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Memory Thieves?

Representing Dementia in Holocaust Literature

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Abstract<**EM SPACE**>This article examines the contemporary phenomenon of fiction and film about Holocaust survivors suffering from dementia. Earlier examples of this kind use dementia to explore the interior states of survivor guilt and the suppression of painful memories. By contrast, twenty-first-century representations convey the passing on of Holocaust memory to the next generation. These individuals, in the role of offspring or carers, act as the investigators and inheritors of a history that either has vanished from the survivor's memory or appears in the present as if it were still taking place. Such works are expressive of cultural anxiety at the vanishing of the generation of eyewitnesses to the events of the Holocaust yet also act to defuse the unwelcome lessons such witnesses might impart.

Keywords<**EM SPACE**>Holocaust survivors, dementia, memory loss, Irene Dische, Atom Egoyan

It is a verity of Holocaust commemoration in the twenty-first century that the event is turning from one in living memory to one of historical record, as the last survivors and eyewitnesses die. The cultural significance of this change has been acknowledged by such initiatives as the interactive survivor testimonies recorded for the UK National Holocaust Centre's "Forever" project, and, in the USA, the USC Shoah Foundation's "New Dimensions in Testimony" program. In both projects, survivors' stories are presented in such a way that the individuals appear in life-size, three-dimensional virtual form and give the impression of answering questions in real time.[1] The technology used in both cases retains the immediacy and individuality of testimony by preserving the "voices" and recall of survivors, most notably their ability to respond to listeners.[2] The preservation of this form of what Steffi de Jong calls "communicative memory" has been established to enable "the dialogue between Holocaust survivors and learners" to continue into the future.[3]

Yet the anxiety apparent here, that the loss of survivor testimony is a soon-to-be-realized cultural catastrophe, has appeared in a different, more covert form in recent fiction and film about Holocaust eyewitnesses and the succeeding generations. This is the widespread phenomenon of representations of Holocaust survivors who are still alive yet who can no longer remember what they underwent or when it took place. The role of the fictional survivor with memory loss or dementia is the opposite to that of the National Holocaust Centre and USC hologram witnesses, since the latter are simulacra of individuals with whom communication is "feigned," as de Jong puts it, even if it seems "realistic."[4] For the survivor who cannot remember, by contrast, communication is still possible and is indeed emphasized in the fictional texts' focus on the responses of carers, relatives and onlookers. However, the Holocaust content of such communication either has vanished or reappears in the present as if the events of the past were still taking place. The fear of the disappearance of such memory, along with the notion of an essence of historical atrocity that might at last be revealed, underlies these fictional narratives. Survivors, who are closely associated with memory and its importance as an artistic and ethical mode, appear in these texts in a transitional form: they are not yet dead but cannot impart their knowledge. The custodianship for such memory is shown in action, passing on to future generations.

The notion of dementia as it afflicts Holocaust survivors has equally occupied clinical literature in the several decades since the war's end. The possibility of a link between posttraumatic stress and the likeliness of the onset of dementia has been widely debated, although there is no clear consensus about the nature of such a connection. While Wolfgang Sperling, Sebastian Kreil, and Teresa Biermann see clear evidence that "there is an increased dementia rate in PTSD patients," including Holocaust survivors, Ramit Ravona-Springer, Michal Schnaider Beeri, and Uri

Goldbourt conclude the opposite, adding that the very fact of coming through the camp experience "might carry survival advantages that are associated with protection from dementia and mortality."[5] In other words, for Sperling and his coauthors, the costs of surviving entail debilitation; for Ravona-Springer and hers, on the other hand, survival ensures survival. In the novels I discuss here, no organic or causal connection between the protagonist's status as a survivor and their dementia is implied or explored. In such fiction with its contemporary setting, the fact that the survivors with dementia are necessarily very old might suggest the presence of "survival advantages," but such an affliction is not presented to this effect. Rather, it is shown to be the site of extra pathos as the individual's final experience of unmerited suffering.

Other therapeutic literature focuses on the kinds of "perceptions, behaviors and emotional responses" peculiar to Holocaust survivors with dementia.[6] These are the elements of the inner state which, as Oliver Sacks has warned, might get lost in focusing on physiology alone.[7] The exertion of novelistic appeal by these responses arises from the transformation of such customary features of any case of dementia as short-term memory loss along with reliance on "remote memory"[8]—that is, the ability still to recall earlier periods of life—into a pattern of fragmented remembering that is in the present cases filled with historical significance. In an example described by Ruth Kannai, this takes the form of "persecutory thoughts and hallucinations with threatening contents": the tropes of Holocaust atrocity are present in a form that is characterized more by affect than by chronology or historiography.[9] It is perhaps ironic that the memory loss of dementia does not, apart from some unusual cases in which the Holocaust experience is itself forgotten, "protect" survivors from their distressing memories but reveals their unexpectedly "intact" nature.[10] The signifiers

of the experiences of life in hiding or of imprisonment in a camp reappear in the context of a postwar environment. Medical professionals report the distress exhibited by survivors in care homes at such phenomena as showers, medical procedures or hospitalization, the provision of food, the requirement to stand in queues, and the presence of uniformed personnel. These are among the tropes often said to characterize the concepts left tainted by the experience of Nazism for any eyewitness, as Norma Rosen notes: "For a mind engraved with the Holocaust, gas is always that gas. Shower means their shower. Ovens are those ovens."[11] The presence of these conceits is also what enables the reader to identify the Holocaust significance of even the most abstract or oblique literary work, ranging from Georges Perec's 1975 novel W; or, the Memory of Childhood to Geoffrey Hill's 1968 poem "September Song," thus redoubling the aesthetic potential of representing the consciousness of the survivor with dementia, for whom these tropes appear as manifest reality once more.

Fictive Irony

The narrative potential offered by a mental state where the past reappears organically yet disruptively and unreliably in the present is clear in its twenty-first-century fictional contexts. We might expect that the representations of survivors with dementia would show them to be subject to what Saul Friedlander describes as "deep memory"—that is, an unutterable and unassimilable experience of suffering and bereavement.[12] In contrast to the narratability implied by the question-and-answer format of the interactive hologram testimonies I mentioned at the outset, Friedlander wonders whether it is this kind of deep memory, the unrepresentable horror evident in earlier testimonial examples,[13] **{Au: The note cites Young, not Friedlander. Please check. Thanks, it should be Friedlander – have amended}** that will be lost along with the survivors themselves. Yet this notion of deep memory does not always appear in fictional form as a way to

represent the traumatized consciousness that will vanish with the last survivors. Rather, the temporal blurring arising from survivor memory disturbance exists for other purposes, such as historicized irony and diegetic mystery. This is clear in Irene Dische's short story "The Doctor Needs a Home," from her 1995 collection Strange Traffic. It gradually emerges that the first-person narrator, ninety-year-old Stach, now living in New York, is unreliable and confused, imagining his sister Zesha to be his constant companion despite acknowledging her status as an absent "ghost," not in the sense of "a being," as he puts it, but in the sense of "a state of being."[14] Stach's memorious confusions are most starkly represented in terms of topography, as he describes the home of his childhood sweetheart, the Catholic Annula: "She lived on the other side of a wide body of water called the Hudson. The Hudson river separated my house from hers in Drohobyc."[15] This utterance acts as a chronotope of Stach's Holocaust-related memory loss for the reader. It does so by uniting "time and space markers,"[16] meaning that the Hudson river becomes a geographic boundary that simultaneously separates Stach's present in New York from the world of the past, making Annula doubly inaccessible.

Stach's invocation of his hometown of Drohobyc is not an example of a prewar city with the communally shared "afterlife" of "a place that cannot be found in any contemporary atlas," as Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer put it of the equally "invisible city" **{AU: Delete "of the place"? Yes}** known as Czernowitz in the prewar era.[17] It is, rather, a clue to an event that occurred at a time when Drohobyc had a Yiddish name and its river was the site of Annula's attempt to give her Jewish boyfriend an impromptu baptism. Stach's confusion of the topographies of past and present seems to be a failed effort at recall but is shown finally to be a successful suppression of tainted memory instead. In this text there is no external figure of an intra- or

extradiegetic kind, such as a grandchild or omniscient narrator, to make clear either the protagonists' mental state or the true facts of their history. Instead the diagnosis of a survivor's dementia is made in explicit, albeit oblique, terms, as Stach says in relation to a doctor's pronouncement: "He told them something worrisome that I didn't know, that I am not well. I understand that I suffer from ulcer of the Heimat. I'm sure he called it ulcheimers."[18] This diagnosis is glossed as "Alzheimer's disease" when Stach asks the doctor to write it down, but his erroneous rendering possesses its own accuracy. As the story's title implies, Stach is displaced from home in every sense, and although it is a care home that he is advised to seek in the present, the story's denouement centers on a belated revelation concerning his homeland. The truth from which he has shied away, and which, it is implied, is now also lost to conscious memory, constitutes his psychic "ulcer."

In "The Doctor Needs a Home," the interpretation of Stach's "ulcer of the Heimat" as "Alzheimer's" is just one of several instances in which the voices of other characters constitute a narrative and "performative" device, acting to translate the confusions of memory loss for the reader.[19] While such clarification is not entirely necessary in the instance of the diagnosis, some of the other corrective utterances, even if we have to take on trust Stach's ability to report them accurately, are crucial to the reader's understanding of the story's revelation. In this way, the shocking truth that Stach abandoned his beloved sister Zesha and his mother during the war is put forward with brutal directness by his ex-wife Greta during a phone call, in the form of a reminder to him and a disclosure to the reader: **{Au: Blue highlighting is used here and below to signal repetitions. Thanks, changes look good}** "'You sent her home to Drohobyc, remember, when the Nazis came. You only looked out for yourself. . . . The Nazis shot her, and your mother, and threw them in a ditch.'"[20]

However, Stach's experience does not imply that there is an underlying connection between survivor guilt and memory loss. Rather, it makes dementia into a figure for the occlusion of historical atrocity and the individual's relation to it. Through memory loss Stach's self-delusion has turned into delusion tout court.

Fictive Redemption

The presence in twenty-first-century fiction of the Holocaust survivor afflicted with dementia reveals an emphasis distinctly different from that in Dische's story, moving from painfully exposing to comfortingly redeeming survivor guilt and wartime loss. This change arises in response to an inevitable turn to the second and third generations, whose legacy is shown to be one of historical investigation and understanding, as a way of consigning to the past wartime stories that have caused emotional and often ethical torment for the survivor. The role of dementia is to hold the parent or grandparent with the disorder in a transitional space, as if we were **{Au: "as if" calls for the subjunctive.}** witness to the very moment of memory becoming postmemory: they are not yet dead but no longer actively present.[21] **{Au: Hirsch's name appears in new n. 21, the date in the works cited.}** All these features, including dementia enlisted to render the survivor inactive, are apparent in Kristin Harmel's The Sweetness of Forgetting (2012). In this instance the narration of Rose McKenna's story is undertaken by the novel's protagonist, her granddaughter Hope, who gradually unravels her grandmother's history of survival in hiding in wartime Paris followed by emigration to the United States. This novel—and others such as Harriet Chessman's Someone Not Really Her Mother (2004) and Jillian Cantor's The Lost Letter (2017)—shows the occluded Holocaust-related history of an older woman existing to enable the flourishing of the narrator, who undertakes a journey of historical discovery that is only partly on the survivor's behalf. A hint at the premise

of Harmel's novel lies in its title, which contradictorily—since it is, rather, remembering that is shown to be "sweet"—refers both to Rose's dementia and to Hope's family bakery, where the recipes hold clues to the lost past of her grandmother. As in Stach's case, "forgetting" has been a deliberate strategy in Rose's postwar American life, but, by contrast to him, it is easily reversed by a deliberate choice even at a time when Rose really cannot remember, as she puts it to Hope: "'I am losing my memories now, and if I do not tell you these things, I fear they will be gone forever, and the damage I have done will not be reversed. It is time to tell the truth.'"[22] The "truth" turns out to include not only such hidden facts as Rose's Jewish ancestry but also the entirety of her Holocaust-related history; the loss of her family, including the younger brother Alain, whom she "loved best" (SF, 293); and the fact that Hope's mother, Josephine, was the child not of Rose's American husband Ted but of her beloved French husband Jacob, whom she believed to have died at Auschwitz. Hope's status as the inheritor of Holocaust memory is thus made fully genealogical.

Rose's dementia serves the pretext of her inability, despite her stated intention, to tell her granddaughter these facts directly. This gives the novel its element of mystery and ascribes all the agency to Hope, who not only uncovers her grandmother's secret past but also manages "miraculously" (SF, 192) to locate Alain in Paris and Jacob in New York and reunite them both with Rose. Hope's realization, after the feat of locating her grandmother's lost husband Jacob, that "in the drama of the moment, I'd almost forgotten about [Rose's] Alzheimer's" (424), qualifies as a metafictional acknowledgment that the figure of the survivor with dementia in Harmel's novel has a purpose beyond that of either clinical realism or Holocaust symbolism. In The Sweetness of Forgetting Rose's more obvious status is one that

risks falling into Efraim Sicher's category of "the cultural artifact with tenuous relevance" to the events of the Holocaust or their aftereffects.[23] In this way, Rose's role in being reunited with Jacob is to embody the romantic notion of "one true love" (261), which seems to elude Hope, rather than implying, in its "miraculous" unlikeliness, the reality of dispossession and bereavement, while her own survival assures the reader of the United States' status as a savior nation. The novel's centering on reparation and reassurance makes its ethos conflict with its own plot about a Holocaust survivor whose memories of the traumatic past often supersede those of the privileged present.

Hope's retrieval of Alain and Jacob before Rose finally "slips away" emphasizes that representing the deep memory of irreparable loss is not the novel's concern. In this instance, the transitional phenomenon of a Holocaust survivor with dementia exists self-consciously as a fairy tale, a form often invoked in the novel alongside equally frequent reference on the part of characters to the unlikely nature of the events that nonetheless take place. This contemporary fairy tale's moral teachings guide those such as Hope in the postwar world, in matters that might not just appear "trivial," as Sicher puts it, but ahistorical.[24] In Hope's case these include romantic fulfillment, saving the bakery from creditors, and reconciliation with her teenage daughter Annie. Hope is increasingly likened to her grandmother, so that we learn from Annie that Hope's suitor, Gavin, looks at her "'maybe kinda how Jacob used to look at [Rose],'" and, even more explicitly, from Alain that "'[Hope] is a survivor. Just like her grandmother'" (SF, 356, 329). While the subtitle of Art Spiegelman's first- and second-generation graphic testimony Maus, "A Survivor's Journey," is a self-ironizing reference not only to the experiences of Vladek during the war but also to Art's having to undergo his parents' postmemorial legacy, here it seems that the

much more everyday obstacles of single parenthood and financial pressures are what Hope has to "survive" yet what implicitly place her on a par with her grandmother.

So compelling are tropes of this kind that Amy Sorrells's novel Then Sings My Soul (2015) follows a narrative format similar to that of The Sweetness of Forgetting, despite its setting in a pre-Holocaust era. Such a pattern is evident in its protagonist Nel Stewart's uncovering the Jewish ancestry and escape from persecution of her dementia-afflicted father, Jakob. This frees her to make fulfilling life choices of her own, including embarking on a romantic relationship. Although Jakob's tribulations take place in the early years of twentieth-century Russia and Ukraine, so that the violence threatening him and his family of "Messianic Jewish" converts to Christianity is that of pogroms rather than of Nazi mass murder, the way this violence is portrayed is clearly indebted to Holocaust representation. Indeed, one of the "book club questions" in the novel's appendix reminds readers of the Holocaust-era deaths in Ukraine and asks whether they consider "the pogroms," which are themselves described as "genocide" in the book's blurb, to have "contributed" to the Holocaust.[25] Among individual acts of violence in Sorrells's novel, described in terms often as grotesque as those in Jerzy Kosinski's The Painted Bird (1965), is Jakob's witnessing the aftermath of a mass killing in a "steep ravine," which, with its "hundreds" of victims, "all naked, dead. Twisted and unmoving," appears to be a prochronistic version of the 1941 massacre at Babi Yar (TS, 249–50). By setting it a quarter century earlier, Sorrells avoids having to fictionalize the Holocaust itself for her novel's redemptive purposes, yet she draws on the imagery of Jewish martyrdom, including deaths crucifixion style. Like The Sweetness of Forgetting, Then Sings My Soul concludes with the dementia patient's death, suggesting that the characters' role has been to remain alive long enough to validate the findings by individuals in the next

generation that memory loss has prevented the patients from summoning up themselves. In this way the watershed moment of losing the generation of eyewitnesses to atrocity is enacted as we read, acting in "homeopathic" form, to accustom us through small doses to the effects of this loss.[26] **{Au: Santner's name appears in new n. 26 (originally 31).}**

Since Jakob ostensibly cannot remember his harrowing experiences, Then Sings My Soul has to resolve the question of how to represent his life history. The answer in this case is not that of a history gradually revealed, as in Dische's short story and Harmel's novel, but the offering of two narratives in parallel: that of Nel's visit to her father in the wake of her mother's death in the early 1990s and the story of Jakob's attempt to leave Russia prior to the First World War. Jakob's history is told by an omniscient narrator, although at times it is presented as if it consisted of his own visions, since we learn that "memories he hadn't thought of in years resurfaced, terrifying him" (TS, 142). Yet when Nel decides to "[come] right out and ask" for the details of her father's early life, despite his dementia and lifelong secrecy, Jakob is able at once to oblige, as he unhesitatingly responds, "'I will tell you my story'" (256).

Forgotten Crimes

The religious framework of Sorrells's novel, which is published by the Christian imprint David C. Cook, necessitates its salvific conclusion. Jakob's suffering from survivor guilt, compounded by his failure as a child in Russia to prevent his little sister Faigy from being abducted by a "man in black robes" (TS, 290) after the massacre of their family, seems likely to be assuaged only by psychic acceptance. Yet absolution also takes place in plot-related terms, as Nel's researches reveal that the man in black was not a "pogromshchik," as Jakob had believed, but a kindly local

priest, and that Faigy not only survived but also became the founder of an orphanage in Ukraine. This act of misremembering precedes Jakob's dementia, meaning that his memory loss functions most tellingly, apart from emphasizing his age, to necessitate Nel's intervention and discoveries. The redemptive conclusion of Then Sings My Soul, which even extends in its final pages to an afterlife where Jakob is taken into "the arms of Yeshua and his loved ones" (298), differs starkly from the bleak and material resolution of Irene Dische's "The Doctor Needs a Home," in which Stach's unreliable memories of his own losses are shown to have screened out the truth that he was responsible for the suffering of others. In Michael Lavigne's novel Not Me (2005) and Atom Egoyan's film Remember (2015), this notion of discovering that ill-doing originates in the self rather than in the outside world is taken to an extreme. In these twenty-first-century instances, the aged individual is unexpectedly shown to be a Nazi perpetrator masquerading as a Jewish survivor but one who has forgotten this hidden truth. Although these twenty-first-century versions of the same figure, the survivor with dementia, do confront the aftereffects of wartime atrocity, their centering on the perpetrators rather than on the victims makes these narratives generically distant from those events. Such distancing takes place not by means of a redemptive plot but through the generic effects of allegory.

In Lavigne's novel, Michael Rosenheim's father, the camp survivor Heshel, suffering from Alzheimer's disease, lives in a Florida care home. In this case, the means of representing the history of an individual who can no longer remember that very history is also the plot's central device, in the form of Michael's discovery of a box containing twenty-four volumes of a diary. In this instance of a parallel narrative, we read about the wartime past as Michael does, interleaved with episodes about his father's declining health in the present for which the son is the first-person narrator.

Michael's uncertainty about whether the diary is fact or fiction arises from its "Nazi gothic" story of an SS officer, Heinrich Mueller, who masquerades as a Jewish camp survivor at the war's end to evade Allied justice. Mueller assumes the name of a dead camp inmate, Heshel Rosenheim, and is persuaded to join a group of Jewish prisoners newly liberated from Buchenwald on their journey to Palestine, where he takes part in the War of Independence.

The plot in Not Me of the Nazi masquerading as Jew, extreme though it seems , is indebted to earlier novels with the same central conceit. Just as these earlier novels responded to their political context of postwar reparations and war-crimes trials, as Stephanie Bird (2018) has argued, so the trope of dementia in Lavigne's novel is an extra twist arising from its twenty-first-century context. These earlier works include Edgar Hilsenrath's novel The Nazi and the Barber (1971) and Robert L. Fish's Pursuit (1978), on which the television miniseries Twist of Fate (dir. Ian Sharp, 1989) is based, in both of which, by a supreme irony, a former Nazi's assumed Jewish identity is confirmed as a result of combat on the side of the Jews in Palestine in 1948. It is left deliberately unclear how far an inner adherence to the new identity of Hilsenrath's protagonist Itzig Finkelstein, né Max Schulz, and Fish's Benjamin Grossman, né Helmut von Schraeder, extends beyond the strategic performance of being a Jewish Holocaust survivor. By contrast, in the case of Heshel Rosenheim, it is not only implied that his masquerade as a Jew does become an authentic allegiance, but it is confirmed by a letter that Michael fortuitously retrieves—written by Heshel before his dementia took hold—about the protagonist of his diary: "He wanted to turn the shadow into light. He did not ask to be forgiven, nor did he seek punishment. He sought redemption."[27] Heshel's dementia confirms the possibility of leaving the past definitively behind, as Michael thinks that his father might be taken from his care

home and put on trial as a war criminal: "'He wouldn't even know he'd left the country. He lived in a world of Leberknoedel and jam-filled cookies now, as if none of it had ever happened. It was too late for justice. Too late for anything'" (NM, 199; my emphasis). The memory loss of dementia has allowed Heshel not only to enact his innocence but to believe it, too. And although he describes it as a burden, Michael recognizes that the custodianship of the murky past is about to be passed on to the next generation, as he puts it: "My father finally was allowed to forget, while I was forced to remember" (257).

Diegetic mystery is retained at first in Not Me about whether the story of Mueller's transformation is Heshel's confessional biography or an invention. However, Michael is so quickly convinced that his apparently "relentlessly Hebraic" father, whose house is full of "innumerable tchotchkes" and who constituted a "one-man Jewish National Fund," is in fact a former Nazi that any suspense quickly dissipates (NM, 9, 178). This means that the novel's focus is, rather, as its title suggests, an existential one. It centers on the possibility of a change of heart in the exaggerated sense that we encounter it here. We are invited to consider, alongside Michael, whether Heshel Rosenheim's postwar deeds have outweighed those of his wartime role, an ethical conundrum made simpler by his having acted simply as a bookkeeper in his role at Majdanek and by the irony of his being shown to have forgotten even this.

In this way, Heshel's trajectory contrasts with the political allegory of Hilsenrath's The Nazi and the Barber, the latter's target often taken to be the sanctimony of German reparative responses to genocide in the postwar era.[28] In Fish's Pursuit, since its German-born protagonist dies to save not only his Jewish son but also the Israeli state from nuclear attack, a more self-sacrificial significance is

implied. In Not Me the dementia that afflicts Lavigne's version of the Nazi masquerading as a Jew is a crucial addition, since it distances the novel from either the political allegory of The Nazi and the Barber or the political-thriller genre of Pursuit. Despite the great potential for dementia narratives to represent concerns about historical amnesia and remembrance in specific national contexts,[29] in the case of Not Me memory loss acts instead to shrink the story into one that is exclusively familial and individual. Heshel's dementia and powerlessness exist to pass the details of the past, and the possibility of forgiveness, on to his son, in this story which is most tellingly about an especially fraught example of intergenerational relations.

In Not Me it seems that caution about the plot device of the Nazi-turned-Jew has compromised the ironic potential for such a figure's dementia, since Heshel is posthumously redeemed. This is implied by Michael's decision to say kaddish for the father who originally assumed his Jewishness to evade justice. By contrast, in Atom Egoyan's film Remember the possibilities for dramatic irony of this kind are used more extensively. Neither the protagonist Zev Guttman (Christopher Plummer) nor the audience can predict the revelation that his true yet forgotten wartime history is that of the camp guard Otto Wallisch, on whose trail he is sent by his friend Max (Martin Landau) to find the man responsible for the deaths of their families. Zev is in the dark by reason of his memory loss, the viewer because the action is set exclusively in the present and because Zev is presented as a German-born Holocaust survivor living in a New York care home. Remember lacks the flashbacks that characterize most Holocaust-related films, ranging from The Pawnbroker (1964) to *Sophie's Choice* (1982). Dementia in Egoyan's film is both the pretext of and the determinant for the absence of any imagery from the past of this kind, allowing a psychological state and a diegetic mystery to rely on the same narrative device.

The audience's ability only to follow the surface of the plot, as it unfurls throughout Zev's quest to find Otto Wallisch, matches Zev's mental state: dementia means that he too seems to exist only in the present moment, and everything is a surprise to him. The surprise here is the revelation that Zev himself is the murderous camp guard. Like Oedipus's, his quest ends up identifying himself as the villain. In the world of the film, Zev's final words, "I remember," implying the belated recognition of his Nazi past, are followed by his putting a gun to his head, with a fade to a black screen. This startling denouement is indebted to the imperatives of genre—IMDB classifies the film as "drama/mystery/thriller"—rather than Holocaust symbolism or medical detail. It seems that the trope of dementia is used in Egoyan's film as the motivation for suspense, since the viewer knows as little as the protagonist, but also for other reasons, including the implication that guilt and responsibility are universal.

Conclusions

Although Egoyan has commented on the allegorical status of Remember, claiming that it is a warning about historical amnesia in relation to such events as the Armenian genocide, which forms his own familial background, the film has been criticized for reducing both Holocaust remembrance and dementia to plot devices.[30] Indeed, in all the examples I have analyzed, genre is perhaps the most significant factor in determining how the figure of the survivor who cannot remember is represented. In the case of Dische's "The Doctor Needs a Home," fragmented and oblique interior discourse culminates bleakly in the epiphany of a modernist short story, while Harmel's and Sorrells's novels have to conclude with the salvation required of, respectively, inspirational and "discipleship" literature. Not Me ends likewise redemptively, its hints at Michael's initially **{Au: Delete "even"?}** murderous horror at his

father's past subsumed by its implied popular readership. In the case of Remember, a psychological thriller, the potential for undermining spectatorial assumptions takes a cinematic form. In place of flashbacks, we see Zev react fearfully in the present to such triggers as the view of a showerhead when he is lying in the bath, a barking pet dog, queues, and loudspeakers at the Canadian border. These Holocaust-related images seem to convey the traumatic irruption of elements of Zev's camp experience into his amnesiac present, but they are instead figures for a perpetrator guilt that has itself been forgotten. Remember's filmic genre means that no first-person account of Zev's past or present experience is expected, nor is any means beyond dialogue used to convey his history. Thus there is no equivalent for the need evident in the literary examples to represent by proxy the wartime events that the central character cannot recall, and Zev's past remains enigmatic.

It might seem that the generic variety of the examples I have analyzed makes it hard to draw broad conclusions about the representation of the Holocaust survivor with dementia in the new millennium. The popular appeal of the topic is shown by the existence of further examples of widely read novels (for instance, by Linda Newbery, Lore Segal, and Margot Singer), as well as memoirs (Susan Faludi, Miranda Richmond Mouillot) and film (Josh Appignanesi's Ex Memoria of 2006). Yet, even beyond the symptomatic appearance of such a figure at the watershed historical moment of the last survivors reaching the end of their lives, these portraits do have some significant elements in common. Such shared features cast light on contemporary fantasies and fears about the figure of the survivor, whose value resides not just in remembrance but also in warning. These include ambivalence about the precious yet fallible or distressing nature of the wisdom an eyewitness might impart, an uncertainty resolved **{Au: Unclear. Replace "one" with "an ambivalence"?}** in the figure of

the survivor whose memory is lost and who has thus fallen almost entirely under the "control" of those living in the present.[31] Dische's story is unusual in representing the survivor with memory loss using the first person, and Egoyan's Remember has Zev as its focalizer and misguided agent, but in all the other cases discussed here the survivor is placed firmly in the background of the novel's plot. For long stretches of the action in The Sweetness of Forgetting Rose is barely mentioned, while Sorrells's Jakob and Lavigne's Heshel are symbolically rendered prone in their respective care homes.

The notion of the survivor with memory loss brings together the "polarized" notions of history and memory in a striking manner.[32] A mental state such as dementia that involves losing the accurate perception of time is nonetheless historicized,[33] and the individual is shown to remain in the grip of definitive wartime events as if they were still present, rather than living fully in any recuperative aftermath. However, in most of the examples analyzed here, the rupture in the conditions of human life in history, for which Jürgen Habermas claims the Holocaust is responsible,[34] is ignored and annulled, or exceeds the works' generic capacity. Dementia has been referred to as a contemporary "cultural myth,"[35] and its appearance in the context of the Holocaust redoubles this mythic quality in the self-conscious and fictive use of memory loss to stand in for the loss of access to survivors' memory. These survivors with dementia exist in the form of benign or even domesticated ghosts whose haunting of the present has already begun.

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Notes

[1] Sherwood, "Holocaust Survivors' 3D Project."

[2] National Holocaust Centre and Museum, “The Forever Project.”

[3] De Jong, Witness as Object, 248; USC Shoah Foundation, “Dimensions in Testimony.”

[4] De Jong, Witness as Object, 248.

[5] Sperling, Kreil, and Biermann, “Posttraumatic Stress Disorder,” 196; Ravona-Springer, Beeri, and Goldbourt, “Exposure to the Holocaust,” 709.

[6] Erickson, “Holocaust Survivors and Aging.”

[7] Sacks, “Speak, Memory.”

[8] Keage, “Passage of Time.”

[9] Kannai, “Disremembering the Holocaust,” 219.

[10] Quoted in Ulman, “Failing Minds.”

[11] Rosen, “Second Life,” 52. Thanks to Carmelle Stephens for this reference.

[12] Friedlander, “Trauma, Transference, and ‘Working Through,’” 41.

[13]. Friedlander, “Trauma, Transference, and ‘Working Through,’” 41.

{AU: Needs an entry in the works cited list. Also, the text mentions Friedlander, not Young.}

[14] Dische, “The Doctor Needs a Home,” 113. Thanks to Susanne Christ for this reference. See also Krüger-Fürhoff, “Screen Memories.”

[15] Dische, “The Doctor Needs a Home,” 115.

[16] Bakhtin, “Forms of Time,” 98.

[17] Hirsch and Spitzer, Ghosts of Home, xiv.

[18] Dische, “The Doctor Needs a Home,” 128.

[19] Hartung, Ageing, 193.

[20] Dische, “The Doctor Needs a Home,” 133.

[21] See Hirsch, “Generation of Postmemory.”

[22] Harmel, Sweetness of Forgetting, 76 (hereafter cited as SF).

[23] Sicher, “Future of the Past,” 56.

[24] Sicher, “Future of the Past,” 58.

[25] Sorrells, Then Sings My Soul, 301 (hereafter cited as TS).

[26] Santner, Stranded Objects, 21.

[27] Lavigne, Not Me, 286 (hereafter cited as NM).

[28] See, e.g., Hutter, “Identity Politics.”

[29] See, e.g., Medina, “From the Medicalisation of Dementia.”

[30] Egoyan, interview with Schuchman, March 15, 2016.

[31] Doris Bergen, discussion at the Fifth British Association of Holocaust Studies Annual Conference, University of Leeds, July 24, 2018.

[32] Assmann, “Transformations,” 49.

[33] Keage, “Passage of Time.”

[34] Habermas, quoted in Huyssen, “Monument and Memory,” 260.

[35] Zeilig, “Dementia.”

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