

THE DIFFICULTY IN FORGING A BOND: THE INNER WORKINGS OF POSTMEMORY  
WITHIN FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS IN MONIKA MARON'S  
*PAWELS BRIEFE* AND UWE TIMM'S *AM BEISPIEL MEINES BRUDERS*

BY

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THESIS

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# Abstract

1989 marked a pivotal time in Germany's history where the two German states and their respective histories needed to be reconciled and the memory of its citizens was called upon to be revisited as well. With a major political event, such as WWII in the German history, Germans were prompted to revisit individual memories more closely tied to their own family and themselves. The war and its aftermath impacts family relationships with one who was involved in it. And that personal relationship, at times fostered through some sort of "digging" into the past, if one is to use Walter's Benjamin's metaphor "Ausgraben im Erinnern," in turn, impacts the concept of self-identity. How is the political mapped onto and reconciled with the familial in post-1989 literature?

Much work has already been done on memory in post-1989 Germany and its literature, which serves as a rich basis for the paired analysis of Monika Maron's *Pawels Briefe* with Uwe Timm's *Am Beispiel meines Bruders*. Although there is much scholarship on these post-89 texts and their authors, this particular pairing explores possible similarities in seemingly different family genealogies with regards to the negotiation of historical positionality and the role memory artifacts play in the negotiation of relationships with both alive and deceased family members.

The examined negotiations of family relationships and the critical engagement with personal belongings of deceased family members may reveal similarities between the assumed opposing family genealogies of Jewish and non-Jewish German that unfold from the WWII/Holocaust rupture. Something particularly characteristic to the reevaluations of relationships is the significant implications for those born during or after the war period still living to the present day in their understanding of self, family roots, and how conflicting generational differences embedded within their own historical contexts can be reconciled.

Therefore, using Sigrid Weigel's concept of generation as "symbolic form" in conjunction with Marianne Hirsch's postmemory framework, I argue that the extent to which the historical positioning and the interaction with photographs and diary entries is similar in these post-1989 texts provides insight into the overlaps of Jewish and non-Jewish German postmemory projects. This comparison, thus, supports the identification potential between and among generations as well as the increasingly pluralistic "democratization of memory," as David Bathrick proposes, in relation to national and family history in the current German memory discourse.

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## Introduction: The Continued & Changing Presence of the Past

“I would like to understand why, in this decade, the past is being presented as never before.”<sup>1</sup>

The 1989 reunification of Germany set off a wave of memory discourse as the Germans grappled with national identity. Friederike Eigler notes that “the decade since German reunification has seen a greatly increased public interest in issues of memory and commemoration, motivated by the re-examination of the history of the two Germanies and of the history of National Socialism from the perspective of post-unification Germany.”<sup>2</sup> After 1989, the Third Reich years of Germany’s history continued to haunt the larger cultural discourse in Germany and German citizens with their pasts as well. “Wo ist der Krieg in mir geblieben?”<sup>3</sup> Such a question captures the challenge of inscribing the self into the German past, in other words, what WWII means for one’s understanding of family and self. For some, WWII had left a residual fragment, like a shard of glass, and for others, especially those born just before or after the war’s end, it is a piece that inconspicuously resides somewhere in the memory that one later tries to find. How and to what extent the remnants of the war affect a person and his or her family members speaks to the continuity of fracture within the family unit, specifically that of Germany.

A rupture in the family foundation, such as WWII, is reflected in literature as well. In the late 20<sup>th</sup>- and early 21<sup>st</sup>-century German family, the persistent presence of war through memory has created and still does create uncomfortable, tense spaces. Anne

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Walser, “Friedenpreis des Deutschen Buchhandels 1998: Erfahrungen beim Verfassen einer Sonntagsrede,” in *Die Walser-Bubis-Debatte: Eine Dokumentation*, ed. Frank Schirmacher (Frankfurt on Main: Suhrkamp, 1999), 12.

<sup>2</sup> Friederike Eigler, “Engendering Cultural Memory in Selected Post-*Wende* Literary Texts of the 1990s,” *The German Quarterly* 74.4 (Fall 2001): 392.

<sup>3</sup> Monika Maron, *Pawels Briefe* (Frankfurt on Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1999), 117.

Fuchs, for example, coined the term “memory contests,” which she considers to be a characteristic of post-unification literature, where second and later generations “articulate, question, and investigate the normative self-image of previous generations.”<sup>4</sup> Friederike Eigler has argued that the confrontational language observed in *Väterliteratur* produced by those of the 68-generation towards first generation family members has been replaced in subsequent years with a more distanced “panoramic view of multiple generations.”<sup>5</sup> A panoramic view of historical positionalities suggests the past’s complexities within the family sphere that the depersonalized discourses of cultural memory fail to show. To add to the increased scope of view, Caroline Schaumann observes that generational literature specifically after reunification came “to embrace more diverse, self-reflective, and experimental approaches.”<sup>6</sup> Sigrid Weigel’s idea of generation as symbolic form further adds bi-directionality and interlocking to the understanding of post-1989 intergenerational memory: “[...] there are numerous narratives that seem to be legitimated by the point of origin because they define their own story as arising from those events to which all subsequent history refers back and thus comes to be called the history.”<sup>7</sup> 1989 and the years to follow were by no means the first confrontations with Germany’s WWII past, however. The increasing diversity of historical perspectives in Germany that comes with each generation has reconfigured the contested memory debates of the post-war years to allow potential for reconciliation among not only East and West German perspectives, which the national memory

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<sup>4</sup> Anne Fuchs, “From ‘Vergangenheitsbewältigung’ to Generational Memory Contests in Günther Grass, Monika Maron and Uwe Timm,” *German Life and Letters* 59.2 (April 2006): 169.

<sup>5</sup> Friederike Eigler, “Writing in the New Germany: Cultural Memory and Family Narratives,” *German Politics and Society* 23.3 (Fall 2005): 28.

<sup>6</sup> Caroline Schaumann, *Memory Matters: Generational Responses to Germany’s Nazi Past in Recent Women’s Literature* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008), 144.

<sup>7</sup> Sigrid Weigel, “‘Generation’ as a Symbolic Form: On the Genealogical Discourse of Memory since 1945,” *The Germanic Review* 77.4 (2002): 265.

discourse tends to focus on, but also among the discourses of Jewish and German memory. In literature, for example, similarities emerge among both memory perspectives as more family narratives appear.

In a divided Germany, from just after the war up until the fall of the Berlin Wall, enemy projections from both sides prevented both German states from adequately facing the WWII past, although throughout those some forty years, significant breakthroughs in the West penetrated the broader, contingent memory discourse. As Bill Nivens observes, “the result of such recrimination was that neither state adequately came to terms with the National Socialist past” because “it was felt, in each case, that it was the other German state that had to do this.”<sup>8</sup> The West faced the horrors of the past to an extent through exhibitions or other public media, for example the American television series *Holocaust* in 1979.<sup>9</sup> Also, “West Germans were invited by the political establishment to identify with the military resistance to Hitler,” but oftentimes the attempts to do so were overshadowed by the anti-Communist rhetoric projected at the enemy on the other side of the Iron Curtain.<sup>10</sup> The same holds for East Germany, as well. Through film particularly of the DEFA studio, for instance, “the conscious and unconscious enactments of recent historical experience as memory, were contested and negotiated.”<sup>11</sup> In addition, “East Germans were invited by their government to identify with the anti-fascist resistance against Hitler [...],” except that repressive apparatuses set in place by the socialist GDR politics quelled to a much greater degree the ability to deal with the events that occurred

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<sup>8</sup> Bill Niven, *Facing the Nazi Past* (London and New York City: Routledge, 2002), 2.

<sup>9</sup> Niven, 3.

<sup>10</sup> Niven, 2.

<sup>11</sup> Anke Pinkert, *Film and Memory in East Germany* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2008), 7.

just years before in WWII.<sup>12</sup> East Germans anchored their memory discourse in an anti-fascist, anti-capitalist rhetoric to justify rather the West's necessity to own up to the past, thereby minimizing their own responsibility.

Culpability was present, albeit in different ways, in the memory discourse of both German states before 1989, especially in the 1960s. Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich counteracted any tendency of West Germans to minimize culpability by drawing attention to their perpetration in *Die Unfähigkeit zu Trauern*. In this provocative work, they attribute the lack of emotional engagement with the past to “the collective denial of responsibility for National Socialism.”<sup>13</sup> With this perspective circulating through West Germany's memory discourse in the 1960s, society and the family sphere, especially in 1968, experienced an uprising of members of the second generation against authority of members of the first generation members who had lived through the war, whereby “eine quasi biologische Trennlinie gezogen [wurde],” as the younger generation refused to “inherit” onus of the injustices committed by those before them.<sup>14</sup> The student movement of the 60s is reflected in the *Väterliteratur* genre of the time to which Aleida Assmann attributes the characteristics of “confrontation, dispute [and the] settling of accounts with the father.”<sup>15</sup> This sort of movement also took hold in West German film in the 1960s and into the 1970s with the dawn of Young German Cinema. This new type of

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<sup>12</sup> Niven, 2.

<sup>13</sup> Fuchs, 173.

<sup>14</sup> Gerd Koenen, “Und in den Herzen Asche“ in *Die Gegenwart der Vergangenheit: Der lange Schatten des Dritten Reichs*, ed. Stefan Aust and Gerhard Spörl (Munich, Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2004), 300.

<sup>15</sup> Aleida Assmann, “Limits of Understanding: Generational Identities in Recent German Memory Literature,” in *Victims and Perpetrators: 1933-1945: (Re)Presenting the Past in Post-Unification Culture*, ed. Laurel Cohen-Pfister and Dagmar Wienröder-Skinner (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006), 29-48, here 33.

cinema, according to Anke Pinkert, “[...] aimed to depart from the conformist ‘Papa’s Kino’” and engaged with “recent German history through a self-reflexive language.”<sup>16</sup>

East German filmmakers in the 1960s, for example, similarly re-evaluated the past, particularly the antifascist foundations of the East German state just after the war. Pinkert notes that “the new antifascist films produced in the sixties return to the year 1945 as an imagined point of origin in order to reevaluate historical success of the East German postwar project [...]”<sup>17</sup> These films also “centered around the moment of historical [...] rupture when the end of World War II and the collapse of the Third Reich had left the majority of the population who had supported Hitler with a sense of defeat and disorientation rather than liberation.”<sup>18</sup> Film is one of many ways, along with documentary film and fictional literature of the 1970s, that “the everyday experience of the war and immediate postwar years gained an important space in the public consciousness of East Germany.”<sup>19</sup> Evidently in both West and East Germany reevaluation of the war and/or its subsequent years took place in the 1960s and even into the 1970s, especially with the rise of the Young German Cinema in West Germany and its influence in East Germany as well.

The dynamics of the memory discourse in the 1980s changed, however, especially in West Germany, with the introduction of new voices that argued for sympathy with Germans who had experienced the war. The public spectacle of the Historians’ Dispute took place following President Reagan’s speech at the Bitburg cemetery in 1985, in which he “depicted German *Wehrmacht* soldiers as hapless victims, and implied that their

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<sup>16</sup> Pinkert, 146-147.

<sup>17</sup> Pinkert, 146.

<sup>18</sup> Pinkert, 146.

<sup>19</sup> Pinkert, 148.

war against the Soviets had been part of an ongoing struggle which united Americans and West Germans.”<sup>20</sup> Once again the past was dealt with in the context of East vs. West as those who fought on the German side in WWII were seen as victims of the Communist enemy. While conservative historians affirmed this view, others, such as Willy Brandt, “made it clear that the terrible things which had happened under Hitler were ‘committed not just in the German name, but also by Germans’” thereby encouraging Germans to face responsibility.<sup>21</sup> Arguments entertaining the possibility of German victimhood continued into the late 1990s, for example with W.G. Sebald’s collection of essays titled *Luftkrieg und Literatur*, in which he points out the “repression of the emotional experience of the bombings of the German cities.”<sup>22</sup> Considering melancholy is the “underlying and all-pervasive mood of [his] narratives,” he implies that the continuation of the past burden upon Germans extinguishes any hope for a future.<sup>23</sup> He defines melancholy as “a form of the labor of mourning” connected to “the insight into the impossibility of redemption.”<sup>24</sup> With *Luftkrieg und Literatur* Sebald introduced “a language of traumatic shock to make sense of the emotional numbing and amnesia in the German postwar population” which triggered “new historical accounts [...] about the German war experience.”<sup>25</sup>

The development of memory discussions from 1945 into the 1980s has focused more on placing the blame on the other Germany, while those after 1989 have become increasingly tolerant to a wide-range of recollection about the past, allowing for the

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<sup>20</sup> Niven, 106.

<sup>21</sup> Niven, 107.

<sup>22</sup> Fuchs, 173.

<sup>23</sup> Ernestine Schlant, *The Language of Silence: West German Literature and the Holocaust* (London and New York City: Routledge, 1999), 233.

<sup>24</sup> Schlant, 233.

<sup>25</sup> Pinkert, 5.

possibility of reconciliation between East and West Germany, but also between Jewish and German perspectives of the Third Reich. Salomon Korn has given voice to this potential in his book *Geteilte Erinnerung*, where he alludes to the responsibility to remember: “Die Bereitschaft zum Erinnern und Gedenken ist abhängig vom Verhältnis des Einzelnen zur eigenen Geschichte, zur Geschichte des eigenen Volks [...]. Erinnern und Gedenken bedeuten dann immer auch Auseinandersetzung mit den Biografien der eigenen Eltern, Großeltern, Vorfahren.”<sup>26</sup> This then calls for a more localized analysis of memory under the microscope of family, as it reflects to a great degree the negotiations within the broader cultural discourse. Coupling memory and the family necessitates inclusion of generations into the discussion. Friederike Eigler points out that “das Genre des metahistorischen Generationenromans hat [...] seit der Wiedervereinigung neuen Aufschwung erhalten” and it engages with “Fragen, wie und mit welchen Auswirkungen Familiengeschichte im Laufe der Generationen vergessen, verdrängt oder verformt wurde.”<sup>27</sup> Thus, a more in-depth understanding of the components of memory, generation, and postmemory provides a rich basis for examining how post-war generations presented in literature may converge rather than diverge in their interaction with family, the war, and memory. Two post-1989 novels, Monika Maron’s *Pawels Briefe* and Uwe Timm’s *Am Beispiel meines Bruders* provide opportunity for such an examination where I contend that more similarities than differences emerge in postmemory projects of Jewish backgrounds and German backgrounds.

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<sup>26</sup> Salomon Korn, *Geteilte Erinnerung: Beiträge zur ‘deutsch-jüdischen’ Gegenwart* (Berlin: Philo Verlagsgesellschaft, 1999), 105.

<sup>27</sup> Friederike Eigler, *Gedächtnis und Geschichte in Generationenromanen seit der Wende* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 2005), 26 and 29.

## A. Memory: We/I remember when...

A large body of scholarship on generation, memory, and their intersections in post-WWII Germany has been long established, in which the ideas presented create a trajectory of increasing tolerance toward diverse perspectives on the German past. David Bathrick captures this development well with his “democratization of memory,” which not only allows a wide range of experiences to come to light, but also dismantles any hegemonic, totalizing view of the past.<sup>28</sup> In the conception of a more diversified discourse on the past in German culture, such democratization and diversification stands in opposition to what Jan Assmann coins as cultural memory.<sup>29</sup> According to Assmann, a key characteristic of cultural memory is the “concretion of identity,” by which the knowledge of the past is stored and serves as a reference point for a group and its unity through this past.<sup>30</sup> Public institutions, such as museums and libraries are funded and controlled by the government and serve to propagate cultural memory. Sites of remembrance are also parts of cultural memory, which take the shape of memorials, monuments, or public works of art to symbolize the cultural process of remembering. These sites, in a way, reflect what is deemed important to remember on behalf of the government. Although cultural memory serves to unify citizens of a country in the name of remembering a country’s past, it is also quite problematic in its “distance from the everyday.” Cultural memory depersonalizes history from the individual and could,

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<sup>28</sup> David Bathrick, “Enttabuisierte Erinnerung? Deutsches Leid im Zweiten Weltkrieg” (paper presentation, University of Bremen, Bremen, Germany, November 2008). Quoted in Susanne Veas-Gulani’s chapter titled “Between Reevaluation and Repetition: Ulla Hahn’s *Unschärfe Bilder* and the Lasting Influence of Family Conflicts about the Nazi Past in Current Literature of the 1968 Generation,” in *Generational Shifts in Contemporary German Literature*, ed. Laurel Cohen-Pfister and Susanne Veas-Gulani (Rochester, New York: Camden, 2010), 56-76, here 60.

<sup>29</sup> Jan Assmann, “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity,” trans. John Czaplicka, *New German Critique* 65 (1995): 125-126.

<sup>30</sup> Jan Assmann, 130.

therefore, as mentioned previously, keep the political and personal separate from one another. It also creates a sense of exclusion as Assmann calls cultural memory “a supply of knowledge [...] characterized by sharp distinctions made between those who belong and those who do not.”<sup>31</sup>

It is therefore appropriate that Assmann has conceived of a “communicative memory” as well, which as a fluid, informal way of remembering, brings the political much closer to the personal through a framework of memory.<sup>32</sup> The information and messages conveyed through texts of the cultural and collective memory at large are imbued with a personal touch when mediated through family members’ storytelling and/or personal belongings, such as photographs or letters.

Cultural and communicative memory, then, exemplify transmission from one generation to another when mapping this form of memory onto a population of citizens at large or onto the family unit. The terms “transgenerational memory” and “intergenerational memory” in Assmann’s conception of memory raise questions about the nature of memory. Both terms are similar in that they involve memory transmission; however they differ in that “transgenerational” describes the large scale transmission within a culture from one generation population to the succeeding generation. “Intergenerational,” on the other hand, localizes such transmission to the generations of a family. Although such concepts describe the continuity of memory, it remains questionable if and how memory can be carried on to succeeding generations. To that end, conclusions provided by the Assmann model fail to address forgetting and repression within a generation, what Ernestine Schlant has addressed as a difference

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<sup>31</sup> Jan Assmann, 130.

<sup>32</sup> Jan Assmann, 126.

between “beschweigen” and “verschweigen,” where the former results from trauma and the latter from guilt.<sup>33</sup> Memory lapses can cripple, if not completely hinder, this process of memory transmission. Another important consideration to such transmission is that it depends heavily on the question of victim vs. perpetrator. Using Ernestine Schlant’s terms to demonstrate, silence or memory lapse of “beschweigen” coincides with the degree that one feels victimized, perhaps traumatized by the war’s events. In contrast, one’s “verschweigen” can be attributed to feelings of guilt or coalescence with regards to WWII. Whether memory transmission is interrupted or does not happen because of “beschweigen” or “verschweigen,” it questions the plausibility of bridging a memory gap that exists between generations.

#### B. Generation: “Back in ‘my’ time...”

Sigrid Weigel has attuned researchers to the question of what it means to *have* or *be* of a certain *time*. Time is not just a temporal measure, but also a measure of what happens within it, for example cultural, historical, and educational developments. Thinking of time in this way creates a conception of “generation,” which along with “‘genealogy as a process of procreation’ is usually associated with a naturalizing or organic aspect to historiography” that structures “[...] human history into various quasi-natural periods.”<sup>34</sup> Different experiences and perceptions tied to a particular lifetime make members of one generation simply different from those of another.

Moving away from a conception of generation strictly tied down to time periods, Weigel, in her article on the transgenerational imprinting of Germany’s National

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<sup>33</sup> Ernestine Schlant, *Language of Silence*, 7, quoted by Ulrich Simon, “Die Leistung des Scheiterns: Widerstehen als Thema und als Problem in Uwe Timms Texten,” in *Erinnern, Vergessen, Erzählen: Beiträge zum Werk Uwe Timms*, ed. Friedhelm Marx, Stephanie Catani, and Julia Schöll (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2007), 1: 209-210.

<sup>34</sup> Weigel, 267.

Socialism titled “*Generation*” as a *Symbolic Form*, does not view generation as a parceled period of time, rather as a symbolic form or a “cultural pattern for constructing history.”<sup>35</sup> The cultural pattern takes the shape of an ongoing genealogy whereby “only after the second and third generations have appeared can a first generation be identified” which is implicitly understood as such, as “one seldom encounters a discourse in the naming of ‘first generation.’”<sup>36</sup> In other words, generations are largely defined in relationship with previous generations, which implies a strong interlocking among them and perhaps a sense of accumulation as well. The more generations that follow, the more compounded the aspects of the prior generations become, which reveals a diversity within generations and a bi-directional flow among them when viewing generations in a genealogical way, as Weigel does.

According to Weigel, the second and third generations only appear in relation to the first generation, but considering the latter unnamed raises two questions regarding, first, the legitimacy of those within this unnamed origin and second, what one is a second generation *of*. Rendering the first generation unnamed seems to delegitimize if not silence its members. If the numeration of generations as first, second, etc. is to represent a “hierarchy of memories” rather than a “sense of numerical time,” as Weigel suggests, then all the more reason for the first generation, presumably at the “top” of this hierarchy, to be named as such.<sup>37</sup> For this reason, those who experienced WWII are named in this analysis, and rather than privileging their memory at the top of the memory hierarchy, I will adhere to the current atmosphere of a diverse, comprehensive memory discourse.

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<sup>35</sup> Weigel, 265.

<sup>36</sup> Weigel, 265.

<sup>37</sup> Weigel, 265.

That is to say that regardless of generation, each story and remembrance of the past is equally worth acknowledging.

To take up the second question about what one can be a second or third generation *of* is where a sort of “break” or “rupture” is implied. A rupture could be a family emigration to a different country (“I am a second generation American”) or an event like the Holocaust (“I am a second generation Holocaust survivor”). A rupture, such as the Holocaust is what Weigel refers to when she explains that a catastrophic event is not just a break in genealogy, but also “a propagated break in civilization and its consequences on heritage.”<sup>38</sup> This rupture and particularly its continuity of consequences, she claims, contributes even more to a blending of generations with no clear cut delineations, which she illustrates through the *telescopage* metaphor or the collision/ramming of consecutive railcars on a track.<sup>39</sup>

However, and in returning once more to my point about the trajectory of scholarship on memory over recent decades, this blending of generations, although it connotes similarity, also suggests heterogeneity in and among them that stems from the compounding and transitional experiences of generations. With such heterogeneity, how can any consensus be reached on the Holocaust, a rupture inflicted on millions of families, whether from a victim point of view or, paradoxically, that of a perpetrator? Ralf Dahrendorf has touched upon this lack of consensus and its connection to the fixation on the past in German culture which, according to him, also affects the degree of optimism or pessimism in a country: “Ein glückliches Land ist sich uneinig über die Zukunft, aber im Grundsatz einig über die Vergangenheit; ein unglückliches Land aber

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<sup>38</sup> Weigel, 269.

<sup>39</sup> Weigel, 271.

hält es umgekehrt.”<sup>40</sup> This implies a permanent, compounding obstacle for progress with each new generation, as though the possibility for future generations to come to terms with the past is minor. Bathrick, on the other hand, in his aforementioned notion of the “democratization of memory,” relies on a more harmonious picture. Susanne Veegulani interprets his idea correctly, in my view, when she restates Bathrick’s idea as such:

[...] the term ‘democratization’ as introduced by Bathrick suggests the notion that we have reached a point in German postwar culture when, within an established framework of responsibility for the past that has been informed over decades, various experienced and imagined memories of the Second World War across generations can exist without necessarily being in conflict.<sup>41</sup>

As optimistic as such an idea might be, have Germans finally come to a point where all standpoints on German history are equally legitimate and reside with one another in harmony?

Generation, as an aspect that colors an individual in a way, is inherent to the succession of a family genealogy itself and forces multiple different people together. Within the biological tie of family, the differences represented by individual family members can foster connection, exchange, and the necessity for proximity. It would seem that it does not matter at all what occurs outside this impenetrable family unit, especially if one subscribes to Bathrick’s idea that differences can coexist. However, the connection to the war-ravaged collective past is present in varying ways within German families, as aforementioned scholars and their ideas have shown.

Further adding to the difficulty of the war’s memory in family is the unavoidable, gradual dying out of the first generation, the place of origin. This fact has been

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<sup>40</sup> Gerhard Spörl, “Als die Gestapo mich abholte” (an interview with Lord Ralf Dahrendorf), in *Die Gegenwart der Vergangenheit*, 24-34, here 32.

<sup>41</sup> Veegulani, 62.

underpinned by the historical fall of the Berlin Wall that reunified two German states and in doing so, brought about discussion on the German identity. As national identity is largely connected to the nation's past, not only did a "memory boom" or "memory crisis" take place, but within that boom, the magnitude of reunification and its implications combined with the point of time within the family genealogy, gave rise to the increased scholarly interest in the concept of postmemory, which has gained considerable traction in recent years.

### C. Postmemory: The Tension Between Memory and Generation

Especially in the 1990s or the era of "post-*Wende*" texts, the concept of postmemory has become especially prevalent. Given that two or three generations stood between 1945 and 1989, viewpoints of those respective generations create an intriguing ground for memory work and the possibility for generations in a family and at large to exchange, compare, question, and find memories. Post-1989 generational novels reflect negotiations and deconstruction of a totalizing historical perspective: "[...] zeichnen sich [...] Romane durch die Absage an die 'großen Erzählungen' des 20. Jahrhunderts aus."<sup>42</sup> Postmemory, then, manifests itself in literature of post-89 where younger generation authors are now producing works on the German past alongside the ever-present writers of the second generation to diversify the meaning of memory *after* the rupture. Such postmemory writing exhibits the tension between memories of the first generation's lived experiences and one's own memory that is undoubtedly imbued with the transmitted experiences of the first generation. Marianne Hirsch in her article *The Generation of Post-Memory* explains postmemory as a "looking backward rather than ahead and of

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<sup>42</sup> Eigler, *Gedächtnis*, 29.

defining the present in relation to a troubled past [...]” that “reflects an uneasy oscillation between continuity and rupture.”<sup>43</sup> The inclusion of the multiple voices that share family and individual versions of the German past underline the structure of postmemory as one that in recent decades has created an evolving diversification of literary discourse.

Marianne Hirsch’s article not only marks the characteristics of postmemory, but also the complications to which it gives rise. Postmemory is not a generation, rather a structure of generational transmission that relies on the continued succession of generations in a family to explain what post-war generations do with German history.<sup>44</sup> In returning to the previous question raised regarding whether memory can be transmitted from the first to succeeding generations, scholars like Gary Weissmann and Ernst van Alphen raise skepticism on the idea of transmission, arguing that neither memories (Weissmann) nor trauma (van Alphen) can possibly be transmitted from the first generation onto following generations.<sup>45</sup> It follows then that members of the second and third generations have no claim to remembering the events of WWII when they themselves were not there to experience them. Such a perspective casts doubt on self-identifications, such as “I am a second generation Holocaust survivor.” Can one claim to be a survivor when one did not have to live through and, thus, overcome the Jewish struggle in WWII?

Hirsch addresses the ownership of memory and, thus, circumvents Weissmann’s and van Alphen’s criticisms when she suggests that “postmemory is not identical to memory: it is ‘post,’ but at the same time, it approximates memory in its affective

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<sup>43</sup> Marianne Hirsch, “The Generation of Post-Memory,” *Poetics Today* 29.1 (Spring 2008): 125.

<sup>44</sup> Hirsch, 114.

<sup>45</sup> Hirsch, 109.

force.”<sup>46</sup> Therefore, Hirsch’s conception of postmemory, in keeping live connections to the past, acknowledges the discontinuity of memory between generations, but at the same time also skirts the idea that second and third generations have no connection to the past at all. In addition, she describes this in-between space using fragments of Eva Hoffmann’s recollection of childhood experiences with her first generation family members. The structure of postmemory is not about taking the memories of previous generations as one’s own, rather postmemory is the “‘not memories’ communicated in ‘flashes of imagery’ and ‘broken refrains’, transmitted through ‘the language of the body.’”<sup>47</sup> So even though “second generation Holocaust survivors” did not live through the Holocaust itself, the effects it had on their first generation family members has an impact on the following generation(s). This recalls once again Weigel’s telescoping metaphor that explains this “transgenerational traumatization” and even further, the traumatization of genealogy itself.<sup>48</sup> The reunification of Germany reawakened the transgenerational traumatization, as Weigel describes it, in that it jolted citizens to once again reexamine their sense of German identity, which ultimately includes the reexamination of self in relation to family and national history.

The interplay between and among generations is not as simple as having or not having a connection, as postmemory shows, so how are issues, such as victim vs. perpetrator and the presence/absence of personal belongings from the past dealt with in the second generation? Does the negotiation of these issues allow for connections to the past and, therefore, a chance for healing and reconciliation within a family? Drawing on the historically developed memory discourse in post-war Germany along with theories

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<sup>46</sup> Hirsch, 109.

<sup>47</sup> Hirsch, 109.

<sup>48</sup> Weigel, 271.

and concepts about memory and generation, I analyze the negotiation of the two aforementioned issues in two well-known post-89 novels: Monika Maron's *Pawels Briefe* and Uwe Timm's *Am Beispiel meines Bruders*.

Both novels fit into the autobiographical literary genre. Monika Maron's protagonist as well as the narrative's mother overlap with the author's own biography and that of her mother Hella Maron. Despite the overlaps, however, Margaret Maliszewska explains that "[es ist] nicht legitim, ihn [*Pawels Briefe*] als pure Autobiographie zu betrachten."<sup>49</sup> Es handelt sich eher, wie Friederike Eigler es bezeichnet, um einen, in der Grauzone zwischen Autobiografie und Fiktion' angesiedelten Text."<sup>50</sup> This likewise applies to Timm's novel, despite strong overlaps between the narrative and Timm's life. These texts function as the writers' (re)construction of their family's and their own story through narration. Linda Hutcheon's term "metahistorical narrative" is thus especially relevant for the novels' classification "to the extent they reflect on processes of reconstructing and making sense of the past."<sup>51</sup> One must keep in mind then that the appearance of first names in the texts and in this analysis does not connote the actual author, rather the constructed character in the novel.

These texts have generated much scholarly interest, for example, Michal Ben-Horin has compared Maron's and Ingeborg Bachmann's uses of photography,<sup>52</sup> Margaret Maliszewska focuses on the problematic trip to Poland presented in *Pawels Briefe*, and Joanna Stimmel has examined the increasing cosmopolitanism of Holocaust memory

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<sup>49</sup> Margaret Maliszewska, "Die Reise nach Polen in Jeannette Landers *Die Töchter* und Monika Marons *Pawels Briefe*," *Seminar* 45.3 (September 2009): 224-225.

<sup>50</sup> Maliszewska, 225.

<sup>51</sup> Eigler, "Engendering Cultural Memory," 392.

<sup>52</sup> See Michal Ben-Horin, "'Memory Metonymies': Music and Photography in Ingeborg Bachmann and Monika Maron," *German Life and Letters* 59.2 (April 2006): 233-248.

through Maron's novel.<sup>53</sup> Memory has also been explored in Timm's novel by scholars, such as Friedrich Marx who examines how Uwe Timm's protagonist reconciles cultural with communicative memory, while Matteo Galli uses Aleida Assman's concept "Gedächtniskisten," which refers to the selection and meaning of systematically stored information in the mind, to explore the interaction with and role of personal belongings from the past in *Am Beispiel meines Bruders*.<sup>54</sup>

Anne Fuchs has similarly placed these novels by Maron and Timm together, which makes for an interesting pairing, given that Maron is an East German author who descends from Jewish and Polish ancestry and Timm is a West German author who descends from a non-Jewish German background. Fuchs couples the two works to illustrate what she has coined "memory contests." While understanding the intergenerational rifts caused by the war's memory is useful for this analysis, pairing these novels together reveals even more so the conciliatory elements between and within both novels through the protagonists' mapping of Germany's political past onto the family unit and the self. In other words, watching the rupture of the Holocaust unfold in the postmemory work of both a Jewish genealogy (Maron) and a non-Jewish German genealogy (Timm), the protagonists may have more in common than expected. Examining historical positionality and use of memory artifacts, including photographs, in both novels are two ways in which a meeting point in postmemory projects between the Jewish and German backgrounds can be investigated.

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<sup>53</sup> See Joanna Stimmel, "Holocaust Memory between Cosmopolitanism and Nation-Specificity: Monika Maron's *Pawels Briefe* and Jaroslaw Rymkiewicz's *Umschlagplatz*," *The German Quarterly* 78.2 (Spring 2005): 151-171.

<sup>54</sup> Galli, Matteo, "Schuhkartons und Pappschachteln: Uwe Timms Mediale 'Gedächtniskisten,'" in *Erinnern, Vergessen, Erzählen*, 103-116. See also Aleida Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume: Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2003), 19.

In Chapter 1 I reveal the complications of the simple victim-perpetrator binary through close readings of the family relationships. The fluidity of historical positions opens up the possibility for reconciliation in the post-89 context. The goal to blame or vilify an “other” becomes a more introspective process of the individual and his or her family past that challenges the assumptions under which one has been influenced. Given that Maron and her protagonist are both of the second generation and come from a Polish-Jewish background, making this novel mostly autobiographical, the protagonist and other family members, namely the mother, especially challenge the meaning of victimization, since they identify themselves as German, as evidenced by ways of disavowing the past. The relationship between Uwe Timm’s autobiographical protagonist and his immediate family members also calls the victim-perpetrator categorization into question as issues of age and political indoctrination come into play. Whether one emerges from a Jewish or German background, the protagonists and their family relationships expose the assumed fault line between Jewish victims and German perpetrators as something more complex.

Chapter 2 introduces the role that concrete remnants of the past play in the postmemory structure. In both texts, I will examine how constituents of communicative memory, including photographs, letters, and dialogues, aid or hinder the protagonists in making sense of their family pasts. In the postmemory projects of both novels, it will become clear that an effort to learn of the family past encounters obstacles, such as forgetting, denial, outright disavowal, or silence. Also at risk in engaging with concrete traces of the past is the intergenerational friction that inquiries may cause. This is particularly where cultural and collective memory become relevant because when

mapping the political onto the family circle, deep discrepancies arise, as these novels show, between the family remnants available to the protagonists and what they know from texts of the cultural and collective memory. The discrepancies that arise from the presence of artifacts or perhaps from their absence ultimately render for the protagonists a confused understanding of their respective family pasts. It is especially in the attempt to facilitate inlets to the spirit and character of the deceased where protagonists stand at a loss. Consequently, the role of imagination plays a significant role in both novels. It is of interest to see what the protagonists do with their various sources of information and how they fill negative spaces of these sources. This section ultimately aims to shed light on relationship differences between those of the second generation and their family members, alive and deceased, and how these relationships, especially with the deceased, are mediated through personal belongings.

Exploring this particular pairing of *Pawels Briefe* with *Am Beispiel meines Bruders* through Hirsch's postmemory lens reveals inner workings of the postmemory structure that potentially allows for similarity that bridges the deep division between German and Jewish backgrounds with regards to the retrospective glance on the Holocaust rupture. This, in parallel to Bathrick's "democratization of memory," allows for a co-habitation of diverse historical perspectives tied to individual family stories. This means that with the availability of artifacts and the multiplicity of imaginative capacities, the differences in viewpoints at large among the later generations requires not only a reconciliation with family and self, but also with one another, especially in Germany's post-unification era.

In light of the ever increasing difficulty of those born during or after WWII to establish live connections with those in their family who lived during this time, the family relationships in Monika Maron's *Pawels Briefe* and Uwe Timm's *Am Beispiel meines Bruders* are negotiated in terms of historical positionality and presence/absence of memory artifacts in an effort to gain emotional proximity to family members, alive and deceased, thus allowing for both similarity to others within the larger post-war generation discourse and for the diversification of postmemory work.

## I. Postmemory & the Negotiation of Standpoints in Family Relationships

“Wo warst du damals?”<sup>55</sup>

In 1995, the Hamburg Institute for Social Research (HIS) opened an exhibit titled “War of Annihilation – Crimes of the *Wehrmacht* between 1941 and 1944.” The exhibit attracted many from all over Germany and even the rest of Europe. While the exhibit was a site of historical interest, it was also a site of controversy. Bill Niven notes:

Outside and inside the exhibition, there were heated discussions, between old and young, and between members of the war generation itself as they debated contrasting memories. Some feared the exhibition would tear the fabric of society, setting grandchildren against their grandparents, sons and daughters against parents, or stir up the “old” animosity between Jews, Russians and Germans.<sup>56</sup>

*Pawels Briefe* and *Am Beispiel meines Bruders* reflect precisely the issues this exhibit raised in a unified Germany. Whether prompted by sites of cultural memory, such as an exhibition, or by those of communicative memory, such as a photograph, mapping political history onto the family constellation necessarily leads to categorizations to make sense of the German past. The second generation is thus confronted with the troublesome binary of victim vs. perpetrator. However, these novels reveal that there is no straightforward categorization of members of the first generation. Furthermore, given the fluidity of these labels, the protagonists’ respective processes of negotiation of historical positionalities also reveal similarities between postmemory projects of Jewish and German backgrounds. Although intergenerational conflict and memory contests arise when reconciling WWII with the family history, similarities that emerge through exploring these novels further support integration and legitimation of all voices in the

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<sup>55</sup> Ulla Hahn, *Unschärfe Bilder* (Munich: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2003), 54.

<sup>56</sup> Nivens, 144.

postmemory structure. Such integration occurs not only within the family sphere, but also between family spheres of Jewish and German backgrounds in post-1989 Germany.

A family member of the first generation placed within a historical past, such as WWII, can stand in stark contrast to how the member of the second generation has perceived the family member as a parent or grandparent. Memory contests that can arise between generations thus speak to an identity function of memory. French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century has theorized “die identitätsbildende Funktion von Erinnerung in Bezug auf soziale Gruppen” as well as the “sozialen Charakter jeglicher [...] Erinnerung.”<sup>57</sup> Eric Santner has taken this idea even further with regards to confronting the German past: “So läge in der Trauerarbeit auf kollektiver Ebene die Chance, neue Formen von individueller and sozialer Identität zu entwickeln [...].”<sup>58</sup> Here, Santner emphasizes a more individualistic and empowering perspective with regards to one’s connection to the past without sacrificing its social function that Halbwachs proposes. While these models of collective memory suggest harmony among those of the same and perhaps even of different generations, it is precisely the identity-building function that can create friction between generations within a family.

Intergenerational memory contests occur whether one emerges from a Jewish-German or non-Jewish German background as Maron and Timm do, respectively. Even though Maron’s protagonist primarily identifies as German, her genealogy is undeniably marked by the rupture of the Holocaust and its cause of her grandfather’s death. I propose similarities between members of the two seemingly different positions who research their

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<sup>57</sup> Eigler, *Gedächtnis*, 42.

<sup>58</sup> Eric Santner, “History Beyond the Pleasure Principle: Some Thoughts on the Representation of Trauma,” in *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and “The Final Solution,”* ed. Saul Friedländer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 143-155. Quoted in Eigler, *Gedächtnis*, 58.

family pasts. The intergenerational conflict in these novels with regards to positionality negotiations and the respective outcomes of this conflict is one of aspects that both postmemory projects share. Whether the first generation family member is discovered in his or her past as a prisoner of a concentration camp or as a Nazi soldier, both discoveries can indeed stand in painful distinction to how that person is perceived in the present by the protagonist and therefore requires negotiation.

The subject undertaking a postmemory inquiry situates the parent or grandparent historically between the problematic binary of victim-perpetrator, which is a necessary, but by no means straightforward task. Emotional closeness to a family member of the first generation is a factor that comes into play when confronting the past. This relational consideration reveals a potential causal pattern for how historical positionality may be negotiated within the examined family relationships in Maron's *Pawels Briefe* and Timm's *Am Beispiel meines Bruders*. On the one hand, for instance, any disturbing revelations about the member of the first generation may be overridden and, thus, denied by the close familial bond one has had with the family member until the point of inquiry. This tendency was discovered in a sociological study conducted in the late 1990s titled "*Opa war kein Nazi: Nationalsozialismus und Holocaust im Familiengedächtnis*."<sup>59</sup> This study revealed mechanisms present in second and third generations that separated the Nazi past from family members. Welzer, Moller, and Tschuggnall, who conducted the study, coined the term "kumulative Heroisierung" to explain the tendency of "ausgeprägte familiäre Loyalitätsgefühle" that leads "zu einer Dissoziation von

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<sup>59</sup> Eigler, *Gedächtnis*, 22.

historischem Wissen und Familiengedächtnis”<sup>60</sup> In short, the personal can outweigh the political.

On the other hand, what one finds out about the first generation’s historical identity may be so troubling that it must be addressed somehow. This was one of many effects of the aforementioned exhibition that traveled throughout Germany in the 1990s: “Some [members of the second generation] reacted angrily towards their fathers, [...]. Some sought in the exhibitions answers to questions they had asked as children, or explanations for photographs they had seen, but were not understood.”<sup>61</sup> Although this particular example illustrates the impact of non-Jewish German perpetration, it also holds true in a way for succeeding generations of those who had experienced the rupture of the Holocaust from the Jewish perspective. Conflicts not only arise from how German ancestors are remembered, but also from how members of a Jewish family genealogy are or are not remembered as well. In the coming sections, then, the focus narrows in on the protagonists and the various relationships they each hold with members of the first generation. The relationships exhibit what Anne Fuchs calls “memory contests” where in the process of constructing their own sense of the family past, the second generation also “question[s] and investigate[s] the normative self-image of the previous generation.”<sup>62</sup>

Regardless of how the family members’ various standpoints are negotiated, the process undoubtedly reflects the positionality of the narrator within the second generation as well. One further and no less important goal of this analysis is to reveal the ways in which the relationships, through a process of mirroring and projections, result in new frontiers in self-understanding. As Michal Ben-Horin explains, “the impact this

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<sup>60</sup> Eiger, *Gedächtnis*, 23.

<sup>61</sup> Niven, 159.

<sup>62</sup> Fuchs, 179.

exploration of the past has on contemporary self-understanding, the relationship between self and family [...] is of crucial importance for those writers who engage in memory or postmemory work.”<sup>63</sup>

### I.A. *Pawels Briefe*: Moving Stances

Within the Jewish genealogy, it may be assumed that succeeding generations overwhelmingly sympathize with the first generation which died in or suffered through WWII, for example, through captivity in a concentration camp or exile from the Heimat. In her article on postwar German literature, literary scholar Nancy Lauckner classifies Jewish characters of post-war literature into categories, such as “‘the refugee,’ ‘the victim,’ and ‘the child as victim.’”<sup>64</sup> Also, Weigel points out the “mourning and trauma that extend over generations” within the genealogical structure in the memory of the victims.<sup>65</sup>

Maron challenges victim identification in the Jewish genealogy with her novel. In proving the portrayed fluidity of positionalities in this novel it is important, despite the difficulty in doing so, to first look at the narrator and family members separately as individuals before looking more closely at the relationships that exist among them. Such background information will aid in understanding how the main characters perceive one another and why.

The protagonist, as a member of the second generation born in Germany towards the end of WWII, identifies herself as a non-Jewish German, thus removing herself entirely from her family’s Polish ancestry and *almost* entirely from her Jewish

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<sup>63</sup> Ben-Horin, 233.

<sup>64</sup> Nancy A. Lauckner, “The Jew in Post-War German Novels. A Survey,” *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 20.1 (1975): 275-291. Quoted in Schlant, 167.

<sup>65</sup> Weigel, 271

background. She writes in German and her identification as a German is accentuated on her trip to Poland where she feels distanced in many ways from Poland, its people, and, more interestingly, her grandfather: “[...] in Lomza, waren wir keine Juden mehr; in Lomza waren wir Deutsche. Polen waren wir nirgends für niemanden [...].”<sup>66</sup> Moreover, she does not practice Judaism or any religion for that matter. Therefore, nothing connects her to Judaism except for one thing: “ich wußte damals nicht mehr über Juden, als daß die Nazis sie ermordet hatten. Aber daß mein Großvater als Jude umgekommen war, [...] mag für meine Wahl [...] den Ausschlag gegeben haben.”<sup>67</sup> Even though he was not a practicing Jew and was only labeled as such based on his ancestry, just the fact that her grandfather died under the Nazi regime creates an all too persistent connection to Judaism, which drives her choice to research the family past.

The protagonist’s mother Hella also distances herself from her Polish and Jewish background. Her loss of connection to her Polish past is evidenced by her forgetting of the Polish language, even when immersed once again in the Polish culture while on the trip. She, like the narrator, also does not feel any sense of identification in Poland when she travels there. In addition to that, over the years she loses touch with the Baptist faith with which she grew up, and given her parents’ disavowal of their Jewish and Catholic faiths, she did not turn to either of these religions instead. Having lived through the war, Hella’s character is a member of the first generation. Interestingly, she did not live through the war as a Jew in hiding, rather her Jewish background was covered up and her German/Christian background from her mother was accentuated for the sake of validating herself as a German. The facts of her family past, namely the tradition of disavowal, and

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<sup>66</sup> Maron, 108.

<sup>67</sup> Maron, 9.

the circumstances surrounding Jews during WWII compounded the propensity for she herself to disavow her Jewish heritage.

The first instance of disavowal begins with the grandparents Pawel and Josefa Iglarz who both also belong to the first generation. They both break with their respective families geographically and religiously. Both characters independently move from Poland to Germany, severing all ties to their Polish family members and later refusing to mention them at all to their own children. Pawel and Josefa also disavow their religious upbringing, Judaism and Catholicism respectively, when they both convert to the Baptist faith. This is, however, to no avail for Pawel who is regarded merely through his heritage as a Jew by the Nazi regime and is therefore deported to the Belchatow ghetto.

Within the narrator's family genealogy, there is a noticeable pattern of increased identification with being German and a decreased religiosity, despite the permanent and ever persistent rupture in their family past, that is, the rupture of the Holocaust. The break in the narrator's family genealogy forces negotiation between two generations, which may or may not result in agreement and emotional closeness. Despite the characters' self-asserted positionalities, the memory of the rupture blends or "ram[s] together" multiple generations, thereby necessitating the reevaluation of positionalities in family history as victim, perpetrator, bystander, or a combination of these.<sup>68</sup> In *Pawels Briefe* specifically, the narrator negotiates her own historical standpoint with that of the other characters, Hella and Pawel.

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<sup>68</sup> Weigel, 271.

### I.A.1. The Narrator & her Mother

The relationship between the narrator Monika and her mother becomes marred as the former tries to make sense of her family members' lives during WWII. The first clue to the distant relationship is that the narrator never uses the title "mother," rather always refers to her by her first name. She thereby voids this relationship of virtually any biological tie, which lends itself well to Sigrid Weigel's model of generation in that their relationship is negotiated in terms of lived experience and memory of WWII and its aftermath. The narrator maintains a critical distance from the mother that is politically charged in that it is attributed primarily to their differing political affiliations.

Maron's protagonist grew up with her mother and aunt in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and was also influenced by this ideology through education in an East German school, participation in demonstrations with her mother, and induction as a member of the *Junge Pioniere* group. Having lived for many years under what she perceives to be the repressive GDR ideological apparatus contributes to both characters' unreliable memories (the mother's more so than the narrator's). Both characters, as evidenced by their lack of memory, have been impacted by GDR ideology in which "the historical experience of war death and mass murder [were] widely excluded from the official glorifications of communist antifascist resistance and heroic sacrifice."<sup>69</sup>

In reflection on her childhood, the narrator constructs herself as a victim: "Es ist schwierig, fast unmöglich, an die eigene Kindheit zu denken und dabei dem Selbstmitleid ganz zu widerstehen; zu groß erscheinen die Zumutungen, zu klein wir selbst."<sup>70</sup> Even within the private family sphere, forgetting took hold through repression of transmission

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<sup>69</sup> Pinkert, 7.

<sup>70</sup> Maron, 180.

and paradoxically a transmission of repression. To illustrate, even within the privacy of the home, the mother did not relay the grandparents' entire story to her daughter and explain why they were not present. The mother thereby modeled memory repression, which consequently passed on to the narrator who, therefore, never felt inclined to remember lost family members in terms of what actually happened to them. The repression created, especially for Hella's character, a state of complacency that does not address the family past in WWII.

The mutual discovery of Pawel's letters jolts both mother and daughter characters from this long maintained atmosphere of complacency and confronts them for the very first time with the presence of the past. The process of remembering begins, and it is plausible that in their joint undertaking of a journey into the past, a sense of closeness can develop between them. However, an observable element of friction between them outweighs any potential for proximity because not only is the narrator hurt, angered, and, thus, distanced from her mother due to withholding of such critical information, but once again, the narrator in her politically charged critical distance realizes that her mother has been completely absorbed by the repressive workings of the GDR. Not only that, but Hella's character ardently supported the GDR even after reunification, making her also an agent of repression. This stands in sharp contrast to the narrator herself, who later on in adulthood began questioning GDR ideology and begins at this point in the novel to contest Hella's memories or the lackthereof: "Hella erinnert sich anders. [...] Manchmal kommt es mir fast gewalttätig vor, wie sie den Tatsachen ihres Lebens das Glück abpreßt, als könnte sie einen anderen Befund nicht ertragen."<sup>71</sup> Out of this memory divide grows a sense of competition between Hella and Monika which brings a second meaning to Anne

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<sup>71</sup> Maron, 70.

Fuchs's "memory contests" in that Monika tries to establish herself as the more truthful and therefore better "rememberer." For example, when the narrator describes the impact of the reunification, she recalls visiting her mother and, "Schon am Gartentor rief ich: Ich bin der Sieger der Geschichte, und Hella sagte: Ich weiß. [...] Von diesem Triumph hatte ich geträumt."<sup>72</sup> The narrator's and her mother's differing memories are filtered through their own ideologies and, thus, both the memories and ideologies consistently clash with one another in contestation and competition.

The narrator also questions her own memory, however, not forgetting that she too had been influenced by the same political climate as her mother: "Ich kann oft nicht unterscheiden, ob ich mich wirklich erinnere oder ob ich mich an eine meinem Alter und Verständnis angepaßte Neuinszenierung meiner Erinnerung erinnere."<sup>73</sup> Feeling a lack of basis upon which to establish some kind of sense or truth, the protagonist looks for other perspectives and clues that could reveal what her grandfather was like, what life during WWII was like, and even what she was like as a young adult: "Also verlasse ich mich lieber nicht auf meine eigene Erinnerung an mich selbst, sondern frage meine Freundinnen, wie sie mich wahrgenommen haben, damals [...]."<sup>74</sup> In her seemingly inconsequential quest for knowledge of the family past, the narrator comes forth as a victim of GDR memory politics in that her upbringing in anti-fascist rhetoric did not allow her to explore what WWII actually meant for her own family. Such memory politics infiltrated her family as well, though, as evidenced by the mother's blatant dismissal of the grandfather's posthumous wishes. He explicitly directed his daughter, the narrator's mother, in one of his letters how he wants he and his wife to be remembered:

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<sup>72</sup> Maron, 130.

<sup>73</sup> Maron, 167.

<sup>74</sup> Maron, 195.

[...] laßt euch den Brief wortgetreu übersetzen und Hella soll denselben mit der Maschine abschreiben und Original und Abschrift gut aufbewahren. Schließt ihn irgend in ein Fach ein, daß er nicht verloren geht, und wenn Monika groß ist zeigt ihr den Brief und erzählt ihr, wie tief unglücklich ihre Großeltern gerade in den alten Tagen geworden sind, vielleicht weint sie dann auch eine Träne.<sup>75</sup>

Monika's character, however, represents a sense of empowerment in victimization precisely because she not only challenges the ideology she grew up in, but also her mother and even herself. Because of this, she also leaves some room for other perspectives, such as those of her friends, in helping her reconstruct her family past to ensure integrity and truth.

The text casts Hella's character in two opposing lights as both victim and perpetrator, but it also opens up a third possibility of categorizing her as bystander. The narrative explains her past struggles with family separation, impoverished living conditions, and bombings during WWII; she no longer remembers having ever received, read, or translated any of Pawel's letters. Nevertheless, her character's agency or lack thereof turns out to be problematic in her straddling of both victim and perpetrator positions. She exercises agency in her unwavering loyalty to the Communist party and the GDR utopian myth. Thus, her perpetuation of GDR memory politics within the family circle underpins her stance as perpetrator. In addition, the narrator recalls her mother's choice to marry Karl Maron, a high-ranking GDR officer who, in the protagonist's opinion, symbolized and reinforced her mother's unbreakable bond to Communism. When the narrator seriously doubts that her mother's support would have remained so ardent had she not met and married Karl, the latter insists otherwise, namely that her support of Communism stood independently from her relationship with Karl.

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<sup>75</sup> Maron, 113.

However, in her lack of agency, the text reveals a niche of passive complacency within which Hella's character is a bystander within the German past, namely through her former relationship with Walter who fought in WWII for the Nazis. Her love for him outweighed the implications of his indirect support of Nazi ideology and its repercussions for Pawel. In light of all this, Hella's character utilizes her agency in ways that only further incriminate her as perpetrator or bystander in the narrator's view. Her plausible victimization thus crumbles under the weight of her activity and passivity in the past.

As a result, the political charge of the mother's past (her choices, behavior, connections) carries far more weight for the narrator than any victimization they share from their residence together in the GDR during the post-war years. The narrator recalls how she could no longer live with her mother, "[...] deren politische Ignoranz mich um so mehr empörte."<sup>76</sup> Perhaps the most important and startling observation from this constellation is that it is possible to associate the descendant of a Holocaust victim with a perpetrator standpoint. The revelations of Maron's novel then are twofold. She not only challenges the two-dimensional historic binary of Jewish vs. German, but also that of the victim vs. perpetrator discourses that are typically associated with Jewish and German positions, respectively.

Lastly, the political in this novel crowds out the potential for emotional connection between these two characters. The way Maron writes the novel positions Hella's character on the questionable, guilty side and Monika's on the victim side. The dynamic between their respective political stances reflects the dominant triumphant West German narrative of the GDR's dissolution and subsequent integration into the Federal Republic. The competition of East vs. West and its ultimate outcome is interwoven

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<sup>76</sup> Maron, 201.

throughout Maron's novel and influences her portrayal of victim-perpetrator positionalities within the relationship between the two main characters.

However, if the reader is to fully subscribe to the narrator's portrayal as a victimized member of the second generation, this positioning within the family genealogy does not result in feelings of self-loathing or entitlement. The main character does not dwell on her belated undertaking of trying to get to know Pawel better, nor does she claim to be a victim of the Holocaust in the postmemory structure. After all, she does not consider herself to be Jewish. The protagonist instead tries to establish and maintain a strong bond to her deceased grandfather by means of memory. She thereby transforms her historical positioning as the granddaughter of a Jew killed in the Holocaust into something productive and empowering. Through her deep engagement with his letters and photographs, Maron's narrator attempts to take up the long delayed posthumous connection that Pawel had wished for.

#### I.A.2. The Narrator & her Grandfather

The relationship between the narrator and Pawel is especially intriguing as she was only two years old when he perished in a concentration camp in 1942, therefore she never had the chance to get to know him. Only after coming across letters he had written from detainment to the family and especially after having read his instructions for her mother to pass on his memory does the protagonist feel compelled, now in her adulthood, to research her family past. Whether she acknowledges and mourns Pawel's plight from the outlook of a German, a Jew, or varying constellations of these two, is an interesting question worth exploring in this section. The relationship between the narrator and her grandfather exemplifies how the historic positionality of the perished first generation is

negotiated with the positionality of the present day second generation inquirer in the postmemory structure. As a member of the second generation, the protagonist situates her grandfather in history, while also inscribing herself into that history through her own understanding and remembrance of the past.

The narrator, in her imaginings of how life could have been if Pawel were still alive, if he had lived his full life, illustrates her wish for his *living* presence in her life. She also situates Pawel as a victim of the Holocaust because had it not been for the rupture in the family genealogy, the narrator could have learned about him directly instead of through what is afforded her in the postmemory structure (i.e., letters and pictures): “Pawel wäre 1945 sechszehn Jahre alt gewesen. [...] Fünf, vielleicht sogar zehn Jahre hätte ich einen Großvater haben können, diesen Großvater.”<sup>77</sup> The narrator also conceives of Pawel as a victim whose story has gone untold, rendered forgotten, within not only the family circle, but the “Erinnerungskultur” at large that impacted the succeeding post-war generations as well.<sup>78</sup> The narrator, as a member of the second generation, constructs Pawel’s story and her own to be able to contribute to the diversification of the postmemory structure.

Given that the protagonist’s ancestors had been Jewish and that she does not identify with any faith, I argue that her motivation to learn about and understand Pawel is driven by feelings of both victimization and guilt. As discussed in the previous section, the narrator, who perceives herself as a victim of GDR memory politics even within the family sphere, takes the opportunity to counteract the processes of “not remembering” that had long been imposed upon her. She, in breaking Pawel’s silence, also creates a

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<sup>77</sup> Maron, 180.

<sup>78</sup> Norbert Frei, *1945 und wir: Das Dritte Reich im Bewußtsein der Deutschen* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2005), 26. Quoted in Vees-Gulani, 60.

rupture in the family lineage in a way by unfolding the letters and displaying photographs that had been stored away for so many years. What had been forgotten is now illuminated and subjected to questioning and negotiation.

Moreover, the letters in which Pawel explicitly mentions the protagonist's name binds them together in a written contract that, especially in the absence of its execution, has also made her a victim. In other words, the protagonist and Pawel have a relationship as victims, just as she and her mother stand on similar grounds as victims of GDR ideology. However, following that same pattern between the narrator and Pawel, the former comes forth not as a perpetrator who had purposefully banished any memory of her first generation grandfather, rather she emerges as a bystander in her own genealogy who had neglected a responsibility. Maron's protagonist opens the novel with an explanation: "Es gibt zurückliegende Ereignisse, von denen wir nur ungenau erfahren und von denen wir wissen, daß wir eines Tages ihrer in Ruhe gedenken und sie genauer ergründen wollen."<sup>79</sup> Although she had not questioned the family past until finding the letters, she addresses the belated urgency of doing so. Interestingly, using "we" instead of "I," she creates a sense of community perhaps among post-war generations who engage in postmemory work: "Irgendwann, denken wir, muß ich das genau wissen."<sup>80</sup> A feeling of guilt for having not acknowledged a responsibility for the past is also an undercurrent of her postponed family research. Nevertheless, this guilt is different from that associated with a perpetrator. Within the broader cultural memory (i.e., in textbooks and public debates), the protagonist has fully acknowledged the responsibility of uncovering truths of the German past. Only into the proximate communicative memory (i.e., that of letters

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<sup>79</sup> Maron, 7-8.

<sup>80</sup> Maron, 8.

and photographs) has the narrator failed to extrapolate this confrontation with the German past: “Ich kannte die Umrisse der Geschichte, der das Innenleben und erst recht meine Kenntnis fehlten.”<sup>81</sup> Ultimately, the protagonist uses feelings of guilt in having neglected Pawel’s story to exercise agency by turning her approach introspectively from the depersonalized cultural memory to the personalized communicative memory that Pawel’s letters relay. The narrator explicitly dedicates the first chapter of her narrative to Pawel and Josefa: “Das erste Kapitel meines ersten Buches gehört ihnen.”<sup>82</sup> In contesting her mother’s memories, she clearly has a selective perception of Pawel’s life and the clues that are given about it in his posthumous remnants. Monika’s character seeks to build an exclusive relationship with Pawel that does not so much rely on the mother and her questionable recollections: “in dem Hella, die ihn ja besser gekannt hat als ich, sich dessen eben nicht gewiss sein kann, überläßt sie meinen Großvater ganz mir und meinen Mutmaßungen über ihn.”<sup>83</sup>

This relationship she builds between herself and Pawel is not as politically charged. To her dismay, she finds out Pawel had been Communist, yet, despite her strong opposition to this political ideology, she seems to be willing to make a compromise in the relationship. She artfully navigates around this point of difference and negotiates it in an interesting way. She imagines that had Pawel survived the Holocaust and lived into the Cold War years, he surely would have chosen to live in West Germany and, thus, presumably leave the Communist party: “Ich glaube nicht, daß Pawel mit uns in den Osten gezogen wäre [...]”<sup>84</sup> Additionally, Monika’s character is confident in her

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<sup>81</sup> Maron, 8.

<sup>82</sup> Maron, 7.

<sup>83</sup> Maron, 182.

<sup>84</sup> Maron, 182.

imaginative speculation that Pawel had been a rational person like herself and, in doing so, establishes a similarity between the two of them to counteract this problematic discovery about his political affiliation: [...] der hätte nicht gleichgültig bleiben können gegenüber den Opfern der nächsten Diktatur, dessen Moral folgte einem anderen Gebot als dem seiner Klasse.”<sup>85</sup> Their relationship, therefore, stands in stark contrast to the one that the narrator Monika holds with her mother in that the friction of political disagreement is outweighed by the “longing for affiliation and succession, the desire for an ongoing, documented tradition, and the need, finally, to write oneself back into the family narrative.”<sup>86</sup>

In *Pawels Briefe* the main characters and their historical positionalities are all but static, as the categorization changes depending on varying constellations, revealing “shades of victimhood.”<sup>87</sup> In the relationship with the mother, the protagonist construes herself as a victim; however, with Pawel she connects with him as a victim, but also appears as a bystander. The narrative portrays Hella’s character as a victim, bystander, and perpetrator, but the protagonist emphasizes the latter two labels. Finally, the protagonist’s narration depicts Pawel as a victim of the Holocaust, and that detracts from the differing political affiliations between him as Communist in the past and the protagonist as anti-Communist in the narrative present. Based on positionality alone, one can see, in tracing backward from the narrator to Pawel, that the rupture in the family genealogy (Holocaust) complicates the generational roles in the Maron/Iglarz family starting with Hella’s character. The protagonist, however, further complicates positionality by creating a counter rupture, so to speak, in her family genealogy through

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<sup>85</sup> Maron, 181.

<sup>86</sup> Ben-Horin, 237.

<sup>87</sup> Stimmel, 161.

inquiry and appropriation of the family past that resists the ongoing tradition of repression and disavowal in her family. Confronting her family members as figures of the past reveal intergenerational differences in political and religious affiliation, for instance, yet the second generation narrator reconciles these differences in her own way which results in shifting standpoints for herself and her family members. In confronting and reconciling intergenerational differences, she represents elements of renewal and reconfiguration of family memory within cultural WWII memory that are inherent to Marianne Hirsch's postmemory structure.

### I.B. *Am Beispiel meines Bruders*: The Critical Anchor

The continuation of first generation memory into succeeding generations is an intriguing aspect of Timm's *Am Beispiel meines Bruders*. Written by a non-Jewish West German author, one may assume that this text is scattered with allusions to guilt or perhaps to the "recent return of the topos of 'German victimhood.'"<sup>88</sup> In fact, "current literary texts dealing with the Nazi past and the Second World War are also part of a recent discourse about German trauma and suffering that thematizes war experiences [...]."<sup>89</sup> Such texts include, for example, the aforementioned book by Sebald about German city air raids and even Timm's novel. As in *Pawels Briefe*, however, the triangular relationship between the protagonist, his father, and deceased brother also reveals fluidity among categories. Here, mapping the political onto the familial results in a competition between aversions related to atrocities of WWII and sentimentality of family connection.

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<sup>88</sup> Stimmel, 162.

<sup>89</sup> Veas-Gulani, 58.

The narrator himself, an autobiographical protagonist by the name Uwe, undertakes a somewhat objective approach to his family's past. As opposed to Maron's narrator, who often imbues family discovery with political bias, Timm's narrator does not have as much of an independent presence through frequent, extensive monologue, rather he integrates more excerpts of cultural memory into his own thoughts. Michael Braun notes the interrupted narrative structure in Timm's novel: "Die Erinnerungen gehorchen offenbar einer anderen Logik als der eines linearen Erzählens [...]. Die Anordnungsform der Quellen zerbricht das chronologische Rückgrat der Zeitgeschichte, zerreit kausale Ereigniszusammenhnge [...]."<sup>90</sup> Also, given the narrator was only a few years old at war's end, any injection of his own thoughts and opinions in this novel is closely linked to the various family members in reaction to their behaviors and attitudes. Therefore, he stands on the periphery as the omnipresent narrator, yet all surrounding figures and revelations of his research are mediated through him to the reader. This has a way of making the narration seem more objective, when in fact the narration is a very subjective process of mapping the political onto the familial and vice versa.

The characters take the foreground of this novel in that, as stated before, the protagonist reflects on their attitudes and behaviors as aspects that take center stage. As for his father, Heinz, the narrator does not know much about his childhood and even less about his family. In fact, it is explicitly mentioned his grandfather is to be forgotten: "Über ihn wurde nicht gesprochen. Er sollte vergessen werden. Die Strafe durch Nichterinnern, Nichterwhnung."<sup>91</sup> Heinz's character had fought in WWI and thus takes much pride in German national identity. He comes forth as a charismatic character in

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<sup>90</sup> Michael Braun, "Die Leerstellen der Geschichte: Uwe Timms Am Beispiel meines Bruders," in *Erinnern, Vergessen, Erzhlen*, 61.

<sup>91</sup> Uwe Timm, *Am Beispiel meines Bruders* (Cologne: Verlag Kiepenheuer and Witsch, 2003), 50.

being able to attract customers and win favors from creditors to finance his furrier business. In social interactions, he often disguises any real problems with the appearance of wealth: “Was die Leute denken, das war die immerwährende Sorge um die eigene Geltung.”<sup>92</sup> Later in his life, he falls into a state of depression and begins drinking, “er war innerlich wund geworden,” an amalgam of factors which ultimately lead to his death.<sup>93</sup>

The protagonist’s deceased brother, Karl-Heinz, is depicted as the prized member of the family who had been full of promise, especially for the father: “[...] der Junge, der nicht nur Sohn war, sondern auch Freund und Kamerad, jemand, der all die eigenen Wünsche verwirklichte [...]”<sup>94</sup> Karl-Heinz’s character, like his father, had shown great potential in the furrier business, paving the way for its future inheritance had it not been for his voluntary participation in WWII. He had joined the SS-Totenkopf division of the German army at the age of 18. During his service, he suffered a fatal leg wound and all that remains of his life are his photographs, oral recollections from the parents, and most importantly, his diary from time spent in the war. In this novel much of the relationship between the narrator and his father is mediated through the deceased brother, creating a triangulated relationship: “Über den Bruder schreiben, heißt auch über ihn schreiben, den Vater.”<sup>95</sup> By writing about father and brother, the narrator tries to deconstruct latent memories of them independently from the accusatory perspective of the German past that he holds in the recesses of his memory. Approaching his family members in such a way attempts to establish a closer relationship and a new narrative that bridges the first and

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<sup>92</sup> Timm, 82.

<sup>93</sup> Timm, 110.

<sup>94</sup> Timm, 108.

<sup>95</sup> Timm, 21.

second generations together: “Sich ihnen schreibend anzunähern, ist der Versuch, das bloß Behaltene in Erinnerung aufzulösen, sich neu zu finden.”<sup>96</sup>

### I.B.1. The Narrator & his Father

Given that Heinz’s character had placed so much hope on his eldest son that had been dashed by his premature death, it follows that the same hopes and dreams would be transferred on to the narrator: “Die Hoffnung richtete sich auf mich, der den Vater einmal entlasten würde.”<sup>97</sup> Throughout the novel, there is hardly ever a point where the relationship between the narrator and his father that is not somehow connected to the deceased brother. The father’s dreams and expectations once again fall short with the narrator, which ultimately results in a “hartnäckiger, immer gehässiger werdender Kampf zwischen uns.”<sup>98</sup>

The rebellion begins in the protagonist’s adolescent years just after the war in the time of Germany’s “vaterlose Gesellschaft”<sup>99</sup> or fatherless society, a term coined by Alexander Mitscherlich, in which the virtues of the first generation are rendered a complete failure at war’s end in light of National Socialism’s and thereby the fathers’ defeat in WWII: “Die Erwachsenen erschienen lächerlich, [...] aber es war spürbar – diese Degradierung der Väter.”<sup>100</sup>

Living in West Germany, the protagonist recalls his developed affinity for Western goods, such as jeans and jazz music, which created conflict with Heinz’s character who had deep disdain for the Western nations that had occupied Germany after

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<sup>96</sup> Timm, 21.

<sup>97</sup> Timm, 83.

<sup>98</sup> Timm, 24.

<sup>99</sup> Alexander Mitscherlich, *Auf dem Weg zur vaterlosen Gesellschaft: Ideen zur Sozialpsychologie* (Munich: R. Piper, 1963). Quoted in Weigel, 268.

<sup>100</sup> Timm, 69.

the war as they reinforced his feeling of failure. The father tried in vain and all the more desperately, perhaps, to counteract unstoppable changes, by enforcing past ideals that simply no longer fit Germany's post-war circumstances, the environment the narrator grew up in:

Als ich sechzehn war, begann ein hartnäckiger, immer gehässiger werdender Kampf zwischen uns. [...] keine Jeans, kein Jazz, 10 Uhr abends zu Hause sein. Was alles verboten, was verlangt, was geregelt war. Ein Regelsystem, das mir nicht einleuchtete und dessen Widersprüchlichkeit zu offensichtlich war. Nicht nur, weil ich – älter geworden – ihn kritisch zu sehen anfang, sondern weil sich auch die Lebensumstände verändert hatten.<sup>101</sup>

As the protagonist matures, his developing curiosity for the family past is rooted in the quest for truth, even if it conflicts with past hopes that his father clings to. In having confronted the predominant perpetrator discourse of West German education, the narrator's perspective shifts from cultural memory to communicative memory in his brother's diary, for example. The introspective glance creates even more conflict with his father who does not want to be reminded of Germany's defeat because it only reminds him of his own personal defeat and the loss of his son Karl-Heinz.

In this divide, Timm's protagonist comes forth as a victim if one is to subscribe to the claim in post-war memory debates that the children of the war, including those born just before its end, are victims, as Martin Walser and many others argued in the Walser-Bubis debate.<sup>102</sup> This identification within the second generation fueled the rebellious discourse of 1968 in which, as Anne Fuchs describes, the second generation "carried the question of moral responsibility back inside the family unit," which often led to an emotionally charged categorization of "Väter sind Täter."<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Timm, 24.

<sup>102</sup> Weigel, 273.

<sup>103</sup> Fuchs, 183.

This historic dynamic serves as the backdrop against which the autobiographical narrator himself challenges the father's role in the German past to further reinforce the divide between himself as victim and Heinz as perpetrator. The protagonist reflects on the later repercussions of this divide between the generations that started after the war and culminated in a second generation-wide rebellion against the first generation:

Von einem Tag auf den anderen waren die Großen, die Erwachsenen, klein geworden. Eine Erfahrung, die ich mit vielen anderen meiner Generation teilen sollte. Wahrscheinlich gibt es einen Zusammenhang zwischen dieser Erfahrung und der antiautoritären Bewegung der Studentenrevolte, die sich gegen die Vätergeneration richtete.<sup>104</sup>

As a novel from the post-1989 context, however, Timm's autobiographical narrator takes the discourse of the '68-generation a step further by questioning his own memory. In doing so, he abandons the discourse of separation between first and second generations by ironically relying on a member of the first generation, his sister Hanne-Lore, to get a more objective account of his identity in the German past: "Wie war ich? Solange man diese Frage noch beantwortet bekommen kann, ist man immer noch ein Kind."<sup>105</sup> However, his continued mistrust of the first generation's memory, "Sie wollte es so sehen, und ich sagte, ja und vielleicht," paired with the acknowledgement that his memory may also be distorted, leaves him in continued state of inquiry.<sup>106</sup>

Taking this into account, the narrator still firmly anchors himself in the "desire for childlike innocence" and thereby juxtaposes his positionality against that of his father's as a perpetrator.<sup>107</sup> He questions his father's firm belief in the German national identity and the virtues it perpetuated, whose failure led the latter to a state of anger: "Der Vater

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<sup>104</sup> Timm, 68-69.

<sup>105</sup> Timm, 56.

<sup>106</sup> Timm, 57.

<sup>107</sup> Weigel, 273.

konnte Trauer nicht zulassen, nur Wut [...]”<sup>108</sup> Heinz’s character took Germany’s defeat so hard that he even engaged in discussions with peers about how the war could have been won: “[sie] Suchten Erklärungen, warum der Krieg *verlorengegangen* war.”<sup>109</sup> The narrator is appalled, finding it “kaum vorstellbar heute” that such conversations took place after the war among the first generation, in which they implicitly wished for continuity of the Third Reich and its terrors.<sup>110</sup> The narrator’s description of his father’s behavior illustrates Margaret Mitscherlich’s argument that “Germans substituted important mourning tasks with narcissistic strategies of victim identification.”<sup>111</sup> Here, his fury over damage to the personal and national ego prevents Heinz’s character from coming to terms with his own positioning in the past.

Throughout the narrative, however, the positionality of Heinz’s character is obscured at the question of agency and of personal loss. As one member of a larger value system, his positionality begs the question to what extent he had agency in the political climate of the war period, thereby obscuring his positionality. While the narrator parallels National Socialist goals with his father’s own, revealing him as a perpetrator, he nevertheless considers his father’s relation to the larger historical context that had influenced him. For example, at one point in the text the narrator alludes to Heinz’s character as an “Opfer eines unerklärlichen Schicksals,”<sup>112</sup> who simply became swept up into the prevailing political order: “Es war nicht nur der Vater gescheitert, sondern mit ihm das kollektive *Wertesystem*.”<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Timm, 78.

<sup>109</sup> Timm, 78.

<sup>110</sup> Timm, 78.

<sup>111</sup> Pinkert, 6.

<sup>112</sup> Timm, 91

<sup>113</sup> Timm, 108.

The father's inability to come to terms with his son's death also obscures his positionality. Is it possible that the father's mourning has more to do with the loss of his son rather than the collapse of National Socialism? A father mourning his son's death certainly evokes sympathy. However, the unavoidable historical context surrounding the death and the relationship the father had with him is critically reflected upon in the narrative, yielding Heinz's character as a perpetrator and a victim. Sebald, in his essay, identified German lack of mourning for Jewish victims as a "persistent silencing of the German deaths in postwar culture resulting from feelings of shame and resentment toward the victors."<sup>114</sup> In light of suppressed personal loss, Pinkert argues that "without a robust public discourse [...] that conceives of empathy with the self as potential pathways toward empathy with others, a concern with German suffering will continually relapse into narcissistic or nostalgic engagements with the war past."<sup>115</sup> Consequently, there must be some space for victimization if one is to acknowledge and take responsibility for perpetration. This unexplainable outcome of events, especially as it relates to personal loss in the narrator's family, would need to be addressed before being able to take responsibility for perpetration under the Nazi regime.

The narrative reflects tension between viewpoints, such as Mitscherlich's and Sebald's, in the positioning of Heinz's character. However, the narrator is not ambivalent in situating his family members in the past. His critical view of his father's role in Germany's history as one that championed Nazi ideals overtakes potential feelings of sympathy. Although the father supposedly did not talk Karl-Heinz into entering the SS, the brother's voluntary entry into the war nevertheless carried out what the father

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<sup>114</sup> Pinkert, 5.

<sup>115</sup> Pinkert, 6.

implicitly encouraged. The question of agency is unavoidable for the brother, as it has significant implications for where he fits into the historical picture.

## I.B.2. The Narrator & his Brother

The narrative begins with the narrator's first memory of his own self-awareness, which happens to coincide with a memory of an encounter with his deceased brother:

Erhoben werden- Lachen, Jubel, eine unbändige Freude- diese Empfindung begleitet die Erinnerung an ein Erlebnis, ein Bild, das erste, das sich mir eingepägt hat, mit ihm beginnt für mich das Wissen von mir selbst.<sup>116</sup>

He recalls the faint memory of his brother surprising him from behind the cupboard and the floating sensation as his brother had swooped him up into his arms and swayed him about: "ich werde hochgehoben – ich schwebe."<sup>117</sup>

Such affectionate memories from within the family circle are starkly contrasted with information about the war outlined in the diary that renders Karl-Heinz's character as an actor in the Nazi regime. If his sheer presence at the war scene is not enough to make him an active perpetrator, after all, he could have been a bystander, then the question of his character's agency may reveal otherwise. The fact that he had willingly offered his service to the SS makes him a perpetrator within the larger cultural memory discourse. No one forced him to enter the service, nor was he drafted: "[...] er habe sich tatsächlich freiwillig gemeldet, der Vater hätte nicht zugeredet."<sup>118</sup>

In the family constellation, however, the narrator raises some doubt about his brother's culpability. Karl-Heinz's character, according to the narrator, had identified with the father and his wishes. Therefore, although he had supposedly voluntarily enrolled himself into the SS without pressure from the father, his supposed agency

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<sup>116</sup> Timm, 9.

<sup>117</sup> Timm, 9.

<sup>118</sup> Timm, 59.

becomes complicated when taking into account his upbringing described in the narrative and the oppressive, political climate at the time: “[...] der Vater hätte nicht zugeredet. Aber dessen bedurfte es auch nicht. Es war nur die wortlose Ausführung von dem, was der Vater im Einklang mit der Gesellschaft wünschte.”<sup>119</sup>

Considering the tense relationship between the narrator and the father, it may be conjectured that the former tries to find a similarity with Karl-Heinz’s character in that both of them were raised with the father’s values anchored in the Third Reich. The significant difference, however, is that the height of the war’s atrocities had occurred in Karl-Heinz’s teenage years, while the narrator was only an infant. This creates a divide in which the narrator “attribute[s] [his] own historical position to a self-identification as second generation genealogically to the guilty parent [and brother] generation.”<sup>120</sup> The narrator shows how the ideals of the Third Reich had successfully convinced his brother to participate in propagation of such ideals, especially in his “wortlose Ausführung” of what society encouraged. However, the father’s attempt at a belated enforcement of those ideals and their rigid rules *after* the war conflicted with the protagonist’s very different values shaped by the post-war period in which he grew up. I argue further that the narrator, as the one who could and did resist his defeated father, as one of the second generation who witnessed the “Befreiung von den nach Leder riechenden Soldaten,” sympathizes with Karl-Heinz’s character for not being in the right time and place to do so as well.<sup>121</sup>

Therefore, the protagonist does not allow his brother’s decision to enter the army to relegate him as perpetrator right away; instead he tries to find out more about his

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<sup>119</sup> Timm, 59.

<sup>120</sup> Weigel, 268.

<sup>121</sup> Timm, 68.

brother's role in the war. In the narrative, the protagonist gives his brother the benefit of the doubt, so to speak, not giving up the hope of being able to separate Karl-Heinz's character from accusations of perpetrator and, therefore, holding some sentimentality in remembering him. If he had so chosen to be a member of the SS in order to curry favor from his father, maybe, in confronting the terrors of the war, he had reevaluated his decision and even his allegiance to such an ideology. The narrator searches for clues that may reveal any thoughts of this sort in his brother's objectively logged itinerary of the war's events. One hint of morality appears in a letter from the brother to the father in which the former shuns England's persistent bombing of Hamburg: "[...] täglich werden hier Fliegerangriffe der Engländer gemeldet. [...] Das ist doch kein Krieg, das ist ja Mord an Frauen und Kinder – und das ist nicht human."<sup>122</sup>

Although the narrator acts in a similar way to those of the "Opa war kein Nazi" study of the 1990s in the attempt to heroicize his brother, he cannot help but see blatant hypocrisy in his brother's letter because he too fought among civilians in Russia: "Es ist schwer verständlich [...], wie Teilnahme und Mitgefühl im Angesicht des Leids ausgeblendet wurden, wie es zu dieser Trennung von human zu Hause und human hier, in Rußland, kommt."<sup>123</sup> A particular unforgettable diary entry further underlines the brother's hypocrisy, in which the young Nazi SS soldier crudely notes in his journal that he killed a Russian: "*75 m raucht Iwan Zigaretten, ein Fressen für mein MG.*"<sup>124</sup> Additionally, a letter that the brother had written to the narrator and the mother further incriminates Karl-Heinz's character while also raising the question of the narrator's own positionality to be gleaned from their relationship: "*Wie die Goldmutsch mir schrieb*

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<sup>122</sup> Timm, 27.

<sup>123</sup> Timm, 93.

<sup>124</sup> Timm, 19.

*willst Du alle Russen totschießen und dann mit mir türmen. Also Bub, daß geht nicht, wenn das alle machen würden? Aber ich hoffe, daß ich bald nach Hause komme, dann spiele ich mit Uwe.*<sup>125</sup> This not only incriminates Karl-Heinz's character as a perpetrator to a certain degree for influencing the impressionable protagonist at a young age, but it also, when considering young age, poses the question of how old one must be in order to be a perpetrator.

Given the narrator's apparent young age at the time of the letter and the lack of agency a child at this age has, he justifies himself as victim when he reflects on this letter and wonders: "Wie kommt ein dreijähriges Kind dazu, alle Russen totschießen zu wollen?"<sup>126</sup> Once again it becomes apparent that he clings to his lack of agency at the time and the "desire for a childlike innocence, in effect even today" when he indirectly points out the dangerous influence his surroundings had on him in his childhood.<sup>127</sup>

Also, what his brother does *not* write puzzles the protagonist. Was the killing that went on there not worth mentioning? Michael Braun observes the empty spaces or "Leerstellen" of the novel in which "Erklärungen und Herleitungen [...] lassen sich nicht finden. Es ist allein die dichterische Imagination, die in den Leerraum der Geschichte vorstößt [...]."<sup>128</sup> "Imaginative investment, projection, and creation" of the family story based on what is and is not present, is inherent to postmemory projects.<sup>129</sup> The narrator's conjectures about the brother's possible numbness to killing and the incriminating diary entry ultimately dash any hopes he had for establishing a common ground with his brother---a common ground based on a sense of sympathy and respect for human life.

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<sup>125</sup> Timm, 58.

<sup>126</sup> Timm, 58.

<sup>127</sup> Weigel, 273.

<sup>128</sup> Braun, 63.

<sup>129</sup> Hirsch, 107.

Deliberations about Karl-Heinz as a person removed from historical context also result in a problematic depiction of the deceased figure that only further incriminates him. The narrator's effort to get to know his brother as a person through constructing the family narrative is futile because the narrator finds that his political role in Nazi Germany permeates any remnants of his identity too heavily to be ignored. Depicting the brother simply as an apolitical, demilitarized person is problematic anyway, as it may unjustly victimize him, normalize his actions under the Nazi regime, and thereby weaken the magnitude of those actions. Throughout the entire novel, the narrator fails to find redeeming qualities in Karl-Heinz's character to put him at ease that his own brother was not a perpetrator in WWII. The narrator's attempt to forge a bond with the deceased first generation reveals, though, that in this particular case, it is impossible for the proximity of family connection to flourish in the all too large shadow of the political past that looms over it. This does not mean the protagonist's engagement in postmemory is superfluous. The attempt to get to know his brother as a "normal" young man, however difficult it may be, indeed enriches the protagonist's understanding of the intersection between Germany's history and that of his family. The narrator also discovers a nuanced picture of his brother as an actor in the past which further informs the posthumous relationship they have with one another as one that binds them as brothers, but separates them with regards to historical positionalities.

*Am Beispiel meines Bruders* indicates that the question of positionality, while also somewhat dependent on the family relationship under examination, is still deeply rooted in the cultural memory. The victim-perpetrator discourse does influence the posthumous relationships he holds with his family members. Unlike Friedhelm Marx who, in his

essay on the text, claims that “Timm zielt auf eine Korrektur des kulturellen Gedächtnisses,” I propose instead that Timm’s protagonist aims to correct or at least to re-evaluate his family’s communicative memory by filtering it through the more objective cultural memory.<sup>130</sup> Therefore, the narrator negotiates his first generation family members’ positionalities through cultural memory, thereby informing his family past with cultural memory instead of the other way around. Hirsch is helpful here in her claim that, “scholarly and artistic work of these descendants [here, of the Holocaust, but I argue also the war in general] also makes clear that even the most intimate of familial knowledge of the past is mediated by broadly available public images and narratives.”<sup>131</sup>

Aside from the informed inquiry of negotiating positionalities, however, the purpose of the protagonist’s project becomes much more than just categorization. His position as a member of the second generation in the German post-war *and* post-unification era speaks more to his quest for truth, rather than opportunities to vilify or victimize others and himself. This quest speaks to a “need for inclusion in a collective membrane forged by [...] individual and social responsibility we feel toward a persistent and traumatic past.”<sup>132</sup>

### I.C. Positionality Negotiations in Both Novels

In both *Pawels Briefe* and *Am Beispiel Meines Bruders*, the protagonists both try to situate their family members’ roles in the historical context of WWII. In doing so, both projects reveal the fluidity of positionality for respective family members. This allows neither protagonist to locate with certainty their family members’ positionalities, which is

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<sup>130</sup> Friedhelm Marx, “‘Erinnerung, sprich’: Autobiographie und Erinnerung in Uwe Timms *Am Beispiel meines Bruders*,” in *Erinnern, Vergessen, Erzählen*, 32.

<sup>131</sup> Hirsch, 112.

<sup>132</sup> Hirsch, 111.

significant considering the differing impacts the Holocaust had within the Jewish background of Maron's protagonist, on the one hand, and the German background of Timm's protagonist on the other. This speaks to the complexity of the victim-perpetrator discourse within families and among families of different backgrounds. Although the historical location of family members is an important undertaking for both narrators, it is not the central point of their respective projects. The two post-1989 novels from Maron and Timm reflect more so the open, yet critical dialogue that the protagonists try to establish in mapping the political onto the familial.

However, the way in which the postmemory work influences the protagonists' family relationships unfolds in differing ways. These differences are especially apparent in the relationships with living vs. deceased family members in both novels. Maron's protagonist, overcoming an ambivalent attitude towards her mother, finds a common ground with Hella's character in the end, where the two can co-exist without necessarily having an emotional connection. In contrast, throughout the story, she consistently strives for emotional proximity to her deceased grandfather through the postmemory structure. Interestingly, in Timm's novel, the narrator posthumously situates all his deceased family members, especially his father and brother, as he engages with the past. Their absence throughout the narrative consistently upholds the critical distance between them and the protagonist. He gains a more complex understanding in reflecting on the family connection to political history, however, by the end of the novel, the protagonist still stands emotionally distanced from his father and brother.

As the next section illustrates, the contact both protagonists have with various remnants of the WWII past may either bring the protagonists closer to their respective family members or further distance them from one another.

## II. Postmemory & Artifacts of the Past

“Ein kleines Pappkästchen, mit Briefen, den Orden, ein paar Fotos, einer Zahnpastatube und einem Kamm. Und an diesem Kamm ist das, was von seinem Körper blieb.”<sup>133</sup>

The “Crimes of the *Wehrmacht*” exhibition in the unified Germany illustrated *Wehrmacht* involvement “at all levels and in all types of crime [...]. To render this involvement shockingly visible, the exhibition featured hundreds of gruesome photographs.”<sup>134</sup> And as Andrea Liss argues, “the daunting, delicate, and volatile subject of exhibiting the Holocaust calls for a reevaluation of photography in the service of contemporary witnessing,” especially as members of the first generation gradually pass.<sup>135</sup> As mentioned in the previous chapter, the exhibit was not without controversy in the culture at large and within families, as “some sought in the exhibitions answers to questions they had asked as children, or explanations for photographs they had seen, but were not understood.”<sup>136</sup> It is no wonder, then, that photography plays a special role in Marianne Hirsch’s postmemory structure: “[...] it is in the technology of photography itself, and the belief in reference that it engenders, that connects the Holocaust generation to the generation after.”<sup>137</sup> Personal conversations with members of the first generation and items, such as photographs and other belongings, thus bridge the gap between the WWII past and the present of succeeding generations. As descendants of first generation family members engage with the family past through artifacts, they confront the “disturbance in the genealogy” which enables the “ramming together (*Verschachtelung*)

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<sup>133</sup> Timm, 159

<sup>134</sup> Niven, 145.

<sup>135</sup> Andrea Liss, *Trespassing through Shadows: Memory, Photography & the Holocaust* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), xiii.

<sup>136</sup> Niven, 159.

<sup>137</sup> Hirsch, 107.

of the order of generations, making very difficult any attempt at counting generations or interpreting generations as a measure of time.”<sup>138</sup>

Family belongings also serve to connect cultural and communicative memory, for example with the “‘adoption’ of public, anonymous images into the family photo album [and] its counterpart in the pervasive use of private, familial images and objects in institutions of public display—museums and memorials [...]”<sup>139</sup> In fact, sharing artifacts of communicative memory infuses cultural memory (i.e., exhibits and museums) and postmemory work of the post-1989 context with even more variety.

Despite the increasingly open exchange between communicative and cultural memory, however, there is an increasing tendency to personalize the past. Hirsch states that “public and private images and stories blend, distinctions and specificities between them are more difficult to maintain, and the more difficult they are to maintain, the more some of us might wish to reassert them so as to insist on the distinctiveness of a specifically familial second-generation identity.”<sup>140</sup> This idea fits nicely with the diversification of the postmemory structure since 1989, whether such family memory projects undertaken are publicized or kept private. The effort to distinguish the family history is especially apparent in literature. The introspective glance and personalization of cultural memory, that I propose are present in post-1989 novels, such as *Pawels Briefe* and *Am Beispiel meines Bruders*, contribute to the multiplicity of stories collected in recent years. It also adds to the “democratization of memory” that Bathrick suggests, making both engagements with Jewish and German family history artifacts similar and equally legitimate contributions to postmemory.

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<sup>138</sup> Weigel, 271.

<sup>139</sup> Hirsch, 112-113.

<sup>140</sup> Hirsch, 114.

Such an assertion of personalization is apparent in both novels, as each protagonist extensively engages with sources of communicative memory, such as photographs and letters. Anne Fuchs, in her article on post-war memory contests, identifies artifacts as one of the key characteristics of post-1989 memory works, “[...] that aid or trigger the narrator’s investigations of a historical event that is perceived as a disturbance.”<sup>141</sup> The disturbances in both novels are rooted in the same historical context, yet the one that drives Maron’s protagonist’s inquiry into the past is rooted in the effects of the Holocaust on her family. Timm’s novel in contrast represents the engagement with the family past rooted in National Socialist involvement. The different perspectives with regard to the disturbance itself impact the family genealogy and thus also the engagement with historical remnants in slightly different ways. What both novels uphold, however, as post-*Wende* works is that the protagonists explore the previous generations, as Fuchs suggests. One way the protagonists do this is through engagement with personal belongings preserved from the past.

The artifacts themselves are sometimes quite puzzling, however, as certain clues to the past or obvious gaps contained in them may confuse later generations or raise contradictions. As it turns out, sources of communicative memory are not as communicative and informative as the term suggests. Friederike Eigler observes with regards to “the unexpected appearance of old family photos or documents” that “voids, contradictions, and family secrets are at the core of many of these [generational novels].”<sup>142</sup> Stories and pieces of the past, no matter how intriguing they may be,

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<sup>141</sup> Fuchs, 184.

<sup>142</sup> Friederike Eigler, “Beyond the Victims Debate: Flight and Expulsion in Recent Novels by Authors from the Second and Third Generation (Christoph Hein, Reinhard Jirgl, Kathrin Schmidt, and Tanja Dücker),”

certainly pose problems in many ways for those generations who seek to reconnect with the family past. The search for answers, as Walter Benjamin argues with regards to memory work, also includes “vergebliche[s] Suchen” which belongs to the process just as much as successful discoveries.<sup>143</sup> Due to common voids in the postmemory structure, imaginative capacity is yet another characteristic reflected in literature. Imaginative devices compensate for the voids while also imbuing the postmemory project with a personal touch through “reactivat[ion] and reembod[iment]” of “distant social/national and archival/cultural structures by reinvesting them with resonant individual and familial forms of mediation and aesthetic expression.”<sup>144</sup>

An important caveat to postmemory’s imaginative possibilities, however, is the obligation to maintain historical integrity within such fantasies. After all, the subject undertaking a postmemory project cannot simply imagine whatever he or she wants and claim it as truth. Ruth Klüger argued this when speaking on the relationship between fiction and history, namely that it is insulting when fiction departs too much from the event.<sup>145</sup> On an even more extreme level Raul Hilberg, as another example, omitted from his 1300-page book on the Holocaust oral testimonies all together of even those who had lived through the war because of their “inaccuracies of fact.”<sup>146</sup> Gary Weissman also touches upon such concerns more proximate to the interwoven generations of the postmemory construction, for example, in claiming that the transmission of memory from

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in *Generational Shifts in Contemporary Culture*, ed. Laurel Cohen-Pfister and Susanne Veas-Gulani (Rochester, New York: Camden House, 2010), 77-94, here 78.

<sup>143</sup> Walter Benjamin, “Berliner Chronik” in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt on Main: Suhrkamp, 1991), vol. 6, 465-519, here 487. Quoted in Eigler, *Gedächtnis*, 151.

<sup>144</sup> Hirsch, 111.

<sup>145</sup> Ruth Klüger, *Dichter und Historiker: Fakten und Fiktionen* (Vienna: Picus-Verlag, 2000), 39.

<sup>146</sup> Hirsch, 104.

the first generation to succeeding generations is impossible.<sup>147</sup> The complicated line between fictionalization and historicization must be taken into account and their intersection is at the heart of postmemory novels.

This chapter explores how the protagonists in Maron's and Timm's novels interact with historical artifacts in the respective narratives. Although the physical remnants that trigger postmemory work vary in both texts as do the circumstances surrounding the artifacts, the following illustrates how the protagonists engage quite similarly with traces of the past and their voids. These similarities in deciphering family artifacts imply the potential for crossing not only generational boundaries within the family, but also those that are assumed to exist between artifacts and their meanings with respect to Jewish and German genealogies in the postmemory structure.

## II.A. *Pawels Briefe*: Photographs, Letters, Fantasy

The protagonist's narration in Maron's novel centers on her and Hella's discovery of Pawel's family photographs and letters. Given the *discovery* of historical artifacts, Walter Benjamin's topographic and archaeological conception of the mediality of memory applies particularly well to the engagement with family artifacts in *Pawels Briefe* as it compares memory to the processes of digging up ("ausgraben") and finding artifacts ("Funde").<sup>148</sup> The discovered artifacts, especially, I would argue, the photographs serve the protagonist's purpose of learning more about the past by using the images not so much as "Instrument[e] zur Erkundung der Vergangenheit," but rather as "Schauplatz."<sup>149</sup> Friederike Eigler summarizes this idea as an inner place "an dem Erinnerungen nicht gespeichert und lediglich abgerufen werden, sondern zuallererst

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<sup>147</sup> Hirsch, 109.

<sup>148</sup> Benjamin, "Berliner Chronik," 487. Quoted in Eigler, *Gedächtnis*, 151.

<sup>149</sup> Walter Benjamin, "Berliner Chronik," 486. Quoted in Eigler, *Gedächtnis*, 151.

entstehen bzw. geformt werden.”<sup>150</sup> This implies that the process is not simply a search for answers already existing, but one that requires personal investment in forming such answers (i.e., imagination) while also allowing clues to arise on their own.

The photographs in the novel depict the grandfather’s life before being deported to the Belchatow ghetto, while the letters to his family somewhat illustrate his life in detainment before he finally perishes in a concentration camp. Seeing the autobiographical narrator’s own name in Pawel’s writing symbolizes a written request for a posthumous relationship to compensate for one that could not be established before his impending death:

In fast allen Briefen denkt er an mich: ‘...die allerherzlichsten Grüße und Küsse für Monika’, ‘...was würde ich darum geben, sie zu sehen?’ ...Wenn ich in Pawels Briefen meinen Namen finde, [...] wenn ich mir vorstelle, daß der Mann, der diese Briefe schrieb, an mich dachte, auf mich hoffte, verliert das Wort Vergangenheit für Minuten seinen Sinn.<sup>151</sup>

On the one hand, the photographs and letters set up potential for a new relationship between the protagonist and her grandfather: “memory icons gain an even greater prominence in Monika Maron’s narrative [than in Timm’s novel]. [...] Maron [or rather her protagonist] sets out to invest the faded figures of the dead grandparents with affective meaning.”<sup>152</sup> On the other hand, although such artifacts aid in the investment of affect into the forgotten deceased figures, they somewhat prevent the same from happening in the relationship with her mother. The familial artifacts from WWII in *Pawels Briefe* trigger imagination as well as confrontational conversations, thereby fostering emotional connection to some characters, while creating distance with others.

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<sup>150</sup> Eigler, *Gedächtnis*, 151.

<sup>151</sup> Maron, 141.

<sup>152</sup> Fuchs, 185.

## II.A.1. Photographs

Family photographs repeatedly interrupt, yet they also connect elements within the protagonist's narrative: "Maron's arrangement of text and photographs facilitates a narrative that is both fragmented and coherent, complete and incomplete at the same time."<sup>153</sup> Each picture in *Pawels Briefe* is first shown in its entirety and is followed a bit later in the text by a close up view of one particular aspect. Although the insets of each photograph literally narrow the focus of the narrator's own gaze<sup>154</sup> upon it, assuming to provide more clarity in what is seen, such zoom-ins also paradoxically accentuate the mysteriousness and inaccessibility of the subjects photographed. According to French art historian Georges Didi-Huberman, a photograph presents opportunities and challenges in making sense of a family's past, arguing that in them "we simultaneously find truth and obscurity, exactitude and simulacrum."<sup>155</sup> Nevertheless, the contemplation and narration of photographs is a crucial undertaking in postmemory work, which Mariane Hirsch in her book *Family Frames* describes like this: "writing the image [...] undoes objectification of the still photograph and thereby takes it out of the realm of stasis, immobility [...] into fluidity, movement, and thus, finally, life."<sup>156</sup> This is precisely what Maron's protagonist aims to do, as the photographs trigger and supplement her vivid imagined interactions with Pawel.

The photographs, although they depict Pawel before his incarceration in the ghetto, represent both life and death at the same time. Susan Sontag explains that "photographs state the innocence, the vulnerability of lives heading toward their own

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<sup>153</sup> Ben-Horin, 239.

<sup>154</sup> On the familial and Freudian gaze, see Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 113-116.

<sup>155</sup> Hirsch, *Postmemory*, 116.

<sup>156</sup> Hirsch, *Family Frames*, 3-4.

destruction and this link between photography and death haunts all photos of people.”<sup>157</sup>

The photographs then lend themselves to the affective aspect of Maron’s protagonist’s engagement with Pawel through the memory icons, as Fuchs suggests.

The protagonist’s aim to emotionally connect with Pawel is linked to her goal to glean personal information about him from the family photographs. The family snapshot of her grandparents triggers the narrative focus on their relationship where she imagines, for example, the conversations they would have while sitting together on the kitchen window sill.<sup>158</sup> When the narrator learns from her mother that Pawel and Josefa had spoken in Polish with one another, she imbues her fantasy of their everyday interactions with sentimental attachment, especially when she imagines Pawel calling Josefa by a term of endearment, “Juscha.”<sup>159</sup> Her shifted focus,<sup>160</sup> through the picture, toward Pawel himself, however, demonstrates how “*Pawels Briefe* challenges the illusion that photos provide immediate access to the objects being photographed.”<sup>161</sup> The narrator acknowledges the sensual and imaginative limits of photographs in light of the nuances missing from her imagination, such as what Pawel’s voice sounded like or what he looked like when he laughed: “Ich weiß nicht, wie seine Stimme klingt, ich weiß nicht, wie er aussieht, wenn er lacht, weil es kein Foto gibt, auf dem er lacht.”<sup>162</sup> The narrator acknowledges the two-dimensional perspective the photographs show her: “Ich kenne nichts von dem Leben, das ich mir vorstellen will, weder die Armut, noch die Enge, noch die Frömmigkeit.”<sup>163</sup> The limits of the photographs, the “tension between the

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<sup>157</sup> Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Anchor Doubleday, 1989), 70.

<sup>158</sup> Maron, 32.

<sup>159</sup> Maron, 33.

<sup>160</sup> Maron, 35.

<sup>161</sup> Eigler, *Engendering Cultural Memory*, 396.

<sup>162</sup> Maron, 33.

<sup>163</sup> Maron, 33.

photograph's flatness and its illusion of depth, between the little a photograph reveals and all that it promises to reveal but cannot," speak to the importance of fantasy for the protagonist and postmemory work in general.<sup>164</sup>

Although the protagonist negotiates Pawel's political affiliations throughout the novel, for example, in relation to his own positionality within the German past, as explained in Chapter 1, pictures of Pawel as a social figure perpetuate the narrator's justification and renegotiation of the political dissonance. Some pictures (p. 60-63) also raise questions for the narrator about this aspect of Pawel's life that puzzles her the most: "Wie soll ich mir meinen Großvater als Mitglied der kommunistischen Partei vorstellen?"<sup>165</sup> Her stark aversion to that political ideology directly conflicts with how she imagines him to be in their imagined relationship, "wir, mein Großvater und ich," in which she thought that they were both different from others:

Wir, mein Großvater und ich, weil ich nach ihm und nur nach ihm kam, waren eben ein bißchen anders, ein bißchen unpraktisch, dafür verträumt und zu spontanen Einfällen neigend [...]. Daß er Kommunist war wie Hella, Marta, ihre Freunde und vor allem Hellas neuer Mann, nahm ihm etwas von seinem Anderssein, das mich tröstete und mir recht gab, wenn ich mit der Erwachsenenwelt im Streit lag.<sup>166</sup>

The narrator's imagination helps her work around this dissonance in her and Pawel's imagined relationship. Her mother's uncertainty about how Pawel would have fared in the post-war years of the GDR further satisfies the narrator in that she can trust and have more control over her own projections about Pawel: "Hellas bekennende Unzuständigkeit erleichtert mich. [...] in dem Hella, die ihn ja besser gekannt hat als ich, sich dessen eben nicht gewiß sein kann, überläßt sie meinen Großvater ganz mir und meinen

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<sup>164</sup> Hirsch, *Family Frames*, 119.

<sup>165</sup> Maron, 59.

<sup>166</sup> Maron, 63.

Mutmaßungen über ihn.”<sup>167</sup> Imagination once again plays a significant role. As Michael Ben-Horin states, the “interruption of the harmonizing reconstruction process ultimately becomes acceptance and conciliation [...]”<sup>168</sup> Friederike Eigler proposes that the narrator’s remembrance of her grandfather is “ein Prozess der Suche und der nachträglichen Sinnkonstitution, der untrennbar ist von dem jeweils gegenwärtigen Standpunkt.”<sup>169</sup> The photographs in the novel trigger imaginative processes in the narrator in order for her to reconstruct Pawel’s identity in a way that agrees with her own identity, for example, as one who criticizes the GDR and prefers West German ideology. By instrumentalizing the photographs, the protagonist justifies the positionality of herself and Pawel, thereby reinforcing the alliance with the grandfather and the opposition towards the mother that were discussed in Chapter 1.

## II.A.2. Letters

While “photographic images (either reproduced or only described) serve as primary sources for memory retrieval, but also catalysts of the literary imagination,” so too do the letters in Maron’s novel.<sup>170</sup> The letters also offer clues as to what Pawel was like and what he experienced in detainment. Irony is interwoven between the letters’ contents and the protagonist’s narrative as she reflects on the wishes and hopes left unanswered. For example, when she reads in one of Pawel’s letters how he urges the family to stick together, “[...] haltet zusammen [...],” the protagonist’s further recollection of what she experienced in the post-war years highlights the contrast between

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<sup>167</sup> Maron, 182.

<sup>168</sup> Ben-Horin, 245.

<sup>169</sup> Eigler, *Gedächtnis*, 153.

<sup>170</sup> Stimmel, 154.

what Pawel had implored his children to do and what really happened.<sup>171</sup> The discrepancy allows the protagonist to form an alliance with her grandfather because once she realizes through his letters that her mother clearly did not carry out his wishes, the narrator undertakes a postmemory project to reconnect with the family history and also to further distance herself from her mother. However, the narrator also, no matter how difficult, does not allow political disagreement to sever the somewhat broken relationship with Hella's character, thereby proving her dedication to Pawel's wishes for the family to remain close. The letters are thus a means to establish a close connection with some members of the first generation, while also to reevaluate relationships with others. I argue that the letters reinforce distance between the protagonist and her mother, while fostering emotional proximity between her and Pawel.

The text portrays the protagonist's relationship with her mother as troublesome throughout. The narrator rarely refers to her as her own mother and admits to not even perceiving her as one: "Erst während ich ihre Briefe lese, wird mir bewußt, daß ich meine Mutter nie als Tochter erlebt habe."<sup>172</sup> On the other hand, the narrator repeatedly refers to Pawel by his familial title of grandfather perhaps to maintain a closer, emotional bond to him and compensate for the belatedness of that bond.

Letters from Pawel about the grandmother's sickness and death highlight the distance between mother and daughter when the former learns and the latter is reminded of the former's sober reaction to it. In one of the letters Pawel mentions what Hella advised him to do: "Hella schrieb mir ich soll versuchen (darüber) hinwegzukommen,

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<sup>171</sup> Maron, 149.

<sup>172</sup> Maron, 50-51.

ich kann es aber nicht.“<sup>173</sup> The protagonist tries to console her mother by acknowledging that she had had a small child at the time and that she had been scared and did not know better. Nevertheless, the narrator is relieved to see that the mother’s confrontation of the family past in the letters crumbles her mother’s stubborn front that she erects when the narrator challenges her: “Ich habe sie nicht oft an sich verzweifeln sehen.“<sup>174</sup> This moment of doubt reminds the protagonist of one other time when she saw her mother in doubt: the German reunification. The narrator recalls her feelings of triumph when the Berlin Wall fell: “Ich bin der Sieger der Geschichte [...]. Von diesem Triumph hatte ich geträumt.“<sup>175</sup> Such feelings of triumph, albeit subtle, surface again when the narrator witnesses her mother’s self-doubt in reaction to that particular letter:

Vielleicht hat ein nicht willkommener Zweifel diesen Umweg gebraucht, um dem Verstand vorstellig zu werden und zu fragen, ob nicht auch das Unabänderliche zuweilen nicht hinnehmbar sein kann, ob das kräftige ‚nach vorne leben‘ nicht den Sinn für das Zarte verkümmert läßt, ob das unbeirrbar Hoffen nicht blind machen kann für die längst eingetretene Katastrophe.<sup>176</sup>

This particular letter from Pawel does allow for some emotional proximity between the protagonist and her mother in the mother’s memory breakthrough. However, this letter also supports the ongoing memory contests in the novel because it “advance[s] competing narratives of identity with reference to an historical event perceived as a massive disturbance of a group’s self-image.”<sup>177</sup> In other words, the differences in remembering that arise from this letter are tied back to the larger competition between narratives that exist between mother and daughter in light of the “massive disturbance” of German reunification. The disturbance of this pivotal point in German history is magnified in the

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<sup>173</sup> Maron, 129.

<sup>174</sup> Maron, 129.

<sup>175</sup> Maron, 130.

<sup>176</sup> Maron, 131-132.

<sup>177</sup> Fuchs, 179.

mother's forgetting of the letters. She had forgotten that she owned these letters and that she had even engaged in a written exchange with Pawel during the war, which bewilders the protagonist just as much as it does her mother: "Vor diesem Vergessen stehe ich ratlos, so ratlos wie Hella selbst."<sup>178</sup> Pawel's letters thus reinforce distance between the narrator, as the character who strives for a reactivation of Pawel's life, and Hella's character, who has repressed such memories.

While in some letters the protagonist is able to revive Pawel in a way, especially with her imaginative investments, the little information divulged in the letters about him ends up raising more questions in her postmemory project than they answer. The clues about his life and also what is left unsaid, especially at the time of his captivity in the ghetto, pose obstacles for the narrator to understand and reconnect with him. Benjamin acknowledges such obstacles as part of the process of searching or digging up, and Hirsch also acknowledges these hindrances specifically within the postmemory conceptual framework: "The formative events of the twentieth century have crucially informed our biographies [...]. But we did not see them, suffer through them, experience their impact directly. Our relationship to them has been defined by our very 'post-ness' [...]."<sup>179</sup> As a result, the protagonist's connection to the past is established "by imaginative investment, projection, and creation," especially with regards to voids in her grandfather's letters.<sup>180</sup>

For example, one of Pawel's letters highlights the narrator's lack of knowledge about his family (her great grandparents) and his voluntary separation from them in his young adulthood. He writes: "Wenn mir die Eltern zur Wahl gestellt worden wären, ich

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<sup>178</sup> Maron, 113.

<sup>179</sup> Hirsch, 106.

<sup>180</sup> Hirsch, 107.

hätte mir womöglich auch andere Eltern gewählt aber ich mußte es auch so nehmen, wie es mir geboten wurde.”<sup>181</sup> The narrator can only imagine that Pawel would not have written such an emotionally charged statement if the severance between him and his parents did not precede his break with Judaism: “Ich kann mir nicht vorstellen, daß Pawel diesen Satz geschrieben hätte, wäre seiner Absage an das Judentum nicht der Bruch mit den Eltern vorausgegangen.”<sup>182</sup> This would explain why he, in his letter, conflates his parents with his tragic fate in a Nazi concentration camp. She also contemplates reverse causality: “[...] vielleicht aber hatte die Familie Iglarz aus Ostrow ihren Sohn Schloma auch totgesagt, nachdem er der Baptist Pawel Iglarz geworden war.”<sup>183</sup> Such questions in the protagonist’s mind remain unanswered, but what is ultimately important is the certainty of his death under National Socialism: “Wer immer diese alles bestimmende Entscheidung in Pawels Leben getroffen hatte, sie galt nicht mehr. Den Juden wurden die verstoßenen oder entlaufenen Söhne und Töchter in den Ghettos und Gaskammern wieder zugetrieben.”<sup>184</sup> The narrator alludes here to the inconsequentiality and, in this particular case, irrelevance of her imagination with regard to his long abandoned relationship with Judaism and his parents and the reasons for it.

Simply knowing the historic truth of the Holocaust is not enough for the protagonist to truly grasp its magnitude and proximity to Pawel. The letters he had written from Belchatow barely mention what his daily life was like in the ghetto. He instead directs attention in his letters solely to his loved ones left behind. The protagonist

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<sup>181</sup> Maron, 98.

<sup>182</sup> Maron, 99.

<sup>183</sup> Maron, 99.

<sup>184</sup> Maron, 99.

alludes to the emotional numbness in trying to map the Holocaust onto her own grandparents:

Ich muß mir einreden, sie seien gestorben, wie Menschen eben sterben, an Krankheit, Alter oder durch einen Unfall, zwar zu früh als daß ich sie hatte kennen lernen können, aber an einem Told, der im Leben vorgesehen ist. Im Schatten ihres wirklichen Todes hat kein Detail Bestand, es wird banal oder mystisch.<sup>185</sup>

The letters prevent her from connecting the Holocaust to her grandfather in that he fails to describe in his letters any of the horrors he may have experienced while detained in Belchatow; he only forbids his family from visiting him there. He only briefly mentions the crude treatment from officers at the camp when he arrived and banal aspects of his life there, such as what he eats and where he sleeps. Not too long before his death, however, his despair and hopelessness become apparent, where he alludes to the tragic living conditions he surely experienced: “[...] wie es mir geht, könnt ihr euch denken. Meine liebe Marta, könnt ihr euch nicht denken. [...] ich weiß, es wird nicht mehr lange dauern und ich werde auch den selben Weg gehen.”<sup>186</sup> Despite the incomprehensibility of his living conditions, the narrator, as a member of the second generation who stands at an experiential distance, tries her hardest anyway to imagine it. She visualizes him as a “schmaler Schatten, der über das Pflaster der Ghettostraßen gleitet.”<sup>187</sup> She imagines the environment in which he wrote to his children frequently: “[...] vielleicht unter seiner Pritsche, steht ein kleiner Karton mit Schreibpapier, Tinte und Federhalter. Er räumt sich eine Ecke des Tisches frei [...]”<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Maron, 23.

<sup>186</sup> Maron, 136.

<sup>187</sup> Maron, 141.

<sup>188</sup> Maron, 142.

Although the photographs, letters, and supplemental conversations with her mother help the narrator better understand Pawel in some ways, they also hinder a potential relationship with him whether due to the vague, two-dimensionality of photographs, the unwritten in the letters, and also what Hella does not remember. The narrator's imaginative capacities become particularly useful in compensating for what she does and cannot know about Pawel, making imagination imperative, as Hirsch suggests, especially with regards to deceased family members in the postmemory framework. Such imaginative aspects and "reconstruction of identities and traditions" of her narrative underscore the opportunity for agency in the postmemory structure.<sup>189</sup> In doing so the narrator demonstrates her unwavering effort to make sense of Pawel and his past and to build a delayed relationship with him even when faced with vague information.

Maron's protagonist, although demonstrating imaginative agency in the postmemory structure, is mindful of the tension between imaginative self-investment and historical truth. She exercises agency by integrating herself into the Iglarz/Maron story and imagining Pawel back to life, "but Maron never loses sight of the larger context of German public memory and historical consciousness."<sup>190</sup> The narrator herself even questions the distorting influence of pictures: "[...] fragte ich mich, ob mich alle diese Bilder nicht eher störten, ob die Festlegungen mir meinen Weg der Annäherung nicht verstellten."<sup>191</sup>

As for the impact the artifacts have on the relationship between the narrator and her mother, Michael Ben-Horin argues that the narrator attempts "to write herself back

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<sup>189</sup> Ben-Horin, 239.

<sup>190</sup> Stimmel, 152.

<sup>191</sup> Maron, 94.

into the family lineage and to make peace with her mother,” thus, representing “conciliatory intent” that “reflects on the individual level the greater process of reconciliation in operation within the context of German reunification.”<sup>192</sup> I agree with his critique of the narrator’s individual effort to write herself into her family past and the post-unification context as a whole, and the artifacts no doubt open up dialogue between mother and daughter. The latter indeed even tries to console her mother at least once in the narrative and the competitive, critical nature of their conversations also subsides by the end of the novel. However, I still argue that the engagement with photographs and letters in *Pawels Briefe* accentuates rather than relieves the tension between mother and daughter. The relationship to the past that each character has is simply different, and the discovery of objects from the past underscores their differences rather than breaking down emotional barriers. The narrator still maintains a degree of emotional numbness towards her mother even at the end of the story: “Ich war ihre Tochter sonst nichts.”<sup>193</sup> Their relationship and the particular unfolding of their family genealogy from the Jewish perspective of the WWII rupture therefore do not lend themselves to a possibility for forgiveness between characters in this novel. While the analysis of this particular relationship does not mean that those of the post-unification era cannot reconcile with family members or other voices in the postmemory structure, it does, however, draw attention to the unrealistic expectation for all to agree in perfect harmony. As the end of Maron’s novel shows, mother and daughter still disagree, however, they cease to compete with one another and instead find a middle ground on which to accept differences and to coexist.

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<sup>192</sup> Ben-Horin, 248.

<sup>193</sup> Maron, 204.

## II.B. *Am Beispiel meines Bruders*: Deconstructing the “*Festgeschriebene*”

While photographs also surface in the narrator’s engagement with the past in *Am Beispiel meines Bruders*, written artifacts serve as the central point around which his thoughts revolve. Given that such imaginings are only weakly supported by his own vague memories of his brother, his projections rely more heavily on the artifacts in the novel. Also, Timm’s protagonist, in contrast to Maron’s, does not have other live family members present to converse openly with and infuse his project with more meaning. This is yet another reason why tangible family artifacts play a more significant role in the narrator’s projections as he wonders, for example, “Was wollte der Vater? [...] Was war sein Wunsch?”<sup>194</sup> Given that the narrator, his father, and the brother share a triangular relationship, the diary and the letters, symbolizing the political and personal respectively, leave much space for the narrator’s projections about both of their lives as first generation family members.

The ever-present posthumous nature of this narrative reveals a nuance in the understanding of the postmemory structure in post-1989 German novels in a different way than Maron’s text. To illustrate, the brother’s writings and Uwe’s narrative tend to either supplement or oppose one another, as Friedhelm Marx observes: “Der mündlichen Form des Erzählens, dem kommunikativen Gedächtnis, stehen innerhalb des Buchs schriftliche Dokumente entgegen.”<sup>195</sup> However, despite the opposition between the protagonist’s narrative and that of the writings, these artifacts, especially the diary, provide the opportunity for forgiveness within the family narrative. This is one major divergence that the engagement with artifacts in Timm’s novel takes from that of

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<sup>194</sup> Timm, 43.

<sup>195</sup> Marx, 33.

Maron's novel because, as explained before, the impact of the rupture in the family genealogy is different. Since the first generation family members in Timm's novel are linked to the non-Jewish German background of the WWII context, the artifacts therefore take on a different dimension, a possibility for forgiveness, in this particular postmemory project. Julia Kristeva's conception of forgiveness is particularly relevant to the examination of Timm's protagonist's engagement with familial artifacts because in doing so, he "creat[es] a narrative that does not erase the past but transcends it, allowing the subject to start anew [...]." <sup>196</sup> This, Kristeva argues, "is the ultimate goal of forgiveness and the evidence of its effectiveness." <sup>197</sup> The subject should therefore "not forget a crime but should forgive the person who committed it." <sup>198</sup>

Nevertheless, similarities emerge in that Timm's protagonist, like Maron's, uses artifacts to learn more about his family's past in relation to the WWII rupture within it. And in doing so, he too not only encounters obstacles, thus conjuring up his own fantasies, but more importantly he also breaks the tradition of disavowal and/or forgetting that has taken hold of his family genealogy.

### II.B.1. The Brother's Diary

The diary in this novel, as mentioned before, serves as part of the central focus for the narrator. The way that the narrator's brother used the diary and the circumstances in which he filled it present a unique form of written artifact that is difficult to categorize. While a diary is generally private and personal, it also implies posthumous remembrance, since the writer does not necessarily take care to dispose of it. The brother's diary is quite

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<sup>196</sup> Julia Kristeva, "Forgiveness: An Interview," *Publications of the Modern Languages Association of America* 117.2 (2008): 278-295, here 280.

<sup>197</sup> Kristeva, 280.

<sup>198</sup> Kristeva, 278.

puzzling then because “kein Traum ist in dem Tagebuch erwähnt, kein Wunsch, kein Geheimnis. [...] In dem Tagebuch ist ausschließlich vom Krieg die Rede [...]”<sup>199</sup> Instead, Karl-Heinz, who was “verträumt [...] als Kind,” seemingly objectively logs what he and his fellow SS soldiers undertake on the war’s East front each day.<sup>200</sup> This poses one of the largest obstacles for the narrator in trying to understand Karl-Heinz’s character because although he learns through the writing what his brother experienced almost every day at war, he stands at a loss for exactly the kind of information he yearns for, namely his brother’s thoughts and emotions. He notes a couple entries that somewhat give clues to his brother as a person, however, those too are void of personal commentary: “Einmal wird ein Varieté erwähnt, einmal ein Theater, einmal ein Film [...]. *Kino Der große Schatten*. Kein Kommentar. Hat ihm der Film gefallen?”<sup>201</sup> The protagonist is then left to wonder not only what his brother thought and felt while he wrote, but he also poses the larger question about the type of writing his brother used to describe the process of killing. The narrator indirectly attributes the absence of emotional content in the diary to the father’s quelling of emotions, “ein Junge weint nicht”<sup>202</sup> and his ideal of bravery, as he notes: “Um eine eigene Geschichte und um die Erfahrbarkeit eigener Gefühle betrogen, bleibt nur die Reduktion auf Haltung: Tapferkeit.”<sup>203</sup> The implicit criticism of the father’s and National Socialism’s influence underlines the differences between the protagonist and his brother, thus, creating distance. Rhys Williams provides insight on how the narrator compensates for the lack of emotion in the journal entries: “Wenn das Tagebuch des Bruders die ‘Abwesenheit von jedem Mitempfinden’ verkörpert, dann

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<sup>199</sup> Timm, 30-31.

<sup>200</sup> Timm, 29.

<sup>201</sup> Timm, 31.

<sup>202</sup> Timm, 103.

<sup>203</sup> Timm, 31.

verkörpern Timms Erzählungen genau das Gegenteil, nämlich eine Übersensibilisierung gegen den Einfluss von Ideologie [...] auf persönliche Werte.”<sup>204</sup> The narrator thus fills in the emotional gaps and other crucial information voids that lie at the core of his potential relationship with his deceased brother.

The diary’s writings fail to mention the war’s atrocities, let alone the brother’s emotional reaction to them, leading the protagonist to draw speculative conclusions: Was he traumatized by the war’s horrific scenes or desensitized towards them through repetition? The narrator wonders if his brother had anything to do with prisoners:

Das Tagebuch erzählt nichts von Gefangenen. An keiner Stelle schreibt er darüber, daß Gefangene gemacht wurden. Entweder wurden die Russen sofort getötet, oder die Russen ergaben sich nicht. Eine dritte Möglichkeit ist, daß er es nicht für erwähnenswert hielt.<sup>205</sup>

Imagining what the brother’s surroundings must have been like inevitably begs the difficult question of his participation in murderous acts.

The pivotal entry that confirms the narrator’s suspicion and surfaces repeatedly in his narrative is the one in which his brother, “der Junge, der nicht log,”<sup>206</sup> only briefly mentions a Russian that he killed: “75m raucht Iwan Zigaretten, ein Fressen für mein MG.”<sup>207</sup> The one-sentence long mention of his active participation on the front and his nonchalant use of a stereotypical name for the Russian soldier distance the narrator from his brother. He once again, as Williams notes, compensates for the sober manner in which this shooting is documented by wondering about his brother’s victim: “[...] ein russischer Soldat, vielleicht in seinem Alter. Ein junger Mann [...]. An was wird er

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<sup>204</sup> Rhys Williams, “‘Eine ganz gewöhnliche Kindheit’: Am Beispiel meines Bruders,” in “(Un-)Erfüllte Wirklichkeit:” *Neue Studien zu Uwe Timms Werk*, ed. Frank Finlay and Ingo Cornils (Würzburg: Königshausen and Neumann, 2006), 173-184, here 184.

<sup>205</sup> Timm, 36.

<sup>206</sup> Timm, 21.

<sup>207</sup> Timm, 19.

gedacht haben?“<sup>208</sup> The more significant consequence of this particular journal entry, though, is that it represents the narrator’s ability to finally face the past and its truth, no matter how difficult: “Das war die Stelle, bei der ich, stieß ich früher darauf [...] nicht weiterlas, sondern das Heft wegschloß. Und erst mit dem Entschluß, über den Bruder, also auch über mich, zu schreiben, das Erinnern zuzulassen, war ich befreit, dem dort *Festgeschriebenen* nachzugehen.”<sup>209</sup> The entry marks the beginning of the narrator’s postmemory project as he finally returns to this difficult diary entry and is open to what it means for his family history. Forgiveness, according to Kristeva, “takes into account and comprehends both the act in its horror and guilt. [...] It is not an understanding in the sense of rationalization. But it does demand a partial, temporary identification with the subject of the act and with the act itself.”<sup>210</sup> As a result, this renewed attempt to confront the entry and its meaning implies the conciliatory potential of the encounter with it and the journal as a whole.

An additional and no less significant question for the narrator is why his brother, “ein braves Kind,”<sup>211</sup> clandestinely kept a diary during the war: “Das Eigentümliche an dem Tagebuch ist, daß es dieses Buch nicht geben dürfte. Es war verboten, Tagebuch zu führen, insbesondere bei der SS.”<sup>212</sup> One could conjecture that he was proud of his involvement in the Nazi regime. The protagonist contemplates this possibility ironically in his reading of the explicit, abrupt end to the journal: “*Hiermit schließe ich mein Tagebuch, da ich für unsinnige halte, über so grausame Dinge wie sie manchmal*

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<sup>208</sup> Timm, 19.

<sup>209</sup> Timm, 19.

<sup>210</sup> Kristeva, 281

<sup>211</sup> Timm, 29,

<sup>212</sup> Timm, 159.

*geschehen, Buch zu führen.*”<sup>213</sup> The narrator wonders if his brother had been proud of his undertakings in the SS-Totenkopfddivision and only at this point in the journal did he awaken to feel the magnitude of his circumstances: “es war, als fiel ein Lichtstrahl in die Finsternis.”<sup>214</sup> Consequently, even though the narrator does not know why his brother kept the journal to begin with, he finds hope in the end for a connection between them, namely the courage to say “no”: “Und da ist der Wunsch, mein Wunsch, diese Lücke möge für ein Nein stehen, [...] das am Anfang der Aufkündigung von Gehorsam steht und mehr Mut erfordert.”<sup>215</sup> This connection inevitably excludes the father and his wish for bravery which ironically had meant saying yes to supporting and fighting for the Nazis in the war.

Ultimately the diary raises more questions than it answers, leaving the protagonist with little attachment to Karl-Heinz’s character. Despite the narrator’s effort to imaginatively fill in the diary’s gaps, these speculations lead to further alienation when contemplating plausible reasons for the very objective manner of writing about horrific events. His speculations about why his brother deliberately broke rules to note the SS-Totenkopfddivision’s daily murderous ambitions in the first place also further distance the narrator from him. Nevertheless, the restorative power of the entry about the brother’s shooting, although morbid and aversive, is not to be underestimated, as the very encounter with it marks a milestone for the narrator in his quest for information. Years later he is finally able to come to terms with proof that his own brother had killed others. Another element of redemption is the last entry and closing remark in the journal, which

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<sup>213</sup> Timm, 151.

<sup>214</sup> Timm, 151.

<sup>215</sup> Timm, 152.

the protagonist speculates to mean that shortly before his brother's death his emotions may have awakened to his situation and that he had begun to find a dissenting voice in it.

## II.B.2. Letters

Given the sober nature of the *Festgeschriebene* provided in the journal, the narrator turns to the *Festgeschriebene* of the letters exchanged between his brother and parents during the war to gain a clearer understanding of his brother and perhaps to find softer, not-so-“fixed” points of emotional awareness in him. The only letter that indicates an emotional response from Karl-Heinz's character with regards to the war is his letter to the parents in which he expresses sadness and moral disdain due to the air raid bombings in Hamburg that he has heard about: “[...] *täglich werden hier Fliegerangriffe der Engländer gemeldet. [...] Das ist doch kein Krieg, das ist ja Mord an Frauen und Kinder – und das ist nicht human.*”<sup>216</sup> Although this letter affords the protagonist some insight into his brother's emotional awareness, it poses yet again the mystery of his missing emotional response to the destruction going on where he wrote: “Es ist schwer verständlich und nicht nachvollziehbar, wie Teilnahme und Mitgefühl im Angesicht des Leids ausgeblendet wurden, wie es zu dieser Trennung von human zu Hause und human hier, in Rußland, kommt.”<sup>217</sup> The narrator emphasizes the contradiction of the expressed emotion in the letter, therefore realizing the ever-present barrier to the real Karl-Heinz whom he wants to know.

He relies on his imagination to fill in the blanks after first connecting historical events, for example the SS-Totenkopfddivision's reoccupation of Charkow in 1943, to what his brother must have experienced: “[er muß] doch mit den Opfern der

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<sup>216</sup> Timm, 27.

<sup>217</sup> Timm, 93.

Zivilbevölkerung konfrontiert worden sein, den Hungernden, den Obdachlosen, den durch Kampfhandlungen Vertriebenen, Erfrorenen, Getöteten.”<sup>218</sup> Timm’s protagonist also turns to cultural memory texts of others who had fought in Russia to make up for the brother’s apparent lack of critical engagement with his own surroundings. For example, he reads a published letter from a General in Russia to his wife in 1941 among other written accounts, in which this man tells of the tragic scenes he witnessed and the feelings such scenes evoked in him. By comparing this text from cultural memory with the letter from his brother (communicative memory), the narrator realizes that what is not said in the letters overshadows what is said, still leaving little to no basis upon which to understand his brother.

The same irony from the brother’s letter can be found in one that the father had later written to his son recalling his firsthand experience with the air raids in “*unser schönes Hamburg*” that is now “*total zerstört [...]*” while he was there on vacation.<sup>219</sup> He then proceeds to recount his and the mother’s experience coming home from that vacation and yet again having to take cover in the bunker and deal with the aftermath: “*eine Sprengbombe im Haus [...]. Der Tommy berieselte alles mit Phosphor und es brannte an allen Ecken und Enden. Von unserem Haus stehen nur noch ein paar Mauerreste.*”<sup>220</sup> Instead of pointing out the hypocrisy in his father’s letter, however, the narrator supplements the recount with his own recollections of when his house had been bombed:

Sie [the family] hatten die Dinge ergriffen, wie sie gerade standen oder lagen [...]. Sie trugen sie auf die Straße, wo all die anderen Bewohner standen, darunter die Mutter, das Kind, mich, auf dem Arm. Ringsum brannten die Häuser. [...] Ein

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<sup>218</sup> Timm, 27.

<sup>219</sup> Timm, 37.

<sup>220</sup> Timm, 37.

anderes deutliches Bild, mit dem Erinnerung einsetzt: die riesigen Fackeln, rechts und links der Straße, die brennenden Bäume. Und dieses: In der Luft schweben kleine Flämmchen.<sup>221</sup>

With this particular passage it can be argued that the narrator identifies with the shock and horror his father and brother must have felt in light of the war's tumultuous events that had literally hit close to home. Even though the narrator acknowledges the extreme destruction he and his family had experienced during the war and perhaps sympathizes with them to some degree, he still loosens himself from the grip of sentimentality by mentioning, for example, that Jews were forbidden from seeking shelter in the bunkers during bombings, not even having the chance to protect themselves, as the narrator recalls: "Juden war das Betreten des Luftschutzraums verboten."<sup>222</sup> Such comments that intermittently appear in the narrative between the narrator's recounts of devastation and those of his family remind the reader that some had lost and suffered much more than his family.

The journal entries and letters only let the narrator scratch the surface of his brother's life. Just as how the brother had supposedly been in life, "schwieg, und man wußte nicht, was in seinem Kopf vorging," is how he appears in his mysterious writings.<sup>223</sup> These artifacts from his time serving as an SS fighter raise more questions than they answer. And even though the *Festgeschriebene* gives answers to the extent that it coincides with the timeline of historical events during WWII, it proves to be a solidified wall that blocks the protagonist from his brother as a subject. To compensate for the voids in these artifacts, the protagonist recounts oral recollections from his parents, but these confuse more than they clarify because the stories make the

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<sup>221</sup> Timm, 38.

<sup>222</sup> Timm, 40.

<sup>223</sup> Timm, 29.

*Festgeschriebene* of Karl-Heinz's character wrought with contradiction. He thus makes use of cultural memory artifacts, such as memoirs, by comparing them to the communicative memory of the *Festgeschriebene* not necessarily to gain understanding about his brother, but to guess what he did not write and why. Although cultural memory enriches the protagonist's familial communicative memory, namely the journal and letters, the process works in the reverse as well: "Es sind diese gezeichneten Dinge [...], denen Timm die Aufgabe verleiht, das kommunikative Gedächtnis zu vermitteln und es aufgrund der Beispielhaftigkeit der Geschichte des eigenen Bruders und der eigenen Familie, zum kulturellen Gedächtnis werden zu lassen."<sup>224</sup>

The juxtaposition between the narrator's search for emotion and his brother's barriers to it lead the protagonist to contemplate the triangulated relationship among the father, brother, and himself. The father's character had believed in the virtues of bravery and obedience, which he then tried to instill in his sons. Given that the narrator had begun to rebel in his teenage years against such virtues perpetuated not just by his father, but also by almost the entire generation that experienced the National Socialist era, his resistance reinforces the distance between himself and the two others. The narrator exposes contradiction of the virtues as he wonders why his father and especially his brother did not also see these contradictions and say "no" to them. Interestingly, at the cost of familial proximity, the narrator allies with texts of the cultural memory. For example, what he learns in Christopher Browning's book *Ordinary Men* about the chance many in the Nazi regime had to refuse ghastly orders, resonates with him to the extent

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<sup>224</sup> Matteo Galli, "Vom Denkmal zum Mahnmal: Kommunikatives Gedächtnis bei Uwe Timm," in "(Un-) Erfüllte Wirklichkeit: " *Neue Studien zu Uwe Timms Werk*, ed. Frank Finlay and Ingo Cornils (Würzburg: Königshausen and Neumann, 2006), 162-172, here 170.

that he criticizes the values of obedience in his father's generation tacitly reflected in his brother's diary and letters as well.

Interestingly, however, Browning's book *Ordinary Men* is taken up once again towards the end of the novel in connection to what the narrator finds at the end of his brother's journal that alludes to a possible breakthrough in feeling and therefore also in their relationship. The protagonist uses his imagination to embed his brother's last journal entry into the hypothetical possibilities of the present: "Was würde der Bruder, hätte er überlebt, zu diesem Buch *Ganz normale Männer* gesagt?"<sup>225</sup> Michael Braun illustrates with "'Leere' oder 'Lehre' der Geschichte" the tension between the voids in knowledge and the lessons from history that may paradoxically cause such gaps. This tension comes into play as the narrator interprets his brother's final journal entry as an open-ended space for further thought and as a lesson learned.<sup>226</sup>

This possibility of emotional breakthrough in the protagonist's research on his brother's past extends to new frontiers of forgiveness in the tarnished relationship with the father. The protagonist experiences urgency in the course of the narrative to relay a message to his father: "Ich versuchte ihn anzurufen, ich mußte ihm etwas ausrichten, [...] ohne zu wissen, was. Wußte auch nicht, wer mir den Auftrag gegeben hatte. Aber es war von größter Wichtigkeit."<sup>227</sup> Nevertheless, of course it is already too late. The narrator realizes that after all the years of a distant, at times bitter relationship and after his attempt to become closer to him and the brother through writing, that he never actually took the chance to know more about his father: "Auch das wurde mir während des

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<sup>225</sup> Timm, 154.

<sup>226</sup> Braun, 65.

<sup>227</sup> Timm, 154.

Schreibens erst bewußt, der Vater hat nie etwas über seine Kindheit erzählt.“<sup>228</sup> The delay of these realizations and the postmemory project itself supports what Fuchs characterizes as the “belated nature of these intergenerational memory contests” present in post-1989 novels.<sup>229</sup> The belated breakthrough and understanding and its resulting forgiveness speaks to “the maturation of the trauma. It is not possible for forgiveness to take place without a certain time of suffering and its eclipse following the moment of impregnation with the trauma and the time of the other.”<sup>230</sup>

The lack of understanding he had for his father, especially what his wishes were, “was war sein Wunsch?” seem to become clearer to him towards the end of the novel.<sup>231</sup> The shift from not understanding to understanding allows the chance for self-forgiveness as well. Kristeva explains that “forgiveness is not limited to relationships with others, though. Perhaps its most important form is forgiveness of oneself, which permits personal rebirth and an optimistic advancement toward new horizons.”<sup>232</sup> The narrator understands and accepts the obligation to himself and the family, who are at this point all deceased, in continuing his postmemory work when he writes: “Noch immer arbeite ich- ja, arbeite- an seinen Wünschen.”<sup>233</sup> As the protagonist’s undertaking shows throughout the novel, his continued postmemory work will neither result in clear answers, nor in complete resolution of past conflicts, but rather in more understanding of himself, his family members, and others within the larger postmemory structure.

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<sup>228</sup> Timm, 155.

<sup>229</sup> Fuchs, 186.

<sup>230</sup> Kristeva, 285.

<sup>231</sup> Timm, 43.

<sup>232</sup> Kristeva, 280.

<sup>233</sup> Timm, 158.

The historical remnants therefore reinforce critical distance at some points, but lay ground for forgiveness at other points in the narrative, especially towards the end. Using Kristeva's framework of forgiveness to examine the protagonist's engagement with his brother's personal belongings, reveals that forgiveness is not limited to complete strangers, nor to only the living. In fact, the protagonist undertakes a reparative project with his own family members. Although he critically distances himself from the collective circumstances of his father and brother's involvement in National Socialism, he tries, after all, "sich ihnen schreibend anzunähern [...]." <sup>234</sup> The protagonist tries to get closer to his brother and father to try to identify with them, but also, as Maron's protagonist does, he attempts to get closer to them as posthumous figures. Both protagonists "employ iconic objects in order to convert the uncanny whispering of the dead which had invaded and disturbed communication within the postwar families into more open transgenerational memory contests." <sup>235</sup> While this applies to both novels, forgiveness is a further result in Timm's protagonist's interaction with family remnants. The "uncanny whispering" from the father and brother manifested in the artifacts and the narrator's recurring dreams and fantasies can be seen as the crucial "request of the subject who desires forgiveness" that is imperative in Kristeva's notion of forgiveness. <sup>236</sup> The reopening of the diary and letters is the narrator's answer to such summons to try to understand the ones who committed a crime of upholding National Socialist values in WWII.

Why is Timm's protagonist necessarily in any position to forgive? The answer may be rooted in the matter of age. As Sigrid Weigel explains, "the earlier Hitler Youth

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<sup>234</sup> Timm, 21.

<sup>235</sup> Fuchs, 185.

<sup>236</sup> Kristeva, 281.

Generation is not only excluded from discussion of guilt but represents the political and cultural elite in the Federal Republic of Germany. As founder generation of the new state this is the concealed first generation whose roots in the Nazi period are negated due to their age at the time.”<sup>237</sup> Although this does not perfectly align to the autobiographical protagonist’s positioning within history, he nevertheless was a small child at the end of the war, thus clearing him of any culpability whatsoever, according to the discourse of his generation.

Given that barely any concrete ties remain between the protagonist and the war, further support for his position to forgive within his postmemory inquiry into the family past may also lie in facing what Weigel describes as “transgenerational traumatization and the subconscious telescoping of National Socialism down to the present day.”<sup>238</sup>

Fuchs summarizes transgenerational traumatization as “subconscious memory imprints of National Socialism [that] have been consolidated over the decades and turned into a kind of archaic inheritance that engenders displaced and distorted memories across the generations.”<sup>239</sup> This means for the narrator that instead of disavowing the rupture in the family past or taking fault for it, he is in the position to face the trauma within his family genealogy, to forgive those in his family who acted within it, and finally to forgive himself.

## II.C. Historical Remnants in Both Novels

The role of historical family remnants in both novels illustrates the differences and similarities in the postmemory project of Jewish and German backgrounds. For

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<sup>237</sup> Weigel, 265.

<sup>238</sup> Weigel, “Télescopage im Unbewußten: Zum Verhältnis von Trauma, Geschichtsbegriff und Literatur,” in *Trauma zwischen Psychoanalyse und kulturellem Deutungsmustern*, ed. Elisabeth Bronfen, Birgit Erdle, and Sigrid Weigel (Cologne: Böhlh, 1999), 65. Quoted in Fuchs, 170.

<sup>239</sup> Fuchs, 170.

example, the *discovered* items of communicative memory drive the project of Maron's protagonist, giving it a sense of urgency to make up for neglected remembrance of the grandfather. The protagonist strives for emotional connection to the deceased family member and uses the family photographs and letters to do just that. In contrast, however, these remnants exacerbate the differences in remembering between the protagonist and her mother in their conversations about the artifacts.

The protagonist in Timm's novel, however, carries out his postmemory project alone after all his family members have passed away, which points to yet another difference in the role of artifacts within these two novels. The narrator in *Am Beispiel meines Bruders* has been aware of the various belongings from his brother for as long as he can remember, but had not been able to confront the belongings and the historical context in which their meaning is embedded. Given the painful intertwining of the historical Nazi context with his own family, the narrator has postponed the project until late in his adulthood. For this reason, the motivation and result for learning more about the deceased family member starkly contrasts that of Maron's protagonist. The narrator in Timm's novel is not necessarily seeking a harmonious, emotional relationship to his brother, rather he is on a quest for understanding that may allow him to forgive his brother and his father for their actions during WWII. As Kristeva explains, understanding in this case is not about rationalizing such behavior, but about placing oneself in another's position to understand the circumstances of the transgression.

Although the circumstances in both novels surrounding the interactions with artifacts are different, whether stumbling upon them or finally giving them attention, the results of such interactions in family relationships play out similarly. Both works

illustrate the artifacts' ability to distance characters from one another or to bring them closer together. For example, in Maron's novel, some information mediated through the artifacts supports the protagonist's striving for emotional connection with the grandfather, while other pieces of information, such as his Communist affiliation, distance her from him. Likewise, in Timm's novel, what he finds out about his brother through the diary and letters widens the gap between them as characters, while other clues gathered create the possibility of connection with and understanding for the brother. Information gaps are also present in the artifacts in both novels, which underscores the remnants' unreliability and the importance of both narrators' speculative capacities. The projections often work in favor of bringing the first and second generations closer together.

Therefore, yet another similarity of between the postmemory inquiries lie in the unreliability of the artifacts and the resulting use of imagination to fill the voids the artifacts present. Maron's protagonist, in her close examination of Pawel's photographs, finds that they mystify her understanding of his life more than they clarify. The same holds true for his letters, namely that what Pawel does not mention in his letters raise even more questions for the protagonist. It is no wonder then that the narrator's vivid imagination sets in to compensate for the gaps to achieve the closer bond that motivates her project.

Timm's protagonist also encounters obstacles in exploring his brother's diary and letters, first and foremost because the style of the *Festgeschriebene* presented in the two are quite different. He does not understand why his brother kept a diary in the first place, nor can he make sense of the objective language and the missing information. The lack of

emotion in the journal baffles the narrator, leading to more questions and speculation, but the emotional traces he finds in the letters to the family reveal a bit more about Karl-Heinz's character while also confusing the narrator even more. The sober accounts in the journal are contrasted with hypocritical emotional expressions about the war's events in the letters. The one potential breakthrough that the protagonist clings to is his speculation that the brother had begun to feel while in Russia and had therefore closed the journal.

Remnants of the family past, therefore, serve to enrich the post-war generations' knowledge of past generation's involvement in the war. However, as the two novels show, the items of communicative memory, such as photographs, letters, and diaries often lead to more questions rather than giving straightforward answers. Because of this, imaginative capacity is crucial to making sense of one's family past, whether from a Jewish or German background, because a key part of the postmemory framework is the experiential distance of the war's events. The one who begins postmemory work is not in the position to have memories, however, remnants found can be given meaning through speculation supported by what is known from cultural memory venues, such as museums, and other postmemory projects that end up in the cultural memory archive. Finally and perhaps most importantly for post-war generations of either Jewish or non-Jewish German backgrounds is that the revelations from family artifacts have the potential to distance a subject from a member of the first generation or to connect the subject in some way.

## Conclusion: The Difficulty in Forging a Bond, Now & in the Future

“The mission that has devolved to testimony is no longer to bear witness to inadequately known events, but rather to keep them before our eyes. Testimony is to be a means of transmission to future generations.”<sup>240</sup>

Postmemory projects undertaken in post-war generations become increasingly relevant as the first generation gradually disappears. Events, such as the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 or perhaps even the transition into a new millennium, prompt reevaluation of the family history in relation to political and historical catastrophes. The positionality of the subject who explores the past at the intersection between family history and national history also comes into question. The two post-1989 novels *Pawels Briefe* and *Am Beispiel meines Bruders* analyzed together reveal not only the dynamics of this reevaluation process and its memory contests, as Anne Fuchs suggests in her similar pairing of these novels, but also the generational and genealogical boundaries that are crossed in postmemory projects undertaken in post-war generations. While Maron’s novel, on the one hand, provides insight to the way WWII, and more specifically the Holocaust, impacts the family genealogy rooted in Judaism, Timm’s novel, on the other hand, illustrates the effects of the war within the non-Jewish German perspective. Analyzing how the WWII rupture unfolds throughout generations within both Jewish and non-Jewish German genealogies presented by Maron and Timm respectively leads to the discovery of potential intergenerational bonds and commonalities with other members of post-war generations assumed to be completely different from one another.

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<sup>240</sup> Annette Wieviorka, “On Testimony,” in *Holocaust Remembrance: The Shapes of Memory*, ed. Geoffrey H. Hartman (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1994), 24.

The negotiation of historical positionality within the families of both novels is one of the ways in which the bonding potential of postmemory projects can be explored. Both texts negotiate positionalities based on the relationship between characters in question and complicate the simple victim-perpetrator binary. That is to say that the political and personal influence the positioning of a figure with one outweighing the other. The apparent fluidity of historical positions opens up the possibility for a diversified, democratic memory archive in the post-89 context. The different family constellations within Maron's text exemplify varying positionalities from a Jewish background. For example, exploring the troubled relationship between the narrator and her mother situates the former as a victim of her mother's fragmentary memory and of the larger GDR memory repression. The narrative, with the aid of cultural memory and her own memory, in turn portrays the mother as a perpetrator of forgetting and disavowal of the family past in her avid support of Communism and the GDR utopian myth. The dynamics of this relationship thus impact the way positionalities unfold between the narrator and her deceased grandfather. The narrator's positionality interestingly shifts to that of perpetrator through the minimal knowledge of her grandfather and the belatedness of her inquiry into her family history. However, throughout her research on the family past and her grandfather in particular, she allies herself with the grandfather in not only keeping his and the family memory alive, but also in keeping the family together.

Timm's novel also shows the complexity of situating family members and self within history when reading the various family constellations more carefully. The relationship between the narrator and his father is closely linked to the mediated relationship between father and the other son who had served in the SS in WWII. The

narration oscillates between proximity and distance as it explores the father's positionality during the war years. The attempt to understand the father as part of a larger value system during the Third Reich and as a father who had lost a son in war portrays the father's character then as a victim. However, as Maron's protagonist does, Timm's narrator also relies on cultural memory texts and his own recollection of his father's behavior to uphold a critical distance to the father's character as a perpetrator and avid supporter of National Socialism. Timm's protagonist approaches the deceased brother figure in a similar way. He paves the way for understanding and a potential closeness with his brother when situating him as a member and thus victim of a collective value system. However, the narrative shifts back to the standpoint of perpetrator, when considering the brother's incriminating diary entry and hypocritical letters. What the brother did not divulge in the diary and letters also casts him into a position of perpetrator as the narrator compares these communicative memory texts with those of cultural memory. Within the novels, through the negotiation of historic positionality, generational boundaries are crossed, bringing the narrator closer to, yet also further away from members of the first generation. This dynamic is comparable in the postmemory projects of Jewish or German backgrounds, exposing the assumed fault line between Jewish victims and German perpetrators as something more complex. This process does not so much render members of the respective first generations similar, rather emphasizes what the comparable dynamics of these postmemory undertakings mean for those of the following generations who attempt to connect with the stories of the their first generation family members. With each succeeding generation, accumulated knowledge from cultural memory and accumulated perspectives from communicative memory lead to an

increasingly open discussion with regards to historical positionality, for instance. Rigid categories and divisive lines thereby fade and contributors shuffle and cross these categories and borders with each succeeding generation.

The role of memory artifacts in the novels by Maron and Timm is yet another way that the protagonists not only bridge or sever ties to the first generation, but also illustrate similarities between one another despite differing perspectives of the WWII/Holocaust breach in family genealogy. In both texts, the constituents of communicative memory, such as photographs and letters in Maron or diary entries and letters in Timm, aid or hinder the protagonists in making sense of their family pasts. The gaps in historical artifacts are particularly prevalent in both novels, leading to use of imagination to fill the negative spaces. The historical artifacts, in both the information they present and withhold, affect the family relationships in these texts by bringing the protagonists and their respective alive or deceased family members closer together or distancing them from one another. The writings and photographs frequently stand in contrast to the protagonists' own memory, personal conversations with others, or texts from the cultural memory. The narrator in *Pawels Briefe* uses letters and photographs to find out more about Pawel's character and become closer to him through postmemory. However the artifacts only mediate so much, making imagination particularly prevalent in this novel to fill in the crucial gaps. In contrast, the personal belongings, while allowing for some moments of emotional connection in the narrative with the deceased grandfather and the mother's character alike, accentuate differences between mother and daughter. The artifacts emphasize the characters' ongoing memory contests, but before almost severing their relationship completely, they abide by a posthumous wish in one of Pawel's letters

to remain as a family unit. Both characters resolve to accept differences, which is not to be mistaken for forgiveness, as it does not result in a closer, deeper understanding between the “victim” and “perpetrator” that Kristeva’s model describes. The artifacts’ impact on the mother-daughter relationship in Maron’s novel raises an important point about postmemory work in its diversity and democratization, namely that differing viewpoints do not necessarily need to mesh harmoniously. Instead, all narratives are equally legitimate and can coexist with others, no matter how different.

The personal belongings of the family work in similar ways in *Am Beispiel meines Bruders*. The letters and diary from the deceased brother contain many voids, which lead to the narrator’s speculative questioning and often result in his reliance on cultural memory texts, such as memoirs published in post-war years. The artifacts’ role in the narrative presents an oscillation between proximity and distance with the brother and father. The narrator engages with the diary and letters in an effort to feel an emotional connection with the deceased brother and father, however, the incriminating diary entry, the hypocritical letters exchanged, and his own thoughts influenced by cultural memory intervene to maintain a critical distance between him and these figures. Something that is said in the diary, however, and the conclusion the narrator draws from it presents a marked contrast from Maron’s protagonist’s interaction with historical family remnants. Towards the end of the novel, the narrator, while still acknowledging the generational discursive difference from his father and brother, moves beyond judgment to a level of understanding that allows him to potentially forgive these deceased characters and himself. The element of forgiveness present in Timm’s novel is particularly appropriate since his family genealogy unfolds from a non-Jewish German perspective in which

family members were directly or indirectly involved in National Socialism during WWII. This, as Chapter 1 explored, does not necessarily relegate those family members entirely to the perpetrator category, which is something that the narrator begins to understand as he overcomes the bitter cultural discourse he subscribed to in the post-war years. In the end, he does not wholly sympathize with his first generation family members, however, he finally opens himself up to engaging with their story to give it a chance and finally to forgive those family members and himself.

*Pawels Briefe* and *Am Beispiel meines Bruders* reveal how Hirsch's postmemory structure allows renegotiation of intergenerational family relationships and similarities between German and Jewish backgrounds with regards to the retrospective glance on the WWII/Holocaust rupture. The fluid historical positionalities and ever-present historical artifacts along with the diverse imaginative capacities and different viewpoints at large among the post-war generations require not only a reconciliation with family and self, but also with one another, especially in Germany's post-unification era. This allows for the ongoing open discussion and the co-habitation of diverse historical perspectives tied to individual family stories as Bathrick's notion of "democratization of memory" suggests. As this analysis has shown, all family stories and those of individual family members are of equal legitimacy and contribute to the increasing diversification of the cultural memory archive. Works such as *Pawels Briefe* by Maron and *Am Beispiel meines Bruders* by Timm are becoming increasingly relevant as the distance from the epicenter (WWII/Holocaust breach) grows with each generation. Therefore, intergenerational novels still to come will be just as significant, if not more, as members of the next generations engage with the past in their own way through literature. Members of

forthcoming generations will further inform the postmemory structure as they come to terms with their family genealogies and 20<sup>th</sup> century history in their own ways while walking the line between imaginative subjectivity and historical tragedy.

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