. Yet, Friedlander (ibid.: 77) notes that the amorphousness of this idea of ‘resistance’ allows one to ‘identify the concept with tacit acquiescence or passive acceptance of the worst crimes of the regime, notwithstanding whispered disapproval.’ It is thus that actions like listening to the BBC in the last months of the war can advance to acts of resistance. This helps to purge one’s own family history off any Nazi

involvement and relegate the political and ideological aspects to the very outer margins of the family narrative.

Both LaCapra (1998: 26, 50) and Santner (1992) identify *Alltagsgeschichte* with ‘harmonizing narration’ and narrative fetishism respectively. The ‘uncritical appeal to “experience”’ that LaCapra (1998: 50) criticizes *Alltagsgeschichte* for also shapes many grandchildren’s family memory of NS, as we have seen in chapter 4. “‘Experience’ in this specific sense’ he (ibid.) continues ‘counters mourning and any desirable process of critically working through.’ Furthermore, this mode of narrative ‘contains the past through a self-legitimizing, even sentimental process’ which, LaCapra (ibid.) adds, dissociates ‘its more unsettling aspects’; dissociates those aspects that hint at or speak of precisely the extreme within the everyday. Christian Schneider (2001: 335) contends such ‘tacit “generational purification” of one’s own family’ is the ‘typical characteristic of the third generation’, which, in distinction to their parents’ split image of their own parents, has a ‘dissociated grandparents image’, in which suspicion tends to be projected onto other people’s grandparents.

In moving on to the tales of wartime suffering which, are even more ubiquitous in the interviews than tales of heroism, it must be noted that they are narrated in various different ways. There are those, like Caspar, who mentions his mother’s stories of the bombing war, however not without critically commenting on the unreflective way in which she recounted them; or Silke (1981) who, as we have seen above, recounts the suffering of her maternal grandfather in a more empathic but still critical way, as she never fails to mention his act of perpetration and does not view her grandfather’s murderous response to the suffering inflicted on him a legitimate one. And then there are those who recount the suffering of their grandparents by telling the story solely from the perspective of their grandparents, i.e. in terms of a ‘sentimental historicist empathy.’ It is within the structure of these stories that fragments of Holocaust narratives, tropes and images, as well as the term trauma, play an important role and to which we shall now turn.

5.3.2 *Post- or prosthetic memories as screen memories: Trauma, victimhood and wartime suffering*

At the time of the interview in spring 2009, Melanie Kerner (1976) had just finished her doctorate in comparative literature. I will quote extensively from her interview as it not only contains stories that speak of ‘resistance’ as well as wartime suffering and trauma, but also shows very clearly the role fantasy plays in the construction of family memory in the third generation. Melanie begins her story with the maternal side. Everything she knows about it, she learnt from her mother, who told her a lot about her own and Melanie’s grandmother’s experiences of the flight. In a much more pronounced way than in Martina von Selbig’s family narrative (see chapter 4), Melanie’s retelling of her maternal grandparents’ past banishes her grandfather’s SA membership into a subordinate clause:

M: ‘ . . . they [mother’s family] were peasants / smallholders in Poland, my grandfather was also a member of the SA, my grandmother [had] five or then later six children, later received, I believe .. this *Mutterkreuz*.¹⁰¹ After the war was over it became clear they had to [..] clear the farm, Poles from the village came and said “you’ll be gone from here within an hour, otherwise you’ll be dead!” . . . about the flight she [Melanie’s mother] always only ever told things like . it was very, very exhausting, in the beginning they were evacuated to Schleswig-Holstein, where they were the strangers [*Fremden* – foreigners] . . . and were hated by everyone . . . and even though they were Germans the bottom line is they were also displaced . . . ’

She continues to tell her maternal family’s story of the suffering during the flight in very emotional terms and great detail. Above she uses the English term ‘displaced persons’ rather than the German word *Flüchtling*, signalling that for her all are equally victims of war. The distinction between those displaced after being liberated from concentration and death camps and those fleeing the advancing Russian army for fear of reprisals is gone. This shows how an increasing Europeanization of the memory of the Holocaust and WWII, although disposing of a hierarchy of victims, at

¹⁰¹ *Ehrenkreuz der Deutschen Mutter*, usually simply translated as Mother’s Cross but the full translation is ‘The Cross of Honour of the German Mother’. This was an award given by the Third Reich to mothers of German descent who bore five or more children. It was introduced in 1938 to stimulate the growth of the ‘Aryan’ population.

the same time ‘ultimately obfuscates clear distinctions between victims and perpetrators’ (Levy & Sznajder 2005: 20).

Although Melanie repeatedly refers to her maternal grandfather, who was also a *Wehrmacht* soldier in Russia, as ‘the Nazi grandpa’, she always adds how glad she is that only one of her grandfathers was ‘bad’ because he was a Nazi. It is thus that the narrative of her paternal grandfather as a persecuted communist becomes very significant to her self-understanding and might help to explain her lack of concern about the validity of these ‘memories’. As her paternal grandparents died when she was still very young, all the stories she recounts in the following paragraphs, were transmitted to her by her father, who was born in 1935. Her grandfather, she recounts, was a communist, who:

M: ‘ . . . during the Nazi time . . . had to carry out forced labour . . . he was in the mines first and with his cousin he then almost slew someone who wanted to reveal them to the Nazis, with a shovel . . . and then they were kicked out of the mines and then he was unemployed again for quite some time . . . and then he had to work in the mines again because it was essential to the war effort.’

Although much of her narrative remains vague and logically incoherent, it has, as we will come to see, a purpose. Directly following on from her grandfather’s life story, she relates how her father’s family helped forced labourers. This confuses me even more because, until this point in the interview, I assumed that her grandfather was himself a forced labourer:

M: ‘In front of their [grandparents’] house – they lived on a mining estate [*Zechensiedlung*] . . . forced labour was also carried out by . . . forced labourers who came from Poland and France . . . and there are always .. these stories that one had to be very careful because *my/they* were all malnourished and my father, because he was a child, had to go to these people and whisper to them that in the pergola – there were these garden sheds – was soup and bread and they should secretly sneak away and go there and eat there . . . well, a secret relief action.’

Jumping from how her paternal grandfather was condemned to forced labour to how her paternal family helped forced labourers, Melanie herself gets confused, no longer

sure whom – her grandfather or the foreign forced labourers – she is actually talking about. She then jumps to the end of the war, when:

M: ‘ . . . my grandfather even learnt from someone in the NSDAP, from a neighbour . . . that he was supposed to have been picked up [*abgeholt*], because in [name of city] there was the [name of Gestapo prison], where political prisoners were sent . . . and then he was supposed to have been picked up and sent to the [name of prison] and it was clear that whoever was sent [there] will never return . . . torture was carried out there.’

Continuing the family narrative, she embeds it within the local history of mass executions that were committed at the very end of the war, whose victims were mainly foreign forced labourers and POWs, but also a number of local communists and social democrats.

M: ‘ . . . and thus *my fath-/ grandfather* had to go into hiding and *arguably* [*wohl*] went hiding in the woods, there’s a park . . . and mass executions were carried out there shortly before the end of the war.

A: Uh.

M: And *there I never really know* because my father has terrible memories of this, well he speaks about having seen dead bodies which were hastily buried there.

A: Huh.

M: When . . . the Americans invaded [*einmarschieren*] in the West, as they arrived the dead bodies had to then / and they were hastily buried and my father speaks about this; that their skin was torn by barbed wire and that the dead bodies were lying there, shot dead in caverns.

A: Yes.

M: And then before they were filled up/ but that’s impossible that he [her father] fled to the woods with his father, well his father must have told him . . . and presumably it was so traumatic for him.

A: True.

M: That he stored it as his own memory.

A: Ah yes.

M: That’s *how I imagine it*; because I can’t imagine that his mother [grandmother] would’ve allowed him [Melanie’s father] to go to the woods with his father, because there’s no food.’

In trying to narrate her paternal family history, Melanie begins to stumble, encountering contradictions and practical impossibilities that make her story highly implausible. At the end of Melanie’s narrative we are forcefully reminded of the question of the imagination and validity or truth, as her main source, her father, is not

necessarily a very reliable one. Yet, she solves this problem by assuming her father to have been traumatized by his own father's story. Her use of the term trauma in this context 'provides a criterion of authenticity for the "real"' (Douglas and Vogler 2003: 15-16); it validates her story as true. This evidently works, as I endorse it by continuously confirming it. At the same time, she also turns her grandfather into a survivor of experiences that are reminiscent of the Holocaust.

Although her references to skin torn by barbed wire, dead bodies lying in caverns and being hastily buried are reminiscent of widely-circulated images of the Holocaust – of 'icons of destruction', i.e. the images of Allied troops liberating concentration camps – these references make no sense in terms of the plot of the story (Welzer *et al.* 2002: 90). These Holocaust tropes and images are thus used to turn Melanie's grandfather and father into traumatized survivors. One immediately associates her reference to barbed wire with concentration camps, and the story of her grandfather hiding from the Nazis in the woods brings to mind for example the recent film *Defiance*, which is based on Nechama Tec's book of the same title about the Bielski brothers, who organized Jewish resistance from their hiding place in the woods.

Welzer *et al.* (2002: 98) note that the closer such family stories of suffering are to cultural representations of the Holocaust, the more plausible they appear to the young listeners. The interesting point here is that Melanie is completely untroubled by the fact that she does not really know where these 'memories' 'originate' from. Hence, Landsberg's (2004: 42) observation that '[w]here memories come from matters less than how they enable a person to live in the present' seems apt, as these memories allow Melanie to say in vital situations – especially in encounters with Jews and non-Jews abroad – that: 'at least I only had one bad grandfather' and 'I don't come from a proper Nazi family.' However, while Landsberg's observation might be correct, it does not address the consequences of unchecked fantasy, i.e. of not working-through the past. I will discuss these in chapter 7, where I look at how the latter might be related to a return of an often-defiant national pride.

This unconcern about the validity of family narratives of NS becomes even more pronounced in the interview with Anna. For Anna, as for Melanie, it is very important to emphasize that one side of the family were victims. Already, when I call her to arrange the interview, she describes her family history as particularly interesting because of the peculiar constellation that her paternal grandparents were convinced Nazis, while her maternal grandparents – including her grandfather who perpetrated/witnessed mass executions – almost became victims ‘of these events.’

Anna Seybold begins her maternal family narrative by recounting how her grandmother had a love child by a Russian soldier, which then disappeared and was probably killed by the family because, as Anna’s mother assumes, they were afraid of being sent to a concentration camp. By beginning with this story, she shows that her maternal family, unlike most Germans at the time, did not view Russians and ‘Slavs’ more generally as *Untermenschen* [subhuman], but ‘had contact’ with them, as she puts it. Having thus set the scene, she continues by recounting how it was revealed that her maternal grandfather was part of an execution squad. I then proceed by asking her what else she knows about her grandfather, to which she replies:

Anna: ‘ . . . according to the files, as my father told me, he had access to the files, he [grandfather] himself didn’t actually shoot but was part of execution squads, at the age of seventeen or so, that must’ve been really heavy . . . how did I get to this again? Ah, yes well on this farm where he then got to know my grandma, he somehow began to work in the resistance or rather there they then also hid Jews . . .

A: Are there any stories about this; about how Jews were hidden, where and so on?

Anna: No, well *I wouldn’t know of anything that was reported to me*, I believe most of the things come from ((laughing)) my own imagination, in some cellars, *but no I don’t really know*.

A.: And who told you that Jews were being hidden on that farm?

Anna: My mother and in fact the whole family and also my great-aunt who also witnessed this, the whole family almost ended up in a concentration camp because my great-grandpa, he was a very strong opponent of Hitler and the village-teacher once said “*Heil*¹⁰² *Hitler*” and then my grandpa or great-grandpa said “why don’t you cure him” and the teacher reported that and then everything was really terrible but then they somehow still managed to get away with it, no idea.’

¹⁰² Heil can also mean to cure.

Oblivious to the contradiction inherent in the statement that her grandfather was a member of an execution squad but never fired a shot, she begins construing a rather fantastic story about his involvement in the rescue of Jews. Yet, this is the only thing she knows, everything else, where and how they were hidden stems from her imagination, as she admits. Furthermore, her great-grandfather is made into a ‘strong opponent of Hitler’, because of a dismissive remark about Hitler. In the second interview¹⁰³ I return to this story of her maternal family’s ‘active resistance’, with surprising results:

Anna: ‘ . . . [M]y great-aunt . . . said they were always standing with one leg in the concentration camp or prison, . . . because her father, my great-grandpa hid these people and . . . that this threat “children tomorrow Papa might not be here anymore” or “tomorrow we could all be in a concentration camp” accompanied her childhood . . . [but] how my grandfather related to this emotionally, I don’t know, I only know that he lived on this farm and also witnessed all of this and of course he never told anyone, “eh they are hiding Jews or Russian soldiers there” . . . I think that he also took part in this, that’s how my grandpa was, with the Russians, he fought for the Russians, with the Germans for the Germans and with the Nazis killed (all these?) people and then on this farm where Jews were hidden, he simply also hid Jews.’

Asking Anna again about possible sources of this story, she reveals that these are her own ‘strange self-construed memories’, which she thinks:

Anna: ‘ . . . come from films, in which one saw carpets being lifted, underneath there’s a wooden trapdoor in the roof somehow (..) a staircase going down, you know, and there are some people sitting there. But I believe that this doesn’t correspond at all to reality, well my mother for example also said that . . . the people they had on the farm sat at the dining table completely normally, they all had dinner with the family.’

To convey the danger her family found itself in to her listener, Anna here reverts to a narrative fragment we would rather expect to find in a story about the Holocaust, namely the constant impending threat of being deported to a concentration camp and the hidden people. Moreover, her grandfather, simply by not telling anyone about

¹⁰³ The first interview was conducted on 11th May 2006 and the second on 18th May 2006.

the ‘hidden people’, becomes a ‘resistance fighter.’ As in Melanie’s story, Anna’s family narrative of the Nazi past seems to consist of various different snippets taken from family conversations *and* cultural representations of the Holocaust. Anna even admits to that when she says that the places where she imagines these people were hidden derive from films. Yet this does not lead her to doubt the story itself.

It also becomes evident that Anna is very unsure about who the people being hidden were and whether they were hidden at all. At the end, she puts everything she said so far into question by saying that these people – sometimes Jews, sometimes Russian soldiers, sometimes simply people – had dinner with the family. It is thus that the people she speaks about are likely to have been forced labourers rather than Jews or Russian soldiers, as the final part of the story is remarkably similar to a number of narratives I encountered both in my own material as well as in Welzer’s (2003: 99-100) work, which depict the grandparents as moral and humane, because they allowed ‘their’ forced labourers to sit at the dinner table.

The desire for narrative coherence becomes especially discernable in the interviews with Melanie and Anna, but is a strong feature of almost all interviews. Anna steadfastly, perhaps almost desperately, holds on to these highly implausible, even absurd, stories and does not, perhaps cannot, acknowledge that there are gaps, because doing so would disrupt her family narrative, the cohesion of her tight-knit family and her own sense of self. Welzer et al.’s (2002) finding that especially the grandchildren tend to miss [*überhören*] allusions to crimes witnessed and/or perpetrated and other compromising (in)actions of their grandparents in the latter’s stories thus corroborates my own findings, that there is a very strong tendency towards narrative coherence and closure, which marginalizes and/or expunges the ghostly traces of the past.

Yet, I would here go beyond Welzer et al.’s constructivist analysis and argue that this finding shows how narrative becomes a means to keep experience unformulated and avoid working-through structural trauma; its use becomes fetishistic. ‘Narrative truth’ – dependent on ‘continuity’, ‘closure’, ‘aesthetic finality’ and ‘rhetorical

appeal' (Spence 1982: 31-32) – is thus not, as many constructivists in (Spence 1982) and beyond psychoanalysis argue, sufficient when we think about remembering Nazi family histories, but what constructivist psychoanalyst Donald Spence rather dismissively calls 'contact with the past' (ibid.: 32), a haunting, in which the symbolic and material remnants of the past are recognized as potentially pointing towards another, hidden, layer of meaning, would (although also to some extent reliant on the imagination) constitute a limit to unrestricted fantasy. In such encounters with the past, narrative (representation) comes up against its own limits and is compelled to acknowledge its own failure.

Furthermore, the way Anna Seybold and Dagmar Schneider portray the persecution of their grandfathers in Polish and Russian captivity respectively seems "uncannily familiar" (Assmann, A. in Welzer *et al.* 2002: 93). When I ask Anna whether her *maternal* grandfather actively participated in mass executions, she answers with a no, to continue by describing how her *paternal* grandfather was subjected to games of Russian roulette, i.e. random mass executions in a Polish POW camp. 'The Polish soldiers always positioned prisoners in front of them and then always ((makes the sound of machine guns)) he, thank God, never perished there.' Dagmar makes a similar move, when she puts her maternal grandfather's experiences in Russian captivity in the following terms:

D: ' . . . slave labour and far below minimal calories, actually getting some kind of dirt to devour and really to gorge but then working all day and you know exactly that if you don't / aren't strong enough then you don't go but then go in the other direction and never return. And he was lucky to return from captivity.'

The allusion to the two different directions, one implying death, the other life, evokes a selection scene in a concentration camp. The work of historian Robert Moeller (1996) and Ole Frahm (2004: 373) is helpful here, showing as it does how such 'implicit equation[s] of German POWs with victims of the concentration camps' has a long tradition in Germany and was repeatedly invoked in political and cultural discourse of the early Federal Republic. In both women's narratives, their grandfathers only appear as victims, while their role as part of an invading and

occupying army engaged in a war of extermination is left unattended. Or consider the following episode about the flight of Dagmar's maternal grandmother:

D: 'Things which extremely moved me, even to goose bumps and also sometimes moved me to tears were the descriptions of how she with her mother and her three siblings fled . . . and such cruel things as: "No the cuddly teddy won't come with us, the panties and the socks are more important", the loved, too-much loved rabbit or whatever it was, has to stay, and big tears, terrible, harrowing, then . . . jumping on to the train, which *of course* was jam-packed and no one knew where it was going and what's happening, separated from the mother and her other two siblings with her little sister on her arm.'

While describing the suffering her grandmother endured during the flight, Dagmar, knowingly or unwittingly, recounts a situation that is reminiscent of the deportation of Jews, Sinti and Roma and others to the concentration and death camps: the limitation on luggage, the over-crowded train, the destination of which is unknown, getting separated from family members; these narrative devices are iconic representations of the Holocaust.

The interview extracts analyzed in this section are prime examples of what Welzer *et al.* (2002: 90) call '*Wechselrahmung*'; the interviewees 'imagine[s] situations of persecution by drawing on examples of the Holocaust.' They, however, 'export[s] these into a story about persecution in which Germans are the victims' (ibid.). Often these insertions of narrative fragments derived from the history of the Holocaust logically make no sense within the narrative (Welzer 2003: 90); however, they do make sense 'dramaturgically, because the implementation of a significant narrative element of stories of persecution during the Holocaust strengthens the impression of the listener that it must have been a seriously threatening situation' (ibid.). Welzer *et al.* explain the "'uncanny familiar[ity]'" of some parts of the stories transmitted in conversations about the Nazi past in families of perpetrators and followers with the increasing presence of images of National Socialism and the Holocaust in the cultural sphere in the past decades. According to them (ibid.), 'a huge inventory of visual material [*Bebilderungsmaterial*] pushes itself in front of the interpretations of those stories the children and grandchildren hear from their parents and grandparents.' Like Landsberg (2004: 21), who asserts that rather than imposing themselves on and

eradicating 'authentic' particular memories, mass mediated representations of the past 'are the grounds on which social meanings are negotiated, contested, and sometimes constructed', i.e. the grounds on which prosthetic memories are formed. Welzer *et al.* (2002: 119) conclude that cultural representations 'can become effective very concretely in interpretations which one develops for episodes of one's own life history or the history of the family one belongs to.'

However, while Welzer *et al.* seem to share James E. Young's (1988: 121) view that '[a]s long as these images of the Holocaust are public, they inevitably enter the private imagination at some level, where they are invariably evoked to order personal experiences', I want to draw attention to their function as screen memories in these family narratives. Although both Hirsch (1999, 2001, 2008) and Landsberg (2004) try to counter undue appropriations by distinguishing between idiopathic/sympathy and heteropathic identification/empathy, their emphasis on prosthetic and post-memories as formed through 'imaginative investment and creation' (Hirsch 1997: 22) seems to almost encourage a loose handling of the past. Especially in cases such as Anna's and Julia's, where there can be little to no doubt about the serious and criminal nature of particularly their grandfathers' actions, the invocation of Holocaust tropes and images functions to establish 'German' suffering as equally traumatic as the Holocaust and thus sets up a relation of competitive victimhood. In such instances, prosthetic or post-memories take on the role of screen memories (Freud 2006), displacing objectionable or disagreeable memories of the grandparents as Nazi perpetrators and/or followers with innocuous ones, which feature the grandparents as passive victims and/or heroes.

5.4 *The re-interpretation of the familial silence: From denial to a symptom of trauma*

In their study *The Empire of Trauma*, Fassin and Rechtman (2009: 5-6) look at how the concept of trauma combines both medical and moral issues to create ‘this new condition of victimhood’ which ‘designat[es] an irrefutable reality linked to a feeling of empathy’. They (ibid.) furthermore point to trauma’s increasing universalization, which they describe as a process that is oblivious ‘to the validity of the diagnostic category’ in specific contexts. With ‘the metaphoric diffusion trauma’ (Levy & Sznajder 2006b: 289) and its subsequent adoption into German memory discourses, the distinction between victim and perpetrator is often obliterated, allowing for ‘the appropriation of the culturally celebrated status of victimhood’ (ibid.). As Levy and Sznajder (ibid.) maintain ‘by emphasizing the traumatic and . . . therapeutic dimensions . . . , the dividing line between perpetrators and victims as well as the distinction between historical specificity and universal applicability is frequently blurred.’ In analyzing the family narratives of the interviewees, I am thus not interested in asking whether someone was and is traumatized or not, but I, like Fassin and Rechtman (2009: 5), am more concerned about how and to what end ‘this new condition of victimhood, established through the concept of trauma’ is used in these narratives to elicit sympathy with the perpetrators and fellow travellers.

Among the many stories about the grandparents’ wartime suffering in the interviews, there are a number of narratives which describe especially the grandmothers as being traumatized by their war and post-war experiences of the flight, bombing raids, rape and deprivation, while yet others depict former *Wehrmacht* soldiers as traumatized by their war experiences. Let us, however, begin with Sebastian Merle, who concludes that his fellow-travelling great-grandmother was traumatized by the *Reichskristallnacht*. His mother tells him that, during the demonstrations in 1989 in East Berlin, Sebastian’s great-grandmother gets severely agitated and frightened, asking whether ‘they were shooting again’. Both Sebastian and his mother then surmise that this reaction must be due to the fact that these demonstrations reactivated a trauma in her, since she ‘[great-grandmother] witnessed the

Reichskristallnacht . . . and for my grandmot-/ great-grandmother it must've been a trauma.'

In this inversion of a bystanding fellow traveller (a little later in the interview Sebastian describes his great-grandmother as the typical fellow-traveller, who sent his grandmother, her daughter, to join the BDM) into someone haunted by the 'trauma' of witnessing the *Kristallnacht*, he establishes Nazism and the Holocaust as the joint trauma of Jews and Germans. Paradoxically, the Nazi follower is traumatized by the *Reichskristallnacht*, the nation-wide pogrom against Jews and their property, perpetrated on 9th November 1938, in the main by Gestapo, SA, SS, and Hitler Youth, but silently or enthusiastically witnessed and supported by millions of Germans. Literary historian Birgit Erdle (1999: 32) detects in such talk of a common trauma the latent wish of 'founding of a common place [*Ort*] within the after-history [*Nachgeschichte*]: a common space from which the position of belatedness is founded' (ibid.). She (ibid.: 31-32) maintains that through the universalization of trauma a 'continuity of human destruction' is established. This, however, is not a continuity in the sense of 'a *longue durée*' but rather 'a network of symmetries or analogies [*Ähnlichkeiten*] . . . connecting "war and genocide, racist persecution and ethnic cleansing", innerfamilial violence, sexual abuse and violence in the social context' (ibid.). This proliferation of trauma in turn relates to what Douglass and Vogler (2003: 10) have observed in relation to the broadening of the category of victim or traumatized subject:

'The standard dynamic of trauma makes the traumatized subject the recipient of the traumatic event, in categories that have moved beyond victim/survivor to include "onlooker trauma," (the event of witnessing a traumatic event) and "secondary PTSD" (the post-traumatic stress disorder a therapist may get from treating a traumatized patient) to "transgenerational trauma" (descendents of trauma victims, ranging from Holocaust survivors and those of colonial regimes, slavery, apartheid, and "ethnic cleansing" to persons "living with AIDS").'

Such proliferation of trauma as (culturally) transmittable but also as a medical diagnostic, blur all differences and distinctions. As alluded to in chapter 2, one strong critique against the current trauma culture is that in medicalizing individual

experience, it privatizes collective memory and obligations into ‘narratives of individual suffering (Antze & Lambek 1996: xxiv). In Dagmar’s case below, taking recourse to the diagnostic of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder to explain her mother’s experience of her own father as harsh and cold as well as to understand the psychological after-effects of the war, allows her to turn her grandfather into a victim, without having to acknowledge his role as part of an invading, occupying army, engaged in a war of extermination:

D: ‘This whole Post-Traumatic Stress-Syndrome thing, back then no one knew about this, [but] all of them should’ve gone to therapy, . . . everyone who went to war and particularly those who were in captivity and I think that *being powerless for such a long time*, should it be as soldier beforehand, always ever only following the chain of command or even worse later in captivity, the *permanent death threats*, this *powerlessness* . . . led to the very strong urge to regain some control which was lived out in the small setting of the individual family . . . and I think that’s a general development which I believe happened in millions of households across Germany . . . and I think it’s also one of the reasons why he was a hard father.’

As Kali Tal (1996) and others (see Douglass & Vogler 2003; Leys 2000) observe in relation to Vietnam war veterans, with the official adoption of PTSD into ‘the third edition of *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders of the American Psychiatric Association*’ (Young 1996: 96) in 1980, attention shifted from soldiers as perpetrators to soldiers ‘as victims of trauma, even if that trauma is the trauma of having inflicted trauma on others’ (Douglass & Vogler 2003: 28). This has also enabled the rehabilitation of Vietnam veterans, who, in the 1960s and 70s were regularly compared to Nazis and seen as perpetrators (Tal 1996: 11-12), into victims. The use of the adjective traumatic to describe the experiences of former *Wehrmacht* soldiers does the same work.

Schmitz (2006a: 105-106) notes that the current mass of representations of German wartime suffering, especially that of former soldiers, and I might add the ubiquity of narratives of the grandparents’ suffering in the interviews, signifies a form of belated collective empathy with the ancestors’ suffering, which facilitates not only a reconciliation between the generations but also with the nation. Schmitz (ibid.: 108)

thus regards this belated empathy less as a form of collective mourning than as a way of ‘identity building’. Lauren Berlant (2007: 309) also shows how the public articulation of ‘painful feeling’ is often implicated ‘in the making of political worlds’ and draws attention to how a cultural politics based on feeling constructs national identity ‘across fields of social difference¹⁰⁴ through channels of affective identification and empathy.’ Empathy with suffering soldiers and others rehabilitates and validates the ‘German experience’ of NS and thus allows one to speak of NS without needing to take account of its crimes.

This becomes evident in the interview with Armin Bachmann, who saw both *Wehrmacht* exhibitions,¹⁰⁵ and knows that his paternal grandfather, a soldier in the East, was engaged in what was euphemistically called ‘*Partisanenbekämpfung*’.¹⁰⁶ He recounts the latter’s war stories in a very empathetic way, that portrays the grandfather and his division as fatefully caught up in a war of which they were the victims. His narrative ends with an episode that retells the grandfather’s last hours:

A: ‘When my grandfather died . . . his wife, . . . stood by the bed and he was in a kind of febrile state . . . but he registered that his wife was there and then he shouted “Elsa, Elsa run the Russians are coming, they want to kill us all!” and that made it clear to us that apparently shortly before his death . . . he was . . . living through this again and this also suggested how traumatic these experiences must’ve been.’

Furthermore, the critical work of Allan Young (1996) and Ruth Leys (2000: 10) in particular shows how the idea and diagnostic of PTSD allows one to view the trauma-inducing event as a purely external one, that overwhelms ‘a sovereign if passive victim.’ Leys (2000: 7) points out that, in applying PTSD to war veterans, distinctions between combatants participating and civilians caught up in war disappear as well as how it displaces issues of moral and political, sometimes even legal responsibility by regarding trauma as an overwhelming external event. This

¹⁰⁴ The overcoming of the difference between East and West Germans is one important aspect of this belated empathy.

¹⁰⁵ This does to some extent confirm the negative reading of the impact of the *Wehrmacht* exhibition, i.e. as having instigated conversation between the generations and thus facilitated empathy with the perpetrators (see introduction, p. 40-41).

¹⁰⁶ See footnote no. 25 on page 38.

conception of trauma allows Julia, like Dagmar above, to strip her great-grandparents and grandparents, who were deeply and actively involved in Nazism completely off their agency and responsibility when she turns them into recipients of a trauma.

Although Julia Hartwig acknowledges that her paternal family embraced Nazi ideology, she never touches on the subject of active participation other than saying that they were ‘big shots’. In the second interview, it becomes clear that rather than interpreting the revelations about her family’s Nazi past as indications for an even more intimate and active Nazi involvement of the family, she takes the fact that her great-grandfather murdered his sons and wife and killed himself as signifying how deeply traumatized the entire family was by Nazism. Learning about these murders and the suicide, ‘it became even clearer to’ her ‘how much this traumatized an entire family, this whole Nazism and also across several generations. My great-grandpa, my grandpa and my father were all in a sense traumatized by this whole Nazi time’. The use of the term trauma to describe perpetrators (and their offspring) thus often facilitates a

‘conception of history [*Geschichtsbild*] among young Germans, which allows to return to the long deemed obsolete strict separation between Nazis and Germans, which fosters an image of the Germans as ‘mislead, abused, [and] of their youth deprived group, . . . , who were themselves victims of National Socialism’ (Welzer *et al.* 2002: 79).

Interlude: Silence and ineffability

In his discussion of recent German literature about NS, which draws on Holocaust iconography, to represent German wartime suffering, Schmitz (2007a: 202) notes that ‘[t]he Holocaust serves as a model prototype of traumatic excess against which the excess of the German traumatising needs to be valorised; its discursive model is the relationship between horror, trauma and the trope of ineffability in Holocaust discourse.’ In invoking the notion of the grandparents’ war experiences as unspeakable and incomprehensible, a number of interviewees below thus implicitly

draw on the antirealist discourse of the Holocaust as a limit event beyond history and representation, thereby positing their grandparents' suffering as similarly traumatic and ineffable. This legitimates dissociation and puts these sufferings into a competitive relation. Dagmar, for example, extends the PTSD she attests to her grandfather to the entire German collective to justify institutional silences in schools:

D: 'Mum once said, that she envied us children for having studied this topic at school . . . because her teachers, mum was born in 1951, well theoretically it would've been possible for her to have had it taught in history lessons but that didn't happen because the teachers themselves were so traumatized by it at that point in time that they of course didn't talk about it at all.'

Of all the interviewees, Constantin Reinhart is the one who is most averse to asking his grandparents about the Third Reich unless they start talking on their own accord. Although he knows that his grandfather, also a soldier in the East, once asked what he did during the war, answered 'I shot people dead!' and was suspected of having been a member of the SS, Constantin says the following when I ask him what they speak about when he talks to his grandparents: 'There aren't that many conversations, . . . [and] I actually don't dig any deeper because I . . . think they are completely traumatized, especially my grandfather . . . and I'd be damned to burden the old man with all this stuff.'

Having asked Dagmar how she interprets her grandparents' silence about their past, especially her grandfathers' silence about their war experiences, she replies by referring to the unspeakability of this experience:

A: 'How do you interpret this kind of silence?

D: Horror . . . pure horror, I think one can't at all imagine the kind of scars this left.'

What used to be condemned as denial (Mitscherlich, A. & M. 1967) is now diagnosed as silence in the wake of trauma. Fabian, whose father and both grandfathers were *Wehrmacht* soldiers in the East, similarly refers to the

unspeakability of their experiences when I ask him whether their participation in the war is a subject that ever comes up in his conversations with his mother.¹⁰⁷

F: 'She'd actually like to know more about it but somehow she also can't really imagine it, how it really was, but by now she's also of the opinion that . . . one can probably neither put this into words nor otherwise somehow / that's simply an extreme situation and I believe that any / yes any talk about it wouldn't do it justice [*nicht gerecht werden*], one simply can't understand it, I think.'

Fabian Hoffmann, like Dagmar Schneider, is much more interested in how the soldiers and perpetrators psychologically dealt with their past, rather than with what they did. In relation to the use of the idea of the incomprehensibility of the Holocaust 'in the German memory discourse,' Birgit Erdle (1999: 44; my own translations) points out that it often works to render invisible the multiple connections 'between the everyday and the extreme' (Rothberg 2000: 107). In Fabian's conversations with his mother, the notion of extreme or traumatic experience as incomprehensible and unspeakable works in a very similar way: it isolates and separates the war of extermination in the East not only from the everyday life of the soldiers, but also from family life in the present. It constitutes the war of extermination as something unknowable and not to be known, because language and representation will never be able to do it justice.

In addition, Schmitz (2007a: 203) notes that 'the topos of ineffability and unimaginability of the soldiers' experiences at the Eastern Front' is important for the grand/children insofar as it validates the elders' status as victims. This is confirmed by Fabian, who – even though he recognized the presence of the past in chapter 4 – ends up dissociating it by emplotting it in a harmonizing narrative that expunges NS as something external that was forced on the Germans.

F: ' . . . even if they [soldiers] were probably pigs, . . . I think by now I see the soldiers also as victims: they are in fact humans and they do have their own will and their own leeway [*Entscheidungsspielraum*] . . . but I also

¹⁰⁷ All three, his father and both grandfathers, died before Fabian was old enough to ask them any questions.

believe that . . . they were really abused, abused for things by an elite . . . [who] had a fixed idea and could enthuse a whole *Volk* about it.'

5.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I analyzed the grandchildren's family narratives about the Nazi past with respect to how they construct and represent their grandparents, particularly their grandfathers as perpetrators and/or victims. In line with Welzer et al.'s (2002) findings, it is here also noticeable how few of the interviewees imagine their grandparents' Nazi and war past as anything other than a personal story of suffering and/or heroism. With the exception of Ilka, Caspar and Silke, the interviewees dissociate and marginalize the political aspects of their grandparents' past that speak of Nazi collaboration and perpetration and recount their families' Nazi and war pasts by attending to their grandparents' everyday experiences of the Third Reich and their personal lives. The family past is thus overwhelmingly narrated in stories of individual suffering. What is particularly relevant here is what Levy and Sznajder (2006: 5) describe as the key element of the universalization of the Holocaust and the attendant cosmopolitanization of collective memory, i.e. the function of the Holocaust as a de-contextualized concept in lending a voice to 'other acts of injustice and other traumatic national memories across the globe' (Levy & Sznajder 2006: 5).

In looking at these family narratives, it becomes possible to discern how the globalization of the Holocaust plays itself out in the family memory of NS of these 'third generation' Germans. While such reinscriptions, or 'borrowed memories', might help to articulate other silenced memories of injustice, in the case of the above cited grandchildren, such 'reinscriptions' aid the transformation of active and often enthusiastic Nazi perpetrators and followers as well as *Wehrmacht* soldiers into passive victims. It is thus that the paradox, which Schmitz (2007: 6) identifies, that the globalization of the Holocaust 'ironically facilitates' the return of memories of German wartime suffering, is to be taken very seriously. In and of itself the 'return' of memories of German wartime suffering is not necessarily a problematic development. However, the way in which this return often models itself on the

memory of the Holocaust and employs a universalized notion of trauma obliterates any distinctions between victims and perpetrators, facilitating a renewed ‘disappearance of the perpetrators’ (Heer 2004).

It is here that Suleiman’s (2000: 554) above-cited question of whether and where a line should be drawn ‘between personal memory and imagined or “borrowed” memory’, between public and private, family memory, becomes relevant again. While Landsberg (2004: 118) and Levy and Sznaider (2006) view the capacity of technologies of mass culture to render increasingly imperceptible and fluid the boundaries between authentic and inauthentic memory as enlivening nonessentialist and self-reflexive forms of identity politics and ethical thinking, I would be much more hesitant than their (see Landsberg 2004: 118) self-admittedly optimistic accounts. As I have argued in the introduction, and as the analysis of the interviews in this chapter shows, prosthetic and post-memories can also become part of a renationalizing politics of identity. In her Ph.D. thesis *Memories and Positionalities: Holocaust Memory, Migration and ‘Otherness’ in Renationalised Germany*, Annette Seidel-Arpaci (2005: 254) shows how ‘Germany’s process of renationalisation’ after unification is intimately connected to the return of memories of Germans and Germany as victim/s. With Santner and LaCapra, I want to here again draw attention to the importance of processes of working-through/mourning *both* structural and historical trauma, which allows for *some* distance to the past as well as an ability to make vital, if non-binary, distinctions, such as between victims and perpetrators, to develop. I thus agree with Ole Frahm (2004) who, in his article ‘*Ein Deutsches Trauma?*’: *Zur Schamlosigkeit Deutscher Opferidentifikation* calls this appropriation of Holocaust tropes in the perpetrator context shameless. I would add that it is shameless in a double sense: it avoids a working-through of structural trauma that begins with the acknowledgment of shame; and, in positing German wartime suffering and the Holocaust as equally traumatic, it remains oblivious to the important distinctions and differences that working-through historical trauma requires and that shame keeps us alert to (Probyn 2000: 57).

Chapter 6: National Socialism and the Holocaust: Between memory, history and education

6.1 Introduction: Developments in the theory and practice of Holocaust education in Germany

Although the boundaries between history and memory, public and private memory have admittedly become seriously blurred, one cannot avoid taking a closer look at how National Socialism and the Holocaust are taught and transmitted at school and in public educational institutions, such as museums and memorial sites, as well as how the grandchildren respond to the latter. This is especially the case as there is still a ‘consensus about assigning public schools with the task of being the central social space of memory and learning’ (Meseth *et al.* 2004: 10-11). Moreover, directing our gaze towards the grandchildren’s responses to such pedagogic efforts is insofar imperative as they ‘are the addressees [*Adressaten*] of the Holocaust pedagogy’ (Assmann, A. 2007: 64-66) – devised in large parts by the generation of their own parents – which focuses, as some interviewees below assert, obsessively on the Third Reich and the Holocaust. An analysis of how the interviewees learn about this past is furthermore important as there has been a growing trend, especially in the wake of the Walser-Bubis debate (see footnote 22, page 34), against the normative tradition of officially and culturally remembering the Holocaust, i.e. of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*.

If one wants to discuss education about and after Auschwitz in (West) Germany, one cannot avoid Adorno’s influential writings ‘*Education after Auschwitz*’ ([1967] 2003) and ‘*What does coming to terms with the past mean*’ ([1959] 1986; see Heyl 1997: 20; Glück *et al.* 2004; Wood 1999). Like the Mitscherlichs (1967: 35, 42, 43), Adorno ([1959] 1986) was alarmed by the absence of any empathy with the victims of the Nazi regime in the perpetrator and follower collective. Although he does not refer to a lack of empathy per se but uses the words coldness and indifference to

describe the psychological state that was instrumental to making Auschwitz possible, he (1966: 8) links this to '[t]he inability to identify with others.'¹⁰⁸ Yet, as Karyn Ball (2008a: 151) notes, Adorno's 'understanding of *durcharbeiten* as *verarbeiten* . . . is motivated by a genuine commitment to the process of coming to terms with the past through critical reflection' and of making conscious what was unconscious. His writings have come to inform post-Holocaust educational agenda, with an imperative, which functions as 'morally unassailable rationale for pedagogical action' in Germany today (Glück *et al.* 2004), namely '[t]he premier demand upon all education is that Auschwitz not happen again' (Adorno [1967] 2003: 19). Henke-Bockschatz (2004: 299), professor of history didactics, informs us that 'at the latest, since Adorno's dictum of an "education after Auschwitz", the school and educational system finds itself confronted with the demand to draw comprehensive conclusions from the National Socialist' systematic persecution and extermination of Jews and others. Education, he (*ibid.*) continues, has to instruct the younger generations, 'to civil, humane and tolerant behaviour and to immunize them against racist and nationalist ideas' (see also Samuels 2007).

Thus, school education about the Holocaust has been progressively shouldered with the task of not only transmitting historical knowledge but also with the 'moral-political socialization of future generations' (Meseth *et al.* 2004: 10-11). The editors (Meseth *et al.* 2004: 11) of a recent study that takes stock of the successes and the failures of Holocaust education in Germany, show how lessons have become 'the instruments of the facilitation of social integration' by teaching youngsters about 'the Federal Republic's special historical responsibility for keeping memory alive, and how to draw lessons from the past for the future.' As historian and educationalist, Matthias Heyl (1997a: 39; emphasis in original) notes that, this already points to the 'area of conflict [*Spannungsfeld*]' in which the memory of the Holocaust is located in Germany, namely between '*historical learning and memory* [*Erinnern*]' on the one

¹⁰⁸ Heyl (1997b) also makes this connection between Adorno's (see 2003: 26-27, 29) use of the notion of hardness, coldness and an inability to identify with the other. Adorno states: 'Being hard, . . . , means absolute indifference toward pain as such', including one's own pain.' Heyl (*ibid.*; emphasis in original) writes '[i]dentification with the victims . . . is ideal for penetrating through that coldness, the incapability of putting oneself in the place of others, which according to *Adorno* was one of the prerequisites for Auschwitz.'

hand and *remembrance* [*Gedenken*]', the anamnestic solidarity with the victims, on the other hand. In the case of the descendants of perpetrators *Gedenken* thus calls for an 'identificatory effort, which must first establish an emotional relation to those perished' (ibid.: 42). However, until the early 1980s, this was not foremost in the minds of educators, who rather followed the outlines of an anti-fascist education about NS and the Holocaust, which strongly focused on cognitive (historical) learning and emphasized the structural aspects of the rise of fascism, and was furthermore strongly influenced by critical theory and theories of fascism.

This changed with the 1979 broadcast of the American television series '*Holocaust*' in Germany which is often credited with having put into serious doubt the efficacy of antifascist and cognitive-based educational practice, and to have shifted attitudes about how to culturally and publicly remember the Holocaust more generally (Heyl 1997a: 147; Huyssen 1980; Kansteiner 2006: 243; Landsberg 2004: 123-124; Meseth *et al.* 2004: 13; Zielinski 1980: 94). Huyssen (1980: 122; see also Landsberg 2004: 123-24; Meseth *et al.* 2004: 13-14) argues that the success of the series resided in the fact that it invited its viewers to re-experience [*Nacherleben/ Nachempfinden*] and identify with the suffering of one Jewish family whose terrible fate at the hand of the Nazis the story of '*Holocaust*' visually recounted. Against critiques which saw the series as a product of the American culture industry and thus as a dangerous trivialization and sentimentalization of the Nazi genocide of the Jews, Huyssen (1980: 120; see also Neiman 1992) counters that this fictionalized rather than documentary account of the suffering of individual victims has done more in combating widespread denial and repression of the Holocaust, than all the rational attempts at *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* and education that went before it, i.e. to arouse both interest in the past and empathy with the victims. It is claimed (Frei 2004: 44) to have shocked and *affected* [*betroffen*] the nation. For the first time, it is argued, Germans felt empathy with the Jewish victims.

The lessons that the discipline of history didactics and educators took away from this success and the subsequent increasingly obvious failure of relying solely on

social theory¹⁰⁹ to teach NS was to include affective approaches (Heyl 1997: 147).¹¹⁰ The success of the series furthermore emphasized ‘that historical enlightenment [*Aufklärung*], if it occurs at all, emanates less from school and lessons and much more from popular historical narrations . . . that simplify and invite identification’ (Meseth *et al.* 2004: 13). The educational aim has thus often become to instill *Betroffenheit*¹¹¹ and empathy with the victims in the students (Heyl 1997a: 148-150; Henke-Bockschatz 2004: 308) by confronting them with images, films and individual testimonies and dead bodies, visiting concentration camp sites, or engaging in local history projects to make the Nazi past more concrete, immediate and personally relevant. Yet, this method was and is often accompanied by the ‘rigid transmission strategy [*Vermittlungsstrategie*] of instruction, which assumes the moral unambiguousness of the subject matter’ (Meseth *et al.* 2004: 16).

In a similar way to Hirsch, Landsberg and LaCapra, who contend that confrontations with representations of the Holocaust (and other mass atrocities) that invite identification can and should entail a muted re-traumatization of the ‘secondary witness’, Shoshana Felman (1995: 56; emphasis in original) posits that, in the post-Holocaust age, teaching must produce ‘a crisis’ or a trauma, in the students for it to be effective. Similar to those advocating as “‘educational objective *Betroffenheit*” (Heyl 1997a: 150) instead of simply passing on (cognitive) knowledge, Felman (*ibid.*) argues that ‘teaching, . . . must . . . make something *happen*, not just transmit a passive knowledge’. She (1995: 56) suggests a similarity between the psychoanalytic encounter in the consultation room and the pedagogic encounter in the classroom insofar as ‘[b]oth are called upon to be *performative*’; able to produce ‘altered

¹⁰⁹ Adorno’s ([1967] 2003: 32) suggestion that to fight the recurrence of Auschwitz ‘education must transform itself into sociology, that is, it must teach about the societal play of forces that operates beneath the surface of political forms.’

¹¹⁰ Heyl (1997a: 147) speaks in this context of a *Tendenzwende* [trend reversal] and cites Glaser (1980) as arguing: “‘As important and indispensable historical comprehension as well as individual and collective reflection might be: *Holocaust* has shown that the necessity to feel with [*Mitfühlen*], sympathize [*Mitleiden*] and relive [*Nacherleben*] had received too little attention.”’ The veteran historian of National Socialism Detlev Peukert (1980) also cited by Heyl (*ibid.*: 148) echoes this: “‘Especially the debate about the film *Holocaust* has shown that the presentation of an emotionally comprehensible example is much more haunting [*eindringlich*] than dry documentation or the statistical listing of millions of NS-victims. A didactic constriction to the representation of single acts of terror within the nearby *Heimat* of the pupils and the emotionally comprehensible fate of individual people is thus to be aimed for.”’

¹¹¹ This term is usually translated as concern or shock. Karyn Ball (2008a: 49) translates it as ‘being deeply affected’.

subjectivities' (Simon 2004: 186). Teaching the Holocaust, in a similar way to clinical psychoanalysis, should enable change and transformation in the students. However, as already alluded to in chapter 2, the interviews I conducted and recent empirical research (Brendler 1997; Borries 2004; Meseth *et al.* 2004b; Staas 2010) suggest that such transformations of subjectivity in most cases fail to materialize.

Numerous scholars (Heyl 1997a; Henke-Bockschatz 2004; Meseth *et al.* 2004b; Schneider, W. L. 2004; Welzer 2004) have thus begun to take issue with such notions of teaching, arguing as they do that they overburden school lessons with tasks they cannot possibly achieve and go far beyond their limited format. Furthermore, it is argued that such an affective Holocaust pedagogy can lead to the appropriation and/or displacement of the suffering of the victims and survivors and distracts from historical facts to focus on the emotional reactions of students/spectators (see Samuels 2007: 33; Heyl 1997a: 150; Tal 1996: 53-59). I will thus in this chapter look at how the grandchildren responded to their school education about the Holocaust and will pay particular attention to the question of whether an affective Holocaust pedagogy is indeed conducive to processes of working-through and altering subjectivities.

I will begin by analyzing interviews in which the grandchildren recount more or less strong emotional reactions to representations of the Holocaust at school as experiences that led them to further engage with the Nazi past. However, I will also point to the unethical responses such an affective pedagogy can elicit. What will become clear in the process is that the distinction between what LaCapra, for example, calls acting-out and working-through is, albeit necessary, nevertheless a very precarious one. Yet, how necessary this distinction is will become evident in the discussion of interviewees who view themselves as vicariously victimized by representations of the Holocaust, without however showing any empathy with the victims of Nazi crimes. In the last section, I will look at those who reject most if not all normative demands – especially the requirement of an anamnestic solidarity with the victims – which a Holocaust education, that is caught between historical learning, memory and remembrance inherently entails. It is in this context that the question of

whether working-through and mourning can and should function as an obligation and ‘regulative ideal’ (LaCapra 1998: 196) becomes relevant. While I do recognize the shortcomings of such normative accounts, especially their inability to specify in more detail how public commemorative rituals and education can enable the process of working-through/mourning, in the last section I want to acknowledge their continued importance.

6.2 *The pedagogic value of (traumatic) affect*

6.2.1 *Working-through and indebted memory*

I begin with the interview with Ilka Pilcher because she more or less stays within the normative framework and seems to have ‘successfully’ worked through the Nazi past if we go by LaCapra’s (1994: 209; 1998, 2001), Santner’s (1990) or Brendler’s (1997) definitions. LaCapra (ibid.) argues that, although working-through always involves acting-out, it ‘seem[s] to involve a mode of repetition offering a measure of critical purchase on problems and responsible control in action which would permit desirable change.’ Although Ilka’s dealing with the Nazi past works through an initial (over)identification with the Jewish victims of the Nazi genocide and thus via initial ‘empathic unsettlement’ (LaCapra 2001: 41), she acknowledges the impossibility of ever being able to feel and experience what those persecuted and murdered have suffered. However, it does not remain limited to this approach: as a student of politics, she is also very interested in ‘the political connections’ that brought Hitler to power and made Auschwitz possible.

Although Ilka imparts that particularly her mother ‘had dealt with [*auseinandergesetzt*] all these things, where Jews used to live [in her home town – A. H.] and who disappeared’, she identifies two ‘incisive’ extra-familial experiences that shaped her way of dealing with the Holocaust; firstly, performing Peter Weiss’s *The*

*Investigation*¹¹² with her school theatre group and, secondly, her one and a half year stay in Israel, an experience with which she begins her life story. About the former, she remembers that it was the point:

I: ‘ . . . when it strongly began, this engaging with the victims because we performed the role of the victims and then tried to empathize, how could it possibly have felt like? Well, it’s impossible anyway, one can think about it, but to at least try to take on another perspective . . . and I remember that it was very difficult for us not to identify too strongly with that, also not with the victims . . . ’

So, to speak with Hirsch (1999: 7-10) and Landsberg (1997: 81-86, 2004: 149-150), Ilka might be considered to have achieved what the former calls heteropathic identification and the latter empathy; an identification that acknowledges and is based on difference and avoids what LaCapra (2001: 47) calls ‘surrogate victimage’ or ‘vicarious victimhood.’ Although she experienced her lessons about NS as ‘always very, very historical’, she vividly remembers watching Leah Rosh’s and Eberhard Jäckel’s 1990 television documentary entitled ‘*Death is a Master from Germany*’¹¹³ about the Holocaust at school. Watching this film and performing the play ‘deeply moved’ her.

After finishing school, Ilka moved to Israel (where she lived in a Kibbutz that was specifically designed to foster Jewish-Christian and Jewish-German reconciliation) in order to find out how it feels to be a German in Israel. The way in which working-through structural and historical trauma intersect becomes particularly evident in Ilka’s description of her time in Israel: ‘Firstly, I began to occupy myself relatively intensively with myself but [I] also .. very intensely dealt with German history.’ The question of who she is – of her identity as a German – that arises abroad, thus becomes part of her process of dealing with the Holocaust. She attends Holocaust seminars, visits Yad Vashem and meets with Holocaust survivors. Again she engages

¹¹² This ‘documentary play’ which ‘is based on the trial reports of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*’ (Huyssen 1980: 131) of the Auschwitz trials, which took place in Frankfurt am Main in the mid to late sixties (1. trial 1963-1965 2. trial 1965/66, 3. trial 1967/68). The Hessian prosecution service, with the help of the *Zentrale Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltung zur Aufklärung nationalsozialistischer Verbrechen* put members of the camp personnel on trial.

¹¹³ This is a verse from Paul Celan’s 1948 published poem *Death Fugue*.

intensively with the suffering of the other, without however ever explicitly making the connection between her own family history and her interest in the Holocaust. Rather, she says: 'I never had the feeling that my family wasn't affected by it, but I also never explicitly felt affected by it in terms of my family. I always felt generally affected, that I always thought 'I am German and live in this society.''

Caspar Reinhart and Silke Turner are much more explicit than Ilka in connecting their engagements with the NS past to their political views and activities in the present. Like Ilka's, theirs is a position of 'critical judgment and responsible action' (LaCapra 1994: 208) which is, however, as we will see in chapter 8, time and again disrupted by acting-out in experiences of shame. Although, in a similar way to Ilka, Caspar and Silke are critical of their family stories of National Socialism, they seem slightly more removed from this past on a general level. While Ilka's life story is shaped by her repeated attempts to witness the Holocaust, Silke and Caspar, although admitting their political lives to be strongly influenced by the Nazi past, their affective connection to it seems to play a lesser role now. Caspar, for example, contends that since he has been intensively dealing with the Nazi past on a general level for years, he now sees his position more in the 'here and now,' where he tries to positively influence his environment in an 'anti-fascist' way. While, for Ilka National Socialism and the Holocaust are still highly relevant to her personal and professional life – she thinks about looking for a job in the commemorative sector – Silke, in a similar way to Caspar, maintains 'that in the last years I was living in Germany I didn't occupy myself much with fascism . . . it was rather a time in which the topic wasn't very present for me.'

Silke and Caspar, unlike Ilka, use less emotionally inflected language when describing their responses to their education about the Holocaust, and their dealing with the past seems to have been shaped more by a politically motivated anti-fascist education rather than one explicitly aimed at fostering *Betroffenheit*. Describing his teachers as anti-fascist, Caspar says the following about his education:

C: ‘At my secondary school I had many former 68ers as teachers who emphasized the time of the NS-regime and also tried to convey to us that participation and political engagement is important . . . I went to school in [name of town] and there’s a nuclear power station and then relatively quickly I began to resist against that. At the age of fourteen I joined the Green Party . . .’

He continues by stressing his oppositional political activities, which shaped his life. Silke also closely links her educational experiences and her early political activism. Her parents are 68ers and she grew up in a community living project, where she learnt about the Holocaust before she went to school. In reply to my question of how NS was taught at her school, she asserts:

S: ‘ . . . [in] the conventional way. Quite early on we read . . . *The Diary of Anne Frank* . . . At school, I’ve also dealt quite a lot with that because in sixth form we organized a big demonstration, a school demonstration against racism . . . which was also against . . . a concrete neo-Nazi thing in [name of town] . . . and that’s why in this context I then again dealt quite a lot with it, but it was also rather connected to the present [*ehers so im aktuellen Bezug*].’

Like Caspar, she is engaged in anti-nuclear protests, anti-racist activities and left-wing politics more generally. While for Silke the NS past becomes personally, rather than politically relevant only when she is in her mid-twenties and moves to the UK, for Caspar it does so, when he realizes that he is gay. So, unlike Ilka, neither experiences Holocaust education at school as a crisis, but rather they experience such crises outside strictly educational contexts and, as I will argue in chapter 8, particularly when they live or travel abroad. Furthermore, Carolin, who, although she criticizes her teachers for having simply confronted the students with the horrors of the Holocaust, without providing any adequate forum for discussion, is nonetheless relatively satisfied with her education about NS, which was a mixture of facts and testimony. Yet even though she says that NS and the Holocaust was an ‘always constantly present topic’, for her, in a much more pronounced way than for Silke, the past only becomes personally relevant and present when she moves abroad after finishing school.

For Caspar, it does so when he finds out that homosexuals were also persecuted by the Nazis – knowledge, he argues, his school lessons, never mentioned:

C: ‘ . . . a third level became relevant, . . . [which] was when I realized that I am gay and then also actually only learnt relatively late that homosexuals were also sent to concentration camps, something that was . . . not at all thematized at school. There it was actually only ever about the Jews and that there were also members of the opposition and homosexuals and Sinti and Roma didn’t really transpire. I only picked that up later on via books or the like and for me . . . that was another level when it was about the concrete, when I for myself thought: “ *if I had been alive during that time, I would’ve also landed in a concentration camp.*”’

Especially during adolescence and his attendant conflicts with his father, whom he describes as very conservative, bordering on fascistic, the cultural memory of National Socialism provides Caspar with an identificatory matrix onto which he can map his familial conflicts. His confrontations with the Holocaust at school and through mass media – he mentions *Schindler’s List*, for example – provoke ‘a strong counter reaction [*Gegenreaktion*]’ against his family. Caspar perceives his father (and the paternal side more generally) as the oppressors and strongly identifies with the maternal side. However, even though he here identifies with victims of Nazism, he identifies with victims who were like him, thus this identification is not based on difference nor does it have as its outcome empathy with the suffering of the other, but rather serves to confirm Caspar in his identity as a homosexual, as well as in his perception of himself as ‘interrupter and outsider’ (especially in relation to this family) and in a ‘general underdog identification.’ In this way, these fantasized projective identifications aide his distancing and separation from the paternal family and allow him to view himself as a victim, i.e. ‘surrogate victimage’ (LaCapra 2001: 40), which occurs ‘when the virtual experience involved in empathy gives way to vicarious victimhood, and empathy with the victim seems to become an identity’ (ibid.: 47; see also Samuels 2007).

While Caspar does indeed here seek a concrete and personal relation to the Nazi past by imagining himself as a victim and/or resisting, more recently he has come to want to know more about the perpetrators. He contends that his lessons about NS did not

provide him with ‘links to an everyday reality’, nor was there any consideration on the part of the teachers of the fact that he and his fellow students were also ‘the grandchildren of those who did that’. He would have liked to have learnt more about ‘what it meant to have been a perpetrator at that time, and how one became a perpetrator and these were things that were a bit suppressed.’ Although he, like the interviewees in section 6.3.2, also wants to historicize Nazism, he wants to do so not to redeem positive aspects of NS and/or to rehabilitate the grandparents, but because he is no longer content with demonizing the perpetrators.

Ilka, Caspar and Silke could be said to more or less subscribe to the Habermasian left-liberal model of memory based on mourning (Wolin 1989: xi), demanding both a critical appropriation of one’s own traditions, as well as an anamnestic solidarity with the victims. Their relation to the National Socialist past is *to some extent* marked by critical distance, judgment, self-reflexivity and an insistence on the distinction between victims and perpetrators. These interviewees, including Carolin and Melanie, who I will discuss in much more detail in chapter 8, have in various different ways emotionally distanced themselves from their families and empathized with the victims. In the discussion of shame in chapter 8, we will however see how processes of working-through are often not instigated by education and public rituals of commemoration, but are instead intimately related to feelings of shame that arise in conjunction with experiencing German national identity abroad as a stigma (Moses 2007a, 2007c); are intimately related to receiving a blow to one’s narcissistic identifications with the nation. The attempts of these interviewees at working-through can be identified as more or less ‘successful’ precisely because they also involve structural trauma, as we will see in chapter 8, and an acknowledgement that the past cannot be shed like a second skin after a temporally delimited period of public mourning.

6.2.2 Vicarious victimhood

Johanna Müller, who, as we saw in chapter 5, is eager to rehabilitate her grandfather as a moral and humane soldier, clearly remembers learning about the Holocaust:

J: ‘On my eleventh birthday I read *Anne Frank* the diary . . . and that was so terrible, I can still remember that . . . after that I watched a lot of documentaries . . . and there was this one documentary, most likely I was way too young, . . . in Bergen-Belsen, they weren’t burying the dead properly and I can remember that in this video they showed how these dead bodies were somehow pushed together with a digger . . . which upset me terribly. I don’t know if one is ever ready for this but I wasn’t at the time. And that definitely changed me . . . but at the time it traumatized me a lot . . . I couldn’t bear it.’



Illustration 9. British soldiers 'burying' the dead in mass graves at the former concentration camp Bergen-Belsen (Hirsch 2001: 228).

‘In the case of responding to the Holocaust and other cultural traumas, empathic identification may cause the viewer of a traumatic victimization to feel that he or she has also been traumatized’ (Samuels 2007: 10). Yet, as Samuels (ibid.) makes clear, ‘[h]ere empathy creates a fixated mode of identity, which in turn effaces the victim’s subjectivity.’ As we have seen in the case of Ilka in particular, ‘empathic

identification can help people overcome . . . indifference to an event or person.’ In Johanna’s case, ‘however, this empathic experience . . . [is] centered on the emotional responses of the viewer and not on learning about the lives and possible social lessons of the victims’ (Samuels 2007: 33-34). Although Johanna recounts this initial encounter with images of the Holocaust as the starting point of a long process of attempting to comprehend it, she is much more interested in the perpetrators. Unsatisfied with the overly factual answers she is presented with at school and in books, she turns to her grandfather to get an answer to the one question she finds impossible to understand – ‘how could one vote for someone like Hitler?’

Karin Ingbert also describes herself as traumatized by visual representations of the Holocaust. Shocked by a visit to the concentration camp Neuengamme, she begins to recognize not only the incomprehensibility of the Holocaust, but also how this past affects her.

K: ‘I came out of it and was actually . . . a broken girl, I was seventeen I think, because this shocked me so much . . . I mean photos of course make this even clearer . . . and for me that was really a shock for life because the incomprehensible is really not comprehensible.’

It needs to be added, however, that what remains incomprehensible to Karin is not necessarily the Holocaust, but ‘this killing machine, which ran there, this ideological trimming and to really manipulate the people to such an extent that they believe, that’s what I find so incomprehensible.’ Like Johanna, Karin finds it difficult to understand how someone like Hitler could manipulate a whole people to perpetrate such a crime. The Germans again become the abused victims of an all-powerful Nazi elite. Moreover, Karin is also much more concerned with her own emotional reactions to what she has seen than with the victims’ suffering. So, for Johanna and Karin this initial ‘traumatizing’ encounter with the Holocaust does not necessarily lead to an engagement with the victims’ history of suffering, as it did for Ilka, nor to what Hirsch and Landsberg call an ethics of empathy; rather, they criticize official and cultural memory of National Socialism in Germany as dominated by representations

of Jewish suffering, as we will see below. Consequently, they refuse to grant the victims the ‘weak anamnestic solidarity’ Habermas and LaCapra demand.

I would thus agree with Robert Samuels (2007: 33-34) who, in his books *Teaching the Rhetoric of Resistance*, writes that ‘empathic identification cannot be an effective pedagogical tool if it results in a purely personal emotional response’. Yet, this does not imply ‘that some level of empathic identification is not necessary’, but rather, ‘that this type of response should act as a starting point for a more complicated learning experience’ (ibid.). Heyl (1997a: 150) and Samuels (ibid.) draw attention to the possibility of empathic identification to be used defensively, i.e. to detract from the historical event itself, the suffering of the victims and the responsibility of perpetrators and fellow travellers. These interview extracts make clear what I noted in chapter 2, namely that it would be a mistake to identify, as Long (2006: 172-73) suggests Hirsch does, empathic identification as ‘necessarily ethical’. Long’s (2006: 150) critique of postmemory as an ethics of memory suggests that postmemorial identification ‘assumes the prior existence of an ethical subject, thereby [however] presupposing what it sets out to explain.’ In critique of mediation strategies that use photographs of victims to elicit emotional responses and thus personalize modes of transmission, Samuels (2007: 45), writes that ‘. . . what is often missed from this strategy is an understanding of how emotional responses lead to ethical development.’ He (ibid.) furthermore asserts that ‘this effect of the real may serve to create a quick emotional identification that goes nowhere and serves no higher purpose other than creating a sense of authenticity.’

6.3 *Reevaluating the National Socialist past*

6.3.1 *Working-through as resented obligation*

For the interviewees included in this section, working-through is associated with a strongly moralized approach to the past, which they reject as imposed by the generation of 1968 and the political Left. Having grown up with books and films about the Holocaust, but also with their grandparents' stories, they take issue with the way they learnt about the Third Reich as one that was informed by too much of a focus on the Holocaust and its victims, a decontextualization of the twelve years of the Third Reich from the *longue durée* of German history and a highly moralized view of history. I shall proceed by looking at how interviewees describe their confrontations with the Holocaust and NS at school and beyond as compulsory, prescribed and accusatory. Dagmar Schneider, for example, begins the interview with an unelicited scathing critique of her school education about NS. Almost enraged, she excoriates her history lessons as having:

D: ' . . . consisted of jumping directly from the Roman Empire to [19]33 . . . then 33 to 45 was regurgitated ad nauseam sorry, but really, no end . . . and I think that's mainly because my history teachers were of the generation which is a bit older than my parents' generation, who had to obsessively deal with it . . . and impressed that on us, this really hard-core "You should never forget!" this very strongly guilt-burdened . . . it must stay alive in memory . . . '

She also no longer sees any (educational) need to further engage with the Holocaust because, as a child, she read all the children's books about it and then learnt about it at school. When I ask her what she thinks about how the Holocaust is currently remembered in Germany, she asserts that:

D: 'I personally never felt the need to visit the *Wehrmacht* exhibition or go to any memorial . . . but in my case I don't necessarily see an educational need concerning this topic. Surely, I can't put forward many facts and dates, but one doesn't have to teach me that what happened there was terrible.'

Although Dagmar expresses the wish to visit Auschwitz at some point, she adds that this wish is also informed by a sense of duty, i.e. she feels that this is something ‘one has to have done.’ Similarly, Anna Seybold describes how she felt she was forced to deal with the Nazi past when she was a teenager, while she welcomes the fact that the memory of the Holocaust has become more of a private matter now:

A: ‘But I also think if one isn’t interested in the topic one can walk around relatively unaffected, not noticing anything. I think if one’s politically engaged there’re many opportunities to deal with it, but . . . when I was sixteen I really experienced this very differently. When I was sixteen, I felt one is being forced to deal with it. I don’t know whether that was because of school or because I knew people who were members of the *Antifa*¹¹⁴ . . .’

Karin is also very critical of what she considers the by now exaggerated and ‘diffuse’ confrontation with the National Socialist past at school. According to her, this confrontation is not based on facts but rather on the ‘opinions’ or ‘whims’ of the teachers and the ritually repeated demand that it must never happen again. Albrecht Richter and Fabian Hoffmann are even more explicit in their critique of the generation of 1968 and find the way members of this generation taught them about NS and the Holocaust particularly wanting. Fabian blames his school education for having suffocated any interest that he might have developed in the topic. While Fabian recounts how he enjoyed rebelling against his 68er teachers at school by annoying them with slogans like ‘we can be proud of our country again’, Albrecht was always more interested in the relation the 68 generation has to the Nazi past than in the historical event itself. It is thus that questions about the Holocaust as a historical event are replaced by questions of how it is and should be represented. Hence, Albrecht’s criticism of the 68 generation for its self-righteous identification with the victims, through which it liberated itself from any connections to the NS past.

Martina von Selbig became interested in NS generally and her family history when she began her university studies in her late 30s. Before that, she imparts, she avoided the topic as best as she could. One factor that contributed to this avoidance was her

¹¹⁴ *Antifa* is an acronym for anti-fascist and signifies leftist and radical leftist groups, whose main aim is the fight against right-wing extremism and neo-Nazism.

experience of her education about NS as a constant accusation and, in hindsight, she sees herself as having been ‘permanently on the defensive and in constant justification of a . . . past time for which I wasn’t responsible’. Julia Hartwig argues explicitly against the history education she received as having focused too much on emotions. After talking about her recent visit to the concentration camp Buchenwald, I ask her what she thinks about the way the Holocaust is currently publicly remembered in Germany. She replies:

J: ‘ . . . it’s always too much tear-jerking, for example at school, we got this pesky book *Tell ye your children* [*A book about the Holocaust in Europe 1933-1945*], in which large-sized images of dead people could be seen, which was very harrowing and we ceaselessly watched films about concentration camps and about the persecution of the Jews and all of that is important, but what would’ve also interested me . . . is the political background, how could it get that far at all, I mean, one has to first get that going such a National Socialist system, it doesn’t emerge out of nothing . . . we hardly got any answers to that . . .’

Similar to Caspar above, Julia would have liked to know more about the beginnings of NS and the perpetrators, while she explicitly attacks a pedagogy that has as its educational aim *Betroffenheit*. But, unlike Caspar, she thinks NS to be history now: ‘it’s gruesome history, but my God, it’s also over somehow. It should never happen again, one shouldn’t forget it . . . and, as I said, compassion in moderation is important but think it’s too much exploited . . .’ She reiterates Heyl’s and Samuels’ reservations about empathic identification when she says that ‘this expected reaction “now we all have to show how shocked we are”’ not only detracts from important issues, such as the question of how the National Socialists could come to power in the first place, but also concentrates too much on the victims in their position of victimhood, while forgetting their lives before they became victims. She attacks her teachers for their ‘hypocritical concernment [*Betroffenheit*],’ and for instilling guilt feelings in their pupils by emphasising that ‘we’re all very guilty and you’re all guilty and you all have to feel very bad about it.’ Julia continues:

J: ‘ . . . we visited concentration camps and watched films at school and I felt guilty for not feeling guilty. At Bergen-Belsen I stood in this field and thought “my God this is a field, what am I supposed to do here?” and my classmates

started crying and I was a bit like hm. Of course this is all very terrible but I honestly have to say “I am standing in a field, I can’t really” / and I felt guilty about that and today I’d say I wouldn’t have needed that . . .’

In his critique and rejection of his education about the Holocaust and National Socialism, Alexander Fierbert is the most severe:

A: ‘ . . . at school always this “children, children, you have to know all of this, how terrible, terrible, terrible all of it was” and then . . . this forefinger [*Zeigefinger*] and one was burdened with a guilt, with such a strange, in my opinion, Christian guilt as a child to which one couldn’t relate at all because one thought “ok what happened then, what did they do, what’s it got to do with me?” . . . [at] school the ever-same mantra “mind the Jews! Don’t say anything stupid!” and we have to be ashamed until the end of our days . . . I was glad [when] I no longer needed to listen to that.’

It is, as Schneider (2001: 335) notes, ‘[i]n this confusing situation of having to confront an imposed [*auferlegten*] guilt which does not correspond to any psychic representation, [that] the function of the relationships to the grandparents’ – whether dead or alive – ‘was and is to provide relief [*Entlastungsfunktion*].’ This is particularly relevant in the case of those interviewees who portrayed their grandparents as victims or heroes in chapter 5. In these relationships, the grandchildren ‘are not mauled [*traktieren*] with moral appeals or instructed to avow themselves to something that happened long before they were born’ (ibid.).

While Alexander also redeems his grandfathers as heroes, he feels no personal connection to the past and thinks his generation no longer has anything to work through. Like German writer Martin Walser (1998) who, in his notorious acceptance speech of the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade (1998), fulminated against a ‘constant representation of our disgrace’ [*diese Dauerrepräsentation unserer Schande*] which the media and the intellectuals practiced in their ‘cruel *Erinnerungsdienst*’ [commemoration duty], and which repeatedly showed images and films of horrendous suffering – which he prefers *not* to look at – Alexander, refuses to be confronted with visual representations of the Holocaust, because:

A: ‘Ultimately I find it very unpleasant to have to look at these images because I think one doesn’t have to look at everything. I also don’t look at

everything that's on television. I don't think much of that and as if one had to shock children . . . these absurd images of these heaps of glasses, heaps of teeth . . . heaps, heaps, totally crazy, it also repelled me . . . I thought "I don't want to see this nonsense, I refuse- well it didn't interest me."

He goes on to say that 'this suffering . . . leaves me unaffected [untouched]' and voices his incomprehension about why one would want to continue to dwell on this. He considers visits to Auschwitz 'a waste of time.' If we agree with Santner, LaCapra, Hirsch and Landsberg about the necessity of empathic unsettlement or secondary traumatization for the process of working-through (and mourning) the past, however differently that might be conceived by these theorists, then these interviewees dissociate the past by narrating it in a particular (unaffected) way which, as we will now come to see, seeks an unbecoming, or deceptive objectivity (see LaCapra 1994: 70-71) that represses the interviewees' own positionality and investments in the past.

Naomi Mandel (2006: 58; see also Ball 2008a: 190), however, raises doubts about such normative accounts and trauma theory more generally. She (ibid.) criticizes LaCapra's account because its 'alignment of trauma with ethical engagement reestablishes inclusive and exclusive communities, here identified not geopolitically but juridically.' She (ibid.) continues by contending that '[w]hen susceptibility to trauma becomes legislated in this way, access to the ability to be traumatized becomes an index of ethical commitment, whether directly, for the victim . . . or indirectly for the critic.' In LaCapra's (1994: 220-221) view, one has to endure 'a process of at least muted trauma' in one's attempts to understand the Holocaust 'and empathize with victims.' Mandel (2006: 58) takes issue with this ethical notion of trauma because '[a]ccess to trauma' becomes 'also access to the attractive position of responsibility and empathy.' She (ibid.) continues that if 'access to the position of "traumatized" . . . is thus monitored, trauma theory becomes both the subject and the object of cultural and ethical surveillance.' And Karyn Ball (2008b: 166) refers to the frequent 'conflation between the *Bilderverbot* [(image prohibition)] and unrepresentability' which often ends up turning into '[a] moral claim about how an audience *must feel*' while being 'presented as a given inherent in the traumatic event.'

The historian Wulf Kansteiner (2004a: 215) similarly argues that ‘the trope of trauma devalues many other subject positions’ and ‘makes it difficult, for example, to interpret the detached curiosity, with which many consumers react to Holocaust media products, as anything other than an ideological screen or a psychological defense mechanism.’

While I am sympathetic to Mandel’s criticisms of trauma theory, especially the idea that certain identifications with the victim(s) are not only appropriative but happen ‘at the expense of new and potentially unsettling knowledge about the pervasiveness of complicity’ and about perpetration, that “we, heirs to the horrors of the twentieth century cannot afford to ignore” (Mandel cited in Ball 2008a: 210), she ignores LaCapra’s distinction between structural and historical trauma and lumps his account together with those of Caruth and Felman, both of whom lack a notion of working-through. However, it must also be added that most interviewees complained that they did not learn (enough) about the beginnings of NS and the perpetrators and felt somehow circumscribed in what and how they could speak about NS. It is thus that a pedagogy that declares a ‘disciplined empathy’ with the victims and *Betroffenheit* its main goal cannot attain the aim of facilitating a ‘deep intellectual and emotional response in the pupils with serious consequences for the formation of identity’ (Borries 2004: 268). This is the case because, ‘in elevating the desired result to a precondition’ (Staas 2010: 14), such a pedagogy does not allow for a more pluralistic and multiperspectival approach (Borries 2004; Meseth *et al.* 2004, 2004b; Welzer 2004) to the NS past, but rather teaches students how to speak about and react to representations of the Holocaust properly.

Yet, this raises the question of how to think about some of the interviewees below who, rather than display shock and empathy, express an explicit fascination with Nazism. Are such expressions of fascination, as Friedlander (1993 [1982]) notes, the fruits of a ‘new’ discourse on Nazism that developed in the early 1980s, ‘organiz[ing] itself around the same phantasms, the same seductive modes of address that proved so powerful during the Third Reich’ (Santner 1990: 33)? Or are Santner (*ibid.*: 34) and Brendler (1997) correct when they argue that such phantasms and

fascinations are better understood ‘as a matter of blocked or circumvented mourning’? In any event, the at times vehement rejections of the public commemoration of the Holocaust as prescribed and ritualized ‘*Erinnerungsdienst*’ and an increasing fascination with Nazism reminds us of the importance of working-through the structural trauma of the shattering of a primary narcissism. Unless the latter is not also part of the process, narcissistic structures of identity remain intact and public commemorations and representations of the Holocaust are experienced as accusatory, as I will show in chapter 7.

6.3.2 *A more ‘differentiated view of the past:’ Historicizing the Holocaust and National Socialism*

Although some interviewees discussed below, e.g. Sebastian, Karin and Johanna, do express shock [*‘Betroffenheit’*] and incomprehension about the Nazi genocide of the Jews, Gypsies and others, their wish to historicize is expressed in such a way that it overrides any empathy with the victims of the Holocaust. This points to what Friedlander (1993 [1982]: 20) describes as the ‘dissonance’ between condemnation of and the will to understand Nazism, and furthermore relates to Welzer’s (2004: 49) criticism of Holocaust pedagogy in Germany as ignoring ‘the fact that each form of the mediation of history is accompanied by a set of – fascinating, deterring, aesthetic – subtexts that are interpreted within the frames of social interpretive patterns which always already exist beyond school.’ Welzer here draws our attention to the various other sources – among which family memory, he argues, reigns supreme – on which young Germans draw in their attempts to understand the past. In doing so, he also implicitly alerts us to the fact that public enlightenment and working-through historical trauma cannot be sufficient.

For Albrecht Richter and Christian Marx, the Holocaust is now to be considered part of European history, as we will come to see in the next chapter. Furthermore, Christian rejects what he considers a current ‘sacralization of the Holocaust’ and by now no longer approaches the past in the terms of a ‘personal *Betroffenheit*,’ while

Albrecht speaks disdainfully of ‘the same old *Betroffenheits*-story [*Betroffenheitsleier*]’ that comes up in relation to the German past and resents the idea that the Nazi past still influences the way people judge each other in the present. Sebastian understands National Socialism in the terms of an abstract theory of fascism and as an ‘ingeniously devised system’ which left people no choice but to become collaborators. Very critical about the American ‘Holocaust industry’ he suggests one start to view the past as history and ‘that one should now simply draw the line’. Horst Endress, the professional historian to be, pleads for the ‘historicization of all history’ and claims his ‘task as historian is to not once use the word good, evil, guilt or anything else in . . . work about the Holocaust.’ In the light of the revelations about her family’s very active participation in Nazism, Julia maintains ‘it doesn’t change anything about the fact that I view it as history and do not consider myself as directly affected [*betroffen*] . . . I don’t feel myself to be greatly affected in this respect.’ Karin emphasizes that it is important that one now views the past in an objective and sober way and begins to ‘develop a certain self-confidence in relation to history’. Constantin asks whether one still needs to deal with the past because he has the impression ‘that we lacerate ourselves a bit, well it’s an unhealthy working-through the past [*Aufarbeitung*] . . . if we can’t stop beating our chest.’ Alexander says that, apart from a few family stories, ‘there was never a connection there and sure, I then view it as history.’ Fabian is of the opinion ‘that the Holocaust as historical event is being remembered too much,’ that ‘it’s emotionally remembered too much [and] that society is basically lacking the ability to abstract the whole thing.’

Many of these interviewees echo Martin Broszat’s ‘Plea for the Historicization of National Socialism’ insofar as they criticize the way an understanding of this period ‘remains bound up with’ what the historian (1988: 90) elsewhere called the ‘monuments of mournful and accusatory memory’ which is ‘imbued with the painful sentiments of many individuals, in particular Jews, who remain adamant in their insistence on a mythical form of this remembrance.’ Hence they tend to view memory as the ‘“other” of history’ (LaCapra 1998: 16) and to ‘conflate memory with myth or ideology’ (ibid.: 17), while history is seen as unimpeded by either.

Johanna makes this explicit when she says that ‘museums [are] a nice thing, but we don’t need 20 museums on the topic of Jews and above all the Holocaust didn’t only claim Jews, [but] also politically and religiously dissenting people, other cultural groups [like] Sinti and Roma.’ This aspect, she thinks, is drowned out in the current debates about the Nazi past, which are conducted in too propagandist a manner.

Although looking at the past objectively and trying to rationally understand it is important, it needs to be noted here that most of the above rejections of memory in favour of more ‘objective’ and differentiated approaches to the past are, as we will come to see, expressed in the service of quite a different agenda. I am here drawing on LaCapra’s (1994: 70-71) distinction between a ‘deceptive “objectivity-effect”’ brought about by ‘concentrat[ing] on past contexts in abstraction from their relation to present problems and debates’ and ‘a defensible mode of objectivity’ which can be ‘achieved in and through an explicit, theoretically alert resistance to projective wish-fulfilling tendencies and an attempt to engage critically the problem of one’s relation to the past,’ i.e. remaining aware of one’s positionality and transferential relation to the past. Appeals to greater differentiation and more objectivity in most of the above-cited cases, however, imply the former kind of objectivity rather than the latter. Elsewhere LaCapra (2001: 39) writes that ‘[s]uch objectifying strateg[ies] may well posit or assume a radical divide between objectivity and subjectivity (. . .) and lead to an either/or conception of the relation between empathy and critical analysis.’

Sebastian Merle for example, takes issue with the view of National Socialism as something ‘unquestionably bad’, while I champion the view that it is just that, i.e. radically evil.¹¹⁵ In the ensuing discussion, I abandon my role as (detached) interviewer. Also a sociology student, Sebastian criticizes me for not being properly scientific [‘*wissenschaftlich*’] because my view is not differentiated and objective enough, while he attempts to redeem positive aspects of the NS past, such as the technical progress that it facilitated and the social security measures it introduced. He

¹¹⁵ Since the interview, which was conducted in 2006, I have diverged from this position, insofar as I have come to realize that viewing NS as radically evil is also not an option, as it allows one to conveniently distance oneself from this past, to such an extent that continuities become invisible.

offers the metaphor of the Nazi past as a soup, seasoned with lots of disgusting spices, which render it almost inedible, even though it also contains healthy ingredients like vegetables. As fitting as this metaphor might be, his desire to redeem something positive from the past goes beyond praising the rate of technical progress under National Socialism to include respect for what the Nazis did in terms of fostering a national consciousness. Although he concedes that one cannot separate the Holocaust from the rest of National Socialism – ‘the *Autobahn* then also always has this Holocaust aftertaste’ – he asserts that if one separated them analytically one would surely also see its progressive sides. If one were to view it more objectively, ‘including all its regressivity and aggressivity and terror which it spread, the fascist time is also a sign of modern societies or the advance of societies.’

The interview with Horst also raises this issue when we speak about his view of official Holocaust memory as ritualized, and tied to what he terms a clichéd political correctness. He asserts: ‘I believe someone who really thinks about it, is soon no longer content with simply saying “pff back then they were all evil and that’s how all of this happened and then the Americans came and then everything was good”’. This critique, as we saw in chapter 5, however goes hand in hand with an interest in local history in which, as he explains, ‘the Holocaust would not be in the foreground.’ In this context, Friedlander’s (1993 [1982]: 22) fear that ‘[t]he more the worst aspects of Nazism are neutralized, the more the new discourse finds its way into our imagination’ is legitimate and apt. Horst developed a fascination for the Hitler as a person from quite early on: ‘I was fascinated by or interested in how someone like that, who comes across as ridiculous today, how someone like that fascinated this whole *Volk*, not spoken abstractly, but to which my grandpa, my grandma, my grandaunt and so on belonged.’

Sebastian also speaks of his:

S: ‘ . . . negative fascination with fascism, . . . even though it’s somehow something diabolical and something negative, one is still fascinated by it, one cannot believe it that the people at the time had this ideology; when one sees them on pictures one thinks “wow they were these absolute Jew haters and . .

. had a hell of a lot of skeletons in their closet [*tierisch viel Dreck am Stecken*], beastly [*tierisch*] bloody hands . . . [and then] one sees them, [and] they're wearing a clean uniform and look sharp . . . that's always such a discrepancy, one sees this image, . . . and knows the facts and then thinks "wow, they were supposed to have done that?" and one can't see that, fascinating.'

While Sebastian aestheticizes Nazi power, Constantin Sievers is captivated by how the film *The Downfall* about the last days in Hitler's bunker visualizes this 'end time' and the attendant apocalyptic coexistence of total power and the immanent 'annulment of all power'; a structure which Friedlander (1993 [1982]: 19) regards as one of the 'foundations of the psychological hold of Nazism itself', namely 'of a particular kind of bondage nourished by the simultaneous desires for absolute submission and total freedom.' Although initially speaking of his father's continued captivation with Nazism, Constantin himself is quite taken with Nazism's alluring power:

C: 'I have the feeling that there's still a bit of pride there, you know, Nazis and Hitler and so on. Well really bizarre, . . . I think this spell, the mysticism, which emanates from this whole thing, it's indeed still very fascinating. What really interests me is the end of the war, . . . that's really a very fascinating situation, how it's always portrayed, . . . that it actually started quite promisingly for these Nazis this war, . . . and then the striving to become a great power [*Grossmachtsstreben*] and the omnipotence thinking [*Allmachtsdenken*], and how this drifted apart, reality and what these people fabricated in their heads.'

Rather than visiting Auschwitz, Alexander Fiebert, is also much more interested in:

A: ' . . . how the media was used at the time, how perfectly that was done . . . and the propaganda and the way the masses were controlled [*lenken*] by the media and information . . . and how all of this looks, and how it is then represented, how well this was done visually . . . simply in terms of images, how visually very powerful it was, all these *Lichtdome*,¹¹⁶ the stadiums . . . or these torchlight processions . . . that's a show . . . This is a part of it which really absolutely interests me and . . . how can one get something like that started, how does that happen?'

¹¹⁶ Designed by Albert Speer, these 'Cathedrals of Light' consisted of hundreds of army flak searchlights directed towards the night sky at Nazi rallies, such as the yearly *Reichsparteitage*. They had an enormous effect on the masses and were employed as an important propaganda instrument.

Alexander, who works in the film industry, wants to be able to look at Nazism in a way that is free of value judgments to be able to appreciate how perfectly it aestheticized power to control the masses. What becomes obvious in these three extracts is that there is indeed a ‘revival of a certain attraction of Nazism’ (Friedlander 1992 [1982]: 106) that flourishes in the wake of the progressive historicization of the Holocaust. Alexander furthermore argues for the historicization of the Holocaust to clear the way for a view of the successful postwar history that is unimpaired by the Holocaust. Asking him about how, in his opinion, the grandchildren should deal with this past, he replies that he would like to start writing this history anew, because what has so far been conveyed as ‘our’ history is ‘so bleak [*düster*].’ He would ‘lace up the whole thing and say “well, that was the history, which we were supposed to believe’ and would like Germans to begin to look at the positive things that have happened since 1945.

Julia Hartwig is similarly interested in re-writing the past in a more ‘objective’ way. Alexander’s and her pleas for objectivity can, however, to use LaCapra’s words, be described as ‘deceptive’ insofar as they remain inattentive to ‘the problem of the implication of the interpreter in both the object of interpretation and in contemporary discussions of it’ (LaCapra 1994: 70-71). Annoyed about the ‘sentimental guilt feelings story,’ which hinders an objective dealing with the past, she criticizes cultural memory of the Holocaust as representing the past in stereotypical ways, i.e. the evil Nazis and the good, innocent Jews. Against this ‘stereotypical’ memory she proposes a widening of perspectives, which would include her grandparents’ memories of wartime suffering:

J: ‘We can’t criticize anything that’s about WWII . . . and culturally I think the way it’s dealt with is still too uncritical and too stereotypical, for example when I look at my grandparents’ history . . . my grandma who was bombed out in Berlin had to rescue her child and my grandpa suffered in Stalingrad . . . then it would of course be interesting to for example, I don’t want to say to humanize the whole thing but simply to represent it, without of course forgetting that the Germans were also still perpetrators, but I believe in the end both sides suffered.’

In a similar way to Julia, Anna Seybold not only seems ambivalent about the imperative to remember and critically deal with the Holocaust, but also, as we saw in chapter 5, appropriate narrative fragments and tropes of the history of the Holocaust to narrate their own family histories. Dagmar would have liked to have learnt about the postwar time at school, especially about the political struggles to get German POWs home. The latter is an aspect that she distinctly missed in her history lessons and which relates directly to the stories she recounted about her grandfather's time in Russian captivity and the physical and mental state in which he returned. Karin Ingbert is also concerned about limiting the national narrative of the NS past to the Holocaust, when she fulminates:

K: 'It can never be just that, of course there was resistance, there was the White Rose, there was the Confessing Church [*Bekennende Kirche*], there wasn't only *Herr Bonnhoefer*, . . . he's only one of many, . . . homosexuals were also persecuted, . . . priests and pastors were persecuted, . . . there were diverse groups who could land in the concentration camps, . . . , but it's only ever the Jews about whom we hear stories [*es wird immer dann nur von den Juden erzählt*], which brings with it a total one-dimensionality of the whole problematic.'

Karin's grandfather was a pastor and she seems to want to see his experience of what she calls resistance and persecution represented in the national narrative of the past. So, if we remember how the majority of the interviewees narrated their grandparents' Nazi past, we can here, following Schmitz (2007a: 208), conclude that '[t]he call for a historically more differentiated view of Germans under National Socialism beyond the perpetrator/victim divide frequently coincides with an attempt to legitimize a sentimentally empathetic approach to Germans as innocent victims.' Furthermore, we can conclude with Friedlander's (1993: 95) critique of Broszat's plea for the historicization of National Socialism that, even though calls for the removal of moral barriers are often articulated in the service of a more objective, differentiated and less emotionally inflected history of NS, it needs to be kept in mind that such demands are frequently about a cultural memory and collective identity that does not have to integrate the Nazi genocide of the Jews as a defining feature. The voices of these interviewees are, however, also a sign of the failures of Holocaust education in German schools, which most of them found to be crucially

lacking because it left them bereft of ways to understand in more concrete terms how the Holocaust could happen, and here in particular bereft of knowledge about the perpetrators that goes beyond what Julia calls the ‘stereotypical’ evil Nazi.

6.4 Conclusion

What became obvious in this chapter, is that education has in most cases neither managed to convey the desired knowledge about NS, nor the intended moral attitudes (see also Meseth *et al.* 2004: 13). As in chapter 4, we are here again confronted with young Germans’ growing desire to understand ‘a past with which they are repeatedly confronted as a special legacy and burden’ but which they, as Broszat (1988: 89) to my mind wrongfully argues, ‘can only . . . experience[d] intellectually and in historical terms.’ Yet, this still leaves us confronted with the question of what we are to make of the fact that so few interviewees respond to Holocaust pedagogy in the desired manner, with the desired knowledge and moral emotions of empathy and indignation.

While educationalists have obviously not paid enough attention to other affective responses – ranging from shame, to indifference to outright anger and annoyance – other than deeming them inappropriate defenses, the aim of instilling the correct emotions in the students might not be the right approach to teaching, as Sara Ahmed (2004: 181-82) reminds us. She (*ibid.*) argues that although emotions are important to learning, a pedagogy in which they ‘become the “outcome” of . . . teaching (rather than part of the process)’ (*ibid.*) is akin to ‘instrumental and conservative practices of teaching’ (*ibid.*), insofar as it turns the students into containers, to be filled with the right emotions as well as turning emotions ‘into fetish objects’, that can be known before they are experienced. Several commentators and scholars (Borries 2004; Henke-Bockschatz 2004; Staas 2010: 14) have thus noted an anti-enlightenment tendency in Holocaust education, if its aims are reduced to instilling *Betroffenheit* and practising the correct way to speak about the Holocaust. Furthermore, Henke-Bockschatz (2004: 309) notes that removing the Holocaust

beyond *any* attempt at understanding imposes too strong a limit on pupils' efforts to think about the Holocaust and NS independently. Increasingly, educationalists are thus calling for an end to teaching the Holocaust as an unfathomable event that demonizes the perpetrators (Shilling 1996; Welzer 2004), and for the educational objective to become "multiperspectivity", i.e. to abandon the idea of NS and the Holocaust as an a priori morally unambiguous subject (Meseth *et al.* 2004: 16).

Another sign of the failure of Holocaust pedagogy is that, if the past does indeed become present and personally relevant to the interviewees, it often does so only (long) after they have left school or in explicitly non-educational (and non-commemorative) contexts. As Kößler (2004: 239) points out, this raises the question of whether historical learning – be it in the form of critical analysis or empathic identification – when it has to be pressed into the format of school lessons, can be the 'adequate means' to form a 'moral personality'. In most cases, as Borries (2004: 268) echoing Adorno ([1959] 1986) contends, the result of school education about the Holocaust is 'a rather business-like [*geschäftsmässig*] and superficial working-off [*Abarbeitung*]' the past.

Chapter 7: Proud guilt and other ways of ‘normalizing’ national identity in unified Germany

7.1 *Introduction: The dialectics of ‘normalization’*

While Habermas has always considered the NS past as constituting ‘a special legacy and burden’ (Broszat 1988: 89) for Germans, his conservative counterparts during the *Historikerstreit* tried to extricate German national identity precisely from this burden, by for example comparing the Holocaust with Stalin’s Gulags. Where the conservative historians, however, remained unsuccessful, two developments of post-unification memory politics – firstly, the official integration of the Holocaust into German cultural memory and identity and, secondly, the simultaneous Europeanization of the Holocaust – can be said to have in large parts achieved what Ernst Nolte and his colleagues could only dream of. I thus want to here distinguish between two forms of ‘normalization’: firstly, ‘normalization’ via relativization, the preferred strategy of the conservatives of the old Federal Republic, and secondly, ‘normalization’ via ritualization and regularization of Holocaust commemoration, the approach that has become especially apparent since unification (Olick 1998: 553). While the first kind of ‘normalization’ has become distinctly outmoded, but has not completely vanished, the second seems to be very successful (*ibid.*; see also Kansteiner 2006). I will thus in this chapter look at how the above identified two developments in post-unification German memory politics have variously facilitated the ‘normalization’ of German national identity by dispensing with the idea that NS constitutes a particular German legacy and responsibility.

As chapter 1 tried to show, the veritable surge of commemorative events and scandals that followed in the wake of unification demonstrates that, contrary to widespread anxieties, the Holocaust was set to become an integral part of unified German national identity. As political scientist Lothar Probst (2006: 65) asserts, ‘the Holocaust has become a central point in the founding narrative of modern Germany, a

key component in the officially sanctioned national identity.’ Karl Wilds (2000: 94) confirms this in his influential article ‘*Identity Creation and the Culture of Contrition: Recasting ‘Normality’ in the Berlin Republic*’. There, he shows how the politicians and officials of the Berlin Republic opted for the memory of the Holocaust and ‘open contrition’ (ibid.: 94), which has become cross-party political consensus.

Having thus embraced responsibility and contrition as official policy, the Federal Republic is increasingly taken to be standing at the end ‘of a collective moral learning process’ (Moses 2007a: 5; see especially Goldhagen 1998) and having successfully mastered its past or indeed more sarcastically as the ‘world champion of mastering the past’ (Frei 2004; Garton-Ash 2002). Increasingly Germany’s leading export, *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* is regarded as an occasion for pride (see Rensmann 2001), rather than shame. Unlike in the old Federal Republic, official admissions of guilt and contrition and an assertive national identity are no longer mutually exclusive but rather constitutive of each other (see Wilds 2000). However, as Homi Bhabha (1990) notes, such founding narratives – to which the progressive narrative of reconciliation and moral learning has now advanced (Jarausch & Geyer 2003: 31) – always work to exclude and displace that which ‘cannot be transcended or dialectically surmounted’ (Bhabha 1990: 5). In the final part of this chapter, I will thus look at how the ‘constitutive contradictions’ (ibid.), which this redemptive national narrative displaces, can come to interrupt the latter in experiences of shame.

While many (see Barkan 2000; Beck 2002; Habermas 1999; Levy & Sznajder 2004, 2006) regard such self-reflexive endorsements of national guilt across the globe as heralding a new age of humanitarianism and cosmopolitanism, even ‘a second Enlightenment’ (Levy & Sznajder 2006: 204), Sarah Ahmed (2004; see also Kansteiner 2006; Moses 2007a; Olick 1998, 2007) draws attention to the ambiguity of such a politics of and with the past as not only concerned with recognizing and atoning for the perpetration of past injustices but as also characterized by a restorative and performative aspect. In her book *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Ahmed (2004: 102) contends that ‘[r]ecognition [also] works to restore the nation or reconcile the nation to itself by “coming to terms with” its own past in the

expression of “bad feeling.” So what Ahmed (2004: 112) writes about the Australian politics of shame might in some sense also be the case for the politics of regret (Olick 2007) and the official culture of contrition (Wilds 2000) as it is practised in unified Germany. She (ibid.: 102) suggests that official gestures and expressions of moral feelings like guilt and shame ‘allow us “to assert our identity as a nation”’ and continues by posing the following question: ‘in allowing us to feel bad, does shame [or guilt] not also allow the nation *to feel better*’ and thereby reconcile itself with itself (in pride)? In the section entitled ‘Proud Guilt’, I will thus look at how a number of interviewees are reconciled with the nation through the acknowledgement of national guilt.

Let us turn to the Europeanization (and globalization) of the memory of the Holocaust. The 1990s saw an increasing acknowledgement of the fact that the discrimination, persecution and murder of European Jewry was aided, abetted and perpetrated by a host of European countries, which were slowly beginning to acknowledge their own dark pasts. This brought to light the Holocaust’s international dimension, and led to it being increasingly ‘viewed as a European phenomenon’ (Probst 2006: 66). No longer the (sole) responsibility of the Germans, the recognition of the European element of the Holocaust allowed ‘Germany to be “normal” again’ (Levy & Sznajder 2006: 198). Thus, the integration of the Holocaust into the German national narrative is accompanied by its simultaneous diffusion into ‘a common European legacy’ (Kansteiner 2006: 326). While one of the consequences of this de-nationalization of the collective memory of the Holocaust is the ‘normalization’ of German national identity, the interviews show that, although most of the interviewees call for and speak of an increasingly ‘normalized’ relation to their German nationality – perhaps contrary to expectation – they also still display a remarkable reluctance to describe themselves as German and a great readiness to view themselves as Europeans or cosmopolitans. This might perhaps be understood as an indication of the limits of ‘normalization’ and reconciliation evident in the persistence of what Huyssen (1995a) calls the post- or anti-nationalist consensus. There is thus a much larger number of interviewees who still seem to experience their national

identity as problematic and afflicted with guilt and/or shame and thus stigmatized, as Moses' analysis suggests, feeling the need as they do, to distance themselves from it.

Now often considered a relic of the old Federal Republic, this post nationalist consensus was shaped in large parts by renowned members of what is variously called the Hitler-Youth, or 45er generation, as well as by the generation of 1968 (see Assmann 2007a; Moses 2007a; Huyssen 1995a). It found its most prominent expression in Habermas' notions of constitutional patriotism and postnational identity and the widely shared idea of an integrated Europe as the bulwark against the dangerous vicissitudes of German nationalism. Left-liberal intellectuals, like Habermas, wanted to employ the idea of Europe to transcend individual nation-states 'by uniting them as much as possible in the European community and having their populations think of themselves first and foremost as Europeans' (Moses 2007a: 249).

Andreas Huyssen (1995a: 76) and the political scientist Wolfgang Bergem (2005: 241) note that the post- or antinationalist consensus was so successful 'that it denationalized a majority of Germans to the extent that many of them prefer to feel European rather than German . . .' However, both also point towards an increasingly obvious contradiction and failure of this consensus, namely in rendering a postnationalist identity a normative requirement, it declared a continuous moratorium on national identifications that go beyond the political and constitutional level. However, at the same time, it demanded that Germans 'underst[an]d themselves historically as a prepolitical national community' (Moses 2007a: 237) and remember and atone for the Holocaust. Its failure thus consists not only of allowing the political right to hijack questions relating to national and cultural identity, but also – and perhaps here more importantly – that in its 'emphatic commitment to Europe' (Huyssen 1995a: 83; Bergem 2005: 241), it might be viewed as constituting a flight from the National Socialist past.

Following on from the last chapter, I will here look at how the grandchildren draw on the above indicated opportunities that a post-unification and Europeanized cultural

memory of the Holocaust offers them to dispense with the particular legacy of the Holocaust and its affective implications. If Aleida Assmann (2006a: 277-78) is correct, when she welcomes a shift in the memory culture of the generation of 1968, which was affectively shaped by '*Betroffenheit* and a consciousness of guilt to the younger generation's cool "ideology-free" handling of memory constructions', then the question still remains why a number of interviewees admit to nevertheless feeling guilt and/or shame; something which they, however, in many cases resent and want to get rid of. Is the new coolness [*Gelassenheit, Unbekümmtheit*] about the NS past and national identity, that emerged particularly forcefully during and after the football World Cup in the summer of 2006 in Germany – Armin, for example, describes the event as potentially 'the definitive end of post-war history' – a sign of 'inner catharsis' [*innere Entspannung*] (Amend 2006) among young Germans, or does this attitude signify a continued dissociation of and defense against the memory of the Holocaust (Rensmann 2001)? Did the surprising and enthusiastic display of national symbols that attended the World Cup inaugurate the return of a dangerous ethnic nationalist patriotism, or was it rather an unsuspecting, tolerant, cosmopolitan patriotism (Fleiß et al. 2009)?

I do not intend to provide a full answer to this question in this chapter, but rather want to look at how those grandchildren, discussed in the last section of the previous chapter, construct their (national) identities as free from the constraints of the National Socialist past and as no longer invested with 'bad feeling'. I will begin by looking at different ways in which the interviewees try to return to a proud national identity; starting with attempts to move from a shamefaced to a proud national identity, I will then look at how some interviewees re-claim a proud national identity through the expression of national guilt and contrition. In the final part of this chapter, which functions as a bridge to chapter 8, I investigate how the postnationalist discourse is both adopted to 'flee' the past but is often, at the same time im- or explicitly criticized, because of its above-mentioned inherent contradiction. It is thus that the last section discusses attempts to 'flee' into either regional or European identities also as manifestations of unacknowledged shame.

7.2 ‘Defiant pride’¹¹⁷

In their empirical study, which investigates interdependencies between national pride, anti-Semitism, xenophobia and a *Schlussstrich-Mentalität* [mentality that seeks to draw a final line under the past], educationalists Klaus Alheim and Bardo Heger (2008) arrive at the unanimous conclusion that there has been an alarming return of national pride, especially among young Germans since unification. National pride, once the reserve of the right, has migrated back into the centre of society and has become fashionable, even among those who locate themselves on the political left (ibid.: 32). They (2008: 11) furthermore detect a strong relation between a widespread *Schlussstrich-Mentalität* and ‘the desire as German to finally be able to be proud of one’s nation and nationality again.’¹¹⁸ Although in the interviews discussed below, national guilt per se is not called into question, it is argued that ‘it is enough now’ which implies the rejection of a memory culture that reminds them of past crimes, committed by Germans. Official admissions of national guilt and shame are viewed as standing in the way of being able to express national pride. Sarah Ahmed’s (2004: 112) work is again very useful here as she draws our attention to the fact that ‘[t]he politics of shame is contradictory’ because it ‘involves not only a sense that “past actions and omissions” have been unjust, but also that what makes the injustice unjust is that it has taken pride away . . .’ In thus being deprived of what they consider is their right to national pride, the interviewees here do sound reminiscent of the ‘normalization’ as relativization strategy.

Now, if we remember that Elspeth Probyn (2005: 46) asserts that guilt can be atoned for and is an ‘on/off’ feeling, and ‘shame lingers deep within the self’ (ibid.: 2), then the potentially explosive ‘political muddle of pride, shame, and guilt’ becomes even more so ‘when shame is denied, when it is seen as taking away from pride . . .’ (ibid.: 46). Interesting to our concerns here are Probyn’s (ibid.) observations that guilt can

¹¹⁷ Jaspers ([1947] 2001: 102).

¹¹⁸ Here they (2008: 99-100) cite a Forsa poll of May 2000, which found that 69 per cent of 18 to 29 year-olds wanted to draw a final line under the Nazi past. They (ibid.; see also Rensmann 2001: 351-52) add that the desire to get rid of the past is thus much higher among the young than among those over 60.

often create circumstances in which ‘shame cannot be admitted’ because it ‘leads to moralistic judgments’ and the polarization of public debate between those who endorse and those who reject guilt. Santner (1990: 51) and Werner Bohleber (cited in Alheim & Heger 2008: 97) might thus be right in contending that the memory culture of the Holocaust is resented because it reminds one of this stain that is the Nazi past and thus arouses shame rather than guilt, which is not as easily discarded and hence prevents a return to an unbroken, pure and untainted national identity (Rensmann 2001: 369).

In such instances national identity is primarily a cultural identity, which in turn is framed as something unchanging and essential – as ‘common historical experiences and shared cultural codes’ which express ‘a sort of collective “one true self”’ – which one seeks to recover and return to rather than as something that is in constant flux and which positions us and through which we ‘position ourselves within, the narratives of the past’ (Hall 1990: 223-225). The memory of the Holocaust thus seems to be experienced as disrupting and preventing such a return or recovery of national identity through pride. This can, as in the case of Julia below, turn into what Rensmann (1999), following Adorno, have variously called secondary or guilt-defensiveness anti-Semitism. Feelings of guilt and/or shame are disclaimed, because they are seen as being demanded by external agencies: by the generation of 1968 (Yvonne), by European countries and their inhabitants (Rainer), by (non-German) Germans themselves and Israel (Julia). These agencies are then attacked for making unjustified imputations of collective guilt.

The interviews with Yvonne Lechner, Julia Hartwig and Rainer Binder allow us to think about how guilt and shame can be experienced as precluding a return to an untainted national identity. Here, national guilt and shame are seen as a ‘passing phase towards being-as-nation’ (Ahmed 2004: 113) that needs to be overcome. Yvonne, for example evokes the classic symbol of shame, the hanging head, when she asserts that it is now time to move beyond it and be proud again:

Y: 'Of course it was bad what happened back then . . . but to still walk around with a head held low [*geducktem Haupt*] is also somehow a bit stupid because so much has happened in the meantime about which Germany could actually be proud, like unification and the fact that it happened without any bloodshed.'

She regrets the fact that she could not witness the world cup in Germany first-hand because she was living abroad at the time and regards the national reawakening that occurred during and after the event as 'cool' and '*klasse*' [great, swell]. Unlike the interviewees I will be analyzing in the next chapter, many of whom express concerns or at least doubts about this return of national feeling, Yvonne and Julia cannot understand why one should not now be allowed to show one's allegiance and loyalty to one's country. In distinction to the interviewees included in the following section, Yvonne, Julia and Rainer do not incorporate an admission of guilt or historical responsibility into their self-conception as German. Yvonne, for example says:

Y: 'I also always find it somehow strange when people now say "oh is this now allowed and with our history?" . . . it's simply something that I can't fully comprehend because we in particular – it's now so far away from us . . . and I don't accept why I should then still feel guilt about anything.'

Yet, the rational argument of a growing temporal distance that Yvonne uses in order to justify this rejection of guilt reaches its limits when she admits what she cannot stand about how the Holocaust is remembered in Germany is that it always makes her feel guilty: 'the only thing that actually always annoys me is that immediately this feeling of guilt arises.' In a similar way, Rainer is angered and annoyed by how his grandparents' generation's past impacts on his own life. Yet, he does not direct his anger towards his grandparents, whom he, as we have seen in chapter 4, protects and identifies with, but at people he encounters during his travels across Europe who, according to him, have 'this hatred against all Germans.' He admits that in this respect he feels himself to be 'actually really almost in a defensive position.' He sees himself locked into what he calls 'this eternal role of the sinner [*ewige Sünderrolle*]' and continues by saying:

R: 'I don't at all want to dismiss this [the Holocaust] or anything like that but I also at the same time see that I am not responsible for it, not at all . . . I am

also no longer willing to defend myself in this respect, but I have the feeling that there are a lot of people running around who think that I am responsible for it or want to hold me or the country responsible for it and in this respect my grandparents' deeds have an impact on my life . . . I personally don't actually have any guilt feelings.'

Julia also attempts to leave this phase of guilt and shame behind by, for example, universalizing trauma, suffering and victimhood, so that the Allies' bombardment of German cities ends up on the same scale as 'other' suffering, and German guilt is considerably lessened. During the interview, she reiterates several times that everyone was a victim, and states that her grandmother's stories of war and immediate post-war suffering 'showed [her] again, that it was terrible for everyone, which is why I find it a bit weird when people still today say "well the Germans should feel guilty and suffer for it" because they've also suffered enough . . . I think, slowly with my generation it's enough now.' In both Rainer's and Julia's case, we can here clearly see how the coalition between the grandparents and the grandchildren works to circumvent the moral demands of the cultural memory of the Holocaust.

Julia also wants to be relieved from the constraints of the past, because in her eyes the memory of the Holocaust represents an injunction against her almost desperate wish to be able to criticize Israel and Jews more generally. In response to my specific question about whether the question of guilt still plays a role in her thoughts about her grandparents' past actions, she does not address my question at all but responds evasively and incoherently by reversing the victim-perpetrator roles:

J: 'Well that would / I mean I can understand where some of this comes from / Israel, that's a great example now, my husband is from Gaza, the Israelis don't allow me in, they kill my family, well his family, . . . which is now also my family, what they do to the Palestinians is a kind of Holocaust, by far not as bad as what the German Reich did, but one can definitely compare it to a genocide, what's happening there.'

Unwilling to even broach my question, both interviews with Julia are peppered with very graphic depictions – during which she gets very agitated – of how either Germans were the victims of the Allied forces or how 'her family', i.e. the family of her Palestinian husband, is subjected to what she describes as Israel's genocidal

offensives against Palestinians. Even though she is very outspoken in her criticism of Israel when compared to any of the other interviewees, she complains about the Holocaust precluding her from voicing this criticism: ‘we are responsible for this terrible Holocaust and we can’t criticize Israel . . . we don’t have the right to do that.’ Refusing to consider in any more concrete detail her grandparents’ active participation in Nazism, she prefers to fulminate against Israel’s murderous methods of ghettoization. It is thus that she not only inverts victims and perpetrators, but also displaces her anger for being reminded of the Nazi genocide, at Israel.

Unlike traditional anti-Semitism, this secondary anti-Semitism emerges not despite but because of the Holocaust (Alheim & Heger 2008: 108-109) and is intimately related to the question of guilt and the memory of the Nazi past: ‘One feels disturbed, harassed, encumbered by “the Jews” because of the memory of the Holocaust’ (ibid.), which is regarded as preventing one from having a immediate and continuous relation to oneself. Feeling disturbed by the memory of the Holocaust has, however, wider ramifications, as Santner (1990: 51) notes, when he argues that the latter can also come ‘to figure as the irritating signifier of the traumas and disorientations of postmodernity.’ It becomes the (displaced) aim of resentment because it is seen as that which has rendered unavailable those ‘conventional sites of identity formation’ which ‘have become destabilized . . . [and] more and more *unheimlich*’ (ibid.) with the ‘fragmentation of [German] cultural identity’ (ibid.) after Auschwitz *and* an accelerated globalization.

In a similar but much more radical way than Christian and Albrecht below, Julia expresses the wish that in Germany the Nazis should become ‘simply a part of European history’ and that ‘these Nazis [should] not [be] related to Germany.’ She tells me that she is ashamed because of WWII, but she does not feel guilty because of the Holocaust:

J: ‘Of course I am ashamed about the Second World War, that’s a historical episode which no human likes [to have – A.H.] in their country . . . but I am not ashamed to be a German, I think that’s okay . . . If one looks at other countries, I believe that the Germans have also achieved a lot, I mean . . . for

example in art and technological development and so on, in these respects we have achieved a lot of things about which we can be proud . . . I don't feel guilty about the Holocaust, by no means!'

She continues by contending that 'on the other hand, I of course think that, as I said, it is a thing which one should remember . . . I mean the Americans also no longer feel guilty about the slave trade . . . the British no longer feel guilty about their colonies . . . and I no longer feel guilty about the Holocaust.' The globalization and Europeanization of the Holocaust thus allows Julia to divest herself of the particular and affective legacy of the Holocaust. Like most interviewees in this chapter, Julia considers herself 'actually primarily as European'. Yet she qualifies this when she says that 'I do feel German [but] in a European context' when she tells me about her considerations about whether to take on British citizenship when her Muslim Palestinian husband, with whom she lives in Reading, tried to get a British passport. She asserts that 'there's more that links me to Germany, I would say, than to Great Britain.'

As these interviewees regard responsibility as something strictly individual, limited to the guilty among the war and perpetrator generation, they experience continued references to the extraordinary criminality of the Nazi regime as unjustifiably accusatory. Rainer, Yvonne, and Julia thus all in some way feel themselves to be 'persecuted' and disturbed by the Nazi past, which becomes particularly obvious when Julia begins the first interview by saying that 'this is a topic that still *verfolgt* [haunts, persecutes] us.' Critical theorist Lars Rensmann's (1999: 66) idea of the 'imaginary accuser' who, he argues, is constructed, because feelings of collective guilt have not been mastered but are negated, i.e. 'are split off from the self and [are] aggressively turned against those who remind . . . [one] of Auschwitz, the perpetrators and German responsibility' (ibid.: 71) is, although helpful, not entirely accurate. Rather, than the consequence of inadequately or not internalized guilt, I will in chapter 8 argue that the 'imaginary accuser' is the consequence of unacknowledged shame.

The Nazi past, so the interviewees here argue, stands in the way of the ‘free’ expression, even celebration of national identity. Julia thus laments ‘that the Germans still hide so much [*sich noch viel so verstecken*],’ which she finds is evident in the fact that there was no celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Federal Republic. She wants national history to be celebrated in pride not commemorated in shame or guilt. The ritual commemoration of the Holocaust stands in the way of such proud displays of the achievements of German history and culture. It however needs to be noted here, that Julia and Yvonne are proud of different aspects of their German identity than Fabian, Christian and Albrecht, below. The former are proud of (pre-political) cultural and historical attributes that they ascribe to the Germans. Julia for example lists among them punctuality, honesty, the ability to build good cars and play good football. Even though it is debatable to what extent constitutional patriotism and pride in political culture and institutions can be separated from other pre-political cultural and historical traditions (see Markell 2000), Fabian, Christian and Albrecht are primarily proud of political institutions and achievements, which have emerged out of a process of learning from the past. The interviewees discussed in this section, however, do not reconcile with the nation through proud guilt, but feel they can only return to it if shame and guilt are finally overcome, which can only occur, in their view, if the Holocaust finally becomes history.

7.3 *Proud guilt*

I will now try to show how an often ambivalent, conflictual or wholly negative relation to the nation can be and is resolved, or rather ‘normalized’ through the adoption of a redemptive narrative of recovery and moral learning. Here ‘[a]dmitting responsibility and guilt for historical injustices . . . also become[s] a liberal marker of national political stability and strength rather than shame’ (Barkan 2000: xxix-xxx). Furthermore, as Karl Wilds (2000: 95) maintains, ‘[c]ontemporary formulations of the “normality” of the modern German nation appear to depend upon articulations of contrition for the sins of the last unitary German nation.’ In the Berlin Republic ‘contrition and atonement for the past not only serve[s] to underline the ‘normality’

of the Germans but also transform[s] into a collective act which can be unreservedly viewed as a source of national pride' (Wilds 2000: 95).¹¹⁹ The 'overall narrative of contemporary German history leading from the depths of genocide and defeat to the triumphant recovery of national unity and self-determination' that Kansteiner (2006: 277) sees increasingly employed across Germany, and that Jarausch and Geyer (2003: 31) argue has 'become the official self-representation of the Federal Republic', provides a convenient way 'to contain and historicize the memory of the Holocaust' (ibid.).

This redemptive narrative links to Ahmed's (2004: 112; emphasis in original) reservations about a reconciliatory *politics of shame*, which '*involves a narrative of recovery*', which at the same time, also recovers the nation as a source of identification. In such politics, recognizing and witnessing past injustices committed by the nation, she (ibid.: 111) writes, 'is implicitly constructed as the condition for national pride; if we recognize the brutality of that history through shame, then we can be proud.' Shame, thus, becomes a passing phase, beyond which the unified German nation becomes an object of pride in its construction as a 'moral nation' (Olick 1998; Ahmed 2004: 111) that has learnt from its past mistakes and has made amends.

Although Albrecht Richter prefers to be perceived as a human and describes himself as a *Ruhrgebietler* and European, in the following extract he expresses the wish to resurrect a certain pride or at least a more positive relation to Germany as a unified nation. This in turn is linked to an admission of German guilt, which then allows him to compare progressive 'moral' Germany to backward, immoral Italy that still has not worked through its fascist past:

¹¹⁹ In a recent article in *The Guardian*, Princeton-based political scientist Jan-Werner Müller (2010) came to a similar conclusion: 'Germany's dealing with its two difficult pasts . . . has almost universally been considered a success, even a model for others to emulate. . . . Not surprisingly, this *Modell Deutschland* was increasingly viewed with pride within Germany itself, especially by the left. Some outside observers picked up on this peculiar form of pride – a kind of anti-nationalist nationalism – and gently mocked it: Timothy Garton Ash, for instance, spoke of *Deutsche Industrie-Normen* – a German industrial standard – in "coming to terms with the past"; others crowned the Germans "world champions in remembrance".' Similarly Rensmann (2001: 336) detects 'a meta-discourse about the "exemplary effort to work through the past" in the social sciences in Germany, which regards these efforts as "unparalleled" and "unique"'.

A: ‘Generally it’s clear, of course the Germans have burdened themselves with guilt, which is why I don’t really ask myself the question of guilt anymore, because it’s actually settled [*geklärt*]; we voted wrongly, for a very long time we did too little against it [but] on the other hand I also think that after the war in Germany there did in fact to a certain extent occur a working-through of the past [*Aufarbeitung*] – and I don’t care how much this was forced from outside. Now if one looks at Italy, particularly at the moment, one can see where it leads if one doesn’t work it through.’

While national guilt and responsibility are readily acknowledged, the focus very quickly shifts to the Federal Republic’s successful efforts of dealing with the past. In this statement, the process of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* and a critical memory of the Holocaust become a source of pride rather than the aim of criticism. However, as Dirk Moses (2007b: 1-2) points out ‘ . . . there are good reasons to regard the narrative in which Germany was redeemed by the memory of murdered Jews with some suspicion.’ This, he (2007c: 156) argues elsewhere, is the case because it is within this redemptive narrative, as we will see below, that ‘the murdered Jews of Europe’ are ‘cast . . . as sacrificial victims,’ who ‘were killed so that a new Germany can be born.’¹²⁰ The earliest version of this narrative can be found in Karl Jaspers’ ([1947] 2001) *Die Schuldfrage*, but also shines through some of Habermas’ writings on the topic. Anson Rabinbach (2000: 132) here points to how Jaspers establishes a strong link between political as well as moral self-transformation and (inner) purification, and freedom and democracy to “guilt,” “atonement,” “reparation”. Thus Jaspers casts the Nazi genocide as an opportunity for Germans to redeem themselves by developing a consciousness of guilt and transform themselves into European, cosmopolitan or ‘non-German Germans’ (see Moses 2007b), who identify not with particular national traditions but with more universal and abstract values, such as ‘the political order and the principles of the Basic Law’, i.e. practice a constitutional patriotism (Habermas 1989b: 257).

¹²⁰ Moses (2007c: 179) cites Habermas’ *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*: ‘ . . . Habermas regards the remembrance of past suffering contributing to the “dissolution of guilt on the part of the present with respect to the past.” Drawing on the political theology of Helmut Peukert, he wrote of “anamnetic redemption of an injustice, which cannot of course be undone but can at least be virtually reconciled through remembering . . . ” Karyn Ball (2008a: 57) makes a very similar point when she criticizes Habermas’s model of an indebted memory, in which ‘Auschwitz is retroactively assessed as the “price” Germans paid (and will continue to pay) for a democratic future,’ thereby ‘becom[ing] the means to the end of rehabilitating West Germany as a European democracy.’

This redemptive logic also becomes evident in the interview with Albrecht. Although he recognizes that history is perverse, as he puts it, and acknowledges the Janusheaded-ness of all qualities – Auschwitz and a good social system are, in his words only realizable with good organizational skills and reliability – it seems that he wants to salvage German history from its state of discontinuity and fragmentariness, when he says that:

A: ‘Even if it ends [*ausgehen*] in such a terrible way, then it’s terrible for everyone who witnessed it, but then afterwards it has the positive aspect that everyone saw how terrible it is . . . well the democratization of Germany for example . . . is of course completely shaped by National Socialism.’

This almost Hegelian move can also be found in some of Habermas’ (1989c: 227) writings on the concept of constitutional patriotism, where the democratization and Westernization of Germany is achieved through Auschwitz:

‘The only patriotism that does not alienate us from the West is a constitutional patriotism. Unfortunately, in the cultural nation of the Germans, a connection to universalist constitutional principles that was anchored in convictions could be formed only after – and through – Auschwitz.’¹²¹

Although Alexander Fiebert rejects personal feelings of collective guilt and shame, he – surprisingly if we think about the dismay he expressed at how the Holocaust is remembered (chapter 6, pages 206-207) – emphatically accepts German responsibility for the Nazi past. Yet, if we look closer we can discern that this happens in the service of constructing a redemptive narrative of recovery and progress, in which the Holocaust, although not mentioned as such, but only as

¹²¹ What Habermas (1989c: 227) means by constitutional patriotism becomes especially evident in the following quote: ‘If national symbols have lost their influence with the young, if naïve identification with one’s heritage has yielded to a more tentative relationship to history, if discontinuities are felt more strongly and continuities not celebrated at any price, if national pride and collective self-esteem are filtered through universalist value orientations – to the extent to which all this is really the case, indications of the development of a postconventional identity are increasing. In [the] Allensbach [Institute for Public Opinion Research] these indications are pondered in Cassandra tones; if they are not misleading, they reveal only one thing: that we have not completely wasted the opportunity that the moral catastrophe could also represent. That the Federal Republic opened itself without reservation to the political culture of the West is the great intellectual accomplishment of the postwar period, an accomplishment of which precisely my generation could be proud.’

WWII, is cast as the ‘crisis’ that made ‘us’ better, more progressive and democratic, i.e. more moral, than everyone else. Alexander repeats several times that Germany is a total exception when it comes to its (collective) mentality. He states that while every other country is ‘mega proud about its heroic deeds in the past’, this is no longer the case in the Berlin Republic. Germany is not only restrained in its pride but also in its foreign policy and military intervention, Alexander maintains, in spite of the eagerness with which various recent governments deployed German troops to the Balkans and to Afghanistan.

Alexander sees Germany’s exceptional collective mentality manifested in its ‘political openness and in its world view’, in political movements such as the Green Party and institutions such as the *Zivildienst* [alternative civilian service]. This mentality, he continues, has also led to Germany having become a ‘kind of good conscience’ of the world: Germany as the model (transitional) democracies around the world seek to emulate. He goes on to say: ‘I think that this is also a part or consequence of the *war* and actually something really good has come out of it.’ He wants Germans to look at ‘these positive things which also emerged out of it’ while he advocates a final line to be drawn under the past itself: ‘it’s good, *gegessen* [over], and we have learnt well from it and [we should] be proud of what we now have and where we now stand as humans.’ It is thus that Alexander’s interview makes it particularly clear what Axel Körner (2000: 71-72) finds to be the case across the ‘third generation’, namely the ‘naïve hope’ or belief that in accepting guilt and responsibility one finds liberation from the past and redemption.

In the interview with Fabian Hoffmann below we can discern a very similar dynamic, when he remembers a particular lesson about the Holocaust at school when two concentration camp survivors visited his class. They, he continues:

F: ‘ . . . said “okay the people died, but we have to do everything that they haven’t died in vain,” well analogously that all of us who come after it should learn from it . . . that the catastrophe effectuates something positive, that one now has individual rights, protection of minorities and all these things . . . how a society remembers this and that they thus didn’t die in vain, . . . the Holocaust has brought this about . . . that out of this catastrophe, out of this

heap of ash still somehow/ it stays ash and it's daft but still that one learns from it.'

The 'unassimilable remainder' (LaCapra 1998: 187; see also Bell 2007: 54; Lyotard 1988) is here assimilated into a narrative that justifies the suffering of the other as retrospectively useful. Florian here renders the 'heap of ash' necessary for Germany to be reborn as a tolerant country, with a constitution that protects individual and minority rights. Below, Fabian makes clear how constitutional patriotism also links to less abstract and universal norms and works to highlight Germany's political culture as exceptional and thus Germany in its moral *Sonderrolle*:

F: 'Germany is actually . . . a country of which one can in some way / let's say of the constitution, of these values and of this *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, which can of course never be perfect, but about which I have the feeling that in this respect Germany is one of the societies or systems in the whole world which has already progressed very, very far, in terms of justice, learning from the past, not making mistakes that frequently and also that one treats all social groups equally, . . . and eventually one can also see it in terms of environmentalism, . . . that one tries to learn from history, I think one does sense that in some way and that one does of course continue this obligation . . . or feels this obligation and not only in the sermons [*Sonntagsreden*] of politicians, [but] we have to deal with this legacy responsibly . . .'

But Fabian also welcomes the fact that national pride as well as the topic of Germans as victims is no longer the reserve of the right. He links this to what he views as a 'fair European partnership', which would imply the joint working-through of history and the attendant recognition that there were also German victims.

The redemptive narrative, in which unified Germany stands at the end of a long but successful moral learning process, now allows Alexander – almost like the prodigal son – to return to Germany after having left behind him a phase of strong 'antipathy' and hate towards this country, which prompted him to leave Germany for five years. He asserts:

A: 'This step to return [to Germany] was such an epiphany for me, it's such a crazy situation to suddenly be here in Berlin and to suddenly realize that everything that I was always looking for there [abroad – A.H.], these ideas

and changes and a more open approach . . . I find here and I find in Germany, . . . and then I thought I no longer have to search, well I've found a place here in Germany.'

Thus, the redemptive narrative allows these interviewees, who all recount phases of anger at or disassociation from their national belonging, usually during late adolescence, to reappropriate and handle national symbols more openly and in a more relaxed [*gelassen*] way. However, while it not only allows for a line to be drawn under the past, it also effectuates reconciliation with the nation in the pride about Germany's exemplary process of working-through and democratization.

7.4 *Europe and the Europeanization of the Holocaust and its memory*

The new *Gelassenheit*, which is manifested in the above variously articulated stirrings of a new national pride, is furthermore facilitated by the reinterpretation of the Holocaust as a European phenomenon. Albrecht Richter and Christian Marx, for example, consider the Holocaust either as an international or European phenomenon respectively; whose 'process of development' [*Entstehungsprozess*] as Albrecht argues, needs to be discussed on a 'pan-European' [*gesamteuropäischen*] level. Christian also holds the view that:

C: ' . . . if one [deals] with the history of the Second World War and the Holocaust . . . / that's an international phenomenon. Germany did play a big role in this [*hat da viel mit eine Rolle gespielt*], a lot would've been different; wouldn't have happened without this regime, but still in many countries there was a readiness to participate.'

This does, however, not mean that they reject German national guilt per se; quite the opposite is the case. As we have seen above, both Albrecht and Christian do acknowledge this guilt as responsibility. However, they then immediately go on to universalize it. Albrecht contends that 'historically, we have this special position [*Sonderrolle*] because we took things, which also existed elsewhere, to the extreme but already back then it wasn't isolated that there were only the Germans.' Albrecht, furthermore conveys a certain desire to dispense responsibility when he first admits

guilt – ‘of course, for me it’s totally clear that they [the Germans] have burdened themselves with guilt’ – but then continues by saying that:

A: ‘ . . . and the question is of course to what extent did other countries bear responsibility, to what extent did England for example abandon the people here when its foreign secretary didn’t exactly negotiate very well . . . I don’t know, but if one limits the question of guilt only to the Germans, one is also again quickly very nationalistic, that’s also not good.’

Like most interviewees in the sample, Albrecht recognizes a general but diffuse national guilt, as we have seen in chapter 5, for he and most others are much less eager to acknowledge the concrete participation of their grandparents in Nazism. While Albrecht Europeanizes the Holocaust, Johanna Müller universalizes it by arguing that, although it was an extreme form, this kind of ‘annihilation of human life’ existed and still exists everywhere in the world. She adds that rather than focusing on the historical guilt of the Germans it is the continued perpetration of genocides that should be condemned. Alberta Michels, like Johanna, also draws attention to a whole host of other genocides, among which she includes the Turkish genocide of the Armenians, the Rwandan genocide, as well as the Kosovo conflict. At this point it becomes clear that the increasing de-contextualization of the Holocaust that occurs when it is recast as a European phenomenon and/or as a global historical analogy facilitates the dissociation of familial legacies of Nazi collaboration and perpetration.

Although, in most instances, the interviewees assembled here acknowledge some form or aspect of national, political, or official responsibility, it is perhaps not surprising that they, like all of the above interviewees, reject what both Sebastian Merle and Albrecht Richter call ‘*Erbsünde*’ [original sin] or personal feelings of (collective) guilt. As we learnt in chapter 6, they advocate a more objective relation to the past, i.e. the historicization of the Holocaust. That this is intimately related to a rejection of feelings of collective guilt or shame becomes clear in the interview with Sebastian. He admits that the reason he volunteered to be interviewed was that, if my research would also further the cause of historicizing National Socialism and the end of guilt, he thought he might be able to contribute something. On a more cautious note, he adds: ‘perhaps I am totally wrong about this, but I am of the opinion that

slowly but surely one could stop with this guilt, this original sin, which continues to be passed on [*‘die sich ja immer weitervererbt’*] to all subsequent generations, that one could stop with that.’

Christian Marx seems to have achieved what Sebastian wishes for. Although Christian used to feel shame, he has now ‘discarded’ [*‘abgelegt’*] this feeling. This returns us to the question raised by Probyn, whether one can ever deshame oneself. So Christian’s discarding of shame and his passionate appeal for the past to become history reminded me of Probyn’s (2005: 56; see also Retzinger 1996: 12) observation that ‘ . . . being ashamed is painful, and an easy way out is to disengage from the affect, to distance oneself from the object of shame . . . ’ Volkan *et al.* (2002: 145) also suggest in their book *The Third Reich in the Unconscious Transgenerational Transmission and its Consequences* that emotionally distancing oneself ‘from aspects of the Third Reich that induce shame and guilt’ protects one’s self-esteem and thus circumvents structural trauma. Although Christian acknowledges the fact that he cannot flee the past due to his family and social *history* [*Gesellschaftsgeschichte*], he, like many others in the sample, speaks of a *Wandel* [change], i.e. of a ‘normalization’ that has happened in how he relates not only to the NS past but also to his German national identity. No longer *willing* or *prepared* to feel ashamed, in the context of our conversation about the World Cup 2006, he tells me ‘the fact that there were flags on every car and many windows . . . would have still annoyed me much more a couple of years ago.’ Rather, he now speaks positively of the World Cup and the increasing *Gelassenheit* it entailed.

Johanna and Albrecht also refuse to feel any ‘personal guilt’ or shame. Albrecht Richter considers guilt only relevant in terms of the present and future, relating it as he does to the humanitarian and political question of ‘when does one have to intervene?’ In thus making memory more about the future than about the past, the Holocaust is no longer about German perpetrators and Jewish victims but becomes a decontextualized event that can potentially happen to anyone, as Levy and Sznajder (2006: 17) note. Johanna, on the other hand, rejects having to feel embarrassed as a German abroad – embarrassment is a variant of or at least closely related to shame

(Taylor 1985: 69-76); while she also asserts, 'I don't carry any guilt, well not more than any other human on this earth.' Karin Ingbert also explains: 'I personally don't feel any guilt.' She is furthermore reluctant to admit to any feelings of shame when she inverts shame into a lack of pride: 'Let's put it this way, I am not proud of my past or the past of my country and some of my ancestors.'

While the sons and daughters of perpetrators felt a certain pleasure in declaring themselves to be burdened by guilt (Arendt 1963; Schneider, Chr. 2004), most of their children reject this burden.¹²² Yet, it becomes clear that the interviewees discussed here reject feelings of collective guilt and/or shame, not by drawing on an explicitly nationalist discourse that defiantly repudiates any responsibility, but rather by claiming that they feel responsible as a human rather than as a German. Albrecht also sees collective responsibility not as something that concerns Germans in particular but rather all humankind, when he contends: 'out of this arises a responsibility for the world'. Christian, on the other hand, admits that a couple of years ago he would have still acknowledged that young Germans had a particular responsibility and obligation; now, however, with the change in how he relates to the past, he 'thinks every human has a moral obligation' in this respect. Yet, there is a tension or contradiction here, insofar as these interviewees in their self-descriptions as individuals or Europeans also express the wish for a more 'normalized' German national identity, to be able to express national loyalty or belonging like the French, or the Americans.

Many of the interviewees mentioned here, e.g. Johanna Müller, Alberta Michels, Karin Ingbert, Albrecht Richter, Sebastian Merle and to some extent Christian Marx, prefer to see themselves as European, cosmopolitan, human and/or individual rather than as German when it comes to answering the question of collective responsibility. It seems that in relation to this issue they prefer to distance themselves from their

¹²² In *Eichmann in Jerusalem* Arendt (1964: 251) writes disapprovingly of the children's generation, when she asserts that '[t]hose young German men and women who every once in a while . . . treat us to hysterical outbreaks of guilt feelings are not staggering under the burden of the past, their fathers' guilt; rather, they are trying to escape from the pressure of very present and actual problems into a cheap sentimentality.'

German background. This becomes apparent, for example, when Albrecht declares: ‘I don’t see myself so much as a German . . . I am like all Germans, we see the negative.’ He rather perceives himself as a European, asserting that ‘culturally one is a European culture and as a German . . . to understand oneself in terms of culture is always a bit difficult because there is this strong [*stark*] break.’ In these instances, a European cultural identity is drawn on to circumvent the break in German culture. Unhappy about his earlier answers, Albrecht qualifies them by saying that when he is abroad he appears [*aufreten*] as himself rather than as a German. He continues: ‘I am someone from the *Ruhr* area [*‘Ich bin Ruhrgebietler’*] . . . and European but I find it enormously difficult to imagine Germany as something meaningful.’ Andreas Huyssen (1995a: 72), in his critique of the postnationalist consensus, writes that:

‘Europeanism or regionalism, two of the alternatives to nation privileged by the post-nationalists, are and have always been not really alternatives at all, but necessary supplements to nation and always implied in it. . . . The decision to opt for a European identity in order to avoid the Germanness in question, so typical of post-war intellectuals, was always a delusion, necessary perhaps in the post-war decades, but politically self-destructive today.’

He (ibid.: 73) suggests ‘to engage in a debate about a potentially alternative and positive notion of nation’, yet leaves open how exactly this could look like. The question here, however, remains: why do so many of the young Germans I interviewed prefer to see themselves as European rather than as German? Alberta, who has been living in the UK for the past ten years, explains that even though living abroad has made her more aware of her ‘Germanness’ – ‘I really notice that this is the culture to which I belong’ – at the end of the interview she qualifies this by contending: ‘I mainly feel myself as Western Europe[an] . . .’ And, like Karin below, she is also very eager to portray herself as non-German, when she tries to explain to me why she never had any negative experiences abroad ‘which might . . . be due to the fact that at first sight I don’t look like a typical German, [and] in terms of my temperament, I am also not necessarily the typical German and I always quickly speak the language of the people.’

Alberta, Johanna and Karin are even more vehement in distancing themselves from anything 'German.' Johanna maintains: 'my self-perception for example is not German, I don't feel German, I really feel as a European by now and anyway as a German abroad one is not very intent on showing, that one is German . . . because it's actually embarrassing if someone notices.' Although earlier in the interview she has claimed not to feel embarrassed as German, we can here glimpse that this might not be the case. But in terms of passing herself off as European, English or Swedish, Karin, who works as a translator (German-Swedish and German-English), seems almost proud of her 'command of mimicry'. She tells me she 'always adapt[s] perfectly to [her] surroundings.' She continues: 'I have a German passport, [but] am taken for a Swede in Sweden, . . . [and] when I go to Great Britain, everyone considers me a Brit.' She emphasizes that she always cheers for the football team that opposes the German team – 'that's my kind of multinational . . . attitude towards life' – even though she also mentions that she very much welcomed the 'patriotic' atmosphere that erupted during the World Cup: 'I mean, the German flags attached to the cars, that was just cute, that was actually amiable.' During the interview at her flat, she is anxious to point out that I would neither be able to find any 'German design' in her living room, nor would I be able to discover any 'really German foods' in her kitchen. She continues in the same vein, when she tells me that in her circle of friends 'the proportion of foreigners outweighs' the number of Germans.

K: 'I don't feel German, to say it plainly, I am somehow European . . . the German passport doesn't mean anything to me . . . I also don't have anything German . . . Well, I don't even have German as a mother tongue, well I speak three languages, I have three mother tongues, if you like, I am German, Swedish and English . . . I mean one also doesn't notice it by way of my clothes, of my movement, of so many odds and ends. Hardly anyone identifies me as a German . . . often they say "are you English?" Yes, I mostly refrain from commenting, because somehow it's also true.'

The way the assumption of a European or other national or regional identities can come to serve as an escape or flight from history has been pointed out by Huyssen (1995a: 83-84), who wonders why 'nobody has made the argument that the denial of German national identity and the emphatic commitment to Europe could itself be

seen as a flight from this history.’ He finds the reason for this in the fact ‘that the post-nationalists are also those who insist most adamantly on preserving the memory of German responsibility.’ But he continues by pointing to ‘an inconsistency’ in their argument, which he claims ‘points to the unbearable nature of a burden too heavy even for those who do acknowledge it.’ This becomes particularly evident in the following exchange between Karin and myself. Having asked her whether – if she does not feel any guilt – she ever feels ashamed to be German, particularly when she is abroad, she replies: ‘No, no, I am only German per passport, . . . I consider myself as a European [*ich halte mich ja für einen Europäer*].’ She goes on to deny the fact that her German background might have any relevant influence in an encounter between her and Jews: ‘Well, I’ve no problem to face a Jew, well that’s so marginal for me, it depends on whether I like him or I don’t not like him.’ She is very reluctant to accept the particular historical obligation of an anamnestic solidarity with the victims as part of her national identity, even though she is willing to acknowledge a present political responsibility that stems from the failings of the past, i.e. safeguarding democracy.

While most of the interviewees discussed above, especially Johanna Müller, Karin Ingbert and Albrecht Richter remain unaware of the contradiction or at least tension that their position entails, Christian Marx, Sebastian Merle and Armin Bachmann become increasingly conscious of this tension during the course of the interview. By drawing on the interview with Sebastian, I would now like to show how these interviewees *feel* the limits of their self-conceptions as an autonomous individual, a European or a *Weltbürger*. Sebastian also distances himself in many ways from Germany as a nation, while he universalizes the perpetrators by taking recourse to the theory of the banality of evil (Arendt 1964). When we talk about the fact that one cannot deny that both – the Holocaust and ‘German’ culture, i.e. Goethe and the *Volk* of *Dichter* and *Denker* – need to be mentioned ‘under the same heading’, his ‘rational’ argument for the historicization of National Socialism and the end of collective feelings of guilt and shame slowly unravels. He asserts that it is this inseparability of NS and the Holocaust from German national and *cultural* identity that ‘objectively should make one feel ashamed if one had participated in it . . . and . .

. when one says I am German this [the Holocaust and NS] also belongs to it . . . one has to avow that.'

However in the following sentence Sebastian retracts that when he draws attention to the fact that he was not alive at the time and hence the past should no longer be of his concern. In the part of the interview that follows, he proceeds in the same self-contradicting way, oscillating between claiming that the past cannot but be part of oneself through a familial link and socialization and vehemently and defiantly denying exactly this insight, by arguing the opposite when he appeals for a final line to be drawn under the past and reiterating that the past 'is definitely history.' In this sense, we could argue with Judith Butler that his portrayal of himself as a human or an autonomous individual, unconnected to the historical and cultural legacy with which he grew up, is continuously interrupted by this very legacy. Judith Butler (2005: 82) in her recent book *Giving an Account of Oneself* writes that:

'I am interrupted by my own social origin, and so have to find a way to take stock of who I am in a way that makes clear that I am authored by what precedes and exceeds me, and that this in no way exonerates me from having to give an account of myself. But it does mean that if I posture as if I could reconstruct the norms by which my status as a subject is installed and maintained, then I refuse the very disorientation and interruption of my narrative that the social dimension of those norms imply.'

Sebastian's attempts to narrate himself as an autonomous individual – the latter is also the basis on which he builds his argument that rationally there is no foundation or explanation for any feelings of guilt and shame in the generation of the grandchildren – are interrupted by the presence of feelings of shame to which he then finally refers and which do not easily fit into his initial narrative. Although he links shame to an identification with the nation, he finds himself at an impasse when he recognizes that he cannot rationally explain the presence of this feeling, and thus belittles its force when he alludes to the constructed nature of these emotions and compares it to the emotional euphoria during the Football World Cup. He contends that

S: 'Still I of course have this feeling of shame, which is however also something that cannot be rationally explained, but which either has to do with a kind of emotion . . . with a national consciousness and . . . that I am also happy that we got so far in the Football World Cup, even though these are all only constructed national emotions'.

In relation to the contradictions present in the interviews with Sebastian, Saul Friedlander's (1993: 2) comment about a similarly expressed 'desire to break out of the entanglement of guilt' might be helpful. He states that '[t]hese lines poignantly express what for some Germans seems to be [an] intractable predicament: the Nazi past is too massive to be forgotten, and too repellent to be integrated into the "normal" narrative of memory.'

7.5 *Conclusion: Shame and the limits of 'normalization'*

What has become clear in this chapter is that, although political national guilt and responsibility is hardly ever really disputed by any of the here cited interviewees, it is the idea of a collective moral guilt, which in turn implies personal feelings of collective guilt (Rensmann 2004), *Betroffenheit* and/or shame that they take particular issue with and which they reject. I would argue that, since most of the interviewees cited here used to be or still are very keen on downplaying their national belonging, by trying to pass themselves off as cosmopolitans, Europeans, individuals, or even British, it is not feelings of collective guilt that they are thus avoiding or rejecting but, in these very obvious gestures of hiding, 'distancing and disidentification' (Branscombe & Doosje 2004: 30), they are avoiding shame.

On the one hand, some interviewees integrate National Socialism and the Holocaust into a European or global memory whereby this past becomes Europe's or the world's legacy to deal with and no longer a particular German responsibility. Yet, in accord with the dialectics of 'normalization', thereby the possibility to redeem positive aspects of German history and to re-validate a more 'normal' national identity via a pride in political culture or constitutional patriotism opens itself up.

On the other hand, others, like Karin, who view the Holocaust as unique then have to vehemently distance themselves from or even hide their German background, which is experienced as a stigma (see Moses 2007c) and thus as shameful. Lastly, there are those who in their desperate wish to return to an untainted national identity, free of any ambivalence, also have to disavow any feelings of shame. The latter are deposited in the past, as belonging to a different generation. By appealing to temporal distance, they argue that guilt should be left behind or moved beyond, so their generation, which cannot be held responsible, can be freed from the past. Yet, what became obvious in the analysis of the interviews with Yvonne and Julia is that this seems to be more difficult than anticipated as they experience the commemoration of the Holocaust as an accusation, which spoils these very efforts to free oneself from the past. They no longer want their self-narratives either as Germans or as autonomous individuals to be interrupted by the legacy of the past.

Many of the interviewees, who contend that the Holocaust is to be considered the responsibility of Europe or humankind in some way, echo Hannah Arendt's ([1945] 2000: 154) statement of 1945 in which she declares her *shame to be human* in the face of the Holocaust. Arendt announces this 'elemental shame' while she at the same time downplays her Jewish background as well as the fact that she herself is a survivor of the Nazi genocide, when she writes that '[f]or many years now we have met Germans who declare that they are ashamed of being Germans. I have often felt tempted to answer that I am ashamed of being human.' In reviewing Arendt's article on collective responsibility, Lillian Alweiss (2003) lauds her commitment to an 'elemental shame' of being human rather than allowing herself the pleasure to simply blame the Germans. Yet, Alweiss pauses to point to the importance of the positionality of the person making such a statement. 'It does make a difference whether a German or a Jew says, "men must assume responsibility for all crimes committed by men and that all nations share the onus of evil committed by all others"' (Alweiss citing Margalit 2003: 313; see also LaCapra 2001: 40). Thus, when it comes to collective responsibility, Alweiss (ibid.: 314; see also Moses 2007a, 2007b, 2007c) asserts, 'Arendt was not entirely mistaken when she argued that we cannot reduce collective responsibility to the language of guilt.' In instances like the

ones we have discussed in this chapter, i.e. the grandchildren of Nazi perpetrators and followers and their conceptions of (collective) responsibility as either non-national and universal, or as national and political but not moral or as non-existent and purely individual, shame might be more helpful when trying to understand what is at issue.

Chapter 8: Shame in the presence of the past

“Generations come and go. Every new generation has to come to terms with the fact that the self image of the Germans is contaminated by the memory of Nazi excesses and that the consciences of others, perhaps even their own consciences are burdened with what Hitler and his henchmen did. Perhaps the only conclusion to be drawn from this experience is that it is impossible for the individual to consider himself as a completely autonomous subject. One is, whether one likes it or not, a member of a group. The language one speaks is a group language. One is co-responsible, one is made co-responsible for everything the group does.”¹²³

8.1 Introduction: Responsibility beyond ‘normalization’ and reconciliation

The German cultural critic Klaus Theweleit (1995: 33) recently wrote that ‘[o]nly the person who can be ashamed, about things which he has done, about things that were committed in his vicinity, about things “humans” have done, gets access to his own history, to his own body history, to his own political history, also to that of others.’¹²⁴ This, he argues, is the case because in shame the self is dis- and reassembled (see also Agamben 1999), thereby becoming open to others. However, in distinction to Arendt’s focus on ‘elemental shame’, Theweleit (ibid.) ponders the question why (young) Germans are seemingly incapable of feeling ashamed. With characteristic hyperbole, he (ibid.; emphasis in original) claims that Germans are unable to feel shame for anything other than their own selves; a sign, he argues, of their willed ignorance of their own history. Although in style reminiscent of the Mitscherlichs’ (1967) general imputation of a German national character incapable of mourning, there is nevertheless some truth to Theweleit’s thesis, as the analysis of the interviews in the previous chapter(s) has shown.

¹²³ Elias, Norbert ([1989] 1996). Translation taken from Bell (2002: 65).

¹²⁴ My own translation: ‘Nur, wer sich schämen kann, über Dinge, die er getan hat, über Dinge, die in seiner Nähe getan wurden, über Dinge, die ‘Menschen’ getan haben, bekommt Zugang zur eigenen Geschichte, zur eigenen Körpergeschichte, zur eigenen politischen Geschichte, auch der anderen.’

Theweleit's emphasis on shame is furthermore useful here because it draws attention to the inadequacy of the language of (collective) guilt that has shaped the German memory discourse since its inception (see Jaspers ([1947] 2001; Olick 2005; Rabinbach [1997] 2000), which however obscures more than it illuminates. Rensmann (1999: 66) elucidates how representations of NS¹²⁵ are frequently misperceived "as an accusation of collective guilt", or of original sin [*Erbsünde*] or clan liability [*Sippenhaftung*]. This, he (ibid.) argues, is 'an indication of social paranoia' because the subject feels the need to reject 'an allegation that was never made' and 'blow[s] critical assessments of the German past out of proportion by portraying them as accusations of collective guilt'. Yet, by doing so, the relation to oneself and one's national identity is kept untainted and difference and otherness is perceived as something threatening that intervenes from outside.

Lilian Alweiss (2003: 313; see also Arendt 1987) agrees 'that the language of guilt alone does not entirely capture what we mean by a collective or shared sense of responsibility' and proposes shame as much more useful in this context. This is especially the case, as guilt is not only a legal concept but also limited to individual deeds and transgressions or, if referring to collective actions, the guilty must at least have had some control over the outcome of the (in)actions in question (Branscombe, Slugoski & Kappen 2004: 28-29). It furthermore implies that the harm that has been done can be atoned for and can be paid back in restitution and through other forms of reconciliation. In relation to this, the moral philosopher Gabriele Taylor (1985: 97-104) makes the important point that, in guilt, the thoughts of the guilty are primarily with him or herself rather than with the harmed, as the ultimate aim of reconciliation and restitution in this case is 'that [he or] she should be rid of the burden' of the past. Alweiss (2003: 315) concludes her article on *Collective Guilt and Responsibility* by arguing that 'the language of guilt and remorse', when used to describe collective responsibility, thus even 'contradicts the duty of remembrance'.

¹²⁵ Brink (1998, 2000) shows very clearly how the German population – already immediately after the war – interpreted the images of the liberation of the concentration camps as unfair accusations of collective guilt.

Furthermore, as the pervious chapter showed, many interviewees featured there take official acts of reconciliation and commemoration by unified Germany's successive governments as legitimating and authorizing a certain liberation from the past: the past, now securely enshrined within official national commemoration and narrative, thus no longer affects them. This is not to say that commemoration and reconciliation are bad, or that young Germans should or must feel burdened, but just to call to mind what Ahmed (2004) identified as the ambiguity of official acts of commemoration and restitution as also reconciling the repentant (nation) with him or herself (itself). It is from a similar insight that Karyn Ball's (2008a: 57) critique of the Habermasian model of memory stems. Like Dirk Moses (2007a), she accuses Habermas of subscribing to the logic of *Sinnstiftung* when he calls 'upon contemporary Germans to "pay off" the crime of Auschwitz through indebted memory, which' she adds, 'additionally assumes a compensatory meaning as a herald of reconciliation.' Although Habermas would vehemently deny this charge, as we have seen in chapter 7, his writings do at times suggest such a logic.

This logic views the past as something that needs to be 'worked off' [*abarbeiten*] (Habermas 1998) in a self-critical manner in order to remove its stain, or to convert the stigma into a stigmata, as Moses (2007a) puts it in his more anthropological language. In contrast to such an idea of working-off as eventually liberating, LaCapra's (1998: 187) concept of working-through is much more helpful since it is based on the notion that working-through 'requires the active recognition that there always remains in thought and in social life a "stain", impurity, or residue of the past that cannot be entirely eliminated or made good.' Although he argues that working-through is necessary, in order to get some distance to the past that allows for critical judgment, it can never be fully completed. There remains 'an unassimilable remainder' (ibid.) that cannot be integrated into such redemptive narratives of successful *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* or domesticated, tamed and controlled in rituals of commemoration and/or procedures of reconciliation and restitution.

The unassimilable here refers to the traces of the genocidal past that have rendered (not only) German national identity *unheimlich* but have also destabilized it and made it unavailable as an essence. Yet this does not mean that identity and belonging are to be renounced in favour of nomadism and complete rootlessness, but that identities become ‘the unstable points of identification or suture, which are made within the discourses of history and culture’ (Hall 1990: 226), i.e. positionings, in which we are always someone in relation to someone or something else. Belonging and identity cannot be ‘based [on] the individual possession of an intrinsic quality’ (Probyn 1996: 22), but are relational and ‘in constant movement’ (ibid.: 19). Thus, neither a return to an untainted German national identity, nor the attainment of a final point of liberation from the past, are viable options here. Now, before we can return to the feeling of shame, which *can* disrupt both of these (re)turns to a self-same identity; we have to come to at least some kind of understanding of collective responsibility.

If we go by Arendt’s (1987: 45) definition, it implies that firstly one ‘must be held responsible for something [one] has not done’ and the responsibility in question must refer to group membership; secondly, this membership must be one that cannot be dissolved voluntarily. Discussions of collective responsibility (see Alweiss 2003; Arendt 1987, 2000; Branscombe & Doosje 2004; Gilbert 2002; Jaspers [1947] 2001; Lickel *et al.* 2005; Margalit 2002; Olick 2005; Rensmann 2004; Schaap 2001; Striblen 2007) in moral philosophy and social psychology usually confine themselves to debating to what extent such responsibility is either political or moral or both, and whether guilt or shame is the more appropriate moral sentiment. I do not want to be drawn into these discussions here but rather simply want to endorse David Eng’s (2010: 171; see also LaCapra 2001; Gordon 1997: 193-208; Santner 1990) view that responsibility for a past through which one has not lived oneself ‘is as much an affective affair as it is a political affair.’ This renders the strict distinction between private moral and public political realms inherent in Arendt’s (1987.: 46) notion of collective responsibility as purely political and not moral, at least problematic. It also puts into doubt the idea that we can ever be completely autonomous moral beings, a wish expressed by so many in the previous chapter.

Even though the German philosopher Karl Jaspers ([1947] 2001: 70-74), author of the famous book *'The Question of German Guilt'*, extends the idea of collective guilt to the moral, pre-political realm, I would argue, that shame, rather than his 'philosophically incoherent concept' (Moses 2007a: 25), captures much better a sense of collective co-responsibility, especially when this is a transgenerational one. This necessarily returns us to the feeling of shame, which is much less easy to get rid of than guilt, as it 'lingers deep within the self' (Probyn 2005: 2) and can return long after the initial 'moment of shaming has passed' (ibid.: 46). It is thus a disruptive, even haunting, feeling. It is also a social feeling, not only because it emerges as a response to the other's (fantasized and internalized) gaze, which exposes the self (as defective and lacking), but also because 'experiences of shame are a painful uncovering of hitherto unrecognized aspects of one's personality . . . [and] one's society' (Lynd 1958: 183) – or, as Probyn (2005: 14) puts it, '[i]t highlights unknown and unappreciated investments.'

While, as we saw in the previous chapters, an increasingly globalized memory of the Holocaust has made it easier for 'third generation' Germans to repudiate their 'historical relation to the perpetrators' (LaCapra 2001: 66), the experience of shame confronts them with 'complicated identification[s]' that are often 'not of [their] making' (Alweiss 2003: 314), such as with the perpetrator collective. As such, experiences of shame represent occasions in and through which narcissistic identifications with the nation (and/or the family) as untainted and pure are (traumatically) shattered or ruptured, i.e. rendered *unheimlich*. Hence, it is perhaps more in shame than in guilt or empathy that we are positioned in such a way that we become co-responsible for the deeds of members of the (political) community that we are identified with and identify with; that we become '*affiliated with the horrors of [our] history*' (Mandel 2006: 218). This, I would argue, is the case because shame 'expresses an *indirect* and *impersonal*' (Alweiss 2003: 314; emphasis in original) but nevertheless acutely-felt collective responsibility.

What unites the interviewees discussed in the present chapter is that, for them, visits or longer stays abroad are accompanied by at times acute and painful experiences of shame, which can, if acknowledged, become self-transformative and disruptive of redemptive narratives and practices of ‘normalization’. Thus, unlike those in the previous chapter, the interviewees included here, acknowledge – at times only during the interview itself – their shame and, by doing so, also accept that there is no alternative to recognizing what Santner (1990: 46) calls the ‘insuperable ambivalences’ that come with, on the one hand needing to identify with Germany (and one’s family) as a contaminated (national) collective, while at the very same time needing to disavow these very identifications.

As shame comes in many different shades and intensities (Probyn 2005: 15), I will slowly work my way from less intense to more extreme cases of shame, to end with Carolin, who experiences a prolonged total loss of self. While the interview with Fabian, who alludes to his shame but does not acknowledge it, shows us how important an acknowledged affective response is – what LaCapra calls empathic unsettlement and what I argue is in the present context better described by shame – Carolin’s story demonstrates the limits of theories (see Agamben 1999) in which (traumatic) shame advances to become the model for post-Holocaust ethical subjecthood per se and thus reminds us of the significance of what LaCapra calls working-through.

8.2 *Shades of shame*

Several empirical studies (Kohlstruck 1997: 92; Moses 2007a: 28, 2007c: 153; Schneider, Connie 2004: 280-81; Schneider, Ch. 2001: 334-335) find that for ‘third generation’ Germans the Nazi past becomes relevant, particularly when travelling or living abroad, and here in particular in countries that used to be occupied by the Germans during WWII and/or in social encounters with Holocaust victims, survivors and their grand/children. This observation not only concurs with my own data and resonates with my own experience but, as Kohlstruck (1997: 92) asserts, it also

points to the fact that for ‘third generation’ Germans dealing with the NS past is much more strongly linked to national belonging than it was for their parents’ generation. These findings at least question Levy and Sznajder’s (2006: 194-95; see also Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2002) thesis that national identity is increasingly becoming ‘a conscious choice’ in Second Modernity and ‘no longer plays a vital role in terms of autobiographical memory’ (ibid.: 197). Much more helpful than Levy and Sznajder’s theory, is the psychologically informed work of Dirk Moses and Christian Schneider, who draw important socio-psychological inferences from such empirical material. They argue that stays abroad can produce “‘psychological dissonance”, . . . that is discomfort caused by the violation of one’s self-conception’ as ‘moral and socially respected but also as belonging to a group that . . . [has] committed the worst of all genocides’ (Moses 2007a: 28; Schneider, Ch. 2001: 334-35).

Encounters with the past which occur *in a different national and cultural context* can then provoke ‘a crisis-laden situation’ which can induce a narcissistic or structural trauma, which in turn manifests itself ‘in a fragile feeling of self-worth and pronounced shame affects’, the result of which can be that one experiences German national identity ‘as a negative stigma’ (Brendler 1997: 69-70; Moses 2007c). Probyn (2005: 64) concurs thus far when she writes that ‘shame undoubtedly makes us feel temporarily more fragile in ourselves’ and adds that in shame the subject ‘feel[s] small and somehow *undone*’ (Probyn 2005: 2; emphasis added; see also Theweleit 1995). Many theorists note that shame is intimately linked to a literal and metaphorical feeling of being out of place. In a similar way to Probyn’s Bourdieusian assertion, that shame particularly erupts when the habitus is out of sync with the field, sociologist Helen Lynd (1958: 37) writes that in ‘[f]inding oneself in a position of incongruity, [of] not being accepted as the person one thought one was, [of] not feeling at home in a world one thought one knew’ renders one especially prone to shame. In much more detail than Lynd, Probyn (2005: 40) ‘explore[s] how the physiological experience of shame intersects with the physicality of place’, to analyze how being a cultural outsider is inherently shame inducing: shame as ‘the feeling the body registers in social and cultural contexts when it does not belong’

(Probyn 2005: xvi). It can thus contribute to producing a form of ‘outside belonging’: a mode of belonging ‘that is, . . . performed in the knowledge of the impossibility of ever really and truly belonging, along with the fear that the stability . . . and . . . sanctity of belonging are forever past’ (Probyn 1996: 8; see also Santner 1990: 8-9); performed in the knowledge of ‘the very *unheimlich*-ness of social life’ (Probyn 1996: 19).

In the interviews below, we will see how such experiences of shame, fostered by being and feeling out of place, can also reignite interest in the past and instigate processes of working-through which, although remaining to various degrees marked by phases or aspects ‘that [are] uncontrolled and unconscious, involving acting-out and the compulsive return of the repressed’ (LaCapra 1998: 187), do allow for some distance to the past to emerge in the process. Thus, unlike Brendler and Rensmann, who endorse guilt as the more appropriate emotion in these instances, because shame is not predicated on the internalization of norms but on conforming to external sanctions, following Probyn, I view acknowledged shame as positive, transformative and more productive than guilt (see Probyn 2005: 46). So, although the interviewees assembled in this chapter engage in similar ‘avoidance behaviors’ as the interviewees in the previous chapter, such as hiding or disidentification, in acknowledging their shame, they seem to be more self-reflexive. The interviewees assembled in this chapter do not rationalize, but recognize that such ‘avoidance behaviors’ also constitute a form of hiding and flight. Apart from Fabian the interviewees mentioned in this chapter agree that the NS past and the Holocaust constitute a particular responsibility and legacy for Germans. Furthermore, even though shame is often related to the visual realm and a sense of being exposed in front of an audience, for these interviewees exposure has to do with being identified as German through their language. This is why many of them avoid speaking German when they are abroad.

8.2.1 Fabian: Fear of shame

Although Fabian Hoffmann is the only interviewee included here who is rather dismissive of his feelings of shame, these feelings are however strongly linked to place. He tells me how he stops at commemorative plaques scattered around the city he lives in and how he sneaks around synagogues. Apart from Ilka and Carolin perhaps, he is the only other interviewee who expresses a strong interest in Jewish culture and laments the loss (rather than the destruction) of it. Yet he is too afraid to allow his interest to flourish more freely, as he explains:

F: 'I sneak, as it were around these/ around these/ around these/ around synagogues, I sneak around them and look at them fascinated but to go in and / I am quite / I somehow always feel a little scared [*schissig*] in the sense of *how do I belong here* or no idea and . . . I've just been to Brazil . . . and there I casually got to know a couple of Israelis . . . it wasn't enough to have great conversations but somehow it's weird . . . I always look at them and think to myself / or I almost gape at them and think / . . . well I was on a bus, a couple was sitting in front of me and they were speaking in Hebrew and I thought 'what life stories do they have?' well . . . I would really like to ask them . . . "he you're from Israel, where are your grandparents from? . . . yes well an interest in the whole . . . culture.'

In the first sentence, his fear of going into the synagogue seems to manifest itself in his hesitation to finish the sentence. Fabian's shame seems to be 'born of the desire to fit in, of an interest in being part of a place' (Probyn 2005: 38). And, as Probyn points out above, the relation between shame and belonging or rather not belonging becomes particularly obvious here when Fabian describes his fear of going into the synagogue by asking 'how do I belong here?' However, as Probyn (2005: 38; emphasis in original) also maintains, this kind of shame in its '"desire to avoid potential wrongdoing and bad consequences . . . seems to have more in common with *fear* than with *guilt*.'" Yet, she (2005: xvi) also notes that this feeling 'out-of-place can ignite a desire for connection.' Although Fabian's interest in Jewish culture 'propels [him] toward exposure' (ibid.: 38), his fear of doing or saying something wrong seems to get the better of him and he remains silent instead. So his shame never really reaches the stage of becoming 'white-hot' (Probyn 2005: 15), when it is felt most intensely on the body and can lead to a shock to or questioning of one's

self-conception. Unlike Carolin and Ilka, below, whose interest, repeatedly, even obsessively, propels them towards shameful exposure, Fabian plays it safe.

8.2.2 *Caspar, Silke, Melanie and Ilka: Transformative shame*

Caspar Reinhart is more explicit and self-reflexive than Fabian about the emotional reactions travels abroad trigger in him. When I ask him whether there are any fears or insecurities in his life,¹²⁶ he tells me that he always felt a bit guilty vis-à-vis non-Germans. He goes on to recount experiences abroad, which seem to point more to shame than to guilt:

C: ‘When I was abroad for example I had huge inferiority complexes . . . No matter where I was / for instance when I went to Holland and it was more likely that someone there spoke German rather than English I nevertheless spoke English. I thought it was simply impertinent to speak German.’

Abroad and vis-à-vis non-Germans he feels his self to be small and depleted, which in turn is intimately connected to his language. In this instance, feeling out of place makes Caspar, and even more so the interviewees discussed below, not only want to fit in – ‘[t]he shame of the cultural outsider is fed by a deep desire to fit in and . . . to belong where you don’t belong’ (2005: 39) – but also makes him ‘want to disappear’ by hiding his language. Britt and Heise (2000: 253) quote the psychologist Nathanson as ‘suggest[ing] that “true of shame is a wish to conceal.”’ Caspar here tells me how he preferred to remain unrecognized as a German when he spoke English. Yet, his reflection on his experiences of shame abroad is followed by an admission that, even though for some time he tried to see himself as a European or not to categorize himself at all because he views the nation as a construct, his ‘strong interest’ in how foreign media report about Germany, ‘does show a search for a feeling of identity.’ This clearly demonstrates that for shame to arise one needs to be interested in and care about what the other thinks of oneself. It is this positive aspect

¹²⁶ This being one of my very first interviews, when guilt, let alone shame were so far off my research radar that I did not include any questions relating to either sentiment, Caspar brings the issue of guilt up without me eliciting it.

of shame that gets lost in views like Brendler's (1997; see also Leys 2007) who views it as negative and regressive.

Caspar goes on to assert that, even if one wished to disavow national belonging, it still plays a role somehow. However, unlike Rainer, Yvonne and Julia, the kind of belonging that Caspar speaks of here does not contain a wish to return to an untainted, pure identity. Rather, although acknowledging a desire for belonging, for Caspar belonging and identity is not a process that can have a determinative end or an essence with a particular content, nor can it have as its aim a national identity that excludes the (memory of the) Holocaust. His search for belonging is relational because it proceeds via the other – via an interest in how the other perceives me – and is thus mediated 'by a[ny] passage through alterity' (Santner 1990: 5; see also Hall 1990; Lynd 1958).

Although Silke Turner says that the question of guilt is not of much importance to her, she points to a more subtle way in which guilt plays a role in her life, when she asserts that her relation to her national identity is somehow afflicted with guilt. The difficulties she has in explaining this feeling becomes obvious when she goes on to say 'when I think about it I would always reject this (as) guilt, that's not mine/ that's not my role but . . . I [do] have the feeling that my position, what I know about the world . . . is still of course massively affected by it [the past].' Even though she does not know how to name this feeling, in the following paragraphs it becomes clear that it is probably more akin to shame than guilt. Furthermore, in her acknowledgement that the past massively affects her, she, unlike the interviewees in the previous chapter, recognizes that 'collective histories inform how we are in the world' (Probyn 2005: 39) and inform our thinking and acting in ways that are not necessarily always accessible to consciousness and representation. It is thus that notions of collective and cultural memory in the form of the theories of Halbwachs and Assmann, for example, fall short of helping us to illuminate and understand the experiences of the interviewees in this chapter, for whom the past reaches into the present, making itself *felt* in manifold ways.

Her secure and consolidated critical left political position and identification with the victims that inform her dealing with the past are, however, upset or complicated, as she says, when she moves to the United Kingdom, which is also where I interviewed her. Before her move abroad, fascism, as she puts it, was no longer something that particularly interested her, even though it used to when she was younger. Yet, having arrived in London, she says ‘it feels a bit different, it’s simply a different position . . . one gets a completely different relation to one’s own identity.’ Like Caspar, Silke is far from eager to identify herself as German and has, since having arrived in the UK, become ‘über-cautious’ [*übert vorsichtig*] when it comes to speaking German, preferring to speak English even when she meets other Germans. Yet, she adds that with her move to another place, the past got ‘another presence’ which is something she had not expected at all. She also links this different presence of the past to her encounters with ‘people who come from families who were victims’, which she describes as experiences that she lacked in Germany and which ‘of course lend the topic a whole new relevance [*Brisanz*].’ She comes to experience herself in a different way in England; ‘[I] notice that I become more cautious about what I say without having the feeling/ well it’s not that I feel somehow guilty, that’s too strong, but I notice that it causes an indisposition [*Unwohlsein* - unease].’

Not only does this feeling of unease make it more difficult for Silke to speak about the Nazi past – she notices she becomes more cautious about what she says – but it also compels her to re-consider her own political position as well as her own relation to herself. She tells me that this move has made her position of a critical leftist student more complicated than it was before. I would contend that the *Unwohlsein* that Silke speaks of is a form of shame that is borne out of a sense of being or feeling out of place. The way in which her body registers a particular *Unwohlsein* and shame also brings with it the recognition that certain aspects of her own politics, as well as both her families’ Nazi and war pasts, are much more reluctantly contained within certain narratives or categories, i.e. ‘the feeling body’ here seems to ‘outrun[s] the cognitive capture of the habitus’ (Probyn 2005: 55; see also Gordon 1997: 198; Thrift 2008: 237). Probyn thus locates within this very moment the possibility for change and transformation. I also think that she is correct in according place such a

prominent space in her theory of shame. Furthermore, her (2005: 56) argument that '[t]hrough feeling shame, the body inaugurates an alternative way of being in the world,' I think summarizes Silke's description of her experience in England quite well:

S: 'Here [in the UK – A.H.] it feels as if / one point about the whole thing is definitely that one/ that in Germany I feel socially clearly located [*verortet*] and also feel locatable by others, that I have the feeling that I don't have to explain anything about myself, in the way I appear, in what I do, people very quickly politically identify me in a particular direction . . . and thereby certain things are already said, that I've dealt with certain things, while here I've got the feeling that I have to explain myself more, it's not as self-evident. That's a thing . . . which became clearer to me here . . . how unclear my own position is . . . it has nothing to do with guilt but simply to have this feeling again of having profited from having grown up in this family, to have profited from the fact that this family could continue to live in prosperity, the fact that my grandfather wasn't impr-/ wasn't really brought to justice¹²⁷ . . . brings with it a different consciousness about . . . / that one's own position in it is also never/ [that] one always profits from things which aren't clean.'

Here it becomes evident how Silke's left-liberal position, no longer self-evident, suddenly requires explanation. The impeccable moral and political credentials that this position usually entails at home are not as easily recognized abroad. Abroad, this position does not guarantee a self-evident identification with politically and socially progressive forces, but in the UK Silke suddenly becomes 'German' despite the fact that she does not see herself as German and finds German national identity deeply problematic. Yet, this forces her to leave the position of the witness, who identifies with the victims and renounces her belonging to the perpetrator, collective and to acknowledge her own position, as 'unclean' and stained. '[I]t is from this affiliation' with the perpetrator collective 'that a sense of complicity' (Mandel 2006: 218) and a different sense of responsibility emerges, i.e. the sense that she profited from the injustice that her grandfather's war crime was never brought to justice as well as a broader sense of being implicated in familial, institutional and social structures that cannot be completely divorced from the past and how it was subsequently

¹²⁷ Silke suspects her grandfather of having killed a British paratrooper. He escaped justice by spending several years as a travelling salesman in Italy.

dissociated. Thus, she is no longer afforded the comfort of viewing herself as innocent and the past as past.

The shame Silke feels abroad interrupts her more or less taken-for-granted sense of self and, in the encounter with the other, she recognizes aspects of herself and society (Lynd 1958: 183) that she had not been aware of. Although ‘shame is by nature *recognition*’ (Sartre 1958 cited in Alweiss 2003: 315) – I recognize myself in and respond to how the other perceives me – the work of LaCapra (2001), Sedgwick (2003), Probyn (2005, 1996) and Butler (2005: 28), for example, shows that this recognition can never be a full and final recognition. Butler (2005: 28) for instance notes that the past of the subject ‘gathered and known in the act of recognition’ can never be the full past, but such moments of recognition can ‘alter the organization of that past and its meaning at the same time that [they] transform[s] the present of the one who receives recognition.’ In this respect, Probyn’s (2005: 72) remark that ‘. . . shame demands that we tell other stories’ about ourselves is very apt. This is especially the case if we consider Susan Suleiman’s (2000: 557; see also Probyn 1996: 93-125) statement that ‘[i]f memory is a “shifting and many-layered thing,” never reaching the bedrock one longs for, then the way around that problem is not to keep silent, nor to confine oneself to fiction, but . . . to keep on writing and re-writing’ – or, in this instance, telling and re-telling.

While, in chapter 4 and particularly in chapter 5, we have seen how many interviewees confine themselves to fictions, when they narrate their family histories in rigid, often-repeated stories that are at the very least implausible and/or have resigned in the face of silence, for Silke the acknowledgement of her shame also requires that she modifies her family and self-narrative. She re-composes her family narrative and re-assembles her own self-narrative, as her so far taken-for-granted political and social positionality are no longer self-evident but in need of explanation. Thus, experiences of shame can potentially entail an increasing awareness of the presence of an unformulated, dissociated past, and can thus be the *start* of a process of (re)interpreting, of telling and re-telling (Stern 2003).

During a cycling trip through a predominantly Jewish neighbourhood in London, Silke furthermore realizes ‘how very little I know about this [Judaism – A.H.] and this not-knowing is so very / it really is so very unclean and unsavoury [*unangenehm*].’ Here the link between shame and interest becomes very evident and allows us to see reconciliation practised differently to the interviewees in the previous chapter, for whom differences are barriers and in need to be overcome. One such example is Albrecht Richter who, in telling me about his trips to Israel which were part of a school exchange, voices above all the wish to be perceived as human and not as German as well as to finally be able to criticize Jews (not Israelis) and describes these trips as primarily youth experiences, during which aspects of history remained in the background. Another example would be Dagmar, who no longer sees any need to engage with the past because, as she says: ‘one doesn’t have to teach me that what happened there was terrible.’

However, as Probyn (2000: 54; emphasis in original) asserts, reconciliation is better understood as a process rather than a fixed endpoint when she writes that ‘[r]econciliation must be a challenge to *learn*, and not to *know*.’ For her (2000: 53) ‘[r]econciliation is therefore placed at that intersection of ignorance and knowingness . . . ,’ and must remain aware of the differences and dis-connections that shape social relations in the aftermath of mass violence. Probyn’s (2000) interest in shame is thus also to be read as a stab at those feminists and queer theorists who, according to her, too quickly assume a commonality between the suffering of Aborigines, women, gays and lesbians. Rather than empathy, which can often serve ‘cultural appropriation’ (ibid.: 53-54) by assuming knowingness, reconciliation based on shame seems to be more aware of differences, reluctant to jump to premature knowingness.

In a similar, perhaps initially more defensive, way than Silke, during the interview Melanie Kerner rejects any feelings of guilt for the Holocaust – ‘I’ve never felt personally responsible for the Holocaust’ – and initially also denies to have ever felt shame. Following her initial rejection of guilt she continues by saying that ‘[I] also have to say *I also never really felt ashamed to be from Germany*. I’ve noticed when we went to England/ I went to summer camps that *I never liked saying that I am*

from Germany.' She preferred to say that she is from France, she admits, not realizing that she is contradicting herself. She then goes on to recognize that 'I always denied this [being German – A.H.] a bit.' Yet, while she disclaims any feelings of guilt or shame, she also rejects any attempts to draw a line under the past and acknowledges the imperative that young Germans have a particular responsibility. But she thinks that the past can be dealt with in such a way that it can be divorced from the question of whether 'one is guilty or not.'

Whereas in the beginning of the interview she denies to have ever felt ashamed to be German, when we, at the end of the interview (which was conducted in Germany) turn to her experiences abroad, she seems to reverse her position completely. Melanie tells me about how she met young Jews in London when she used to visit her German-Turkish husband, who was studying there for a while. During these encounters she always felt she had to explain herself to these young Jews and assure them 'that only one grandpa was bad, that I don't come from a proper Nazi family', while she now recognizes that she was the one who put this pressure on herself and that no one ever demanded any explanations from her. Like the young German journalist Christian Salewski (2009) who, in a piece about his experiences in Israel, writes about how he in almost every conversation he had there felt the need to explain himself – to tell his counterpart that he went to countless anti-Nazi demonstrations, that he had visited Auschwitz and many other concentration camps and so on – Melanie also felt the need to justify herself in anticipation of accusations that were actually never made. So unlike those interviewees who wish to historicize NS and Europeanize the Holocaust because, in their eyes, it represents an accusation of guilt, Melanie realizes 'that this is my problem and not their [young Jews' – A.H.] problem', i.e. that the accusations are not levelled against her from outside but stem from her internalized and fantasized gaze of the other.

This is why acknowledging shame as shame is so important, because 'the acknowledgement of shame' exposes the 'imaginary accuser' as a largely fantasmatic construct. Thus, acknowledging shame can become 'a vehicle for constructive personal and social change' (Retzinger 1996: 16) rather than a hotbed for anger and

resentment. In this respect, the connection Retzinger (1996: 14) makes between unacknowledged shame, anger and rage is helpful. She (ibid.) writes that '[w]hen shame is not acknowledged, the other is almost always seen as the source of hostility.' When we now remember how the interviewees who desired a return to an unbroken national identity and pride, viewed references to the Holocaust as inherently accusatory, which in turn made them quite angry and resentful, Melanie here comes to acknowledge her shame and thus realizes that these reproaches do not come from outside, but are, as she says, her own problem. This then also shows us that the phenomenon identified by Rensmann (1999) as the 'imaginary accuser' points much more to unacknowledged shame rather than guilt.

Eventually, towards the end of the interview, Melanie does indeed begin to speak about being ashamed of 'com[ing] from a family that was capable of doing such things.' Having in the beginning of the interview recounted her family history by concentrating almost exclusively on her grandparents' experiences of suffering (see chapter 5, page 170-173), she now, as we come to talk about her shame-inducing experiences abroad, speaks of her family as a family of murderers. And when I ask whether she had connected her grandfather's war past to a documentary film about the *Wehrmacht* exhibition which she and her friends had watched years ago, her replies become very hesitant. Although Melanie remains very vague about what her grandfather might have done, she does become conscious of her own complicity in dissociating the past when she says that, even though she and her friends did not know much at all about their family histories, and thought what their grandparents did was 'crap' and their own parents' implication in the familial conspiracy of silence was also deplorable, she recognizes that she and her friends are just as much part of this conspiracy as their parents, because, as she says: 'although we get worked up about it, it remains without consequences, we go to all these anti-Nazi demonstrations and feel good about ourselves, but that's it.'

She then quickly links her shame to national belonging when she speculates about how she would feel meeting Israelis:

M: ‘Then I would find it difficult to say “I don’t know exactly what my grandpa did” because then I would also think “I owe it to you to be able to tell you that” . . . then I would feel awkward [*unangenehm*] . . . I do think that’s shameful actually. Actually I think it’s very shameful to say to Israelis “I am German”, then I would even prefer to say “I am French”, something I used to do in the past.’

Yet, she has begun to recognize this as ‘flight’ [*Flucht*] – the manifestation of a wish to be recognized as a human, as she says, rather than having her identity determined by her grandfather’s past (in)actions. Like many of the interviewees in chapter 7, when she was a teenager, Melanie was very pleased ‘when the whole thing with the European Union started’ because then she could ‘simply say, “I come from Europe”’. However, unlike the interviewees above, she does now acknowledge this as having ‘pulled the wool over her eyes [*sich Sand in die Augen streuen*]’ because she now thinks that, even though she still finds it difficult, there is no other way than to see herself as German, ‘including all the ambivalences’ that come with it.

Ilka Pilcher begins her life narrative with her stay in Israel, explaining that she went to live there because she always wanted to know ‘how it would be for a German to go to Israel’. This is however not only an experience which she, during the course of the interview, describes as initially full of shame, but also one that obviously had a transformative effect on her. This becomes evident when she begins her life narrative in the following: ‘the most important/ . . . when I also *changed drastically* was I think really when I lived for one and a half years in Israel . . . before that my life proceeded actually pretty, I would say normally.’ Not only is this time characterized by repeated encounters with Holocaust survivors and representations of the NS past, but also by an intense engagement with herself and German history, as she puts it, and thus by a heightened sense of self-awareness. Like Fabian, she is very interested in Judaism and Jewish culture and her interest is similarly accompanied by fear. Yet, even though Ilka is more successful in overcoming her fear, it nevertheless was a feeling that deeply shaped her encounters with Holocaust survivors, for instance. When she meets survivors for the first time, she recounts the experience in the following way:

I: 'I had a lot of concerns before, well I was afraid that she [the survivor] would perhaps communicate to everyone there that we were from the land of the perpetrators . . . as well as a fear of a direct accusation because I didn't know how I should've reacted to that and then I also didn't know how touched I would be by what she was going to tell us.'

Although her fear of being exposed as coming from the land of the perpetrators does not become reality, and her shame becomes less the longer she stays in Israel, she asserts that 'it still remains shameful somehow, it doesn't go away that one still . . . somehow feels a bit guilty or at least somehow responsible.' And although she never had a single negative experience in Israel (quite to the contrary), her feelings of shame lingered and were re-activated especially when she visited Yad Vashem and the kibbutz, where many of the survivors of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising live.

I: 'In Yad Vashem . . . one feels terrible as a German; well at least I felt the need to speak English. Well I somehow didn't want to be there and around me lots of Americans, I don't know and to then speak German there. Somehow I thought it was bad to speak German at all at this place.'

She describes her experience of visiting the kibbutz in the following way: it 'was a strange feeling . . . I didn't feel guilty in that sense but I did feel ashamed, because I somehow also thought 'how terrible that I speak a language which triggers a trauma in them.' The haunting quality of shame becomes evident in the following extract; Ilka describes how even though her feelings of shame became less intense as time wore on and she got accustomed to her new surroundings in Israel, they never went away completely and still erupt whenever she visits commemoration sites or watches films about the Holocaust:

I: 'It was particularly strong in the beginning, later on it wasn't like that anymore because one notices more strongly that one doesn't need it. But it was and still is like that at these places. I thought about visiting Dachau . . . and I know exactly that it will be like that when I go there. I simply know that when I am confronted with it or when I also watch these films / it's even worse when watching American films in English and suddenly a guard speaks German, in that moment simply because of the language . . . *I somehow feel I am being addressed [sich angesprochen fühlen].*'

It is this haunting quality of shame, returning long after the initial moment of shaming has passed, that makes for a much happier marriage between shame and the demands of memory than between the latter and guilt. While the language of guilt fosters the desire to be forgiven for the past and thus eventually get rid of it, it becomes particularly obvious here how shame is much more obstinate and difficult to get rid of. Although it might get less intense and painful, it hardly ever dissipates completely. Ilka's shame, for example, in contrast to the protestations of the end of guilt in the previous chapter, continues to return years after she began dealing with the NS past.

8.2.3 *Carolyn: Shame and the loss of self*

While the above interviews help us recognize the importance of acknowledging shame and the potentially positive and transformative effects this might have, the interview with Carolyn Dietrich draws attention to what can happen when intense unacknowledged shame leads to the loss of self. As Retzinger (1996: 17; emphasis in original) notes,

‘[f]requent and intense *unacknowledged* shame arises from and generates failure of social connectedness. Under intense states of shame distortion may take place, rendering one unable to function; like any self-monitoring system that has lost its governor, it spirals endlessly. Shame is a thermostat; if it fails to function, regulation of relationships become impossible. With the intense sequences of emotion generated by shame, it may become difficult to regulate self in relation to other. If shame is not acknowledged it disrupts behaviour; at best one can go into a holding pattern, repeating routine responses rather than finding new responses.’¹²⁸

Similar to how LaCapra conceives of acting-out as compulsive repetition, which although necessary, needs to some extent be worked through, shame needs to be acknowledged to become transformative. It is at this point that Probyn's account of

¹²⁸ Retzinger (1996: 13) adds that ‘[p]ersons in a covert state of shame function poorly as agents or perceivers; thought, speech or perception is obsessive. Thoughts might be divided between imaging the self and imaging the other. Imaging the self involves thoughts about self-identity and [the] self has been discredited.’

shame, however, falters as it concentrates more or less exclusively on the positive aspects of acknowledged shame and cannot tell us what happens when shame remains unconscious and unarticulated.

I meet Carolin in Leipzig in the spring of 2009, where she had moved recently after a long stint abroad. The interview with her is unlike any of the other interviews I did. Not only do I hardly need to ask any questions, as she simply begins to recount, but her narratives, especially her self-narrative, are very fragmented, cryptic, incoherent and marked by long pauses. This shows, as she later also confirms, that she has only recently begun to speak about her experiences abroad. As Retzinger (1996: 15) points out, ‘because shame involves [a] threat to identity and loss of trust in self and another, and because shame is so painful it is extraordinarily difficult to communicate.’ Like Silke’s, Carolin’s interest in the past returns or intensifies when she moves abroad. Slightly dismissive of Holocaust exhibitions, museums and commemoration sites, which only managed to convey the past to her as history, at the very end of the interview, she tells me that for her the past ‘became present when I for the first time really . . . came into closer contact with people with a Jewish background and I realized “okay it’s not only history, it reaches into the present.”’

It is only after having moved to Bristol after finishing school that, as she says, the past became burdening [*belastend*] and she incurs what Brendler (1997: 69) and Santner (1990) call a narcissistic trauma, in which the deeds of her ancestors and the Germans more generally ‘devalue[s] her self.’ The resulting dissonance or incongruity between her self-conception and how others perceive her becomes particularly evident in an email that Carolin sends to me about six months after the interview: ‘. . . when I then found myself in situations abroad, in which I was confronted with my German identity, a situation ensued, in which I thought I had a moral deficit . . . not being as inherently good as I perhaps wanted to be.’ She goes on to write that she tried to overcome ‘this overwhelming feeling of shame . . . through a sequence [*Aneinanderreihung*] of actions’ which, as we will see, seem to have been largely performed or rather acted out without much awareness of what and why she was doing what she was doing.

While studying in Bristol, she befriends and falls in love with a young French Jew, but her love remains unrequited and, although she knows some aspects of his family history, the topic of the past remains largely unarticulated. At some point he breaks off all contact with her, but she does not know why. She says that this got her seriously thinking, and concludes that he must have fallen into a serious depression because of his family history, which Carolin vaguely describes as very terrible. In trying to get to grips with the dawning insight, that the children and grandchildren of Holocaust victims and survivors still suffer terribly from the effects of the past – an insight which she describes as ‘groundbreaking [*bahnbrechend*]’ and ‘life-changing’ – she moves to France and becomes a nanny, much to the chagrin of her parents and the relationship between daughter and parents rapidly deteriorates. During this time she also loses contact with, as she says, 90 per cent of her German friends and is adamant not to return to Germany for longer than a holiday. While her German friends consider her hypersensitive and tell her to stop engaging with the past, she tells me that she had the feeling that she was ‘at least making an effort [*sich Mühe geben*].’ At the end of the interview, she describes these years abroad, during which she had to slowly reassemble her ‘world [which] totally collapsed’ as ‘highly emotionally straining’ and ‘psychologically very exhausting’.

She considers it a great injustice that she had a carefree childhood, while many descendants of Holocaust survivors and victims still suffer. At this point she repeats several times how ‘very, very terrible’ the suffering of these children and grandchildren is, whose lives ‘are in the most negative way affected by the past.’ Yet, while she focuses obsessively on the victims, she remains very vague about her own family members’ implications in the Nazi movement. Even though she admits she was ‘totally adrift’ at the time and her parents thought she was depressed bordering on insane, she says she did not feel depressed, but rather had the feeling that she needed to find something out and was driven by ‘an unbelievable interest [*Interesse*]’. Although she remains vague about and only cursorily deals with her family history at the beginning of the interview, she explains how she wanted to find out what exactly happened in Germany during Nazism, something which, she believes, no one in

Germany can tell her about. She asserts how she mistrusted everything that came from Germany and describes her relation to Germany as ‘strongly fractured [*stark angeknickt*]’: ‘I had the feeling that I needed to live abroad for a long time, to be able to develop an independent relation to the German past and my own family’s past.’ According to her, this was not possible in Germany, as she always had the impression that in Germany something was withheld [*vorenthalten*] from her, because her parents and their entire generation had not dealt with the past because they were still too close to their own parents.

Perhaps ironically, inheriting a bit of money from her Nazi grandmother permits her to study again; she moves from Lyon to Paris, enrolls in a cultural studies course and consciously or unconsciously chooses a subsidiary course in contemporary history with a Jewish professor. During one of his office hours, the professor asks her where she is from. At this point, she feels for the first time that she is consciously telling a Jew that she is German. As with her friend in Bristol, she has the feeling that the professor is very affected by the past. Undecided about which topic to choose for her oral exam in history with this professor, she first opts for WWI, because, as she thinks, it is a more neutral subject. Having studied WWI for two weeks, she suddenly comes to the conclusion that ‘that won’t work, you have to go there now, for whatever reason, and talk about National Socialism.’ Unaware of the reason why, she feels she has to put herself into this situation, she describes the exam in the following words:

C: ‘ . . . that’s a situation ((laughs a bit)) which I will never in my life forget . . . in this beautiful Paris I then walked to this terrible exam and then of course I said and did everything totally wrong and ((laughs)) it was terrible because he [the Jewish professor – A.H.] was really sitting in front me like a judge and was absolutely tense and I was also totally nervous.’

Although she felt he greatly appreciated that she had the courage to choose NS as her exam topic, she ‘judge[s] herself adversely’ (Taylor 1985: 68) when she says that she was ‘erratic, said things wrongly, put [her]self in a defensive position.’ After this experience, she hides for two weeks and hopes to never see the professor again. Not long after the exam, however, she runs into him again in the library, where she

suddenly finds herself overwhelmed and starts crying. This is all too much for her; she becomes unable to handle her studies, begins to read about NS and the Holocaust for herself, completely losing connection to what is relevant to her university course and what is not. She attempts several times to get in touch with the professor, writing him several letters asking to meet him to clear the air. Even though they occasionally run into each other at the library, they never speak, because, as Carolin puts it, ‘there was a total barrier’ and she describes ‘the whole thing’ as very burdensome for her. Eventually the professor agrees to meet her, yet she is emotionally so tense that she can hardly talk and runs away, after he had invited her to a coffee. After this she begins to what can only be described as stalking the professor, until he threatens to get the university rector and the police involved. She flees France, like she had fled the UK years earlier, to return to Bristol to work as a nanny of mainly Jewish children, to eventually move back to Germany.

In the context of telling me about her meeting with the professor, she reveals that it was what she calls ‘this perpetrator-victim thinking’, which really got to her, since it gave her ‘the feeling that [she] needed to behave especially heroically . . . to actually get out of this situation in a moral way, and it demanded a more than possible strength of me.’ Being affiliated with the perpetrators arouses in her the need to behave particularly heroically in order to be a moral person, while she also at times assumes the voice of the descendants of victims and survivors, thus failing to recognize that their loss is not hers (see LaCapra 2001: 79). At these points she conflates structural trauma – the loss of an identity and ‘*Heimat*, to which I now lack an immediate relation’ and the process of separating and becoming more autonomous from her family – with working-through the historical trauma of the Holocaust.

8.3 Conclusion

While Carolin's case shows us, in a very extreme way, how in shame we 'become strangers in a world where we thought we were at home' (Lynd 1958: 46), the more general point here is that the shame of the interviewees in this chapter points to attempts to integrate the *unheimlich* (Freud 1919; Santner 1990: 33) into a reconstituted German cultural or national identity. Their shame has unsettled and made *unheimlich* an unfractured, homely sense of familial, cultural and/or national belonging – Santner (1990) terms this a narcissistically specularized identity – and they acknowledge, very much unlike Julia, Rainer and Yvonne that there is no return to a pure, untainted national identity that expunges the Holocaust and the memory thereof. They also recognize that there is no complete freedom from the past. Although the way in which the interviewees examined in this chapter engage with the Nazi past does at times conflate structural and historical trauma, they do find themselves in various different phases or stages of a process of working-through, which seems to me to be more fruitful precisely because it also involves the shattering of narcissistic identifications with a *Heimat*, that exclude not only the Holocaust but otherness more generally.

Although some interviewees mentioned in this chapter tend to contain their family histories in stories of suffering and heroism, I would nevertheless argue that experiences of shame *can* become the starting point for processes of working-through and (re)interpretation. In Melanie's case for example, the interview itself becomes a moment of recognition and acknowledgement of shame and a point when she realizes her own implication in the dissociation of her family's Nazi past. And although Carolin's naïve family anecdotes offered at the beginning of the interview sit strangely uneasily with her hyper-identification with Jewish suffering, her subsequent email correspondence shows how she is becoming increasingly aware of her conflation between what I have in this thesis called structural and historical trauma.

The last point I want to make here is related to reconciliation. The kind of reconciliation that I have in mind must be distinguished from the kind of reconciliation with oneself and the nation that Ahmed (2004; see also Berlant 2007) draws attention to, when she criticizes a certain cultural politics of emotion that has increasingly come to shape the politics of memory in unified Germany. If the aim of remembrance, of witnessing past atrocity and injustice, is to reconcile the nation with itself – which it increasingly seems to be – then I think what Olick (1998: 553) has called the ‘well-oiled machine’ that is the German ‘commemorative apparatus’ has clearly failed its initially critical, educational, progressive and enlightening mission, that Adorno had envisioned for it, as part of an education after Auschwitz. The work of both Santner (1990) and LaCapra (1994, 1998, 2001; see also Lyotard 1990) makes very clear that after the Holocaust there can be no return to a pure, untainted specular national identity; there can be no reconciling oneself with oneself. As pointed out above, reconciliation must take place at the ‘intersection of ignorance and knowingness’ (Probyn 2000: 53) and thus, although engaging in building connections and establishing commonalities, must at the same time remain acutely aware of disconnections and differences. As the interviews with Caspar, Silke, Melanie and Ilka show, shame seems much better equipped to remind us of such dis-connections and differences; to keep us from eliding them by drawing on an increasingly Europeanized, even globalized, but definitely decontextualized memory of the Holocaust, that levels distinctions between victims and perpetrators and between very different kinds of sufferings. Critical of the possible consequences of ‘the reinvention of the Holocaust as a European human rights catastrophe’, Wulf Kansteiner (2006: 332-333) very aptly states that ‘[g]iven the opportunity, most collectives in Germany, from the politicians in Berlin to the grandchildren of the ordinary bystander of the Third Reich, use the globalization of the German past to shield themselves from moral self-doubt.’

Rebelling against the Rebellious? Attempting to draw some preliminary conclusions about the ‘third generation’

This study started as an attempt to get an idea about how the Nazi past is transmitted across generations in families of Nazi perpetrators, followers and *Wehrmacht* soldiers. Initially, I attempted to do so by exclusively focusing on the family and its modes of transmission, only to realize that this focus was much too limiting and that family memory never exists in separation from some form of ‘public’ memory. Yet, I had to further expand my perspective, needing to include as I did, an acknowledgment of the Holocaust as an increasingly global icon, to be able to make sense of various interview extracts, in which fragments of Holocaust narratives are reinserted into the local and familial. This recontextualizing or indeed renationalizing of the global has as its consequence the growing dissolution of distinctions between victims and perpetrators.

This dissolution relates to one of the main findings of this and other studies (see Schneider, Co. 2004), namely that the grandchildren, very much unlike their parents, actively refrain from passing judgment on their grandparents’ deeds and dispense with their parents’ too categorical and Manichean vision of the Nazi past. Yet, while this opens up new and fruitful ways of exploring Nazi family pasts via a focus on the concrete and everyday experiences of the grandparents, this perspective, if it is not accompanied by an awareness of the extreme within the everyday, also harbours, as I argued in chapter 4, new forms of dissociation. In this case, family narratives of Nazism often turn into accounts of a pastoral idyll ravaged by war but devoid of Jews and thus also devoid of the grandparents’ participation in their discrimination, persecution and deportation.

On the one hand the grandchildren’s reluctance to jump to judgment and condemnation represents, as Judith Butler (2005: 45-46) notes a possibility to be ‘ethically educated’, on the other hand, it can lead to full identification and idiopathic

or ‘pure empathy’ (sympathy), which, as Novák (2010: 497-498) points out in his article ‘*Understanding and Judging History*’, results in a relativism or rather a historicism, that posits all historical perspectives as equally valid. As we have seen in chapter 4, many grandchildren have come to recognize that the ‘condemnation, denunciation, and excoriation’ (Butler 2005: 46) their parents practised in relation to their own parents, has another side to it, insofar as it relieves the members of the ‘second generation’ from having to understand themselves as in some ways related to those who committed Nazi crimes or passively stood by. As Butler (ibid.) argues:

‘Condemnation, denunciation, and excoriation work as quick ways to posit an ontological difference between judge and judged, even to purge oneself of another. Condemnation becomes the way in which we establish the other as nonrecognizable or jettison some aspect of ourselves that we lodge in the other, whom we condemn. In this sense, condemnation can work against self-knowledge, in as much as it moralizes a self by disavowing commonality with the judged.’

The vehement and at times violent dissociation of the children from their Nazi parents that was/is contained in their condemnations also works to keep Nazi family pasts under wraps – constitutes a melancholic response – because it forecloses any further engagement with this past, as chapter 4 showed. In chapters 4 and 5, however, I also tried to elucidate how an approach to the grandparents’ NS past that is based on understanding must not ‘rest solely on empathy’ because if it does, understanding ‘tends to lead toward an indulgent or even forgiving stance toward’ the (historical) actors, whose (in)actions one tries to understand (Novák 2010: 494-95). This also constitutes a melancholic response, because the relativism, Novák (ibid.: 497-98) argues, that such an understanding entails, keeps what is to be worked through unformulated and thus unconscious. This became especially evident in the interview with Anna, whose *idiopathic* identification or full empathy with her perpetrator and *Mitläufer* grandparents, whom she describes as ‘equally victims’, renders an engagement with and confrontation of aspects of their past, that point to their role as collaborators and perpetrators, in her eyes, redundant. This eagerness to understand the past via full empathy contains the Nazi past in narratives that overemphasize continuity.

At this point it becomes clear that family narratives of the NS past that marginalize and expunge unsettling traces of the extreme by focusing more or less exclusively on the mundane everyday or on traumatic wartime suffering, especially if the latter is told in the terms of ‘uncannily familiar’ Holocaust survivor narratives, are often invoked as a form of contestation of what LaCapra, following Habermas, calls the obligation to publicly mourn the victims of the Holocaust. One thing this study showed and which I repeatedly detected in my numerous conversations with German friends and acquaintances is a tremendous weariness [*Überdruß*] in the generation of the grandchildren of public forms of Holocaust memory, because they feel the latter prescribes how and what can be said about the Nazi past. Many argue that the official and cultural memory of the Holocaust, to a large extent shaped and institutionalized by the generation of 1968, has far outlived its necessity: the grandchildren reject the idea of the Holocaust as a singular historical catastrophe and no longer want to be guided in their interpretations of it, but want to approach the Nazi past on their own terms. Thus they contest their parents’ claim to a monopoly on the interpretation of the Holocaust (Schneider, Ch. 2004). And, unlike their parents, who at times overeagerly took on their own parents’ guilt, the majority of the grandchildren, interviewed for this study, refuse any personal feelings of guilt and do not view themselves to be affected by the past.

The increased dialogue between grandchildren and grandparents about the latter’s experiences of the Third Reich thus takes on a very important role: it provides both the old and the young with the opportunity to circumvent the moral demands of an official and institutionalized memory of NS and the Holocaust in the name of ‘authentic experience.’ In thus abnegating a distanced relation to the past in favour of a more immediate and empathetic one, the grandchildren might be seen to be closer to the NS past than their parents ever were. Attentive listeners to their grandparents’ stories, the members of the ‘third generation’ are however much less plagued by doubts about these stories and thus often take on their elders’ viewpoints, including their justifications, evasions and exculpations, as well as their stereotypes.

Taking this into account, it is perhaps less surprising that the historical imagination of many grandchildren is in some respects reminiscent of the view of history prevalent in 1950s West-Germany, in which Nazis and Germans feature as too entirely different groups. At this point, the outlines of yet another – much less overtly political and violent – generational conflict become detectable, in which the grandchildren in solidarity with their grandparents and the war and perpetrator generation more generally, rebel against the 1968 generation's politicization of the private, by privatizing the political and historical. Here the personal and social use of the idea and diagnostic of trauma plays an interesting and double-edged role: in having 'become . . . [the] *entreebillet* with which every individual, regardless of his or her specific historical position, gains access to the great drama called history' (Weigel 2002: 270), it opens up, indeed democratizes history, while at the same time vitally contributing to the increasing universalization of victimhood and thus to the disappearance of the perpetrators and collaborators, not only from family, but also from cultural memory. Thus, the interviewees' use of the concept of trauma reveals itself to be deeply political.

In this thesis I argued that the idea of working-through structural trauma is very important if we are serious about the continued significance of commemorating and remembering the Holocaust. While the members of the children's generation viewed national identity as deeply problematic, even pathological (Schneider, Co. 2004: 290) and preferred to view themselves as postnational, there is a great desire for national belonging, even pride in the generation of the grandchildren. The flight into postnational, especially European forms of identification, as I tried to show in chapter 7, avoids a vital aspect of any process of working-through, namely the shattering of a primary narcissism or structural trauma. Thus, such postnational identifications can sit alongside or be usurped by national identifications, which, because they remain unrevised, can end up producing versions of German history that in different ways marginalize the Holocaust or are eager to do away with institutionalized and ritualized forms of Holocaust memory, in an attempt to keep one's self-image as German 'clean'. In a similar way, in which the historicization that many members of the grandchildren advocate, represents both a chance to begin

dealing with Nazi family histories as well as the danger of further dissociation, the return of national identifications harbours the opportunity to have them fractured in experiences of shame, especially abroad, as well as the danger of a return of a defiant national pride, that seeks to re-establish the nation as an untainted, innocent and pure origin.

Appendix A

Poster calling for interviewees

I'm looking for members of the generation of the grandchildren (ca. 20-37 years of age) of the German war (and perpetrator) generation, who would be willing to be interviewed about the National Socialist past.

I'm doing my PhD in sociology at Goldsmiths College, University of London. My thesis is about German family memory of National Socialism and the Second World War, especially that of the grandchildren. From [date] to [date], I will be in [town] on a research trip and would be very grateful, if, in case you are interested, you would contact me via the following email address and/or telephone number: so001ah@gold.ac.uk or 0172/6044257.

Appendix B

Questionnaire

Interview Nr.:

Date:

Place:

Interviewee

First name (optional):

Last name (optional):

Pseudonym:

Sex:

Date of Birth:

Place of Birth:

Place of residence:

Education:

If applicable, field of study:

Occupation:

Military or alternative civilian service (please underline appropriate):

Number of siblings (including sex and year of birth):

I have / have not visited the *Wehrmacht* exhibition (please underline appropriate)

Parents

Mother:

Year of Birth:

Education:

If applicable, field of study:

Number of siblings:

Father:

Year of Birth:

Education:

If applicable, field of study:

Number of siblings:

Grandparents

Paternal grandparents

Paternal grandfather:

Year of birth:

Year of death, if applicable:

Education:

Occupation:

Year of marriage:

Place of residence:

Member of Wehrmacht and if applicable, respective division:

Stationed at the following locations during the war:

Member of a NS-organization (HJ, SA, SS, *Waffen*-SS, etc.):

Paternal grandmother:

Year of birth:

Year of death, if applicable:

Education:

Occupation:

Year of marriage:

Place of residence:

Member of NS-organization:

Maternal grandparents

Maternal grandfather:

Year of birth:

Year of death, if applicable:

Education:

Occupation:

Place of residence:

Member of *Wehrmacht* and if applicable, respective division:

Stationed at the following locations during the war:

Member of a NS-organization (HJ, SA, SS, *Waffen*-SS, etc.):

Paternal grandmother:

Year of birth:

Year of death, if applicable:

Education:

Occupation:

Year of marriage:

Place of residence:

Member of NS-organization:

Appendix C

Initial Self-Disclosure

Before we begin, I want to briefly tell you what my project is about. I'm writing my thesis about German family memory of National Socialism and the Second World War and here I'm particularly interested in how the grandchildren remember their grandparents' past. I'm more than happy to tell you a little bit about my own grandparents, so the interview will not be as one-sided and you know how I became interested in the topic. I have done some research and found out that both of my grandfathers were *Wehrmacht* soldiers, one on the Eastern Front, the other in Poland and Greece. This means that both were stationed at places where I must assume that they at the very least knew of the crimes that were committed there, if not directly witnessed and/or indeed perpetrated crimes themselves. One of my grandfathers was also an early NSDAP and SA member. In my family this is hardly ever spoken about.

Appendix D

Standard in-depth interview: Initial catalogue of questions

I) Interviewee

- 1) How did you come to the decision to volunteer to be interviewed for this study?
- 2) Could I ask you to tell me about your life, anything that you might think might be relevant?
- 3) Could you tell about your political life? (Are you politically active?)

II) Transmission of NS past within the family

- 1) Do you remember situations when the Second World War, National Socialism and/or the Holocaust were talked about in your family?
- 2) Grandparents
 - What did your paternal/maternal grandfather/grandmother tell you about the Nazi time?
 - Did s/he engage you in conversations or did you have to ask her/him about the Nazi time?
 - What was his/her reaction to your questions? Could you speak to him/her about the Nazi past?
 - In their stories, did your grandparents mention Jewish citizens, their persecution and deportation?
 - How did you feel during conversations with your grandparents about the Nazi past?
 - Do you know what role your grandfathers had during the war?
 - Are there things you know about your grandparents' past that you didn't learn through their stories or family stories more generally but got from other sources? (Which were they?)
 - Have you ever thought about researching about your grandfathers' time as a *Wehrmacht* soldier/ member of NS-organization?
 - How do you live with not knowing (much) about your grandparents' Nazi and war past?
 - Are there any photographs of your grandfathers in *Wehrmacht* or any other uniform at your or their home? (Where is this image placed/kept? What exactly does it show?)
- 3) Family more generally
 - With whom do speak most frequently and intensively about the Nazi past in your family? Why this person?
 - Do you articulate your doubts and questions in your conversations about the family Nazi past in your conversations with your parents and/or grandparents?
 - How do you interpret the silence in your family about the Nazi past?

III) Family Dynamics

- 1) How did you experience your childhood and youth in your family?
- 2) How did you experience your relationship to your grandparents during your childhood and youth? How, if at all, did this change, with growing up? How is your relationship to your grandparents presently?
- 3) How was and is your relationship with your parents?
- 4) How did you experience the relationship between your father/mother and his/her own parents?
- 5) Can you tell me about how your father/mother dealt with their own parents' past?

IV) The interviewee's dealing with the NS past and the Holocaust

- 1) Can you remember the situation when you learned about the Holocaust for the first time?
- 2) How did you experience your school education about National Socialism and the Holocaust?
- 3) How did you start dealing with questions relating to National Socialism and the Holocaust?
- 4) How do learn about National Socialism and the Holocaust primarily (films, books, television documentaries, visits to museums and/or former concentration camp sites)?
- 5) Have you seen the *Wehrmacht* exhibition? (How did you respond? Did you speak with your grandparents about the exhibition?)
- 6) What do you think about how the Holocaust is currently being remembered in Germany? (added after the 5th interview)
- 7) How do you feel as German abroad? (added after the 5th interview)

V) Final Questions

- 1) How was the interview for you?
- 2) Have you and/or will tell anyone in your family about the interview? Who?

Appendix E

Biographical Narrative Interview

Used from the interview with Dagmar (interview Nr. 22, 28/08/2006) onwards.

1) Initial narrative question

‘Please can you tell me your family history and your personal history. I’m interested in your whole life and in whatever you can think of. I won’t ask any questions to begin with and will only make some notes about the things I might want to ask you about later.’

2) Internal narrative questions

These questions varied with each interview.

3) External narrative questions

I) Transmission of NS past within the family

I added the following questions to the existing catalogue of questions (see Appendix D) Initial Catalogue of Questions):

- 1) Can and/or could you speak with your grandparents about the Holocaust?
- 2) What do your parents tell about their own parents’ NS past?

II) Political Self-conception

- 1) How did you experience the World Cup 2006 in Germany?
- 2) Can you tell me a bit about your political self-conception: Where would you position yourself on the political spectrum (left-right)?
- 3) How do you feel as German abroad?
- 4) How do you feel as German generally? Does national identity have any relevance for you? And if so, how?

III) Public Memory

- 1) What do you think about how the Holocaust and National Socialism are currently being remembered in Germany?
- 2) What do you think about the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin?
- 3) How did you experience your school education about the Holocaust and National Socialism? (What exactly were you being taught and how?)
- 4) Did your parents and/or teachers attempt to influence your dealing with the National Socialist past and the Holocaust? If so, how?

- 5) Do you think that there arises a particular responsibility for young Germans in respect to the National Socialist past and its memory? If so, what would this responsibility imply?
- 6) Wehrmacht exhibition:
 - How did you respond?
 - Did the exhibition raise any questions for you? What were they?
 - Did you speak with your grandparents about the exhibition?
 - Did you connect what you saw in the exhibition to your grandfathers' experiences of the war?

IV) The interviewee's dealing with the NS past and the Holocaust

- 1) Can you remember the situation when you learned about the Holocaust for the first time?
- 2) How did it begin that you started dealing with questions relating to National Socialism and the Holocaust?
- 3) How do learn about National Socialism and the Holocaust primarily (films, books, television documentaries, visits to museums and/or former concentration camp sites)?
- 4) What does it mean to you not to know much/anything about your grandparents' past during the Nazi time? Are there things, which you would prefer not to know? What would they be?
- 5) Does the question of guilt still play a role in your dealing with the National Socialist past generally? (If not, does the feeling of shame in any way influence your dealing with the past?)
- 6) And does the question of grandparents' guilt still play a role?
- 7) In how far, do you think your grandparents' past has an influence on your life?

Appendix F

Research Consent Form

Title of study: Family Memory of National Socialism in the generation of the grandchildren of the war generation

My name is Alice Hohenlohe and I am currently doing my PhD in sociology at Goldsmiths College, University of London. My research seeks to find out how the grandchildren of those who lived through WWII and the 'Third Reich' remember National Socialism and the Second World War. I am particularly interested in how the NS past is spoken about and dealt with in families and here I am particularly keen to examine to what extent and how the way the grandchildren relate to the National Socialist past differs to how their parents remember it. I am also interested in how members of the grandchildren's generation learnt about National Socialism and the Holocaust at school and elsewhere.

I will be recording the interview and might be taking notes. The interview material (recording, transcription) will be accessible only to myself and no one else. Personal data, such as names, names of places, dates, etc. that could reveal the identity of the interviewee will be omitted or anonymized should sections of the transcription be used in the PhD thesis (which will be publicly accessible) or any other publications arising from this research project. I will provide audio-recordings (on CD) and/or transcriptions of the interview upon request.

Alice Hohenlohe
Warmington Tower, Room 805
Goldsmiths College
University of London
London SE14 6NW
Tel.: 07780531381
so001ah@gold.ac.uk

I have read and understood this consent form and hereby agree to be interviewed as part of the above described study. I understand that the interview will be recorded and that anonymized sections of the interview might be used for publication. I am aware that I am free to withdraw from the interview at any time.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Print: _____

Appendix G

Transcription Signs:

...: two seconds pause

...: three seconds pause

((pause)): longer pause

/: speaker interrupting him- or herself or being interrupted

(.): not understandable

(?): difficult to understand

(()): non-verbal or acoustic accompaniment

Yes: emphasis

Appendix H

The externalization of NS and the Holocaust: Anti-fascism in the GDR

While in the FRG the process of dealing with the Nazi past was carried out in an evolving democratic and pluralistic public culture, the ‘East German universalization of the past has to be seen within the context of a totalitarian system’ (Kattago 2001: 79) of a one party state which lacked such a forum. Thus, its history of memory is largely devoid of the public disputes and the transformations that shaped the FRG’s memory. Although de-nazification was more rigorous in the Soviet-occupied zone than in those occupied by the Western Allies, as soon as it was declared completed, ‘National Socialism no longer belonged to the history of the GDR, but only to the history of the capitalist Federal Republic’ (Wolfrum 2002: 142-3).¹²⁹ The state, in the guise of the SED (Socialist Unity Party [*Sozialistische Einheitspartei*]) became the ‘custodian of national memory’, fabricating the master-narrative of antifascism for its own self-legitimation (Kattago: 111). By embedding NS within the historical development of capitalism and thus universalizing it as fascism, official memory did not provide space for the commemoration of the Nazi genocide as an atrocity motivated by anti-Semitic ideology and aimed at annihilating Jews in particular (Herf 1997). Within this anti-fascist framework Nazism appeared not as part of East Germany’s history but as integral to ‘a larger historical process in which late monopoly capitalism necessarily culminated in fascism’ (Kattago 2001: 7). Rainer Lepsius (1993) thus argues that, while West Germany internalized NS as an anti-democratic threat, the GDR externalized it as a capitalist threat.

The myth of antifascism furthermore ‘provided a framework of social integration’ (Kattago: 86) relieving the citizens of East Germany of questions of individual and collective responsibility by portraying the GDR as having emerged out of a heroic communist resistance against Hitler’s fascism. ‘[P]ublic ceremonies, political speeches, history books and the socialization of youth’ (Moeller 2005: 155) focused

¹²⁹ My own translation.

on this heroism of the anti-fascist movement while suppressing the annihilation of the Jews. The antifascist myth increasingly turned into an ‘undifferentiated confessional ideology’ [*entdifferenzierten Bekenntnsideologie*] (Danyel 1995: 42) without much resonance in the communicative memory of the people,¹³⁰ and was thus forced to rely heavily on ‘cultural means of communication’ [*Vermittlungsformen*] to be collectively remembered (Wolfrum: 143). Hence, the dissonance between cultural memory and communicative memory was much more pronounced in the GDR than it ever was in the FRG, as studies like Sabine Moller’s (2003) show. However, she also finds that people still spoke about their suffering at the hands of the Red Army. Yet, such talk was banished to the private space, since the articulation of such memories always implied a challenge to the myth of anti-fascism, which portrayed the Soviet army as liberator and friend.

¹³⁰ Moller (2003: 50) calls this ‘“petrified remembrance “‘.

APPENDIX I

All names, names of places, dates and other personal data that could identify the interviewees have been changed or omitted, to protect their anonymity. Any similarities with real persons, living or dead, are purely coincidental.

Female Interviewees:

- 1) *Silke Turner* (non self-selected)
 Born: 1981, grew up in Wiesbaden, former FRG.
 After her A-levels (Gymnasium), she studied Psychology and Anthropology.
 At the time of the interview, she was doing a semester abroad (UK).
 I interviewed her in London in December 2007.
- 2) *Sabine Schwabach* (self-selected)
 Born: 1984, grew up in Magdeburg, former GDR.
 After finishing her A-levels (Gymnasium), she began studying Comparative Literature in Hamburg. She was still studying when I interviewed her.
 She was interviewed in Hamburg in May 2006.
- 3) *Carolin Dietrich* (self-selected)
 Born: 1978, grew up in a town close to Cologne, former FRG.
 After finishing her A-levels (Gymnasium), she moved to Bristol, UK, to study Cultural Studies (*Kulturwissenschaften*). She dropped out of her course and moved to Lyon, France, to work there as a nanny. After a couple of years, she moved to Paris to take up her studies again. Having graduated, she moved back to Bristol, to work as a nanny and then, a year before the interview, she moved back to Germany.
 I interviewed her in Leipzig in April 2009, where she was doing a Masters in *Kulturwissenschaften*.
- 4) *Melanie Kerner* (self-selected)
 Born: 1976, grew up in Essen, former FRG.
 After her A-levels (Gymnasium), she studied Comparative Literature. Shortly before the interview, she had finished her doctorate and began her tenure as a postdoctoral research fellow at the university.
 I interviewed her in Berlin in April 2009.
- 5) *Johanna Müller* (self-selected)
 Born: 1982, grew up in Dresden, former GDR.
 After her A-levels (Gymnasium), she began studying Philosophy and Sociology. At the time of the interview, she was in the process of finishing her studies.
 I interviewed her in Hamburg in May 2006.

- 6) *Dagmar Schneider* (self-selected)
 Born: 1979, grew up in Hamburg, former FRG.
 She did her A-levels (Gymnasium) and studied Economics in Germany and the UK, where she also lived and worked for a big consultancy firm at the time of the interview.
 I interviewed her in London in August 2006.

- 7) *Anna Seybold* (self-selected)
 Born: 1978, grew up in Hamburg, former FRG.
 After finishing her A-levels (Gymnasium) she studied Psychology. She was about to finish her university degree at the time of the interview.
 I interviewed her twice in May 2006 in Hamburg.

- 8) *Ilka Pilcher* (self-selected)
 Born: 1978, grew up in a small town close to Kiel (Schleswig-Holstein), former FRG.
 After her A-levels (Gymnasium), she moved to Israel for one and a half years. Upon her return to Germany, she began studying Sociology and was at the time of the interview about to graduate from university.
 I interviewed her twice in Hamburg in May and November 2006.

- 9) *Julia Hartwig* (self-selected)
 Born: 1984, grew up in a small town in Lower Saxony (Niedersachsen), former FRG.
 After finishing her A-levels (Gymnasium), she moved to the UK and studied Media & Communications. At the time of the interview, she worked as journalist in the UK.
 I interviewed her in London in May 2009.

- 10) *Alberta Michels* (self-selected)
 Born: 1970, grew up in a small town in Schleswig-Holstein, North-West Germany and former FRG.
 After finishing her A-levels (Gymnasium), she studied languages and trained and worked as an accountant in different European countries. She has lived in the UK for seven years at the time of the interview.
 I interviewed her in London in June 2009.

- 11) *Martina von Selbig* (self-selected)
 Born: 1964, grew up in a small town in Rhineland-Palatinate, former FRG.
 After finishing her A-levels (Gymnasium), she receiving training in the catering and hospitality business but worked for many years as a personal assistant. In her early forties, she decided to study History and Anthropology at university. At the time of the interview, she was still studying.
 I interviewed her in Berlin in March 2009.

12) *Karin Ingbert* (self-selected)

Born: 1972, grew up in Bremen, North Germany, former FRG.

Although she finished her A-levels, she did not go to university but trained in the hotel and catering trade. Later on, she went into further education to become a translator. She worked as a translator at the time of the interview.

I interviewed her in Berlin in April 2009.

13) *Yvonne Lechner* (self-selected)

Born: 1980, grew up in a small town in Thuringia, former GDR.

She did her GCSEs and went to work in the accounting departments of several firms in Germany, before moving to the UK, where she continued in that line of work.

I interviewed her in London in May 2009.

14) *Teresa Helwig* (self-selected)

Born: 1980, grew up in Lübeck in the North of Germany, former FRG.

After her A-levels (Gymnasium), she began studying American Studies. At the time of the interview, she was half-way through her course.

I interviewed her twice in May 2006 in Hamburg.

Male Interviewees:

1) *Caspar Reinhart* (self-selected)

Born: 1977, grew up in small town close to Hamburg, former FRG.

After his A-levels (Gymnasium), he studied several different subjects at university (Sociology, Philosophy, History) and temporarily worked as a sales assistant. At the time of the interview, he was in the process of finishing his studies.

I interviewed him twice in April and May 2006 in Hamburg.

2) *Constantin Sievers* (self-selected)

Born: 1977, grew up in a small town in Saarland, former FRG.

He finished his A-levels (Gymnasium), then studied Biology and was working as a research assistant in a medical laboratory at the time of the interview.

I interviewed him in Hamburg in April 2006.

3) *Daniel Meier* (self-selected)

Born: 1981, grew up in Hamburg, former FRG.

After finishing his A-levels (Gymnasium), he began to study History. At the time of the interview, he was in the process of finishing his studies.

I interviewed him in Hamburg in April 2006.

- 4) *Horst Endress* (non self-selected)
 Born: 1975, grew up in a small town in Hesse, former FRG.
 He finished his A-levels (Gymnasium) and was in the process of finishing his PhD in History at the time of the interview.
 I interviewed him in his home town in June 2006.

- 5) *Rainer Binder* (self-selected)
 Born: 1976, grew up in West Berlin, former FRG.
 After his A-levels (Gymnasium), he studied law and at the time of the interview he was training to become a lawyer.
 I interviewed him in Hamburg in April 2006.

- 6) *Armin Bachmann* (self-selected)
 Born: 1970, grew up in a small town in North Rhine-Westphalia, former FRG.
 After his A-levels (Gymnasium), he studied History in order to become a history teacher. At the time of the interview, he was working as an assistant teacher in training in a school in a *Realschule* in Berlin.
 I interviewed him in Berlin in April 2009.

- 7) *Sebastian Merle* (self-selected)
 Born: 1977, grew up in Leipzig, former GDR.
 After finishing his A-levels (Gymnasium) he began to study Sociology. He was in process of finishing his studies at the time of the interview.
 I interviewed him twice – in May and November of 2006 – in Hamburg.

- 8) *Albrecht Richter* (self-selected)
 Born: 1972, grew up in Essen, former FRG.
 After finishing his A-levels (Gymnasium) and his Media & Communications studies at university, he began working as a freelance web designer and film production assistant. At the time of the interview, he worked mainly as a production manager for various television channels.
 I interviewed him in Berlin in April 2009.

- 9) *Alexander Fiebert* (self-selected)
 Born: 1975, grew up in Bremen, former FRG.
 After finishing his A-levels (Gymnasium), he trained as an assistant producer on various film sets. He then moved to France and the UK for several years to study film. At the time of the interview, he had lived in Germany again from two years and was working as a (film) set designer.
 He was interviewed in Berlin in April 2009.

- 10) *Christian Marx* (self-selected)
 Born: 1975, grew up in Stuttgart, former FRG.
 After finishing his A-levels (Gymnasium), he studied History and Literature and was at the time of the interview working as a professional historian at a think tank.

I interviewed him in Berlin in April 2009.

11) *Fabian Hoffmann* (self-selected)

Born: 1978, grew up in Frankfurt, former FRG.

After his A-levels (Gymnasium), he first studied Agriculture, but then changed to Media & Communications. After working in an ad agency for a while, he returned to university to finish his Media & Comms. studies shortly before the interview.

I interviewed him twice in Hamburg in May and November 2006.

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