



THE HOLOCAUST IN HISTORY AND MEMORY

VOL. 6 (2013)

THE ARTS AND THE HOLOCAUST

INCLUDES TWO SUPPLEMENTS

- * THE EARTHQUAKE IN CHILE OR
THE PRISONERS OF STUTTHOF.
A PLAY BY FELIX MEYER-CHRISTIAN
FREELY ADAPTED FROM HEINRICH VON KLEIST.
- * SONGS FOR THE BETRAYED WORLD.
HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS' POETRY SET TO MUSIC
BY THE LIFE AND DEATH ORCHESTRA.
COMPOSED BY BILL SMITH AND BIM SINCLAIR.

EDITED BY RAINER SCHULZ

**THE HOLOCAUST
IN HISTORY AND MEMORY**

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The Holocaust in History and Memory
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MASKS OF HOLOCAUST MEMORY*

DANNY M. COHEN, Northwestern University, Illinois

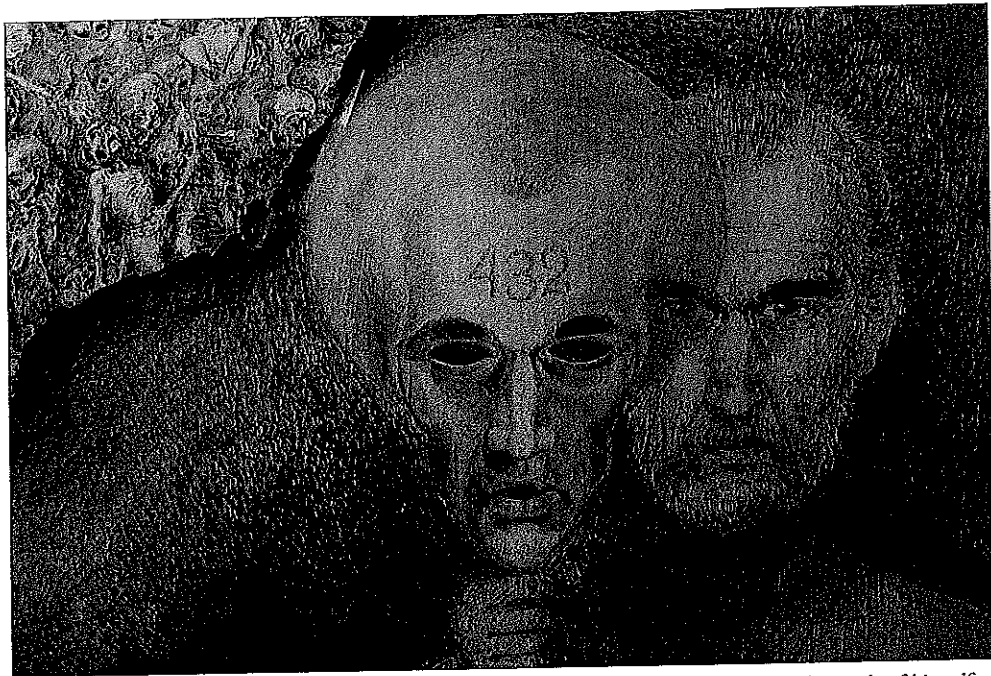
As we struggle to remember and draw the boundaries of Holocaust history, how should we differentiate between the memories of Auschwitz survivors and the memories of those who somehow escaped deportation to the Nazi camps by surviving the war in hiding? How does each of these Holocaust experiences contextualise all others and inform our understanding of the many faces and silent voices of Holocaust memory?

This essay will begin by exploring 'The Labiriths' of Auschwitz survivor Marian Kołodziej in order to make clear the possible extremes of Holocaust memory and trauma. The drawings of Kołodziej provide context for *Soundless Roar*, a volume of autobiographical drawings, poems and stories by Ava Kadishson Schieber, a hidden child who found a way to document the murder of her father, a death she did not witness. Kołodziej and Schieber set the stage for an analysis of *Out of Chaos*, a collection of stories and poems by 'hidden children' through which we are able to appraise the boundaries of Holocaust victimhood, collective Holocaust memory and survivorship.

A Torrent of Memory

Climb down into the basement of St. Maksymilian Kolbe Franciscan Church in the village of Harmęże, Poland, a few miles from the town of Oświęcim (once known as Auschwitz), and you will find yourself immersed within 'The Labiriths' of Marian Kołodziej. More expedition than exhibition, the floors, walls and ceilings of the vast crypt are overcrowded with drawings and etchings – and some collected but mostly constructed objects – created 50 years after the Nazi era by Kołodziej.

*I would like to express my sincere thanks to the staff of the Auschwitz Jewish Center in New York and Oświęcim, Poland, for introducing me to, and for the opportunity to visit, the installation 'The Labiriths' of Marian Kołodziej at St. Maksymilian Kolbe Franciscan Church, Harmęże, Poland. I would like to thank Ava Kadishson Schieber for her incredible insight and wisdom, and Phyllis Lassner for her expert guidance and introduction to *Soundless Roar* and *Out of Chaos*. Thanks go also to Bernard Cherkasov for his feedback on various drafts of this essay.



Placed close to the start of his installation, Marian Kołodziej depicts his older self holding the mask of himself as Auschwitz Prisoner 432.

In the early summer of 1940, teenager Marian Kołodziej, a Polish Catholic political prisoner of the Nazi regime, arrived at Auschwitz on the first transport to the new camp. 'I have been to Auschwitz. I built Auschwitz,' he writes. Yet, 'I had not spoken about Auschwitz for fifty years.'¹ In his late 60s, Kołodziej suffered a stroke. Having worked many years as an accomplished artist and theatre set designer, his rehabilitation led him to draw. Clutching his artist's tools in an attempt to remember the nightmares of his past, pouring out from his weakened hands came the violent and disturbing images – on paper, on wood, mostly black lines, sometimes set behind smashed glass – that tell the story of Kołodziej as Auschwitz prisoner 432.

'The camp was a chaos, a disorder,' Kołodziej writes in the book accompanying his installation.² And his labyrinth reflects this condition through self-portraits of silent screams and depictions of writhing bodies as skeletal, cannibalistic prisoners feed on the limbs of fattened camp *Kapos*, as ominous Nazi guards force hordes of musicians to perform their once-treasured instruments and symphonies in the Auschwitz orchestra while thousands of line-drawn figures march and fall into infested furnaces and cauldrons of rotten soup, as insect-like creatures swarm over and inside open mouths of rotten teeth and into shrunken stomachs, as men hang on barbed wire with their frail arms stretched, crucified, their eyes turned up to an unrepresentative god and as an arm from the heavens rings a Swastika bell, as rows of gaunt Jewish faces – stars sewn onto their chests, stars carved into their foreheads – gaze forward, vacant eyes forced open, asking the viewer muted questions as their shrivelled bodies gasp for a collective final breath.

¹ Kołodziej (2009), p. 15.

² *Ibid.*



A representation of an orchestra at Auschwitz by Marian Kolodziej.



Marian Kolodziej depicts a fattened camp *Kapo*, below the gates of Auschwitz, surrounded by camp prisoners.



Placed closer to the end of the installation, Marian Kołodziej depicts his younger self – Auschwitz Prisoner 432 – holding the hand of his older self.

Throughout this maze of tormented memories, recurring images of Kołodziej himself hide behind a repeated ghostly mask bearing that number: 432. Kołodziej's mask motif is reminiscent of Art Spiegelman's 'Maus' masks.³ But while Spiegelman bears the mask of his father – signalling Jewish self-perceptions of helplessness and the Nazis' belief of the Jew as vermin –, Kołodziej wears the devastated-mask of his former self. Spiegelman draws attention to the trauma projected onto and inherited by the second generation while Kołodziej demands that we stare the genesis of trauma in the falsified, Nazi-constructed, barely-human face.

Kołodziej admits to being 'ashamed' of his 'morbid hallucinations surfacing because of my morbid soul' and speaks of running 'in the camp of my own.'⁴ In the aftermath of the Holocaust, Kołodziej had been unable to speak about his incarceration and of his trauma. And so his outpouring of artworks – though he insists they are not art – serve not only as testimony of his Nazi camp experience, but also as evidence of his suppressed memories stirred decades later by sickness. Stirred, but still hidden; the precise location of the labyrinth – installed beneath an isolated Catholic church near Oświęcim and chosen specifically by Kołodziej as his works' burial place – may reflect Kołodziej's deep embarrassment of his thoughts, of himself, that there was, is and will be nowhere worse than Auschwitz. And no experience worse than surviving it: for it is quite possible to leave the chaotic 'Labyrinths' of Marian Kołodziej believing that, if one even had such a choice, 20 or so minutes of asphyxiation in a Nazi gas chamber would

³ Spiegelman (2011).

⁴ Kołodziej (2009), p. 15.

have been preferable to witnessing and suffering years of unimaginable human violence. Yet, as Kołodziej writes, 'I would not dare to judge what was more terrible – the tragedy of a prisoner dying for five long years, or that of a man dying unaware of the coming death.'⁵

The work of Marian Kołodziej – both his drawings and his accompanying writings – do not only shed light on the trauma and memory of those who experienced Nazi persecution; just as scholars 'Saul Friedlander and Eric Santner seek ways of incorporating victims' traumatic memories into historical consciousness', the violent honesty and surreal, nightmare-like representations permeating Kołodziej's work may also inform and shape common perceptions and framings of the Holocaust as a historical event.⁶ Engaging in an analysis of Holocaust museums, memorials and other modes of commemoration, James E. Young acknowledges how 'public memory of this era is being shaped by the memorials, museums, and days created to remember events.'⁷

Are 'The Labyrinths' of Marian Kołodziej a memorial? A museum? As we walk between and below the wooden panels and canvasses on which Kołodziej attempted to represent his hidden memories, are we participating in a ritual of commemoration? Through Kołodziej's drawings, we cannot help but learn about Holocaust history: we are forced to confront taboos of Nazi genocide (cannibalism amongst prisoners of the Nazi camps, for example); we come to observe the false and forced hierarchies of the Nazi camps, drawing attention to what Primo Levi called 'the gray zone' of Nazi complicity; and we are guided into an overwhelming realisation – a position argued by Elie Wiesel – that the Holocaust experience cannot be 'understood', even by those who lived through it.⁸

Mediated Memories

While Marian Kołodziej depicts fear-provoking scenes of cannibalism and mass suffocation in the Nazis' vastest and most infamous camp, Ava Kadishson Schieber leads her readers through other horrors of the Nazi era that are less explicitly gruesome yet no less harrowing. Like Kołodziej, after the war, Schieber also trained as a theatre set designer, and, through her collection of drawings, poems and stories that she titled *Soundless Roar* – published in 2002, at around the same time as Kołodziej was preparing to share his work with the public –, Schieber recalls four years of her girlhood spent in hiding from the Nazis in and around Belgrade.⁹

As the German army stood on the edges of Yugoslavia, Schieber's father, Leo Hegedish, predicted that he, his wife Beatrice and their daughters Susanna and Ava would stand a better chance of surviving Nazi anti-Semitism if they separated. At the age of 14, Ava was sent to live on a Serbian farm where – because her cultured demeanour was likely to give her away – she pretended, for four years, to be unable to hear and unable to speak. In *Soundless Roar*, Schieber reflects on her memories of those years in isolation, of fear and of her stolen childhood. At

⁵Ibid., p. 19.

⁶Levi and Rothberg (2003), p. 190.

⁷Young (1993), p. viii.

⁸Levi (1989); Wiesel (1995).

⁹Schieber (2002).



Drawing accompanying the story 'Ride Into The City' in *Soundless Roar: Stories, Poems and Drawings* by Ava Kadishson Schieber.

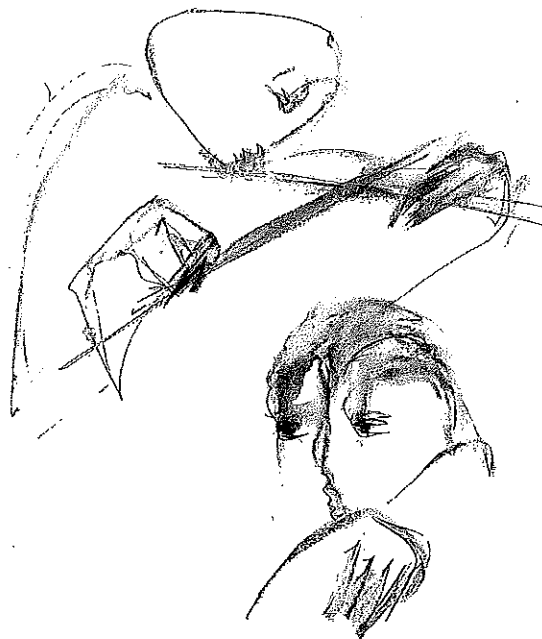
the same time, the collection represents Schieber's attempts to reconstruct her memories and to come to terms with the Nazis' torture and murder of her father and the disappearance of her sister Susanna. Alongside loves lost, Leo and Susanna have become the ever-present 'loving ghosts' – 'and tender warmth they trust upon me' – that rest, at peace, within Schieber's delicate line drawings and tempered words.¹⁰

In reconstructing her memories of her destroyed family, Schieber describes moments of discovery through chance encounters and difficult conversations with fellow survivors, old neighbours and salvaged friends. In her story 'Ride Into The City,' a chance run-in with a New York taxi driver with a familiar face transports her – and us as readers – to war-torn Belgrade. Schieber's narrative, filtered and thrown about by space and time, leaves us with an authentic impression of how memory works. Memory is not linear, nor solid. Memory is fluid, ever changing, iterative, chaotic. Sometimes, even when one is trying to confront and make sense of death, memory can appear to contain life.

The line drawing accompanying 'Ride Into The City' depicts what seems to be a single genderless figure – two legs, two arms, outstretched – but with two faces, each looking inwards at the other.¹¹ After we read the story, we are compelled to return to the drawing, bringing along our informed interpretations and question its possible meanings. In the drawing, is present-day Schieber looking at the Ava of her girlhood? Or does the double-faced figure represent both the taxi driver and the man of Schieber's memory triggered by the meeting decades later? All of the above is the most likely answer; for the intentional ambiguities and dialogues between Schieber's artworks, poetry and stories allow for overdetermined explanations.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 60.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 83.



Drawing accompanying the story 'Tzigane' in *Soundless Roar: Stories, Poems and Drawings* by Ava Kadishson Schieber.

✻

Throughout the volume, Schieber's present collides with her past. In most instances that past is known, recalled through sometimes hazy and sometimes sudden and clear moments of memory. But occasionally, to Schieber, that past is unknown. Through her drawing-poem-story cluster 'Tzigane', Schieber recounts a dialogue with family friend Isabelle who conveys to her the details of her father's death, Leo Hegedish. Isabelle was a cellist, and Schieber re-imagines Isabelle's words: 'I never became even a fair musician. But playing did save my life.'¹² The Auschwitz administration forced Isabelle, alongside Leo Hegedish, to play in the camp orchestra, which included performing waltzes whilst lines of Jewish deportees – knowingly or not – walked toward their deaths.

Mediated by memories of her discourse with Isabelle, Schieber describes the moments leading up to the day her father died. A classically trained violinist, Leo became 'concertmaster' of the orchestra at Auschwitz-Birkenau. Memories that once belonged to Isabelle become entwined between and within Schieber's words: 'I don't know how long we continued to play, for weeks, months, always accompanying those death marchers.'¹³ One day, as the Auschwitz orchestra played music for a group of 'Tziganes', Leo – through Isabelle's memory, then through Schieber's story – offers his commentary: "'They are Gypsies," he said sadly. "They are proud to have been put into the same category as we Jews."¹⁴ At that, Leo began to play Ravel's *Tzigane* and '[w]hen he finished, he put down his violin and walked off. I never saw him again.'¹⁵

¹² Ibid., p. 100.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 100 and 101.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 101.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Reflecting on Isabelle's private testimony, Schieber writes,

I had a vision of emaciated faces, shaven skulls, musical instruments protruding out of colorless rags, bony fingers playing music while endless lines of people were being marched into the gas chambers.¹⁶

Schieber's words could be easily used to describe the series of drawings by Marian Kołodziej in which he depicts the desperate, bald-headed members of the orchestra of Auschwitz, instruments between bony fingers, forced to contribute to the grand Nazi deception. Yet the quiet, smudged drawing accompanying Schieber's short story portrays a composed violinist, embracing the instrument, with eyes closed, connected by one thin line to another figure, eyes open, withdrawn, cowering, eyebrows arched upwards in soundless despair.¹⁷ Is this frightened person the face of Isabelle, bearing witness to Leo's final day? Or is this Ava, realising the reality of her father's Holocaust experience and death? Schieber keeps these questions unanswered and the half-complete figures float in the center of the page in peaceful isolation, without context, without reference to the murdered Jews, Roma and Sinti whose absence fills the blank spaces around the edges of the off-white paper.

As Phyllis Lassner writes in the preface to *Soundless Roar*, 'Ava speaks of her experiences in hiding as having been in the "anteroom of hell but not hell itself," which she locates in the camps.'¹⁸ Schieber was not unaffected by the cruelties of war or by the loss of her family, yet her work indicates that she was shielded from the extremes of Nazi brutality, shielded from the realities that her father faced in Auschwitz, for Schieber's acceptance of her father's death is mediated by and filtered through Isabelle as witness. Schieber is only witness to Isabelle's testimony.

In the poem preceding 'Tzigane', Schieber describes the 'music' as 'now only an echo etched in memory.'¹⁹ It is an echo that originates not within the artist, but from within a woman Schieber once knew, a woman who spoke about those who Schieber once loved. Each thin layer of bestowed memory serves as a barrier, but also as a transmitter; Schieber's art and words speak for – and to – those who cannot. Schieber's words and drawn lines – lyrics to unplayed songs – speak on behalf of Isabelle, they speak for the murdered Jews, Roma and Sinti of Auschwitz-Birkenau and they speak to her father, Leo, who held on to his identity as a musician – Schieber imagines – until his last moments. Sometimes, Schieber's drawings indicate faces within faces, overlapping and interconnected with double outlines, as if her figures – sometimes self-portraits – are putting on, wearing or removing layers of skin; masks of Holocaust memory.

A Mnemonic Community

Schieber is featured again – now listed with her maiden name acknowledged as Ava Hegedis Kadishson Schieber – in the collection of stories and poems *Out of Chaos: Hidden Children Remember the Holocaust*.²⁰ Edited by Elaine Saphier Fox, *Out of Chaos* brings together a group

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 100.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 95.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. xiii.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 96.

²⁰ Fox (2013). While Ava's family name is spelled 'Hegedish' in *Soundless Roar*, it is spelled 'Hegedis' in *Out of Chaos*.

of women and men who survived the Nazi era by escaping, hiding and being hidden from the epicentres of the Nazis' constructed hell. The collection gathers childhood memories that span many years and represents a range of ages, nationalities and mother tongues. Rather than using chronology or geography, the volume is largely organised around the contexts in which individuals hid: with parents, with siblings, with family friends and colleagues, with clergy, with strangers, alone and with others. The stories, poems, photographs and documents of these survivors lead us through chilling moments of escape, through prolonged periods of ominous calm, occasionally into Nazi transit and work camps, through liberation and into the post-Holocaust era.

Cognitive sociologist Eviatar Zerubavel explores the fundamental social dimensions of memory:

The collective memory of a mnemonic community is quite different from the sum total of the personal recollections of its various individual members, as it includes only those that are commonly shared by all of them.²¹

The enduring rememberings of one, Zerubavel suggests, relies on the concurring nods of others. Taking note of the memories of an individual becomes more than commemoration; a collective affirmation of a single personal history can satisfy a basic need of that individual to be recognised, accepted, believed. To be hidden, to be marginalised, ignored, silenced is to have one's memories – the building blocks of one's identity – denied.

In her reflection on the aftermath of her war experiences, Schieber describes her life under so-called Soviet liberation when she sought help from a doctor:

[...] my papers revealed that I was a Jewish survivor searching for my family. He advised me not to talk to the soldiers; definitely not to say I was a Jew. Furthermore, he said he was a Jew as well, but the soldiers did not know that.²²

Even after the Nazis had been defeated, Schieber was required to hide the part of her identity – her Jewishness – that defined her victimhood under Nazism.

The collective identity of the hidden Jewish children of the Holocaust is called into question at the very beginning of *Out of Chaos*: 'You say we are not survivors', writes Marguerite Lederman Mishkin, 'We were not in a concentration camp.'²³ Yet, through her poetry – in tones of defiance and refined sarcasm – Mishkin makes clear the range of emotions, forms of trauma and distressing experiences that contribute to individual and collective identities of all survivors:

We hid in holes [...] We hid in sewers [...] We saw our parents being taken away [...] We learned to scream in silence [...] We felt unloved [...] We felt dirty [...] We lost our innocence [...] We lost our sense of self.²⁴

²¹ Zerubavel (1999), p. 96.

²² Fox (2013), p. 204.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 3, 4 and 5.

Mishkin's three-page list of assertions demands that she and her peers – the hidden children – be considered Holocaust survivors, too. To deny them this title, to remember them in any other way, would be to deny their shared truth.

Just as Art Spiegelman wears his father's mask, just as Marian Kołodziej holds on to the mask of his former self, *Out of Chaos* reveals the masks worn by hidden Jewish children as they dodged the cogwheels of the Nazi machine. Marguerite Lederman Mishkin reflects on the false and confusing identities of her childhood in hiding. During the years of Nazi murder, taken to a children's home in Antwerp, Belgium, Marguerite and her sister Annette had to imagine themselves to be the little girls they were not, to learn about Jesus and Mary, to pretend – or maybe not pretend – to be orphans. At least three years later, taken from the orphanage, Marguerite and her sister, along with many other children, were forced onto a train headed for an unknown place. Mishkin writes in the voice of her young self:

I don't know where we are going or who I am supposed to be this time or whether this time I will be a Jew. Or even whether I will be alive tonight.²⁵

Similarly, Chaya Horowitz Roth's reflections of her war experience underscore the ongoing trauma and craving for identity she experienced in the aftermath of having been hidden: 'because I was never to reveal my true name to anyone, or tell anyone whence I came, I always felt like a stranger (like so many other hidden children).'²⁶

Later in the volume, Marguerite Lederman Mishkin puts on a different mask. While she lived in hiding, her mother, Rayzla Lederman, was deported to and gassed at Auschwitz-Birkenau. 'I wish I could remember the past we shared,' Mishkin writes of her mother, 'I wish I could have seen the future we should have shared.'²⁷ Dreaming of that impossibility, Mishkin dares to imagine the words of her mother, perhaps as if her mother might have lived. Mishkin writes in her mother's imagined voice, referring to herself, as if her mother is speaking about Marguerite the child:

I remember: the contour of her face [...] her first words [...] the joy of being her mother [...] I don't know: her hopes and dreams [...] her talents [...] if she has children [...] if she remembers me [...] if she survived.²⁸

When Mishkin writes 'I was gassed', we witness the writer's audacity to reconceive her mother's presence.²⁹ Mishkin removes the mask of her mother and continues, now speaking for herself about her mother, 'I don't remember: her features [...] her smell [...] her feel [...] her hand holding mine [...] being her daughter.'³⁰ And we come to see that, for Marguerite Lederman Mishkin, the memory of her mother was murdered, too.

Mishkin invents her mother's voice once more when she writes alongside survivor Leonie Taffel Bergman

²⁵ Ibid., p. 87.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 212.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 79.

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 78 and 79.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 79.

³⁰ Ibid.

to create, or possibly re-create, a scenario: Suppose our mothers had met on the transport train that dreadful day of deportation [to Auschwitz] and during the three days of enduring that deportation ride were able to have a conversation [...] Here is what we imagine they might have told each other.³¹

The result is harrowing, not only because of its content, but because we are bearing witness to the idea that these brave women have put pen to paper in order to conjure their parents and breathe them alive with new words of profound terror.

The imagined Pincus Taffel:

My God, where are we going? What is happening to us? What will happen to our children?³²

Then, again, the imagined Rayzla Lederman:

If I have any hope left at all, it is for my children. I have a new identity now. I am only Transport Number 407, and my name doesn't have any significance anymore, I suppose.³³

The imagined Rayzla Lederman continues:

I hid my children to give them a chance to live [...] God keep them safe. That is all I care about.³⁴

The imagined Rayzla Lederman ends the scene – and ends the collection of stories and poems:

Perhaps it will not be us, but our children who will tell this story. May they survive to do so. Maybe the world will listen to them.³⁵

Mishkin and Bergman assume the masks of their parents in order to indicate that all of them – murdered mothers, murdered fathers and their hidden children – share a space within the chaos of Holocaust memory.

As the voices of *Out of Chaos* respond to, build on and sometimes even contradict one another, a sense of togetherness – a mnemonic community – becomes a recurring motif. Those who were once hidden as children speak to their murdered parents. Now grown, those once-hidden children speak to their own children. And these survivors speak to one another. They support and corroborate and bear witness to each other's victimhood and survivorship. And, as in any strong, developing community, there are moments of tension and dispute.

The stories and poetry of the lost children of *Out of Chaos* hold a common theme: a plea to be heard, or perhaps – as the title of the volume's final chapter suggests – to be found. Chaya

³¹ Ibid., p. 240.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 241.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 246.

Horowitz Roth describes her 'obsession to tell' her stories to her young children while seeking to protect them from the violence and fear that had once surrounded her.³⁶ At the same time, Roth writes:

I had to explain to them that technically we were not survivors. Only camp survivors could claim that identity. 'Who were you, then?' they asked. I explained that we were refugees who had survived the war the best way we could, and we were never incarcerated by the enemies [...].³⁷

While other voices in the collection assimilate themselves within the broader Holocaust narrative, Roth, quite explicitly, argues that the hidden children should be kept separate from those who survived Nazi imprisonment.

Roth's perception of herself as a refugee, rather than as a survivor, seems to conflict with the testimonies of others who make clear their unwavering connectedness with those murdered in the Nazi camps. Aaron Elster is haunted by the death of his sister, Sarah: 'My tormented vision of Sarah's brutal murder tears at me; it is unbearable. The pain doesn't subside.'³⁸ Elster underscores and insists on his survivorship, arguing, 'We are the last of the survivors and we have an obligation to tell the younger generations of the atrocities that humans are able to inflict on others.'³⁹

Through her poetry, Judith Levy Straus writes of 'The long snake of cattle cars [...] With human cargo going east [...] full of worry, fear [...] as she waited for the train's arrival, not knowing if she would be taken or remain with 'the faces of those left [...] Expressionless, empty.'⁴⁰ These are the memories that these grown women and men — once children — learned to live with and continue to live with today, every day and night, through life's joys and life's struggles and through the mundane.

Ahlyce Goldman Kapman, many years after the war, discovered a stray dog in Chicago whom she called Benji and whom she began to love:

It was a hot summer night in the 1980s, and as I was walking Benji, he settled down on the grass, and I sat down next to him. I gave him a hug and said, 'You see, you are lucky, someone is taking care of you.' And with that I remembered 1942 and the beginning of my terror. I started to sob, screaming sobs, the dog in my arms.⁴¹

On the opposite page to Kapman's story is a drawing by Ava Hegedis Kadishson Schieber.⁴² Its familiar, simple lines depict an incomplete, pensive figure, chin on hand, with an elbow leaning on a sitting dog. The drawing, according to its caption, was created especially to accompany Kapman's story. In this way, Schieber and Kapman are speaking to one another, helping one another to find the words and to find the imagery that might convey the painful chaos of memories each is compelled to express.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 213.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 194.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 190.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 171.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 220.

⁴² Ibid., p. 221.

Drawing by Ava Hegedis Kadishson Schieber to accompany the story 'A Dog' by Ahlyce Goldman Kapman in the collection *Out of Chaos*.



Out of that chaos, a series of questions emerge; questions that the collection does not explicitly address. While generating their eloquent and complex communal memory, how did each survivor of *Out of Chaos* affect each of the others? Did one individual's specific public reflection trigger the sudden memory of someone else? Might the community of memoirists have caused certain summoned memories to be misremembered? Might particular conversations and group norms have led to an individual's embarrassment or subconscious censorship and ultimate silencing?

Yet, here lies the significance and power of *Out of Chaos*, which contributes to the growing body of work on hidden survivors of Nazi Europe.⁴³ The writers, poets and artists of this collection – supported by editor Elaine Saphier Fox – have found a way to structure, order and group their stories and poems so that, together, they tell an abstracted and, until now, missing narrative of Holocaust history. This is a narrative that, for many years, had been overlooked and self-censored perhaps because, compared to the stories from the Nazi camps, the experiences of hidden children did not seem severe enough to shed sharp light on and reveal clear lessons about the extremes of human nature. *Out of Chaos* represents the collected histories of a group of

⁴³For example, Marks (1995) presents the stories of 22 children who survived Nazi deportation by going into hiding.

individuals who, together, manage to say more than each could say alone. Just as Marian Kołodziej considered destroying his work out of deep personal shame, just as Ava Kadishson Schieber's seemingly accidental conversations with rediscovered friends led to momentous revelations about her family's fate, *Out of Chaos* leads us to wonder what within Holocaust memory has been forever forgotten and what could have been discarded but was ultimately saved.

And so the collective weight of the narratives shared and sustained by the Holocaust's hidden children become entangled with and elevated toward the narratives of the survivors of the Nazi camps. The hidden and the incarcerated belong to the same community, a collective, single chaotic voice calling out from the centre and from the margins of Holocaust memory, masked faces of suffering, finally unmasked.

Further Reading

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