

“For me, home wasn’t a freezer”

Works of postmemory in Israeli Shoah documentaries

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Abstract

The purpose of this essay is to examine how the Shoah affects Israeli society today and deals with the construction of identity and collective memory of the Post-Shoah generations in Israel. The study analyzes three Israeli documentary films through the theory of Marianne Hirsch's "postmemory". These films are *The Flat* (2011), *Six Million and One* (2011), and *Defamation* (2009). The essay cast its light on themes that seems to penetrate the modern Israeli society. It discusses "The German problem" – resentment and struggle against the German culture, how the Post-Shoah generations try to repair the holes in their family history and lastly "The Cultural Trauma" that pervades the Israeli society. To analyze the documentaries I have used a hermeneutic text interpretation, but also highlighted how the directors use photography in order to create collective memory and identity. The documentaries show that the Post-Shoah generations construct their collective memory and Jewish identity through family, photography and trips of return to Europe.

Keywords: Collective memory, Shoah, Second generation, Third generation, documentary, postmemory, Israel, identity

Abstract (Swedish)

Uppsatsen behandlar Andra och Tredje generationens konstruktion av identitet och kollektivt minne i Israel. Syftet med uppsatsen blev att försöka fylla en del av den lucka som forskningen lämnat till nutida dokumentärer. I studien analyseras tre israeliska dokumentärfilmer från 2000-talet. Med utgångspunkt ur *The Flat* (2011), *Six Million and One* (2011), och *Defamation* (2009) lyfter uppsatsen fram tre teman: "Det tyska problemet", hur Post-Shoah generationer försöker fylla i luckor i sin släkthistoria samt "Det kulturella traumat" som genomsyrar det israeliska samhället. Som teori använder jag Marianne Hirschs "postmemory" och filmerna analyseras med metoden hermeneutisk texttolkning. Uppsatsen lyfter även fram hur regissörerna använder fotografier för att skapa kollektivt minne och identitet. Dokumentärerna har visat att Andra och Tredje generationen i Israel konstruerar sina kollektiva minnen och judiska identiteter med hjälp av familjen, fotografier och återvändande resor till Europa.

Nyckelord: Kollektivt minne, Shoah, Andra generationen, Tredje generationen, dokumentär, "postmemory", Israel, identitet

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1. Introduction

A common Post-Shoah belief among graduates of the Shoah and the alumni of heroism as well as the Post-Shoah generations is the view that they are in constant conflict with the world. The Hebrew language, Ivrit, derives from Abraham the Ivri, meaning he was born on the other side of the river, Euphrates. The Hebrew term ivri derives from “ever”, which means “the other side”. Since ancient time into the present the Hebrews have been on one side, and the rest of the world on the other; a point which Hitler restated during the Shoah.¹ Lehakat Pikud Dizengoff’s song supports the theme. “*Ha'olam kulo negdeinu. Lo nora nitgaber*” - “The whole world is against us. Don't worry, we'll overcome”.²

The belief that “the whole world is against us” has sprouted and gained roots in the collective memory in Israel, and is constantly being motivated by Israeli politicians and media. Not one day passes without the Shoah being mentioned in the Israeli media.³ Avraham Burg is one of the scholars in Israel who is trying to move away from this belief, and forms critiques against the constant prominence of the Shoah in Israel. Is Israel constantly living in the past, in the shade of the Shoah and struggling to move forward because of it?⁴

Israel as a nation is very diverse, consisting of different ethnic groups, with different languages and different religions. Since Israel was founded in 1948, it has had to integrate immigrants from all over the world and still try to maintain the majority of the population Jewish. Meanwhile, Israel has been in constant conflict with its neighbors since the declaration of Independence and has had to provide security for its residence on a daily basis. Thus, Israel has placed the leading roles in the creation of a national collective within the educational system and the IDF (Israeli Defense Forces) in order to construct a sense of community mainly through a shared history and future. The ceremonial commemoration of the Shoah, *Yom HaShoah* has become one of the most important days in Israel and in creating a sense of shared history and a collective identity.⁵

¹ Burg 2008, p.107

² Written by Yoram Teharlev in the 1970s, video at YouTube. See Teharlev (2014)

³ Burg 2008, p.13

⁴ Burg 2008, p.16

⁵ Bialer & Kersting 2010, p.58-59

Over 88 % of the 198,000 Shoah survivors that lived in Israel in 2012 are over 75 years old and in need of special home arrangements and help in daily needs. At least one survivor dies every hour in Israel, this equates to 12,000 every year.⁶ The memory of the Shoah will soon rely completely on written testimonies, photography, films and the Post-Shoah generations. Of course, this raises a number of questions about memory (and identity). Which memories will be brought forth? Whose memory? What will happen to the collective memory in Israel, when no survivors are longer alive? Which medium will be the primary in conveying the memories of the Shoah?

1.1 Collective memory and Postmemory

As theory for my analysis I will use Marianne Hirsch's "postmemory", which I consider to be an aspect of collective memory. In regard, "postmemory" and "collective memory" are both concepts and theories. In this section I will explain these two theories.

"Collective memory" is an umbrella term for a range of different types of memory. The concept of collective memory originated from the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs. Although Halbwachs was influenced by Èmile Durkheim, the term collective memory implies memory is necessarily socially constructed.⁷ Since collective memory can be understood and defined in several different ways, we must try to find a further definition that can be seen as universal for all understandings and definitions. Peter Novick understands collective memory to be "memories that suffuse group consciousness" – memories that are both about the past and the present, and which is believed to make a statement about "who we are now", something essential that defines our identity.⁸ In this way a group's identity is constructed of images, traditions and memories to give its members a sense of belonging, a socially constructed community. The group's size or complexity can differ; it can be big and an "imagined community"⁹ in form of nationalism or small, like a family, whose members are all known. Furthermore, the relationship between identity and memory is circular and dependent on each other. In research, Halbwachs claims that all individual memory is constructed within social institutions and that the personal memory is understood only through a group framework.¹⁰ In

⁶ Eglash 2012

⁷ Green 2004, p.37

⁸ Novick 1999, p.170

⁹ See Benedict Anderson's *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*.

¹⁰ Halbwachs 1992, p.53-55

other words, collective memory is constructed by a social group to enhance its unity and identity, but is dependent on the individuals remembering. It is argued that the only individual memories that are not constructed through social framework and structure are the images of dreams, since they are unstable and fragmentary with no organization and can therefore not provide the social group with any cohesive or structured memory.¹¹

Lewis A. Coser distinguishes historical memory from autobiographical memory in Halbwachs. “Historical” means a processed and shared creation of memory that we did not live to experience, which is stimulated indirectly through commemoration, books, film and the educational system. The autobiographical memory is individual, meaning memories of events that we personally experienced.¹² Taking the Shoah in consideration, individual autobiographical memory is reserved only for the actual eyewitnesses, the first generation of survivors. The memories of the Post-Shoah generations will thus be “historical” memories, memories of events occurred before their birth that they receive through commemorations, photography and listening to stories.

Jan Assmann and Aleida Assmann has widened Halbwachs concept of collective memory. Jan Assmann introduced the distinction between “communicative memory” and “cultural memory” to differentiate the different aspects of collective memory.¹³ The “communicative memory” is autobiographical and is transferred to the next generation through everyday communication, in a time span of 80-100 years. Cultural memory resembles the “historical” memory by already being in the past, and is communicated through ceremonial commemorations with a time span of 3000 years.¹⁴ Aleida Assmann extends this into four formats. 1. Political memory – Mediated memories, founded on external symbols and material representations, but also relies on education and collective participation. 2. Social memory – A communicative and intergenerational memory which is transmitted through social events and oral communication, usually within a family. 3. Individual memory – Memories essential for building a social identity and inner self, but not exclusively private memories since memory needs to be constructed within social institutions. 4. Cultural memory – Mythical and historical memories that relies on external representation such as monuments, museums,

¹¹ Halbwachs 1992, p.174

¹² Coser 1992, p.23-24

¹³ Assmann 2008, p.110

¹⁴ Assmann 2008, p.117

ceremonial commemorations and other mnemonic institutions, memories that creates a cultural (collective) identity in social groups and societies.¹⁵

Social memory and individual memory are designed as intergenerational memories, while political memory and cultural memory are designed to be transgenerational e.g. transgenerational trauma that is transferred from the first generation survivors to the Second and subsequent generations. The term transgenerational refer to things that are passed on from generation to generation.

Marianne Hirsch introduces in *The Generation of Postmemory*, the concept of postmemory; a “structure of inter- and transgenerational return of traumatic knowledge and embodied experience” and a “consequence of traumatic recall but at a generational remove”.¹⁶ The “post” in “postmemory” is used to mark the development of memory. Postmemory describes the relationship that the Second generation has to the collective, individual and cultural trauma of the generation before them, the traumatic experiences before their time that has been transmitted to them in such degree that it constitutes memories of their own.¹⁷ If I am to understand “postmemory” based on this, it binds together the distant and symbolic elements of historical and cultural memory with the familial and closeness elements of individual memory. The concept postmemory is characterized by an omnipresent absence and relies on photography as the primary source of transmission of trauma.¹⁸ Hirsch uses the term “postmemory” when reading and viewing art and works made by the Post-Shoah generations. The most prominent examples Hirsch applies postmemory to are Art Spiegelman’s *Maus* and W.G. Sebald’s *Austerlitz*, using these texts to reveal how the work of postmemory falls on familiar and cultural images that is shaping the Post-Shoah generations. By analyzing the images in *Maus*, Hirsch verifies that the Post-Shoah generations only can imagine the experience in concentration camps of the First generation survivors, through public and well-known images.¹⁹ What makes “postmemory” a suitable concept and theory for my analysis is the key terms, which are memory, family and photography and that photography in this case is a key element in the construction of identity.

¹⁵ Assmann 2006, p. 212-222

¹⁶ Hirsch 2012, p.6

¹⁷ Hirsch 2012, p. 5-6

¹⁸ Hirsch 2012, p.247

¹⁹ Hirsch 2012, p.30

1.2 Purpose statement and Research Questions

Based on my personal interest in Israel and my relations with Third generation descendents, my interest in Jewish identity and collective memory in Israel has emerged. My purpose with this essay is to examine how the Shoah affects Israeli society today. By analyzing Israeli Shoah documentaries I aim to identify how the Second and Third generation descendants construct their Jewish identities and collective memory in relation to the Shoah. I will examine what kind of collective memory the filmmakers reveal or do not reveal. This will be done by analyzing the films through the concept of collective memory and the theory of postmemory. As I will discuss in a later section, a large part of the previous research has focused on narrative film, and left a gap for contemporary documentaries. I aim to fill a small part of that gap by focusing on some of the latest Israeli documentaries of the Shoah. The three themes I focus on are the “German problem”, the repair of the holes in family history and the “cultural trauma” as I consider these to be important in the construction of identity and collective memory in Israel. The idea of the themes emerged as I was watching the documentaries, and I found that these three themes have not been the focus of previous research on the Shoah and film.

The research question addressed in this essay is:

How does contemporary Israeli documentary film highlight the “German problem”, the repair of the holes in the family history and the “cultural trauma” as significant in the construction of Jewish identity and collective memory of the Post-Shoah generations in Israel?

2. Terminology

This essay deals primarily with the Second and Third Generation and their collective identity, and collective memory in relation to the Shoah. This section explains concepts that are central to the study.

Holocaust or Shoah

The biblical word Shoah (appears for example in Isaiah 47:11, Psalms 35:8 and Proverbs 3:25) is the standard Hebrew term for the murder of European Jewry in the 1940s and translates to "destruction" or "calamity". The general term for the crimes and horrors perpetrated by the Nazis is the English term Holocaust, which means burnt sacrifice and has its roots in the ancient Greek word "holokaustos", a religious offering completely burnt and consumed by fire.²⁰ The term Holocaust, described in its fullest in Leviticus 1, adopts a theological meaning when it is used to describe the Nazi genocide of Jews, as if the victims were animals sacrificed to a God.²¹ In regard, the concept Holocaust includes the entire Nazis' systematic extermination of Europe, primarily Jews, but also Romani, Slavic peoples, the disabled, homosexuals, and political and religious opponents. I consider it therefore important to use the Hebrew term Shoah for the destruction of the European Jewry, because it is less theologically loaded than "Holocaust".

Second and Third Generation

There are several definitions for "the second generation", a term coming into common usage during the 1980s. Eva Hoffman defines the Second generation as "children of survivors".²² Kathy Grinblat has two definitions of the term: those who are "born to Jewish parents who had survived the Holocaust" and "the generation that was never meant to have been born".²³ Hoffman is one of those who identify a problem with the term and recognizes it as an "imagined community", because what the Second generation has in common are not events belonging to their time of living, but events of their prehistory.²⁴ Hoffman coins a new term for this generation, "postgeneration" as they are defined by their "post-ness" and being a postwar generation, they did not have any direct experience of extremity or collective

²⁰ Auron 2005, p.154; *Yad Vashem* Holocaust museum and memorial

²¹ Baron 2006, p.23

²² Hoffman, 2005, p.26

²³ Grinblat 2002, p.1

²⁴ Hoffman 2005, p.28

violence.²⁵ This term would perhaps also work for the Third generation, since they have not experienced the collective violence of the Shoah either. The concept Third generation indicates the grandchildren of the Holocaust survivors, the children of the Second generation. I do however recognize a problem with changing the concept Second and Third generation to “postgeneration”, seeing as children born after the new Millennia, after 2000, are called the post generation.

The Second and Third generation also have different experience on the aftermath of the Shoah. When I acknowledge the two generations together, I will instead use the concept Post-Shoah generations, which includes all generations born after the Shoah. Helen Epstein holds a small discussion on what constitutes 2 G’s (Second generations): a sense of shame, denial, silence, and a sacred duty to have children, to ensure that the 6 million deaths were not in vain and to preserve the evil of the Shoah.²⁶ “The one common element is enormous physical and psychic disruption in our family history because of great catastrophe” said Epstein.²⁷ I find it difficult to find a suitable term for the Second generation other than the one that previously exists, as the Second generation is so distinctive. To distinguish Second generation survivors from the second generation as a general reference, I prefer to mark Second generation, the children of Shoah survivors, with capital letter. The Second generation came forth as an identifiable group in 1970s America, as children of survivors searching for their identities. Third generation however, coalesced as a group of teenagers in Israel eager to learn about their grandparent’s history.²⁸ By using capital letter for the Post-Shoah generations I distinguish the concepts from the general terms, and to differentiate them from each other I will use the terms Second generation and Third generation, with capital letters. Regarding the term “generation”, it has had a common meaning of “individuals who were born at about the same period of time”. Although, the meaning of the concept “generation” has changed and become a symbolic concept for people of the same age who share a similar social experience or collective memory.²⁹ This new definition of “generation” seems to fit well with the definitions of Second and Third generation discussed above, as they share a collective memory.

²⁵ Hoffman 2005, p.25

²⁶ Epstein 1988, p.18-22

²⁷ Smith 1997

²⁸ Fogelman 2008

²⁹ Khatib 2010, p.17

Identity

The term identity derives from the Latin “idem” which means “the same”. If we are to understand identity based on this definition, it would in general terms mean that identity is something constant, a distinctiveness that never changes, that always is “the same”. It could also mean that we are “the same”, a feature that is communal to a group, a collective identity. “The identity of any man or woman is, after all, or often is, a palimpsest composed of fragmentary memories, imprints, of those he or she has loved”³⁰ According to Bernard Harrison's definition of the term, identity is a manuscript on which writing has partially or completely been erased and replaced with new writing, in relation to memories. If we are to understand the dynamic concept of identity based on Harrison's definition, identity is constructional. As infants our identity is dependent on our parents and ambient, but with time we create identity ourselves based on memories, experience and imprints. In relation to the changing reality the concept identity constantly needs to be redefined. The concept of collective identity has been defined by Francesca Polletta and James M. Jasper as “an individual's cognitive, moral and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice, or institution”.³¹ Based on this definition I understand collective identity to be something generated and shaped between individuals. Collective identity is interrelated with collective memory, as memories that we believe expresses the core of our collective identity are chosen as collective memories, and the collective memory helps to create a collective identity.³² The definitions of identity and collective identity are so versatile that I consider it important to determine the definition I regard as most suitable for this essay. When I hereafter mention identity, it will be with the definition of identity that Harrison expressed, that identity is constructional and changes in relation to memories, experiences and imprints. The collective identity will be understood as something developed and formed between individuals, in conjugation with the above definition of identity.

³⁰ Harrison 1996, p.4

³¹ Polletta & Jasper 2001, p.285

³² Novick 1999, p.7

3. Methodological Considerations

3.1 Hermeneutics and text interpretation

The documentaries in this essay will be interpreted mainly as texts with a qualitative method. I will analyze the films with the method of hermeneutic text interpretation³³ in order to identify which imagery the documentary films show in creating Jewish identity and collective memory in Israel. The benefit of using hermeneutic text interpretation as my method is that I am interested in finding the underlying meanings and significance in the Post-Shoah generations' communication through speech in the films. A disadvantage is that with a text interpretation I cannot examine how the directors apply and use photography in their works of postmemory, which is why I balance this method with a very simple form of film analysis. I have not chosen a specific approach of my film analysis, since I want to keep it subtle. To clearly present the material, the work is divided into different parts, in accordance with the hermeneutics, where I present the material in the three different themes "The German problem", "Living in the light of the Shoah" and "The Cultural trauma". Each theme has a specific film in focus, even though they integrate to some extent. According to the hermeneutics the relationship between part and the entirety are significant and must be understood in relation to each other.³⁴ The purpose of hermeneutics is to understand the reality without any claim of generalization and within hermeneutics it is understood that we can never place ourselves outside of ourselves in relation to what we are studying.³⁵ The researcher approaches the material subjectively and always interprets on the basis of her pre-understanding.³⁶

3.2 Pre-understanding

Pre-understanding are the thoughts, feelings, knowledge and impressions that the researcher already has when approaching a topic. These are an asset to interpretation, not an impediment.³⁷ Based on this, my interpretation of the films is to be marked by my gender, age and Swedish collective identity, which provides me with a specific set of experiences, knowledge and values. It will be formed by my experiences in Israel and my basic knowledge of Hebrew. Additional factors that influence my pre-understanding are my studies in

³³Patel & Davidson 2011, p.28

³⁴ Patel & Davidson 2011, p.29

³⁵ Ödman 2001, p.10

³⁶ Patel & Davidson 2011, p.29

³⁷ Patel & Davidson 2011, p.29

Religious Studies and my specific studies in Jewish Studies in the last 2 years, as well as my experience of working at an American Reform Jewish summer camp for 2 consecutive years. These factors might result in a different interpretation of the films than a person who grew up in the Jewish culture and in Israel.

4. Material

This study will analyze three Israeli documentary films from the 21st century. *The Flat* (2011) centers on the Goldfinger family while they empty and clean out the director's grandmother's (Gerda Tuchler's) apartment in Tel Aviv after her passing. *Six Million and One* (2011) focuses on the filmmaker David Fisher and his siblings when they embark on a journey to Austria where their father was interned at the concentration camps Gusen and Gunskirchen, while the director reads from their father's memoir written after the liberation. *Defamation* (2009) differs from the other films as the director Yoav Shamir is on a mission to answer the question "What is anti-Semitism today?". The number of films I have chosen shows different aspects of how to create collective memory and identity.

The aim for this essay is to analyze documentary films addressing the Second and Third generation as the main characters and for that reason I choose *The Flat* and *Six Million and One*. However, this was not the case for *Defamation*, where the filmmaker Yoav Shamir speaks with an array of people, including the Anti-Defamation League and people on the streets in Crown Heights, Brooklyn to examine violence against Jews. I chose to include *Defamation* in my analysis because the director joins Israeli school pupils on their trip to Poland and Auschwitz, and show us how education in Israel deals with this uneasy subject.

These documentaries are not the typical films about the Shoah; usually ghastly visuals of suffering, death and mass-murder. These films represent a new generation of Shoah film³⁸, because rather than focusing on the Shoah, they express the Post-Shoah generations' thoughts, identities and memories. This new generation of Shoah film is moving away from the historical focus and details that are common in Shoah representation, and moving towards

³⁸ Bayer 2010, p.131-132

ethical concerns.³⁹ Such ethical concerns can be seen in for example, a scene in *Defamation* where an Israeli girl discusses Israel's high threshold for violence against Arabs.

The research assessment shows that motion pictures are over-represented⁴⁰ but that there is a lack of contemporary Israeli documentaries in this field of study, which is why I chose to work with this type of film rather than fiction. For this reason I also limited my choice to Israeli films from the last 5 years. All three of the films belong to the genre "narrative of return"⁴¹ and have a theme where Israelis are traveling to Europe. The research also demonstrates that motion picture will play an important role in maintaining Shoah remembrance. As the archive of Shoah film keeps growing⁴², it ensures that this calamity will never be forgotten, even when the original survivors are no longer living.

4.1 The Flat

Arnon Goldfinger's documentary, *The Flat* approaches the question of victims and perpetrators, and shows a clear demarcation between good and evil, in the theme of trauma and memory and in contrast with two generations. The film centers on the director and his family as they clean out the flat that belonged to his grandparents – both immigrants from Nazi Germany to Palestine in the 1930s. Goldfinger gradually discovers that his grandparents had a close and long-lasting friendship with a high Nazi SS official, Leopold Von Mildenstein and his wife, before and after World War II. The director's mother Hannah represents the Second generation and the inherited sense of shame and silence adopted by her parents; the filmmaker represents the Third generation, and the determination of learning about his grandparents' history.

4.2 Six Million and One

Years after his passing, Joseph Fishers' memoir of the war was discovered. Out of his 5 children, only David, the director of the film, was able to bring himself to read it. David Fisher convinces his siblings to go on a journey to Austria with him, and they find themselves in the dark depths of the B8 Bergkristall tunnels, illuminated only by flashlights, where their

³⁹ Bayer 2010, p.117

⁴⁰ See Previous research 5.1

⁴¹ Hirsch 2012, p.205

⁴² Insdorf 2003, p.xv

father was endured into forced labor. The film approaches the issue of transferring trauma and through the siblings bickering spirit towards each other, and through their journey they become representative of the Second generation who are still wrestling with the experience of their survivor parents. *Six Million and One* is the final film in a family trilogy by David Fisher, after *Love Inventory* (2000) and *Mostar Round-trip* (2011).

4.3 Defamation

Yoav Shamir's *Defamation* is a controversial documentary that investigates anti-Semitism two generations after the Shoah. In the beginning of the film Shamir states that as an Israeli he has never experienced anti-Semitism himself and wants to learn more about it since it is a common reference in Israeli media. In order to answer the question "What is anti-Semitism today?" Shamir speaks with an array of people, including the ADL (Anti-Defamation League) which in 2007 reported a spike in anti-Semitism. With such an explosive topic, Shamir takes on a task to investigate if anti-Semitism is being misused by Israel to justify questionable policies, and how anti-Semitism has become an abused argumentative strategy towards Israel and Jews, by comparing Israel's actions with the Nazis. On the Israeli school trips to the death camps in Poland, Shamir illustrates how Israel uses the memory of the Shoah to enhance identity and the collective memory.

4.4 Note on translation and transliteration

The languages used in the documentaries are mainly Modern Hebrew, English, and German. For simplicity, I will allow myself the benefit to use the English subtitles included in the films when I wish to exemplify situations, since I am not fluent in Hebrew or German, even though this may lead to translation problems.

5. Background

5. 1 Previous Research

This section presents the main features of previous relevant research on the Shoah and film. Little study has been focused on the Third generation.

In the book *Identity, Place and Subversion in Contemporary Mizrahi Cinema in Israel* by Yaron Shemer, the author deals with the “Mizrahi dilemma”, Mizrahi ethnicity and identity in Israeli cinema. Shemer focuses on Israeli cinema from the early 1990s and forward, some movies dealing with the Holocaust and concludes that the aftermath of the Holocaust has nourished a new breed of Israelis, formidable Israelis who will fight to the end. Shemer also addresses the dilemma of the place of Mizrahi in the national memory of the Holocaust.⁴³ The collection of essays *Israeli Cinema: Identities in motion* deals with collective identities and examines Israeli Cinema “as a prism” that refracts collective Israeli identities.⁴⁴ Three of the essays address trauma and Holocaust, only two that are relevant for this study. Ilan Avisar builds an analysis of the Holocaust as a conflict between survival and morality, in which he arranges the films in a chronological order. Avisar finds that the examination of the topic (Shoah in Israeli film) suggests a historical narrative of national memory, which has been dominated by two powerful psychological complexes and parallel ideological viewpoints: the concern for the survival and the concerns of morality.⁴⁵ The other essay, written by Liat Steir-Livny, argues that the image of Shoah survivors in Israeli cinema is problematic and remains almost unchanged since the Zionist narrative in the 1940s and 1950s. In this topic Steir-Livny focuses on Israeli feature films, not on Israeli documentary film. Steir-Livny argues that the majority of the directors portray Shoah survivors in a negative manner, as people broken in body and spirit.⁴⁶

Gerd Bayer argues in his essay “After Postmemory: Holocaust Cinema and the Third Generation”, that there are some developments in recent film dealing with the Shoah that moves beyond Hirsch’s concept of postmemory. Bayer analyzes two Holocaust-films made in the early 21st century and finds that there is a “noticeable decrease in the urgency to keep particular details in perpetual memory” and that the representations are moving “away from a

⁴³ Shemer 2013, p.5; 19; 165-166

⁴⁴ Talmon & Peleg 2011, p. x

⁴⁵ Avisar 2011, p.152

⁴⁶ Steir-Livny 2011, p.168-177

historical focus on the past and towards ethical concerns directed at future generations”.⁴⁷ So far, this has been the closest research in relation to my topic, seeing as Bayer studies movies from the early 21st century, although not Israeli films, but French and German. Bayer does however not write about the Post-Shoah generations but of different generations of Holocaust film, i.e. what focus the films have. As an example, Bayer claims that films that focus on survival and memory are connected to the second generation Holocaust cinema, while the first generation has a testimonial quality.⁴⁸ While in time we move away from World War II, the significance of film for remembering the Shoah will grow even more. What comes after postmemory, as the title of the essay indicates, is not forgetting, but a move towards a memory outside of mass media and a change in the transmission of trauma, making place for the memory within everyday life.⁴⁹

Cinema and the Shoah brings together filmmakers, historians, researchers and journalists to examine the variety of cinematic responses as well as the Shoah’s impact on cinema. Ariel Schweitzer stands for the recognition of Israeli film, and explores films from the 1940s to 1999, only two of them explore the Second generation. Schweitzer concludes that most commercial Israeli cinema practically never dealt with the Shoah, but that this changed in the 1980s by the climate of the First Lebanon War (1982), when Israeli historians began to debate the main ideology in Israel “through the face of the Other”, the Shoah survivor being one of the Other.⁵⁰ During the First Intifada (1987-1993), film made by the Second generation in Israel started to emerge, driven by a sense of urgency and duty: a necessity to collect testimony from the earlier generation that will soon disappear.⁵¹ After the Eichmann trial and Israel’s victory in the Six-day War in 1967, a greater Shoah consciousness grew among Jews all over the world. Films like *Shoah* (1985) and *Schindler’s List* (1993) was a result of this new consciousness, Nathan Abrams write in *The New Jew in Film*⁵² which studies Jewishness and Judaism in contemporary film.

In *Projecting the Holocaust into the Present* history professor Lawrence Baron focuses on how films from the 1990s reach greater audience in the contemporary. Cinema on the Second generation and transmission of trauma did not appear in significant numbers until the 1980s,

⁴⁷ Bayer 2010, p.117

⁴⁸ Bayer 2010, p.123-124

⁴⁹ Bayer 2010, p.131-132

⁵⁰ Schweitzer 2010, p.184-185

⁵¹ Schweitzer 2010, p.186-187

⁵² Abrams 2012, p.10

and by the 1990s it was the fourth most common theme in Shoah film. The first wave of Second generation film was psychodramas that focused on searching for an identity, Baron writes.⁵³ Annette Insdorf's *Indelible Shadows* investigates questions raised by Shoah cinema. Insdorf deals mostly with European and American film from the 1940s to the 1990s, but lacks in representing Israeli cinema from the 1990s to the 21st century. Perhaps this is because the theme of the Shoah is rare in Israeli film.⁵⁴ However, Insdorf notice a growing body of the Second generation theme in Israeli film made after 1988 worth mentioning.⁵⁵

Anna Reading mentions in the anthology *Holocaust and the Moving Image* that “film was a major medium in which the events entered collective memory”, but does not base her investigation on collective memory.⁵⁶ The authors in this anthology take in consideration how the films have contributed to consciousness and a wider understanding of the Shoah among the audience. Reading discovers in a study that young Post-Shoah generations create their individual memories of the Shoah from a wide range of media and cultural forms, including film.⁵⁷ Aaron Kerner study narrative and non-narrative (documentary) movies through the eye of “the realistic imperative” in *Film and the Holocaust*. One of the chapters approaches personal documentaries; such films are usually in an “observational mode” i.e. the audience is allowed into a private world, and are always in one way or another about discovery, an argument also true for my chosen material. With personal documentaries in observational mode, Kerner concludes, it is not the destination that is the objective, but what is discovered along the way.⁵⁸

The essays in *The Modern Jewish Experience* explore Jewish presence in cinema from America, Europe, Israel, and North Africa. Each article in the anthology focuses on a certain film, and in the chapter dedicated to Shoah film the authors have chosen films such as *Schindler's List* (1993), *The Pianist* (2002) and *The Pawnbroker* (1964). As mentioned earlier, Post-Shoah generations create part of their identity and individual memory through film and media, something that Yosefa Loshitzky actualizes in his essay, where he argues that *Exodus* (1960) and *They Were Ten* (1961) were shapers of the image of the new Israeli, if the

⁵³ Baron 2005, p.161

⁵⁴ Insdorf 2003, p.173

⁵⁵ Insdorf 2003, p.212

⁵⁶ Reading 2005, p.212

⁵⁷ Reading 2005, p.213

⁵⁸ Kerner 2011, p.211

new Israeli was identified as male and Ashkenazi.⁵⁹ In addition, one chapter focuses on contemporary Israeli experiences, which is close to my focus, however the essays focus neither on identity nor collective memory in relation to the Shoah. Ilan Avisar writes that because Israeli cinema is so new, mostly from 1979 and on, most Israeli films are also marked by a highly personal and political tone. The Israeli documentary *Comfortable Numb* (1999), a film focused on the aftermath of the Gulf War among people in Tel Aviv, depicts a society longing for normalcy while accustoming itself to life under fire. The film *Made in Israel* (2001) by the same director, Ari Folman, portrays once again the Israeli reality in constant conflict, this time also Holocaust remembrance featuring the last surviving Nazi extradited to Israel from Syria, in the framework of the peace agreement between the two countries. A third film by Folman, *Waltz with Bashir* (2008) “deals with issues of increasing importance in today’s cultural discourse, such as testimony, memory and persistent trauma”. It takes place in Israel’s collective memory, where the hero tries to remember his experience as a soldier in the First Lebanon War (1982), the hero being Ari Folman himself, with elements of images from the Shoah, representing the trauma of his family’s legacy, as both his parents are Auschwitz survivors. Avisar continues to discuss the latter movie based on two questions; “Does the film strike this particular historical nerve (the Shoah) in order to test the moral and emotional strength of a post-traumatic society? Or is Folman indeed trying to portray Israelis as the new Nazis?” Avisar’s conclusion is that despite the narcissistic aspects that can be found in this film, “*Waltz with Bashir*” was received positively among most Israelis and that it may be some sort of breakthrough in Israeli film.⁶⁰

5.2 Collective memory in Israel

In this section I will examine the collective memory in Israel and the development of this since the 1950s to the present.

As I have discussed before, the collective memory is a selective and socially constructed memory that functions in creating identities and boundaries. It is a fundamental ingredient in the building of nationality and identity, nonetheless in the Israeli society. The establishment of Israel in 1948 was a heroic period for Jews all over the world, and David Ben-Gurion

⁵⁹ Loshitzky 2011, p.237

⁶⁰ Avisar 2011, p.359-364

considered the survival of the state to be synonymous with the survival of the Jewish people.⁶¹ The collective memory in Israel has been studied since the 1980s and usually in three different aspects. 1. The examination of a specific subject, which is the aspect I have chosen, such as Jewish identities in context of the Shoah or the educational system. 2. The discourse of a certain period or event, such as the Eichmann trial, or 3. A specific area, such as ultra-orthodox Jews (Haredim) or Sephardic Jews (Mizrahim). According to Idit Gil, heroes are fundamental elements in the collective memory in Israel, and while these shift through different time periods, they remain important in the creation of a collective identity.⁶²

The Israeli collective memory of the Shoah has changed over the years and adapted to the changes in Israeli society.⁶³ It can be studied by looking at rituals, memorial days such as *Yom HaShoah*, museums, monuments, films, educational system, etc. The Israeli memory is unique; the collective memory of the Shoah in Israel is not the same as the collective memory of the Shoah in the United States or in Europe. The Memorial Day (*Yom HaShoah*) in Israel occurs e.g. not on the same day of the commemoration of the Shoah in other countries. The International Remembrance Day falls on January 27 every year, the anniversary when Auschwitz was liberated by the Soviets, while in Israel falls on the 27th of the month Nisan, seven days before *Yom Hazikaron* – the commemoration day of Fallen Soldiers, and eight days before *Yom Ha'atzmaut*, the Israeli Independence Day, which relates the death of the fighters in the Shoah to the death of the soldiers, and the creation of the state of Israel as an outcome of this.

The meaning of the term Shoah has also changed throughout the years, and in the first thirteen years after the establishment of Israel it came to symbolize humiliation. During this time the Shoah discourse was mainly held in the political arena. Those responsible for the humiliation were, seen in the public discourse, the Jews themselves as they were described as “sheep being led to slaughter”. This passive act was seen by the Zionist view as the typical Jewish response in exile. The only ones who owned recognition and heroism were those who were engaged in active armed resistance. Thus, many of the survivors experienced a sense of shame for surviving.⁶⁴ Three major events in the 1950s and beginning of 1960s forced Israel to deal with the Shoah in its social and political discourse; the Law of Return, the creation of Yad

⁶¹ Shindler 2008, p.189

⁶² Gil 2012, p.76-77

⁶³ Gil 2012, p.94

⁶⁴ Gil 2012, p.78-81

Vaschem and the establishment of relations with West Germany and the reparations agreement.⁶⁵

The trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem in 1961 changed the perception of the Shoah and collective memory in Israel. The trial focused highly on details of the extermination and Israel as a collective entity began to think more deeply about the Shoah and understand the helplessness of the victims and the extent of the terrible disaster.⁶⁶ Having previously focused on resistance and heroism it now shifted the focus to death and destruction. Politicians emphasized the birthright of the state; “a sovereign state could have prevented the Shoah”.

The educational system integrated the theme of the Shoah and all historical lessons were to be studied through this framework.⁶⁷ This change resulted in a "collective trauma" in Israel, related to security issues, and since then every security event has aroused fears associated with extermination and the Shoah; the “waiting period” of the Six-day War in 1967, the murder of 11 Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympic Games in 1972, the Yom Kippur War in 1973 and the First Gulf War in 1991.⁶⁸ This "collective trauma" which is socially constructed has thus become part of the Jewish identity that pervades Israel. In fear that history will repeat itself the security issue has become exceedingly vital in Israel, which is noticeable in airports, shopping malls, museums, bus and train stations and other public places in the country. Events after and including the Eichmann trial and the Six-Day War seems to have left a feeling of victimization as part of the Israeli Jewish identity and collective memory, but also the identity of a fighter who is prepared to defend himself against all odds.

In the contemporary period, from 1980s to today the term Shoah has changed meaning again to be used as a more general concept for any catastrophe, such as “ecological shoah”, and has entered the everyday life. Moreover, it is more focused on survival and survivors rather than extermination and death in today’s Israeli collective memory. The Second generation was one of the important reasons for accepting the survivors into the Israeli society. Children of survivors wrote about their experiences of growing up with survivor parents and one prominent contribution was Yehuda Poliker’s album “*Efer ve’avak*” (Ashes and dust) in

⁶⁵ Cebulski 2013, p.5

⁶⁶ Waxman 2006, p.113

⁶⁷ Gil 2012, p.82

⁶⁸ Gil 2012, p.84

1988.⁶⁹ In conclusion, the survivors and the State of Israel symbolize the victory of Nazism.⁷⁰ However, in modern Israel there is a representation among Second generation that is trying to move on from this, for instance Avraham Burg, who argues in *The Holocaust is Over, We must Rise from its Ashes* that the Jewish nation is so traumatized by the Shoah that it has created a distrust towards the Arab neighbors and the rest of the world, that leads to a growing nationalism, enhancing the collective identity. “Mourning time is over; the seven days of *shiv’ah* are past. We are now living in the seventh decade since the Shoah, and we need to get rid of the sack and ashes and get back to living, to a different life” Burg writes.⁷¹

6. Analysis

In this section, I will examine how identity and collective memory are constructed among Second and Third generation in Israel in relation to the Shoah, and what memory the directors in my chosen material choose to visualize. I will do this by highlighting a number of problems or themes I have acknowledged in the films and hold a discussion around them.

6.1 The German problem

After the war, many survivors refused to buy German-made products, and during the early years of Israel there was an official ban on purchasing such products.⁷² Some refused to even set foot in Germany and others declined service to anyone that resembled their perpetrators.⁷³ When the topic of repairing relations with Germany came up it was opposed by many in Israel. The antagonists claimed that accepting restitution with Germany would mean to cleanse the Germans of their horrible crimes.⁷⁴ Even though this has been toned down and is no longer taboo, some Israelis still feel contempt towards the German language and trips to Germany – as it does for example in *The Flat* when Arnon states that

Grandma lived here for 70 years as if she’d never left Germany. Despite her years in Israel, she never mastered Hebrew and I didn’t want to learn German.

⁶⁹ Gil 2012, p.87-88

⁷⁰ Gil 2012, p.94

⁷¹ Burg 2008, p.209

⁷² Crystal 2009

⁷³ Hemmendinger & Krell 2000, p.172

⁷⁴ Shafir 2012, p.216

In this example at the opening of the film Arnon expresses an unwillingness to learn German, despite German being his grandparents' native tongue, and his mother's second language. Why would Arnon not want to communicate with his family in their native tongue? It shows an apparent opposition against the German language. Not wanting to learn German could perhaps be seen as a modern form of resistance from the Third generation.

This also exemplifies what *The Flat* tells us about the Third generation, though perhaps even more about Israel's view on the Shoah. There is no active armed resistance as in the Warsaw Ghetto, but an active choice. As Boaz Cohen argues, the active armed resistance is important for the Israeli national identity,⁷⁵ but I would imply that the active choice not to learn German even though it is part of family history also is a kind of resistance against what he considers to be "the evil". The active armed resistance has been toned down and is not as highly desirable anymore.⁷⁶ However, the resistance is still important for the Israeli collective memory of the Shoah and the collective memory is interrelated with the collective identity, since we choose the memory that we believe expresses the core of our collective identity.⁷⁷ This means that our collective identity and memory are shaped by how we see ourselves and how we want to see ourselves. We can choose what memory to forget and what to remember.

In *Six Million and One* the siblings recoil at even hearing German spoken by one of the guides at Mauthausen and the brother Ronel cringe, calling the German tongue a "porn-movie language", indicating that it is distasteful to converse in German in a place where Jews were tormented and murdered by Nazis. David Cesarani argues that it has shown that a resistance towards the German heritage has played an important role in creating the new "Jewish-Hebrew identity", and gives the example of abstaining from Wagner's music and banning the use of German at vocal concerts.⁷⁸ In *Defamation*, we get to follow Israeli school pupils on their trip to Poland, where most of the Nazi concentration camps were. Trips to Germany, funded by German organizations where young Israelis visit local sites connected to the Shoah and where the young generation meets German peers, are not as accepted among Israelis as the trip to Poland, as some people disapprove of the mere principal.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Cohen 2003, p. 197-198

⁷⁶ Cohen 2003, p.208-209

⁷⁷ Novick 1999, p.7

⁷⁸ Sheffi 2014, p.71

⁷⁹ Aron 2005, p.66

During the first half hour in *The Flat*, Arnon and his family start to clean out his grandparents' apartment in Tel Aviv, and to their surprise find Nazi propaganda and an article about a Nazi officer named Von Mildenstein travelling in Palestine with the company of Arnon's grandparents. He decides to examine the article and the pictures further, and to call up the daughter of Von Mildenstein in Germany to find out more about it, and later embark on a journey to meet her.

You know, I'm curious to understand that, because for me it was a real surprise that they... I mean, that my grandparents kept in contact after the war with, you know, some Germans, at all.

It is an uncomfortable and abstruse situation for Arnon to be in Germany, and in the house of the daughter whose father was an SS officer who gave Adolph Eichmann, one of the major organizers of the Shoah, his job. He approaches the topic in a conservative way, in order not to generate conflict. Arnon cannot bring himself to identify with his grandparents desire to keep company with any Germans after the war, in particular any Nazis. Kurt Tuchler, Arnon's grandfather was a devoted Zionist but also a loyal German who fought during the First World War, as did many of his generation. The Tuchler's moved to Palestine before the Second World War broke out, and thus escaped and survived the Shoah. So far, the postmemory of Arnon thus becomes complicated, since what individual trauma is transferred to him through the First generation? Is it the trauma of being forced to move, not being able to stay living in Germany, the place the Tuchler's considered their home? Is it the trauma of having a close friend who almost exterminated the entire European Jewry? If the Tuchler's even knew about it. Or is it the entire collective trauma of the Shoah? No doubt it is. I will get into more on that later.

According to a survey in 2010, 70 % of Israelis are not willing to forgive Germans and Germany for the crimes during the Shoah. It shows that more secular Jews than Orthodox are able to forgive Germans, and the younger generations are less likely to forgive them.⁸⁰ In Germany, Arnon struggles to make sense of the Von Mildensteins' daughter Edda, whom he visits. She received him "with an openness of someone who has nothing to hide. Yet, she presented her father as having no Nazi past." She even shows him articles that proves this.

⁸⁰ Survey conducted by the Center for Academic Studies, results presented at <http://www.jpost.com/Israel/Survey-23-percent-of-Israelis-forgive-Germany-for-Holocaust>

Arnon Goldfinger goes to visit his grandmother's last living friend, Gertrude Kino, also from Germany who lives in Israel now. It is not his first visit. Arnon shows Gertrude some photos of his grandparents on trips abroad, where they are looking very happy and the two of them converse in Hebrew.

Arnon: You never went to Germany?

Gertrude: What for? That was a topic Gerda and I never discussed.

Arnon: Why not?

Gertrude: Because I couldn't forgive, and I wasn't... "German to the core" as they used to say. I was an Israeli. Luckily. I've made my homeland here.

The two of them continue to discuss Germany, and Gertrude announces that his great grandmother Susanne Lehmann was taken away, probably in 1942 and had perished in the Shoah. He tells Gertrude about Von Mildenstein, his grandparents' German friends, and she is shocked to find out that they were friends with someone who was a journalist for *Der Angriff*, "the worst Nazi newspaper ever", quoting Gertrude. She is even more shocked to find out that they kept in contact with Von Mildenstein after the war. This fact would probably be difficult for anyone to grasp. How can Jews be friends with a Nazi? Even more inapprehensible is the fact that the Tuchler's renewed their friendship with Von Mildenstein after the war, after Gerda's mother had been murdered by Nazis. How are Hannah and Arnon supposed to be able to relate to this, or to make sense of their collective memory? It seems to be contradictory to Hirsch's concept of postmemory. If postmemory only deals with transmission of trauma from survivors, then what postmemory does Arnon and Hannah possess? The inherited collective trauma "that their parents were not meant to survive" is non-existing in this situation as the Tuchler's seem to not have experienced that sort of trauma. Second generation, or in this case Third generation, testimony is shaped by an attempt to represent the effects of living close proximity to the pain and depression of family members "who have witnessed and survived massive historical trauma".⁸¹ But is this accurate for the Goldfinger family? Indeed, the Tuchler's did survive the Shoah, a massive historical trauma in the history of Judaism and the world, and suffered a terrible loss with a family member murdered, but to what degree did they "witness" the trauma?

⁸¹ Hirsch 2012, p.34

It seems as though Arnon has not forgiven the Germans for their crimes and throughout the film he puts plenty of focus on an article from *Der Angriff* that they found in the flat. Arnon's work of postmemory is mainly based on this document and photographs of his grandparents traveling with the Nazis. Arnon Goldfinger does not present us with any pictures of traumatic events from his family album, nor does he visit any concentration camp or present us with any photography from the Nazi camps. Therefore, I would argue that the only evidence of trauma in his family history is his great-Grandmother who was murdered in Thereisenstadt. However, he does confirm as a director, that there indeed was an intergenerational transmission of trauma between his grandparents and his mother Hannah.

6.2 Living in the light of the Shoah

The Flat shows a clear distinction between the Second and Third generation image and experience of the Shoah. The Second generation was brought up in a mindset not to question. When comparing Arnon's approaches and reactions to the information revealed in the film with his mother Hannah's reactions, it is obvious that the Third generation has a greater tendency to ask questions and want to fill in the empty gaps in the family history. Different expressions of "I didn't know" are very common from Hannah, which is evidence of a family history with large gaps and parents who did not talk about their background. In the US, one can see similarities among the Second generation, suggesting that this is something specific to the Jewish collective identity, not only Israeli identity. Epstein explains that as Second generation you did not want to talk about your parents or the war, as it would mean that you accept the Shoah as something that actually happened. It was something shameful about it, and not something you wanted to disclose. Thus, you listened to what the parents wanted to tell you, but you did not ask questions out of fear of saying something careless or to add insult to injury.⁸² Arnon Goldfinger marvels over his mothers' lack of interest in their background when they discuss the trip to Palestine in relation to the Eichmann trial. Hannah, however, sees no point in digging into the past.

What good will it do me? Will it... make me see them in a different light? I had my own burden of living with them. I don't really care what happened so many years ago. No, I don't care.

⁸² Epstein 1988, p.18-19

Hannah's response is similar to the one Esti expresses in *Six Million and One*, when the siblings are sitting deep inside the B8 Bergkristall tunnels which their father dug, by hand.

I can't connect to this any more than I already have my whole life. I don't need this Holocaust trip to know where my parents were. It's already in me. I'm one big wound.

Had not the Third generation, in *The Flat* represented by Arnon, been so interested in family history, the Goldfinger's ancestral collective memory would have vanished with Gerda Tuchler's passing. When searching among the family photographs Arnon creates a sense of being "a man with a past". The collective memory will thus have an identity creating function, as mentioned earlier. He uses photography to create memory, and even though some photography is public, for example the footage from the Eichmann trial, he "adopts" this into his family photo album in attempt to create postmemory.⁸³ While the collective memory in Israel creates a collective Jewish identity, the memory that Arnon creates from photography and other artifacts creates an individual identity. Arnon realizes that his mother has shunned the past, and that she expresses a sense of "the past is the past", what is important is the present. Before Arnon leaves Germany Edda Von Mildenstein tells him one more thing.

I only know that there was a problem in the family, in among the Tuchler's saying that "Mother", now whoever's it was, whether hers or his, but I should imagine that it was his mother, refused to leave her house, her place, her everything. / And then history went that... I think they even mentioned it when they were here again, of course she was then taken to Thereisenstadt and was killed there.

When it is revealed that Gerda Tuchler's mother, Susanne Lehmann, died in the Shoah in Theresienstadt, Arnon is overflowing with questions. Why did Von Mildenstein know about this, that no one in his family had told him? Why did no one from his family have knowledge of this?

⁸³ Hirsch 2012, p.35

Hannah: Looking back, I realize they simply repressed it. Why else didn't they talk about it when we were growing up? She had just repressed it. I guess she felt uncomfortable about the whole thing.

Arnon: But why didn't you ask about your grandmother?

Hannah: I don't know. I really don't. I didn't know who to ask about it. They've never mentioned it.

...

Arnon: Don't you want to talk about her?

Hannah: I have no feelings for her. I've never met her. To this day I don't know where she died, or how, whether she was murdered or...

Arnon shows his mother a list, which he got from Yad Vashem, of German Jews who perished in the Shoah. Susanne Lehmann is on the list. This information gives the postmemory even greater significance for the family, as it turns out that they had a relative who died in the Shoah, which strengthens their Jewish identity and connection to the Shoah. The conversations they have proved Epstein's definition of the Second generation to be correct.⁸⁴ The Second generation does not like to ask questions about their parents past. In addition, this stirs up questions about the relationship between Tuchler and Von Mildenstein. Did the Tuchler's know that the Baron Von Mildenstein was the one who hired Eichmann, and was thus responsible for organizing the Shoah? The distinction between "us" and "the other" as a consequence is not as strong. It seems even more challenging for the Goldfingers Post-Shoah generations to create their collective identity when the boundaries have become blurred. If Jews really can be friends with Nazis, what happens with the collective Jewish identity? And if so, what is the significance of the collective memory in Israel?

Arnon decides to go back to Germany, and this time his mother Hannah joins him. First stop is the only relatives they have left in Germany, a distant one, which is of the same generation as Arnon. He too, had discovered that he had a great-Grandmother who perished in the Shoah: Paula Lehmann, sister of Heinrich Lehmann, Susanne Lehmann's husband. They sit down and Arnon begins to draw a family tree, and discovers that his distant relative Manu Trökes has done the same. Hannah, as a Second generation is still unaware of what relatives she has and

⁸⁴ Epstein 1988, p.18-19

who died in the Shoah, not even knowing the name of her grandfather. Suddenly it seems as if the family tree is growing. Hannah feels as if an explanation is needed:

Arnon doesn't understand how I don't know. We didn't ask and we were not told.

Arnon asks Manu how he knew about the destiny of Paula Lehmann. "I asked", he says. This only confirms what I have already suspected, that the Third generation is more likely to ask questions and try repairing their lost family history and filling in the empty gaps. Though, it needs to be said that this is not an attempt to generalize the Third generation or claim a truth. This is simply what the director Arnon Goldfinger is showing us.

After they have visited their relatives in Berlin, they go to visit Edda Von Mildenstein and her husband and we get a glimpse of the Second generation in Germany. Arnon interrogates the party, trying to make sense of the actual work done by the Baron Von Mildenstein, but the German party gives him several different answers: Journalist, engineer and working in the Interior Ministry in the government are some of the ready-made answers. Edda argues that her father was in fact not a Nazi, and that there was no proof of it, while her husband states that Von Mildenstein must have been a Nazi, because some had to be, meaning the position he was in forced him to be a member in the National Socialistic party and to wear the emblem. Either Edda denies altogether that her father was involved in the organization of the Shoah, or she was like the Second generation of survivors, brought up in an environment where you were taught not to question. However, Arnon finds proof that Von Mildenstein was Eichmann's first boss and that he in fact had a connection to the SS, working in Goebbels Ministry of Propaganda. How does all of this information about someone else's family help Arnon in creating his identity and postmemory? Since Arnon's grandparents never were sent to concentration camps, he cannot follow any traces there, so as to fill in the empty gaps in his history he is forced instead to follow the traces he finds, which leads to Von Mildenstein.

From the "Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel" written in 1948, Cebulski argues that the establishment of Israel was a consequence of the anti-Semitism and the Shoah, out of the necessity to protect the world Jewry and create a homeland for the Jewish people as well as to counteract any future genocide.⁸⁵ *Yom Ha'atzmaut*, the celebration of Israel's

⁸⁵ Cebulski 2013, p.3

Independence Day is seen as a victory over the Nazis. The connection to the Shoah is thus important for the Jewish identity in Israel. By adding this information about his grandparents' friends, Arnon adds to the postmemory of the Shoah, in an attempt to try to relate to what his grandparents must have gone through during the war. The individual consciousness that his great-Grandmother perished in the Shoah reinforces his Jewish identity, as he now has an even more personal connection to the Shoah. With a personal trauma in the family history Arnon and Hannah should feel a stronger Israeli Jewish identity, as it juxtaposes the national trauma Israel suffers from.⁸⁶

The Third generation is not represented in *Six Million and One*, only the Second generation by the children of the survivor Joseph Fisher. However, it seems as though the director David Fisher has adopted a similar curiousness for his family history as Arnon in *The Flat*, while the other siblings are in a similar state of mind as Hannah.

We found Dad's diary after he died. None of us even knew that he wrote it. 12 years have passed since then. Some of my siblings refused to read it. Others simply couldn't. I had no question that I would. I dived right into it and haven't put it down since.

My focus while analyzing the films in this essay has been to interpret them as text, and not be concerned with camera angles and such. However, I cannot help but notice which of his siblings the camera points to when David speak these words. By that, David shows us which of his siblings refused to read the diary and which "simply couldn't".

It is not David's first visit to Austria. He, unlike the other siblings, has traveled there before in the search for memory. Their father had talked about the Shoah with them, but only "about the symbols: The train, Auschwitz, Mengele and nothing else". David follows the traces from the memoir in Austria, leading him to Gusen, Mauthausen and Gunskirchen. There is an instant difference from what we have seen in *The Flat*, already at the first minute of the film, when David reads out loud from his father's memoir and presents portraits from his family album. The way David uses photography reflects how Hirsch argues that memory is

⁸⁶ Burg 2008, p.9

transformed into postmemory. The analog photographs is digitalized and become fragmentary remnants that are shaping cultural work of the postmemory.⁸⁷

When David enters what used to be the Gusen camp he applies an anonymous photograph of what the camp looked like during the war and lets it blend in together with what it looks like today. This way David “adopts” the public, anonymous images into his family album and creates a sense that he is walking in the footsteps of his father. The imaginative investment David carries out is specific to the work of postmemory because the postmemory’s connection to the past is mediated by this type of investment and projection.⁸⁸ Throughout the film he combines photography and footage from his personal family album with public and anonymous photography. Hirsch argues that when public and private images and stories blend the distinction between them becomes difficult to maintain and that this might result in a “specifically familial generational identity”.⁸⁹

The Fisher siblings struggle with dealing with what they find on their journey in Austria, and they each have their own ways of coping with it. Some ways are familiar to how I have presented the Second generation in *The Flat*, and other’s resembles the Third generation more. Gideon is curious to find out more and expresses an admiration towards his passed father, how he could have survived through such horror. “Did I have to come here to find out it was horrible?” Esti says. Ronel sees through the clichés of the words his brother is using; the “scars” their father was carrying and how he managed to “keep his sanity” after such horror. Words from the “Holocaust lexicon” he says. It is obvious that Ronel has a very sharp mind. However, most of them cannot understand why anyone would want to dig into the past instead of living in the present.

It is important to impart that this is not a movie about the Shoah. Instead, it is a film about the intergenerational transmission of trauma. It belongs to the “narrative of return” – in which children of survivors return to their parents past homes or to “walk where they once walked”.⁹⁰ The journey that they are on creates both “rememory” and “postmemory”, two different kinds of intergenerational transfer of trauma, although they usually slide into each

⁸⁷ Hirsch 2012, p.37

⁸⁸ Hirsch 2012, p.5

⁸⁹ Hirsch 2012, p.35

⁹⁰ Hirsch 2012, p.205

other. The intergenerational trauma has been communicated both through bodily experiences and through indirect and multiple mediation⁹¹, which can be perceived in *Six Million and One*.

The dark humorous conversation that the siblings have deep inside the Bergkristall tunnels is perhaps the most revealing of how they perceive their childhood and transmission of trauma. It is sometimes difficult to keep up with their argumentation, but it shows an honest and emotional depth and a loving family, although full of irony, that challenges the generalization of the intergenerational transfer of trauma.

Gideon: But when you witness what Dad went through, and you understand how much the scars we saw in him, were nothing compared to how screwed up he should have been then you realize we had a dad that managed, unbelievably...

Esti: To give us a normal life... Half normal.

Gideon: To keep us from the traumas he carried inside.

Esti: I want to be cruel, so I'll tell you the truth, okay? I grew up without a father, and I think you did too. Did you have a father? A father like all the other kids, who was there to help with your homework, who patted you on the head? Did you have a normal dad like that?

The argumentation continues in the tunnels and it is evidential that the siblings had very different transfer of the trauma their father suffered at Gusen.

Esti: I'm upset that someone made my parents unable to love me, like a little girl should be loved. Why? Why is it so? At this moment, when I think about my childhood with those parents, which was abnormal and screwed up, like growing up in a freezer, no love from my mom... I'm the one who lost out.

Gideon: For me, home wasn't a freezer, it was an oven.

Esti: Because you weren't the eldest. I came after they lost two kids, so they couldn't open up to me. Mom couldn't love me. I got screwed up big-time, and David a little less, and you even less than that, and Ronel and Amnon benefited from the older ones. You never fought for anything, huh? Bastard.

⁹¹ Hirsch 2012, p.83

Ronel: Oh, so normal. They really blossomed. When I was born they really blossomed, they just opened up more and more.

The siblings laugh.

Ronel: Really, it only got worse.

Another reason for David to bring his siblings with him on this trip is revealed by the end of the film. Something, perhaps the different transmission of trauma has divided the family, and David wants to get Gideon and Ronel closer to each other, to make the family whole again. Through this “narrative of return”, the children of a survivor unites and constructs their postmemory and identity together. Again, Hirsch’s key terms come into play: memory, family and photography.⁹² These keywords are exactly what David Fisher uses in his documentary to construct postmemory and shape their identity. The work of postmemory is to uncover what has been covered and to reveal the layers of forgetting.⁹³ I would argue that this is exactly what David Fisher is trying to do, to reveal what has been or is about to be forgotten.

6.3 The Cultural Trauma

In the beginning of *Defamation*, the director Yoav Shamir provides us with some background information about the Israeli school trips to Poland. Tens of thousands of Israeli students fly to Poland each year to learn firsthand about the Shoah. In the 1980s less than 500 in the whole country were going on the trip, today more than 30 000. “I decided to join them on their journey and the initial preparation starting in Yad Vashem”, Shamir says.

The task of commemorating the Shoah in Israel was primarily given to Yad Vashem in 1953 when the “Yad Vashem Law” was enacted.⁹⁴ As I see it, Yad Vashem is also creating and maintaining postmemory of the Shoah in Israel. To this day it is the most important Shoah museum and memorial in the State of Israel. The present Israeli identity is shaped by commemoration days and museums such as *Yom HaShoah* and Yad Vashem, the two most

⁹² Hirsch 2012, p.31

⁹³ Hirsch 2012, p.119

⁹⁴ Cebulski 2013, p.10

important commemorative aspects in Israel in creating a sense of shared history, and a collective identity.⁹⁵

Back at the school, in *Defamation*, the school counselor who is in charge for the main preparation asks everyone to describe their motivation for going on this trip.

I am the third generation of Holocaust survivors. Whenever my grandmother talked about the Holocaust, I saw her expression of ‘Never forgive. Never forget’. I saw what she felt, but I didn’t feel it. That’s what I want to feel on this journey, this feeling of ‘Never forgive. Never forget’.

Not all of the young Israelis going on this trip may be Third generation in genealogy. However, “The pupils acquire an identity as third-generation children of the Holocaust, not through their genealogical origins but as the young members of the Jewish collective living in Zion.”⁹⁶ The image Shamir is showing in *Defamation* is that young generations in Israel are being raised in the spirit of “The whole world is against us”, thinking that anyone outside of Israel or the Jewish faith is their nemesis. The school counselor is preparing the young Israelis for what they might experience on the journey in Poland.

Try to understand the connection between then and now. Anti-Semitism has not ended. Israel was founded as a result of the Shoah, but anti-Semitism still exists. If you read the newspapers, there are anti-Semitic incidents in Europe and in other countries. You as Jews, as next generation, who are about to join the Army, you will also have to face this aspect of our life.

Is this what the educational system in Israel is teaching the young generations? Because of the Shoah, Israel suffers from a national trauma and has become the voice of the dead. A state that lives in constant emergency, because “everyone is a Nazi, everyone is an Arab, everyone hates us, the entire world is against us”.⁹⁷ Since the Yom Kippur War in 1973, the young

⁹⁵ Bialer & Kersting 2010, p.58-59

⁹⁶ Auron 2005, p.66-67

⁹⁷ Burg 2008, p.24

generations of Israel has felt greater identification with the victims of the Shoah.⁹⁸ Shamir interviews some of the Israeli pupils that are preparing for the “Auschwitz trip”.

We are raised in this spirit; that we know that we are hated. And if a kid knows from the start that he is hated, about what happened to his ancestors in the Holocaust... it evokes anger toward the other side: pain, anger, even hate.

Everybody knows that Jews are hated. We were raised that way, with hatred and anti-Semitism.

This will strengthen the Israeli in me, the Zionist and the Jew in me. I have no doubt about it.

The trips to Poland are seen as pilgrimages to the sites of the destruction of the Jewish people, and the participants see themselves as pilgrims in search for their identity, rather than tourists. By visiting the “World of Death” the young Israelis adopt the testimony of those who died and upon their return to Israel they become “witnesses” themselves, “they embody the Jewish people who survived the Holocaust and was reborn in a strong and independent State of Israel”. Israel thus becomes the “World of Life”.⁹⁹

While the participants of the trip are in Poland three older Polish men are asking the kids if they are from Israel. “He’s talking badly about Israel. He said we’re bitches. I understood that”. Another girl says later on: “They called us monkeys and donkeys. We almost got into a fight...” Shamir assures them that the Polish men did not talk bad about Israel, but the kids are so indoctrinated by the national trauma of the Shoah they think that the Poles are out to kill them. Back at the hotel Shamir asks the kids why they are not going out.

We’re tired...

No, I’m not tired. I’d like to go out. There are neo-Nazis here in Poland. They are a threat. We’re in danger; they could knock on our doors and throw things through our windows.

It’s all for our safety, we’re not allowed out.

⁹⁸ Schorsch & Feldman 2001, p.159

⁹⁹ Auron 2005, p.67

The ones who stamped our passports looked like SS officers.

Perhaps due to the lack of the experience the kids are feeling as if they are facing anti-Semitism. Jackie Feldman argues that the students come to associate the hotel and the bus with Israel, with safety and “the center of life and hope”. While the “outside world of Poland comes to stand for the Holocaust and death”.¹⁰⁰ With them all the time the Israeli youth group has a Secret Service Security guard, and according to Feldman the security personnel is the one in charge. He is the one who gives orders and decides when they must arrive at places and at what time.¹⁰¹

During the trips in Poland, the national identity is the main character. For example, *Hatikva* – the Israeli national anthem, is played at the end of every ceremony, always.¹⁰² This is a statement for the Israeli identity, to say “We defeated Hitler”. The Israeli kids are all wearing sweatshirts with *Magen David*, the Star of David and the word Israel on the back, while carrying Israeli flags when they visit the remains of Majdanek concentration camp. One of the points of the film is that seeing the incomprehensible horror the Jewish people has suffered makes other horror seem less significant, somehow, which is expressed by one of the Israeli girls at Majdanek:

That might actually be our problem. Our threshold is too high. When we see an Arab home demolished by the army on the news, we say that it’s not too bad. We faced worse. They packed us into trains and forced Jews to kill Jews.

Avraham Burg also makes this point, calling it the “trauma competition”¹⁰³ and points out that the reparations with Germany were too hasty and only out of economical and state interest, which made the relations with the Arab neighbors even worse and more hostile. “We have displaced our anger and revenge from one people to another, from an old foe to a new adversary”.¹⁰⁴ The same point is stated by one of the Israeli guides towards the end of the film:

¹⁰⁰ Schorsch & Feldman 2001, p.162

¹⁰¹ Schorsch & Feldman 2001, p.161

¹⁰² Schorsch & Feldman 2001, p. 160-161

¹⁰³ Burg 2008, p.24-25

¹⁰⁴ Burg 2008, p.78-79

We perpetuate death and that's why we will never become a normal people: because we emphasize death and what happened. We have to remember, no doubt, but we live too much in it, and it's preventing us from being a normal people.

This cultural trauma has become a part of the Israeli identity, and it is being emphasized in the Israeli school system. The work of the postmemory comes into play when the young Israelis are being shown motion pictures of the horror of the Shoah; starving and malnourished Jews, naked bodies being tossed around, innumerable bodies being buried and cleared by bulldozers. Same as in Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, they can only imagine what their ancestors must have experienced in Auschwitz. These are the images and footage that are shaping their postmemory of the Shoah along with the "Auschwitz trips", where the national identity is being reinforced.

7. Summary and Conclusions

Through my analysis of *The Flat*, *Six Million and One* and *Defamation* I have identified how the Post-Shoah generations in Israel construct their Jewish identities and collective memory in relation to the Shoah. What I have acknowledged is the "cultural trauma" in Israel which has become part of the Jewish identity that pervades Israel. This sense of being in constant conflict with the world, feeling that "the entire world is against us" is mostly visual in *Defamation*, when the Israeli school kids embark on a journey to the death camps in Poland. However, when I speak about the Jewish identity in Israel, there is an impending risk that the Jewish identity becomes synonymous with nationality, since I have focused completely on secular Jews and overlooked that there are other groups of Jews in Israel, for example *Haredim* – the ultra-orthodox, who do not identify with the nationality of the State of Israel. Those who do not feel a connection with the Israeli national identity thus ends up outside my definitions, which is something to consider and discuss in future reference.

In the first section of the analysis I discussed how the German culture has become controversial in Israeli society and how it manifests itself in the documentaries, but what I found is that this is not something that can be generalized. Israelis have many different standpoints on the German culture and on whether they boycott German products or see them as superior products, and if they resent the German language or not. The documentaries showed that the Post-Shoah generations have not forgiven Germans for their crimes, but are open-minded in travelling to the country. In the second section I showed how the Second and Third generation in Israel administer the memory of the Shoah in relation to their family history. At first, I thought that there was a clear difference between how the Second and Third generation deals with the issue of the Shoah. That the Third generation had a greater tendency to ask questions while the Second generation would rather not talk about the past. However, it turned out not to be so simple. *Six Million and One* was a gold mine in this section, where the director challenged the generalization of intergenerational transfer of trauma, showing how the Second generation in a family of 5 siblings has different experiences of living with survivor parents and how differently they dealt with the issue. It showed that some of the siblings had adopted the sense that "the past is the past" and that others were more willing to dig into the past to find out why their father acted the way he did when they grew up, and how he survived the camps.

Lastly, in the third section, I discussed the national / cultural trauma that Israel experience in relation to the memory of the Shoah, with the main focus on the secular educational system. In this section *Defamation* was in focus, as the only film to visualize the school system in Israel. This illustrated how the Third and later generations in Israel relate to the memory of the Shoah, and makes the point that because of the Shoah the Israeli society's threshold for violence is too high. Because no matter what happens to other groups in the world, or to the Arabs in the Middle East, the Jews has always been through worse.

The documentaries have shown that the Post-Shoah generations construct their collective memory and Jewish identity through the family, photography and trips of return to the death camps and past family homes, although Israel uses the educational system, IDF, museums and commemoration days such as *Yom HaShoah* to create a national collective and a sense of a shared history and future. Throughout the study I have encountered new questions, for example: how does Israel move on from the national trauma? How can Israel still remember the Shoah without being caught in the past? In order to live peacefully with its Middle Eastern neighbors, the turning of emphasize of death into emphasizing humanism may be crucial. I would therefore like to agree with Avraham Burg, that the Jewish community in Israel must not isolate itself by constantly mourning the past, and instead try to define itself by its positive attributes.

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