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## **The Culture of Holocaust Remembrance and the Dialogue between Generations**

Let me start on a personal note. I was grateful to receive Gabriele Kammerer's impressive volume while I was preparing for this lecture. I had met friends who had participated in the ASF Program and who had told me about this formative experience of their youth, but I had never really investigated the roots and the beginning of this movement in the 1950s. When I read about Lothar Kressygs project and about how it evolved in an era of amnesia and frozen emotions, I was surprised to encounter many names of my parents's network of friends as for instance Helmut and Brigitte Gollwitzer. Both of my parents were Protestant theologians who took Christianity seriously and who lived in 'protest' against the NS regime. They were part of the movement of the confessional church which is why my father lost his university position during the Third Reich. The Nazi past was never silenced in my family; it was, rather, a continuous concern. After the war, my parents remained in contact with their Jewish friends who had survived through emigration. I myself was not involved in the ASF Program; instead, I was a member of the AFS, another 'Friedensdienst' youth program dating back to the First World War, which was founded by American ambulance drivers.

### **Social and political frames of memory**

Sixty four years after the liberation of Auschwitz and the end of the War,

we look back not only at the traumatic events themselves, but also at a history of forgetting and remembering which has evolved between ourselves and these events. As we see it today with hindsight, remembering or forgetting were not only individual choices but attitudes and orientations generated within social and political frames. When we look back at the 1950s in Germany, we are confronted with a political and social frame that was dominated by a spirit of relief and renewal which was connected to a determination to let bygones be bygones. This spirit was clearly embodied by the first German Chancellor Adenauer. A resistor of the Nazi regime, he lived in hiding until he was arrested, together with his wife, in the crackdown raids which followed the 20<sup>th</sup> of July 1944. He was interned in Brauweiler near Cologne, one of the first concentration camps and later in a secret police (Gestapo) prison.<sup>1</sup> Having suffered himself, Adenauer did not have much empathy for victims and he felt entitled to a policy of forgetting and forgiving. On the occasion of a visit to Israel in 1966, he said at a dinner party in the home of the Israeli president Levi Eshkol in Tel Aviv: “The Nazi regime has killed as many Germans as it has killed Jews. We should now let this time sink into oblivion.”<sup>2</sup> Not only are we shocked by these words today, but Adenauer’s host was also deeply offended by this statement. Previously, he had addressed Adenauer with another message: “The Israeli people await new signs and proof that the German people is currently acknowledging its terrible burden of the past. ‘Wiedergutmachung’ is but a symbolic restitution of the rapacious theft. There is no expiation for the atrocities and no consolation for our grief.” On this evening, Adenauer’s policy of closure (Schlussstrich) clashed

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<sup>1</sup> Hermann Daners, Josef Wißkriehen, Was in Brauweiler geschah. Die NS-Zeit und ihre Folgen in der Rheinischen Provinzial-Arbeitsanstalt, Pulheim 2006, 93-95.

<sup>2</sup> This and the following sentences are quoted from FAZ, March 12, 2009, Nr. 60, Page L 21: Rainer Blasius: “Der gute Wille muss auch anerkannt werden,” a review of the book Adenauer: Die letzten Lebensjahre 1963-1967. (My translations)

violently with the views of his Israeli host. Although the statement which was released afterwards was slightly more moderate, it still confirmed this policy of closure. It emphasised that the Germans “were determined to leave behind this time of atrocities which cannot be revoked or annulled. We should relegate it now to the past. I know how difficult it is for the Jewish people to accept this. But if good will is not acknowledged, nothing good can evolve from it.”

It is interesting to place the forefathers of ASF in this mental scenario of the 1950s and the 1960s. Lothar Kressyng and his group were obviously much more sensitive to the magnitude of the crimes committed against the European Jews and to the unprecedented amount of guilt that the Germans had accumulated in their recent history. He was indeed thinking about “new signs and proof” to show that the German people was “acknowledging its terrible burden of the past”. Within his Christian mindset, however, he could not accept that there was “no expiation for the atrocities and no consolation for (Jewish) grief”. Aktion Sühnezeichen was founded within this Christian frame according to which guilt is associated not only with legal persecution and justice but also with expiation and divine grace. Together with their Protestant tradition, the forefathers had not only inherited a strong obsession with guilt but also the confidence that grace could be enforced through strong commitments and actions.

Thinking of these forefathers today, we are grateful for their passionate ways of acknowledging guilt and of breaking through the policy of closure and the muffling silence of the 1950s. What we can no longer endorse, however, is their notion of reconciliation through divine grace. The shift

from ‘reconciliation’ (Versöhnung) to expiation (‘Sühne’) was the first self-critical step in the process: the perpetrators can only offer expiation; reconciliation is a prerogative of the victims and it can only be endowed by them. As six million victims were murdered, however, they could no longer provide absolution. Thus, a second self-critical step was necessary: with respect to the Holocaust, reconciliation would have to be given up, as this concept clearly underestimates the asymmetrical form of violence and the monumental scope and impact of the crime. It is true that in 1985 Germans were mesmerized when President von Weizsäcker commemorated the End of the War, quoting a Chassidic phrase of Baal Shem Tov: “the secret of salvation is remembering”. Themes such as salvation, purification and decontamination are still powerful motives amongst younger Germans who long for a liberation from their negative legacy.

Today, we no longer share Adenauer’s views but we have absorbed President Eshkol’s position. In his conversation with Adenauer, Eshkol emphasised “the capacity of the Jewish people for a long-term memory that has grown with its long and continuous history of persecution”.<sup>3</sup> In the course of this shift, acts of remembering and commemorating the traumatic history have replaced the Christian emphasis on expiation and reconciliation.<sup>4</sup> The peace projects of ASF are forms of keeping the memory alive and of opening a common future through continuous commitments and collective actions. Memory here performs a double deed:

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<sup>3</sup> The biblical background of the long-term memory of the Jewish people is not its continuous history of suffering and victimhood but, on the contrary, its status of being the people of God with whom they are bound in a special contract. This biblical imperative of Jewish memory was transformed into a new religious command for the post-Holocaust age by **Emil Fackenheim**: remembering those that were exterminated was a way of resisting Hitler while forgetting the dead would kill them once more, **effectively** granting Hitler a posthumous victory.

<sup>4</sup> Reconciliation would blur the line between the former perpetrators and former victims, which is something that is greatly feared by many of the victims. Although this division does no longer strictly apply in the second and third generation, it is not allowed to collapse because, if it did, it would threaten the identity of the post-Holocaust Jew.

it upholds the boundary between victims and perpetrators, while simultaneously connecting them as inheritors of a shared legacy. The children and grandchildren of the perpetrators who embrace this memory perform a belated ethical act: they focus on and take to heart what their parents and grandparents had been eager to overlook and to disremember. Like the 68er generation who belatedly fought Hitler in their own lifetime by protesting against the ‘fascist West German government’, the younger generations who commit themselves to ASF show the kind of empathy and civic commitment that their grandparents failed to show in their own lifetime.

## **Generations**

With these introductory remarks we have already hit on the central term of this presentation which is ‘generations’. Let me start my reflections on Holocaust remembrance and on the dialogue between generations with a few conceptual clarifications of the term ‘generation’. There are various kinds of generations, *social, historical and familial*. When we focus on the family, there is no problem in identifying generations, which are neatly separated from each other through a period of generative inactivity. A generation span comprises a period of 20-30 years which is the time within which children turn into parents. Within the family, three generations usually live in synchronic relationship with each other. These three (up to five) generations have wholly different ranges of experience and memories that constitute, through interaction and communication, a community of experience and memory. This memory, however, has to be maintained through continuous acts of communication both informally and formally

through repetition at festive occasions when the same stories are called up and rehearsed within the group. Family memory is therefore a 'communicative memory' that subsists in acts of oral transmission. Unless it is codified, supported by external media and circulated within a group, its range does not exceed three generations or a time span of a maximum of 80-100 years.

*Historical generations* emerge from historical events that affect all members of a society and leave indelible marks on the biographies of individuals. The 20<sup>th</sup> century has marked historical generations as a consequence of two World Wars. Historical generations are created through a similarity of experience; these cohorts have undergone the same challenges and they have been subject to the same devastating experiences which may leave a permanent imprint on their lives. Historical generations do not follow a regular temporal cycle; they are impacted upon by the irregularity of historical events themselves. While familial and historical generations are easy to identify, *social generations* have much vaguer contours. They are mostly constituted retrospectively through discourses of self-thematization. Social generations are generated in contradistinction from each other. The younger cohorts choose and create for themselves signs and symbols (often from the sphere of pop-culture), which help them to distinguish themselves and to stand out as different from other age groups in society. To summarize: society is a complex network of different generations with different sets of values, experiences, preoccupations and concerns. These differences coexist in time, creating a synchronicity of the sequential. But all of the voices are not heard equally. There is a hierarchy amongst the generations which gives precedence to the adult generation

that occupies important positions, whilst the others are relegated to the margins, where they challenge and critique hegemonic and mainstream views.

The tensions and shifts between generations also have an important effect on the culture of remembrance. In Germany, the generation of 68ers has, to a large extent, shaped the culture of Holocaust remembrance- They achieved this not in their youth but only after the generation that was actively involved in the second world war ceded their dominant positions in the institutions. My focus in this paper, however, will not be on historic or social but on familial generations. Taking the period from the 1980s to today, I will look at some changes that occurred in the dialogue between the generations as we move from the second to the third post-Holocaust generation.

Today, Holocaust memory exists in two rather different forms that may or may not be connected: as national or transnational public remembrance and as private family memory. Public holocaust memory is largely organised by institutions and state events. It has a long-term, trans-generational and increasingly transnational quality. It is based on symbols which are circulated in the mass media, in institutions of education, in museums, monuments and public forms of commemoration. Its opposite pole is family memory which is a short-term, inter-generational memory with a clearly confined temporal range because it is based on experiences which are recorded in the body. While public memory of the Holocaust tends to encompass an ever greater community of nations and to harden into a canon of ubiquitously evoked and displayed icons, it is the mark of family

memory that it is contained within a narrow circle of members of different generations that actively shape it in the process of transmission or non-transmission. In my presentation I want to focus on survivor family memory and to comment on some of the changes in the transfer from the second to the third generation.

### **The second generation**

The second generation is defined by their direct contact with their parents, who were exposed to the cataclysmic events of the Holocaust and who survived the trauma under different circumstances. After their return to what they hoped would be ‘a normal life’, these parents had two options: remembering or forgetting. This, at least, is how the Israeli philosopher Avishai Margalit describes it in his book *The Ethics of Memory* which is dedicated to his parents, whom he introduces on the second page of his preface. “From early childhood,” he writes, “I witnessed an ongoing discussion between my parents about memory.” Margalit reconstructs this parental dialogue, which started after the Second World War when it became obvious that both of their huge families in Europe had been destroyed.

This is what the mother used to say:

“The Jews were irretrievably destroyed. What is left is just a pitiful remnant of the great Jewish people (by which she meant European Jewry). The only honourable role for the Jews that remains is to form communities of memory – to serve as ‘soul candles’ like the candles that are ritually kindled in memory of the dead.”

This is what the father used to say:

“We, the remaining Jews, are people, not candles. It is a horrible prospect for anyone to live just for the sake of retaining the memory of the dead. That is what the Armenians opted to do. And they made a terrible mistake. We should avoid it at all costs. Better to create a community that thinks predominantly about the future and reacts to the present, not a community that is governed from mass graves.”<sup>5</sup>

Today, we know that this was not an ‘either or situation’. After 1945, it was the father’s position that first prevailed – and not only in Israel. What mattered at this point in Israel was the collective project of founding a new state, of forging a new beginning for survivors and of opening up the future for successive generations. Four decades later, during the 1980s, the mother’s position started to take over. The survivors turned to the past that they had held at a distance for so long. After the foundation of the state had been politically accomplished and confirmed by two wars, Yad Vashem became the symbolic cultural centre of the nation and Israeli society transformed itself more and more into a ritualistic community of memory.

Amongst the survivors, there were some who became professional witnesses such as Elie Wiesel or Primo Levi who took it upon themselves to tell the stories that not many people were ready to hear in the ’50s, ’60s and ’70s. A much larger percentage of survivors assumed the status and social role of the witness only in later life in the 1990s after having raised

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<sup>5</sup> Avishai Margalit, *The Ethics of Memory*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2003, vii-ix.

their children and having completed their professional life. The growing anxiety that younger generations would be preoccupied with other issues and that knowledge about the Holocaust would gradually disappear motivated this urge to become a 'belated witness' (a witness in later life). From the 1990s onwards, words like 'survivor' and 'witness' were established as social roles and cultural concepts within a larger frame of a culture of Holocaust remembrance where individual stories gained a chance of being heard with empathy and interest by a receptive audience.

For the second generation, however, the question whether to speak or to remain silent presented itself in an altogether different way. The survivors who decided not to speak in order not to burden their children with the traumatic weight of their experiences could not, in spite of their intentions and efforts, shield their children from the traumatic impact that hit them. Paul Watzlawick has coined a phrase that became a famous axiom of systemic psychotherapy: 'you cannot not communicate'. The parents, who enshrouded their experiences of the Holocaust in silence, communicated these experiences to their children in oblique ways via body language, attitudes, behavior, values and decisions. This communication took place on an inexplicit and non-conscious level, which confronted the children with many ambiguous, puzzling and bewildering messages. As grown ups, the children of the survivors compared their psychological scars and discovered that they had much in common all over the world. They identified themselves on an international level as 'second generation', abbreviated as '2G', in manifestoes, discourses and also in a wealth of autobiographical and fictional writings. Their defining feature is a notorious difficulty to clearly separate their identity from that of their

fathers and mothers. This is due to having been the addressees of a largely involuntary and unconscious process of transmission of family stories and secrets. To put it in psychoanalytic terms: they became the containers of the unacknowledged trauma, which their parents have unwillingly and unwittingly passed on to them.<sup>6</sup> Many representatives of this generation became artists who placed the undefined relationship to their parents and their mediated Holocaust trauma in the centre of their creative work. Their approach to memory is defined by a dilemma. Their task is twofold; they aim at

- revisiting the 'Leerstelle' (void/gap) and to work through the silent messages and family secrets connected with the trauma of their parents, and at

- defining their specific place in the family genealogy and the succession of generations.

The memory work of the second generation is informed by two kinds of sources. Firstly, it is guided by their own immediate embodied experience of living in the closest proximity to the survivors: secondly, they employ objects and media such as family photos, letters, but also books and archives as well as auratic objects and traces in their memory work. These memorabilia, documents and objects are used as bridges across time. The central task of their memory writing is to re-assess their lives in the shadow of the death camps and to redefine their own identities as 'second hand Holocaust victims'.

### **The Third Generation**

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<sup>6</sup> Nicolas Abraham's analysis of the 'Hamlet-complex'.

The coming out and modelling of the Second Generation occurred between the 1980s and 1990s. Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, a third (family) generation has entered the stage, which is busy redefining its relationship to the Holocaust and thereby defining its position in relation to this genealogical chain. This third generation is further removed from the survivors who are their grandfathers and grandmothers. They also did not grow up in the immediate and continuous proximity of these relatives and their relationship is not burdened with parental responsibilities and obsessions. This relationship is no longer defined by the burden of silence but by the urge to speak, to tell, to write, and to communicate. The transfer of family memories, which had come to a halt between the first and the second generation has resumed between the first and the third generation. In this constellation between the first and the third generation, it even takes on the quality of a common project of mutual cooperation. A new prominent type in this third generation is the family historian and archivist. S/he takes the remains and the memorabilia of the family into her responsibility, securing their status at the three-generation-threshold of dispersion and forgetting. S/he is the conscious and knowledgeable chronicler of the family history and the preserver of the family memory. But s/he is not only a passive collector and preserver of documents and objects; s/he is also an active researcher who works through the voids and blanks of family memory. The most effective form of ascertaining lost and scattered memories is a journey to the historic sites of the family history and trip to interview members of the extended family and friends of the grandparents' generation. I will refer to three examples of the new shapers of family memory who are now in their twenties and thirties.

## **Daniel Mendelsohn**

The first example of a family memory of the Holocaust written from the perspective of a member of the third generation which I would like to discuss today is Daniel Mendelsohn's *The Lost*. Published in 2006, *The Lost* immediately won various prizes and it was translated into many languages. Acting as a chronicler for the family, Mendelsohn has not only absorbed the family stories, anecdotes, memoirs and inherited the family archive but he has also become an active researcher and a detective of sorts, in search of search the memory of lost family members. The subtitle of the book is significant: „a search for six of six million“. Rather than being content with what happens to be passed on to him, Mendelsohn takes the initiative and attempts to fill some of the blanks of the traumatic family memory. His project is not only to receive what is transmitted to him but to collect the dispersed memories, to rummage through various archives, to look for lost traces and to recover the stories which still circulate about six family members from Eastern Europe that were not able to emigrate and who fell victim to the genocide committed by the Nazis: the grandfather's brother, his wife and their four daughters.

After the grandfather's death, he inherited a photograph of his grand-uncle which confirmed an amazing family likeness between the two. This had often caused his elders to react to, and to comment on, his features. The photo shows a young man in an Austrian-Hungarian uniform (before the time of the First World War). On the back, written in his grandfather's

hand were the words: “Uncle Shmiel, killed by the Nazis”. (71) When looking at the photo, Mendelsohn was strongly affected by the idea “how easy it is for someone to become lost, forever unknown.” (71) As the recipient and custodian of this fragile and already somewhat faded photo, he became acutely aware of the fragility of memory in general. He suddenly had a concrete sense of how easy it is to drop out of the living family memory at the threshold of the third generation and of how it is possible to be lost in oblivion without leaving a trace. He became conscious of the fact that the murdered victims die a second death when they drop out of the living family memory, when, as Sebald put it - “the stories that are linked to innumerable places and objects are no longer heard by anybody, nor recorded or transmitted.”

Thus, the great-nephew becomes the family chronicler and custodian of family memory. His striking family likeness with his murdered granduncle becomes his personal legacy, which he transforms into a personal vocation. He is not only the official ‘remembrancer’ of the memories of the older generations; he is also the collector of items and archivist of family documents and photos. Together with these stories and relicts, he has also inherited a family memory that is pierced with traumatic blanks and silences. The special task of this ‘memory man’ is not to fill these empty spaces, but to foreground them by embroidering their cutting edges with hindsight and collected recollections. He undertakes a journey to Eastern Europe in search of traces of the lost family members. His travelogue-memoir tells the story of this search and of his journey to the small Polish town where his relatives were murdered.

Sixty years after their death, the great nephew begins his journey to bring the lost family members back into family memory. The book opens with a genealogical chart that shows the intertwined network of two families since the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This family which lived in a small stetl in Galicia called Bolechow is the cosmos of the book. The search for the lost family members leads Mendelsohn not only to Eastern Europe but also around the world, because the last surviving witnesses of the village have been scattered throughout many different countries living now in Australia, Canada and other places. His journey began by surfing the site ‘Jewishgen.org’, a Jewish genealogy website and ‘familyfinder page’. On this basis he built up a network of persons from whom he hoped to receive fragments of information for his ever-increasing memory puzzle. (61, 64) His writing imitates the meandering movement of his search from one person, place or generation to another in a finely spun web of associations, reminiscences and afterthoughts. But this search for the last scraps of a ‘communicative memory’ was also a race against time. He realized that had he begun his search only “two years, even a year earlier”, he could have gleaned so many more stories and references from old people who have died in the mean time or grown dement.

Mendelsohn’s entire book is a liminal journey along the shadowline between remembering and forgetting, between the last flashes of memory and the absolute silence that follows it. With his book he has created a scaffold and a supporting frame for the fragile family memory, but he has also simultaneously broken this frame. Through the multiple copies and translations of the book, this family memory is now also accessible for strangers. With its 500 pages and many photos the book presents itself as a time-resistant memoir that transcends the borderlines both from the first

and second to the third generation and from the short-term family memory to the long-term cultural memory. Mendelsohn is not only the family 'remembrancer', he also participates in a wider social and cultural project: the material saving and securing of memory traces relating to the Holocaust. His book is part of this larger collective memory work and takes its place in a growing Holocaust library.

### **Noah Benninga**

At this point, I would like to turn to my second example which is Helen Benninga-Frank's book entitled *My Story*. Edited by Noah R. Benninga, the author's grandson, this book has a very small, private circulation. Noah Benninga who gave me one of the 200 copies of his book did the layout and printing himself. In his preface, he describes how his involvement in the project started when he received emails from his grandmother in which she told her grandchildren the story of her life. In 2006, she decided to collect the bits and pieces of the email correspondence and put it into a more durable form. The 30 year old grandson Noah offered to help her to edit her texts and to put the messages into a more standardised English without destroying the personal touch of the original. The book edited by Noah Benninga differs in every respect from Mendelsohn's book. Noah Benninga's book contains his grandmother's life story; it spans her childhood and youth in Groningen, her flight with nine family members including her husband and their one year old daughter from Holland after the invasion of the Germans in 1940, their journey via London to Indonesia, her experiences in the Dutch colony and the invasion of the Japanese, her life in ghettos and in a Japanese concentration camp, her liberation in 1945 and her return to Holland, the ensuing birth of three boys

after the War, and the immigration of her family to the United States in the 1950s. It is not a story about ascertaining traces of lost family members, but a very personal story told by a survivor which contains a wealth of individual details and memorable scenes. The book also contains a rich supply of photos of all phases of the grandmother's life and of her extended family which were miraculously saved during the war. While Mendelsohn's aim was to restore the lost family members to the family memory, Benninga helped his grandmother to prolong her story across the problematic borderline of three generations by giving it the solid shape of a book and by making it accessible to all family members. While Mendelsohn stages himself as another Proust, Helena Benninga's editor disappears almost completely behind his grandmother's colorful self-portrait and her experiences, observations, reflections.

Benninga's book is a private family memoir, to be circulated within the family which can then be passed on to succeeding generations. It is a 'living monument' to the grandmother who was well-known to her grandchildren, and it preserves not only her stories and her pictures but also a number of her favourite sayings for the family tradition. It is a work of cooperation between the grandmother and the grandson, bridging the generations by saving the family memory. It is, however, also a tribute to the family members who did not survive. Like Daniel Mendelsohn, Noah Benninga is also a researcher and a searcher for the lost, who has reconstructed various family trees which can be viewed online.<sup>7</sup> Mendelsohn ends his book with a page titled 'In Memoriam' which commemorates the persons who helped him in his five years search and who passed away before the book appeared. The last pages of Benninga's

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<sup>7</sup> [www.myheritage.com/site-9775701/benninga-web-site](http://www.myheritage.com/site-9775701/benninga-web-site).

book are dedicated to the Holocaust victims of his extended family. His last editorial remark reads as follows: “when she (Helene Benninga, A.A.) left Holland, on the 14<sup>th</sup> of May, Helen Benninga left behind a family comprising several hundred members. Of these, we know today of 128 who perished at the hands of the Germans. Their names are listed in an appendix to this book.” The book is therefore not only a living monument to the grandmother but at the same time also a Yizkor-book and monument to the many members of the Frank and Benninga families that perished without a trace and a tomb.<sup>8</sup>

## **Dan Wolf**

In many respects, my third case study represents the opposite pole to Daniel Mendelsohn’s story. Dan Wolf is an actor, an author and a hip-hop musician. His father did not pass the story of his Jewish ancestors onto him. Thus, he knew little to nothing of his large family and its pre-war history in Hamburg; he was unaware of the stories of deportation or those of murder in a forest near Riga or those of flights and journeys across Shanghai to the United States and Canada. He was ignorant to all this until one day, an artist from Hamburg called *Jens Huckeriede* knocked at his door in California. Amongst other things, he told the surprised musician that he was continuing a tradition and that he was following in the steps of his grandfathers and grand-uncles. Having bought a house in the Wohlersallee in Hamburg, Huckeriede had plunged into a project of unearthing the forgotten history of its Jewish owners. In the course of this project, he

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<sup>8</sup> **Yizkor (Memorial) Books** are some of the best sources for learning about Jewish communities in Eastern and Central Europe. Groups of former residents, or *landsmanshafin*, have published these books as a tribute to their former homes and the people who were murdered during the Holocaust. The majority of these books were written in Hebrew or Yiddish, languages that many contemporary genealogists cannot read or understand.

discovered the story of the ‘Wolf Brothers’, a trio of musicians, singers and actors who became popular figures in the Hamburg entertainment business before the First World War. There is a local song that is known to this day by everyone in Hamburg even though people are unaware that this song was actually written by one of the Wolf brothers. The Nazis had expelled the artists and appropriated their song as an anonymous German Volkslied. Huckeriede brought Dan Wolf back to Hamburg and he made a documentary film with him about three generations of the Wolf family, thus bringing also this family memory back to the people of Hamburg (and to other interested viewers of the DVD). In the absence of a family remembrancer, Huckeriede became the Daniel Mendelsohn of the Wolf family. This time, however, the search was started in Germany in the land of the perpetrators and it moved westwards instead of eastwards. With his scrupulous archival research, Huckeriede reconstructed the extended family tree and managed to identify and to contact all of the surviving family members. He brought them together in Hamburg, on the premises of their former house. Four generations of the Wolf family were also reassembled in Hamburg, on the occasion of the dedication of the new ‘Gebrüder Wolf Square’, on 6. Juni 2008. Through the mediator Jens Huckeriede, Dan Wolf was brought back into contact with his own family history and today, he visits Bergen Belsen and other memorial sites together with his HipHop Partner Tommy Sheperd, singing and speaking to a younger generation of visitors.

## **Conclusion**

There is a marked difference between a transnational or even globalised

Holocaust memory which is currently being extended around the world via commemoration dates and icons *and* the family memory that preserves personal knowledge through contact and embodied forms of transmission. My presentation focused on the generational transmission of the Holocaust in families of survivors, where we can observe a transformation of memory with the shift from the second to the third generation. Members of the Second Generation were emotionally entangled in the trauma of the parents to the extent that the contours of their identities became blurred. Their forms of memory were marked by the paradoxical experience of being drawn into the orbit of the Holocaust while living, at the same time, in a normal environment; this caused estrangement and alienation. They grew up with the sense of being different and of being alienated from others, of having to live in two worlds. The situation of the third generation is rather different; their relationship to the survivors is marked less by identification and more by empathy. Situated at the very brink of forgetting, some of them take active responsibility for the family memory, searching for missing information and giving it a more durable shape. In so doing, they establish a long-term family memory with a smaller or wider range of participation depending on the private or public format.

I have focused here chiefly on the succession of generations in survivor families; we may, however, also speculate on changes in the generations in the countries of the former perpetrators. I will end my paper with a few remarks concerning this other side of family memory which are based on my research on contemporary German family novels.

1 In Germany, there is a continuous boom of family novels including

three and sometimes more generations that present an individual account of generational experience as a counterpoint and complement to a publicly organised and staged memory of the Holocaust which often remains abstract and aloof.

- 2 This corresponds to a shift from externalisation towards internalisation: the second and third generations have acknowledged and accepted the burden of historical guilt which had remained untouchable for the first generation and thus acquired the problematic status of 'unclaimed baggage'.
- 3 The psychological dilemma of the second and third generation lies in a double bind situation: they are confronted with the impossibility of combining their feelings of loyalty and solidarity with their family with their empathy with the victims.
- 4 The radical cutting of familial bonds that was often chosen as a way out of the dilemma has proven a problematic strategy as it left the members of the second generation stranded in time. A more effective strategy is, in their books, to work through the dark episodes in the lives of their fathers and grandfathers, reclaiming and redefining their own position in the genealogical chain. This retrospective and retroactive knowledge becomes especially urgent when the sons and daughters of the second generation or the grandchildren of the third generation become parents themselves.
- 5 When we look at the third generation as a whole, we can observe two new trends: one is a dramatic lack of historical information about and interest in the Holocaust which, for them, has receded into a distant past. The other trend is the urge to know more about a dimension of this history which has been largely suppressed in a conspiracy of silence.

While they have a strong desire to avoid their own family being contaminated by the mega-crime of the Holocaust<sup>9</sup>, they also want to know more details about the names and deeds of the perpetrators.

ASF is offering these succeeding generations to their important self-explorations at a critical age of identity formation an important framework for a hands-on encounter with the burdened past, but giving them, at the same time, the opportunity to actively share in the enterprise of building a common future.

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<sup>9</sup>- Welzer, Opa war kein Nazi