

The Continuation of Trauma through Transcribing: Second Generation Survivors and the Inability for a 'Post-Holocaust'

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Abstract : Historians use the term 'post-Holocaust' to indicate the period from 1945 onward; however, for survivors of the Holocaust and their families, the Holocaust did not end in 1945. In fact, for some, it was just the beginning of their struggles. There are those who could not return to their homes, find loved ones, or fight off night terrors. Additionally, they continue to suffer from mental illness or physical disease stemming from the Holocaust. In order for historians to have a clearer understanding of the trauma survivors have endured, it is must to approach time differently. Trauma does not operate on a timeline and thereby, our understanding of 'before,' 'during' and 'after' are flawed. In order to convey this flaw, this study will examine memoirs of second and third-generation survivors and of child survivors. Within the second and third generation group, there are two types of generational memoirs that are scrutinized for this case study. The first being when a child or grandchild records the stories of their parent(s) or grandparent(s) without any of the second or third generation's stories implicitly written. 'Implicitly' is used in the context that it is impossible for any writer to not impose at least some stylistic portion of themselves into writing, but the intent was to focus on the parent or grandparent. The other type of memoir is when they write their parent(s) or grandparent(s) story intertwined with their own story. Additionally, the child survivor has a unique role in memory and trauma studies. Much like later generations who write about the Holocaust but have not experienced the trauma firsthand, the child survivor must write about what they lived through and experienced but cannot remember without the assistance of research or other survivors. This study shows that survivors continue to demonstrate trauma-related paranoia. They fear experiencing another Holocaust. In their minds, they replay the horrors that they had experienced. A pilgrimage to a 20th century Europe, unlike one of the 1940s, causes uncertainty, confusion, and additional paranoia. It is through these findings that it becomes evident that historians must learn to study trauma without placing strict timelines that prevent understanding of how trauma impacts those who have experienced complex trauma.

Keywords : holocaust, generational, memoirs, trauma

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