

Postmemory in Canadian Jewish Memoirs: The Holocaust & Notions of a Jewish Homeland

Lizy Mostowski

We Polish Jews ... We, everlasting, who have perished
in the ghettos and camps, and we ghosts who, from
across seas and oceans, will some day return to the
homeland and haunt the ruins in our unscarred bodies
and our wretched, presumably spared souls.

Julian Tuwim¹

In his lecture at Concordia University in March of 2014, Professor Richard Menkis suggested that children of Holocaust survivors' trauma be compared not to other children of survivors, but rather to those who have not directly inherited the trauma of the Holocaust at all, urging for a less hyperbolic reading of the impact inflicted by the Holocaust on post-Holocaust generations. The transmission of this trauma is generally studied when it is transmitted from Holocaust survivors to their children, with emphasis on particular and peculiar extreme behaviors and tendencies in both generational groups. However, as the second- and third-post-Holocaust generations in Canada have come of age, it has become apparent that Canadian

* Lizy Mostowski is currently pursuing her PhD in Comparative and World Literature at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She holds BA and MA degrees in English Literature from Concordia University in Montreal, Canada. This article is a condensed version of her MA thesis, written under the supervision of her thesis advisor, Professor Bina Freiwald.

1 Julian Tuwim, *My Żydzy polscy, We, Polish Jews*, Magnes Press, Jerusalem 1984.

Jews, as historian Gerald Tulchinsky notes, now “recognize that the Holocaust is part of their collective identity” (Tulchinsky 2008: 459). These post-Holocaust generations exhibit symptoms of ‘postmemory’, a term that Marianne Hirsch defines as that which ‘is distinguished from memory by generational distance and from history by deep personal connection’ (Hirsch 1997: 22). However, postmemory takes on new meaning as the third post-Holocaust generation comes of age, as this generation generally inherits Holocaust trauma and memory not through their own familial lineage but through their ancestral lineage, through second-hand stories, history lessons, books about the Holocaust, and through ‘familiar and familial tropes’ (Hirsch 2002: 48). These ‘impersonal building blocks’ (ibid. 42) construct what Hirsch calls ‘affiliative postmemory’ (ibid. 42) in a subject. In this essay, I investigate how the inheritance of Holocaust trauma and acts of postmemory and affiliative postmemory – namely, writings on the Holocaust that are personally connected yet generationally distanced from the event—can rewrite diasporic identity narratives, by examining the production of postmemory in the memoirs of two Canadian-Jewish writers of the second and third post-Holocaust generations.

Bernice Eisenstein is a child of Holocaust survivors, a member of the second post-Holocaust generation. Her memoir, *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors*, is an unconventional graphic novel in that it is not entirely rendered in comics-like Art Spiegelman’s MAUS, but rather presents prose that is accompanied by illustrations and comics panels that appear intermittently throughout. Much like Spiegelman’s MAUS, however, Eisenstein uses words and illustrations to reveal how her parents’ history has influenced her own identity, and the ways in which their legacy consumes her. Eisenstein’s familial proximity to the Holocaust allows her to easily establish herself as a second-generation writer of the Holocaust, as she depicts her relationship with her parents and builds upon the ideas and texts of writers and thinkers on the Holocaust who came before her.

Jonathan Garfinkel is of the third post-Holocaust generation and has no familial connection to the Holocaust, having inherited

Holocaust trauma via cultural identity. In his memoir, *Ambivalence: Adventures in Israel and Palestine*,² he confronts the version of Israel he was taught in his ‘Labour Zionist [elementary] school’ (Garfinkel 2008: 33) Bialik, by simultaneously exploring contemporary Israel and his Jewish-Canadian identity. Both Eisenstein and Garfinkel have ancestral roots in Poland, travel to Israel at some point in their respective memoirs, and point to unconventional notions of a Jewish Homeland, revealing ways in which the Holocaust has influenced them as Canadian Jews. However, as Garfinkel does not possess Eisenstein’s familial closeness to the Holocaust, he does not write about the Holocaust directly but rather describes its various outcomes, such as the State of Israel in *Ambivalence*, Holocaust commemoration in contemporary Poland following his visit to the controversial village of Jedwabne in his essay ‘The Road to Jedwabne’ (2002), and his positive experiences in contemporary Poland in his poetry collection *Glass Psalms* (2005).

In her essay “Camus’ *The Plague*, or a Monument to Witnessing”, Shoshana Felman cites Elie Wiesel’s famous phrase, “There is no such thing as a literature of the Holocaust, nor can there be” (Wiesel quoted in Felman and Laub 1992: 95), noting how paradoxical the statement is as Wiesel himself is “the best-known author of the Holocaust” (Ibid.). Felman draws on this tension to explore how Camus’ existentialist novel might in fact be how one writes about the Holocaust after the Holocaust. Similarly, in his work *Ambivalence*, Garfinkel does not write directly about the Holocaust but rather addresses it by exploring his own Jewish identity – indirectly reflecting on what it means to be a Jew post-Holocaust. Felman writes that the intention of her essay is to “test the impact of the Holocaust on narrative (on the relationship of narrative to history), in a writer who *does not* present himself, and *is not officially identified* as a writer of (about) the Holocaust” (Ibid. 96). Similarly, through my examination of the production of postmemory in *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors* and *Ambivalence: Adventures*

2 Also published by Viking Canada in 2007 under the more provocative title *Ambivalence: Crossing the Israel/Palestine Divide*.

in *Israel and Palestine*, I contrast Eisenstein and Garfinkel in order to reveal the ways in which generational and familial distance from the Holocaust affects each writer's sense of identity as a Canadian Jew.

Languages of Identity: Yiddish, Hebrew, and their Implications

Eisenstein is of perhaps the last generation of assimilated Jews to have organically inherited the Yiddish language in Canada, and Garfinkel of the first diasporic generation to feel the need to learn Modern Hebrew. For Eisenstein, language is a form of Eastern European nostalgia: "Eisenstein's first language was Yiddish, and the fact that her family home was steeped in Yiddishkeit again epitomizes the extent to which her postwar Canadian childhood was infused with the legacy of the past" (Harris 2008: 137). "Yiddish was our home", writes Eisenstein (2006: 62), seamlessly weaving Yiddish into English throughout her narration rather than reserving the language for speaking others' words, exhibiting her belonging to Yiddish culture. Bialik, Garfinkel's elementary school, taught both Modern Hebrew and Israeli history and literature as an educational foundation in Canada. As a result, Garfinkel is of the first generation in his family to be fluent in Hebrew. While Yiddish as a Jewish language connects Eisenstein to her family and the culture of the *shtetl*, Hebrew epitomizes the gulf between Garfinkel and his grandfather: "I grabbed the phone receiver. Started to talk in Hebrew, which I knew my grandfather wouldn't understand. Hebrew in his day was the language of prayer" (Garfinkel 2002: 92). Garfinkel's grandfather wants to visit the Holy Land before he passes, but he cannot speak Hebrew, and only knows Israel "in the imagination" (ibid. 92), not geographically. This shift in what is recognized as the "Jewish language" from Yiddish to Hebrew marks a change in perspective between the second and the third post-Holocaust generations of Canadian Jewry, which was accompanied by other changes as well, such as the shift of philanthropic focus from the "Holocaust victims in Europe" to the "national revival [of Israel]" (Tulchinsky 2008: 425).

This philanthropic shift echoes other changes that Toronto's Jewish community underwent between the time Eisenstein and Garfinkel

each came of age. Eisenstein grew up in Toronto's Kensington Market neighborhood during the 1950s, an environment she describes as *shtetl*-like, where kosher butchers were common and chickens roamed the streets, while Garfinkel was raised in Toronto's Forest Hill during the 1970s, an elite upper-class Jewish neighborhood in northern Toronto. The migration of Toronto's Jewish population from Kensington to the suburbs signifies many changes in the community. Since the 1970s, Toronto's Jewish community has been "characterized by strong institutions, a supportive multicultural general society, traditional Jewish values ... a fairly healthy demographic, economic prosperity, and strong support for Jewish communities elsewhere, especially in Israel" (Brown 2013: 213). One indicator of this transformation is the dissipation of the *shtetl*-like quality that typifies Eisenstein's Kensington Market, and the community's integration into a North American cultural milieu and transition into a suburban lifestyle. Eisenstein was able to access her familial history in the tight-knit community in which she was raised, whereas Garfinkel felt the need to explore his Jewish identity abroad – in Poland and Israel – another reflection of the shift in communal values and economic status.

Similarly, the Holocaust education that sparked Eisenstein's interest in the subject is rooted in her parents' home, stories, and objects, as well as in books, television, and other media, while Garfinkel's exposure to Holocaust education took place at Bialik, the aforementioned private school to which he was sent as a child. Bialik taught the history of the Holocaust through a Zionist lens that was clearly distinct from that of an average public school. Bialik's long-lasting influence continues to shape Garfinkel's outlook on the world he experiences as an adult, just as the legacy of Eisenstein's parents continues to affect her experience in the world as a subject. Furthermore, as Franklin Bialystok states, "Children born in 1960 who had no familial connection with World War II had little or no idea of what had happened to European Jews" (Bialystok 2013: 283-284). It is therefore likely that Eisenstein's peers were not as familiar with the history of the Holocaust as Garfinkel's peers might have been, even those in the public school system, which positions Eisenstein as a double outsider, both in relation to her peer group

and with respect to her parents' experiences. Historian Gerald Tulchinsky claims that, "A growing awareness of the Holocaust entered into Jewish life in Canada [only] in the 1980s and 1990s" (Tulchinsky 2008: 459 – right around the time Garfinkel would have attended elementary school. The Holocaust became "a normative aspect of Canadian Jewish identity" (Ibid. 459) after Eisenstein came of age, and just around the time Garfinkel's third post-Holocaust generation came of age.

The Role of Kensington Market's *Anshei Minsk* Synagogue

Toronto's architecture, history, and geography are important markers for both Eisenstein and Garfinkel, particularly Kensington Market's *Anshei Minsk* Synagogue. "They say the Jews from Minsk, Belarus, came to Canada and built this shul in Kensington Market, [in] 1930", recounts Garfinkel in *Ambivalence*, "Brick by brick, the design is identical to the synagogue they left behind to flame and smoke, blessed be its memory" (Garfinkel 2008: 6). In 2002, the *Anshei Minsk* Synagogue was subject to an arson attack. Garfinkel's brief history of the synagogue depicts his tendency to absorb histories and present them through affiliation, taking a story experienced by others and absorbing it into his own identity narrative.

Garfinkel chose to live in Kensington as an adult and attend the synagogue regularly with his girlfriend, Judith. The author's perspective of the attack was that of an insider. He reports: "Last year a bunch of arsonists piled religious books up in the women's section and lit them on fire. Fortunately a Chinese restaurant owner called the police before the whole synagogue burned down" (Ibid. 96). Garfinkel's account reveals not only the development of the neighborhood – no longer a predominantly Jewish area, it now includes various tightly adjacent cultures – but also his belonging to the congregation and the effect of the arson attack on him personally. Eisenstein, however, only mentions the arson attack as a side-note when recalling the Kensington Market of her childhood, a Kensington that now exists solely in her memory. She mentions the arson attack in passing:

The *Anshei Minsk* Synagogue on St. Andrew, with its Russian Romanesque architecture, watches over the streets half a century

before its windows will be broken, its books burned, in 2002. But for now it is able to pulse klezmer music into the air and over the rooftops of the market, cadences of the Yiddish soul, another kind of sweet Nothing. Marc Chagall must have floated paint onto his canvasses in Russia with these sounds on his brush (Eisenstein 2006: 59).

Eisenstein's perspective of the synagogue is sentimental – to her, the synagogue is a marker of a world that no longer exists – a remnant of the *shtetl*-like Toronto that she remembers. Her reference to Marc Chagall reveals how she produces postmemory in her memoir: by borrowing and imagining rather than experiencing, a combination, in Hirsch's words, of generational distance and profound personal attachment. Though Eisenstein never mentions the alarming meaning of the arson attack, never connects it to the trauma of the Holocaust directly, Garfinkel does so by sharing his girlfriend Judith's reaction to the attack with his readers. In the wake of the attack, Judith says to him, "It's terrible what happened. Like Nazi Germany, right here in North America" (Garfinkel 2008: 96). Judith's comment reveals one of the ways in which the Holocaust presents itself in Garfinkel's everyday life, how he inherits the trauma of the Holocaust by affiliation.

Each writer's relation to Kensington Market offers information not only about the writers themselves, but also about the communities in which they were raised. "Toronto," Franklin Bialystok writes in his article *Post-War Canadian Jewry* (p. 94), "where about half of Canada's Jews reside, replaced Montreal as the center of Jewish life in the 1970s". Eisenstein grew up in an era of significant European Jewish immigration, when Jews were just beginning to establish themselves in Canada, creating a *shtetl*-like atmosphere – before Toronto became the "center of Jewish life" due to Quebec's declaration of language laws, which alienated English speakers from its society. Garfinkel, on the other hand, grew up in Toronto's elite Forest Hill neighborhood where synagogue parking lots burst with luxury cars on High Holidays (Garfinkel 2008: 18), after many of Montreal's English-speakers had moved to Toronto. Though Eisenstein and Garfinkel grew up in different neighborhoods, each was considered the Jewish neighborhood of Toronto during their respective upbringings. However, while both were raised within what can, in many ways, be considered an

“imagined political community” (Langman 2006—an ethnic group that shares similar physical features and political ideals—both experienced some form of alienation from their community. Irving Massey’s distinction between polis and community is useful in illuminating how Eisenstein’s and Garfinkel’s communities function as a vehicle for claiming and discovering a sense of self where it is not naturally accessible. Massey writes:

If one belongs to a community, one does so not by observing it from a reasonable distance but by immersing oneself in it: by one’s blind side, through which one participates in processes that do not even always rise to the level of the individual’s consciousness: whether by sharing in the opacities of the common language, by simply taking part in the lifestyle of the community ..., or by accepting and perpetuating its values, fears, and its ideals (Massey 1994: 155).

The concept of immersion applies to both Eisenstein’s and Garfinkel’s imagined political communities. While Eisenstein casts herself as an outsider to “The Group – the name she gives to the community of her parents and their Holocaust-survivor friends – stating, “It had always been impossible for [her] not to have sensed [her]self an outsider” (Eisenstein 2006: 166), in her memoir she perpetuates their “values, fears, and ideals”. This is particularly evident when she distinguishes herself from her cousin Larry (*ibid.* 124-127) as having a higher moral standing and greater respect for kosher laws and her grandparents’ home, as well as in her constant use of Yiddish in her narration, which identifies her as an insider to the common values of “The Group”. Garfinkel separates himself from the Jewish community in which he was raised by attending a downtown synagogue that does not include the wealthy Forest Hill Jews he grew up with, choosing to immerse himself in what he describes as a “withered” community (Garfinkel 2008: 17), one that is modest and follows old “Minsker” traditions that are not strictly Eastern European but also express nostalgia for the “Old World”. Though Garfinkel’s description of the other congregation members paints them as outsiders and eccentrics, it becomes very clear that he, too, is an outsider to his Forest Hill community and perhaps an eccentric as well, due to his lack of rootedness and faith in conventional Jewish-Canadian values, to which I will return in the following sections. The Anshei Minsk

congregation is Garfinkel's imagined political community, just as "The Group" is Eisenstein's.

Massey defines polis as the "intellectual features of a rational society" and community as a group composed of "instinctual bonding and intimacy" (Massey 1994: 156). The way Eisenstein and Garfinkel foster social bonds in their memoirs uncovers how they both actively integrated themselves into new, imagined political communities via intellectual exploration – Massey's definition of polis – which brings them closer to the tragedy of the Holocaust than their respective peer groups. In *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors*, Eisenstein introduces "The Group" as a simultaneous polis and community: "They had all known one another in Europe" (p. 157), revealing their intellectual bond and, "... when Jenny sweetly sings a Yiddish tune, Nadja awakens and joins in the notes of their past" (ibid. 160), revealing their closeness and intimacy. Garfinkel, on the other hand, carries a more distanced gaze toward his community. He notes that an Israeli attempting to fundraise at Anshei Minsk would have better luck in the community he had abandoned: "Needless to say, if Yosef were giving this same speech at Holy B[lossom], he'd be guaranteed an audience that would generate at least a few grand" (Garfinkel 2008: 18). Rather than describe each member of the Minsk congregation in detail, Garfinkel tends to characterize the group as a whole: "What a gang we are. Often the rabbi brings in guest speakers to try to attract fresh blood to the withered downtown Jewish community" (ibid. 17). As a child of members in the group she imagines herself to belong to, Eisenstein is able to integrate both "community" and "polis" as defined by Massey, while Garfinkel's memoir is void of the intimacies that create community, and he is forced to focus on what is accessible to him: the intellectual (thereby political and historical) features of the community.

The Impact of the Holocaust & the "Architecture" of the State of Israel

Gerald Tulchinsky explains that Canadian Jewry began to incorporate both the Holocaust and the State of Israel and its ideology into its collective identity through Canadian Zionists who focused not only on funding relief in Europe during the Second World War, but also

on funding the establishment of a Jewish nation-state in Palestine for Holocaust survivors. Tulchinsky points to how closely interrelated the Holocaust and establishment of the Jewish State of Israel are, particularly for Canadian Jews, explaining that Canadian Jewry financially supported both “Holocaust victims in Europe[, which] was a conditioned response to tragedy, [and] aid to the Jews of Palestine, known as the Yishuv, [which] arose from the millennia of hope” (Tulchinsky 2008: 425). Tulchinsky describes the Holocaust as a catalyst for Canadian Zionists, observing that “Canadian Zionist figures joined the protests and ... participated in efforts to save as many Jews as possible through rescue,” (Tulchinsky 1998: 237) and noting that at the time, “Anti-Zionism was rare [for Canadian Jewry]” (ibid. 237). Eisenstein and Garfinkel are positioned at two opposite ends of an era – one that begins with a philanthropic emphasis on the Holocaust, which later shifts to Israel – that Tulchinsky defines in *Canada’s Jews: A People’s Journey* on the basis of sociocultural trends in Canadian Jewry from 1940 through 2008: “Both activities were deemed necessary, but one was inspired by a sense of closure, while the other was evoked by the Messianic hope of return to the ancient homeland and national revival” (Tulchinsky 2008: 425).

The history of Canadian Zionism that Tulchinsky presents reveals not only the relationship between the Holocaust and Israel, but also how close to home these two issues were for Canadian Jewry. Even after the State of Israel was founded, Canadian Jews remained closely connected with Israel: “Ironically, though, success in establishing the state had, in some senses, lessened the urgency and the power of the Canadian Zionist work; Israel became the possession of all Jews, Zionist and non-Zionist alike” (Tulchinsky 1998: 259). By tracing the history of Zionism in Canada, including various fund-raising efforts, volunteer efforts during the War, and particularly the involvement of Canadian Jews in the British war effort during WWII, Tulchinsky pinpoints how Canadian Jews earned their sense of propriety over events that may have otherwise seemed out of reach as they took place overseas. While Eisenstein does not mention Jewish fundraising in her memoir, for Garfinkel the issue is directly connected to Israel: “Every Friday at Bialik I was told to plunk whatever change I had into a little blue box called *Keren Kayemet*. The donations helped to plant trees in arid areas such as the Negev desert”

(Garfinkel 2008: 59). It was with donations like Garfinkel's, "using money from wealthy Canadian donors, mostly from Toronto, [that] the [Jewish National Fund] planted Canada Park" (ibid. 283). The ways in which Eisenstein and Garfinkel address the Holocaust in their memoirs reveals that while the second post-Holocaust generation looks back in order to reconstruct history, the third post-Holocaust generation looks forward in order to participate in the creation of history.

Though Eisenstein is a child of survivors and Garfinkel second generation Canadian, neither author struggles with the issue of agency over the Holocaust, due to the way Canada's Jewish population has collectively absorbed it into its zeitgeist. In her article "Releasing the Grip of the Ghostly", Miriam Harris writes that Eisenstein's illustration of Moses with a large H-shaped tablet "addresses [the] wide phenomenon" of "The Holocaust becom[ing] a cornerstone of identity for many Jews, even those whose families were not in Europe during the war" (Harris 2008: 132). Garfinkel, too, uses Moses in his memoir in a way that could "be regarded by some readers as distasteful blasphemy" (ibid. 132). Moses appears in *Ambivalence* with God, and sees the eight-foot cement wall that divides Israel and its "enemies" (Garfinkel 2008: 337), colloquially called "The Green Line", for the first time. In Garfinkel's memoir, Moses questions God when he asks, "Couldn't you just keep them out yourself?" (ibid. 337). Much like Eisenstein does in her illustration of God's commandments, Garfinkel exhibits his agency over ancient and contemporary Jewish history through Moses:

Remember your Bible, Moses: "You shall make no covenant with them and their gods. They shall not remain in your land."

"I didn't realize you were being so literal" says Moses, his eyes following the long route of the wall (ibid. 337).

Both Garfinkel and Eisenstein exhibit their agency by referring "back to the cultural stories that have cast them as particular kinds of subjects" (Smith and Watson 2010: 235). Both authors combine two major cultural stories: the Torah – particularly the commandments given to Moses at Mount Moriah – which casts them as Jews, and the Holocaust, which casts them as scapegoats of a major tragedy and places their narratives in a specific cultural and historical milieu. Though Garfinkel's family

arrived in Canada before the 1930s, the Holocaust is still a cornerstone of identity for him. Eisenstein writes on the Holocaust and interprets it with a level of ownership that Garfinkel claims as well – not as a child of Holocaust survivors, but as a Jew who has inherited a collectivized history. Just as Garfinkel examines Israel through a Jewish-Canadian lens, his relationship with the Holocaust also presents itself in the form of collectivized history, unlike the personal history shared in Eisenstein’s memoir.

Throughout his memoir, Garfinkel compares the Israel that Bialik established in his mind to the Israel he finds on his journey, reconstructing Israel while deconstructing what he was taught – filling in the gaps between mythology, historical reality, and personal reality. While the Holocaust is at the forefront of Eisenstein’s memoir, in Garfinkel’s story it functions as a backdrop, a historical event related to the creation of the country he explores, and one that shapes his present: “The creation of Israel was essential to the survival of the Jewish people. Even though I’d had no desire to go to Israel as a kid, I considered myself a Zionist for this very reason. Wasn’t the tragedy of the Holocaust that Jews had nowhere to go?” (Garfinkel 2008: 63). Mooli Brog echoes this sentiment in her article, remarking, “Holocaust memory in Israel was articulated in its Declaration of Independence, which determined the State to be the ultimate response to the Holocaust” (Brog 2003: 71). Garfinkel allows characters into his memoir like his teacher Mrs. Blintzkrieg – who personifies the Jewish education instilled in him at Bialik – who admonishes him and calls him “a self-hating Jew” (Garfinkel 2008: 231, 290) for his critical view of Israel. Through this repeating phrase, Garfinkel aligns himself with Jewish thinkers like Hannah Arendt, who was disparaged for her critical views of the Eichmann trial, which Brog notes was “among the most important events in forming Holocaust consciousness in Israel” (ibid. 76). Eisenstein also evokes Arendt by drawing Eichmann in his famous glass case, her caption reading: “How can you deal with this kind of *farkuckteh* logic? There are others to learn from, like Hannah Arendt and Primo Levi” (Eisenstein 2006: 82). However, unlike Arendt and perhaps even Eisenstein, Garfinkel’s views are of the school of thought that Brog calls “post-Zionism” (Brog 2003: 87), which takes into account the impact of the Zionist agenda

on the Palestinian people and the creation of the State of Israel. Brog illuminates the role of the Holocaust in constructing collective memory linked to Israeli national identity: “Holocaust memory [was used] as a means of creating Israel-Diaspora solidarity as a propaganda tool in the political arena” (ibid. 94). The tension between the Holocaust and the reality of the State of Israel puts Garfinkel’s own Canadian Jewish identity at stake as he explores The Holy Land. The same tension – between responsibility toward what one has been taught (and to which one has become deeply attached) and what one learns outside of inherited ideology – similarly fuels Eisenstein’s identification with prominent Jewish thinkers.

Eisenstein’s account of the Eichmann Trial is clouded with nostalgia and acts as little more than a catalyst for her account of her parents’ Holocaust story. Eichmann is mentioned early in the memoir and later illustrated about midway through. Her description of his sentencing is worded as follows:

When the judge presiding over the Eichmann trial addressed the Israeli court, he said “that in order to punish the accused and deter others, the maximum penalty laid down in the law must be imposed on him.” I knew from that day on that I had been sentenced as well (Eisenstein 2006: 26).

The sentence imposed on Eisenstein that day was not a death sentence, but rather an obligation to “never forget” (p. 24) Eisenstein’s reference to the Eichmann trial as both a point of entry into her memory and a historical moment can be appreciated fully only by looking at the formal aspects of her memoir, meaning the intersection of text and illustration. Eisenstein’s illustrations either directly depict an event or image described in her prose, or place her on the sidelines of her prose as a child, communicating her thoughts and feelings about her childhood to the reader, sharing the inspiration for an illustration in her memoir, sitting on a pile of books that she read, or mentioning the thinkers and events that have influenced her. Eisenstein’s complex and varied use of panels and illustrations is what comics theorist Thierry Groensteen calls “braiding”, “a supplementary relation that is never indispensable to the conduct and intelligibility of the story, which the breakdown

makes its own affair” (Groensteen 2007: 147). This “breakdown” is what Groensteen calls the “gridding” of the work, meaning its spatial organization on the page. Eisenstein’s panels do not necessarily form a consistent plot line of their own, but often act as supplementary material that allows Eisenstein to elaborate on ideas expressed in her prose, as she does by illustrating Eichmann long after he is first mentioned. Using the braiding technique, Eisenstein gives Eichmann a haunting presence. Though she does not overtly declare a stance regarding the trial, her disapproval is implied in pointing to Arendt and Levi as better sources on the matter. Arendt’s account of the trial in her book *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* is a more complex and multi-faceted one than Eisenstein’s, and raises questions that are pertinent to both of these memoirs with regard to Israel and its connection to the Holocaust. Arendt writes:

Clearly, this courtroom is not a bad place for the show trial David Ben-Gurion, Prime Minister of Israel, had in mind when he decided to have Eichmann kidnapped in Argentina and brought to the District Court of Jerusalem to stand trial for his role in the “final solution of the Jewish question” and Ben-Gurion, rightly called the “architect of the state” remains the invisible stage manager of the proceedings (Arendt 2006: 4-5).

Through Arendt’s perspective, Eisenstein’s biases as expressed in her account of the trial, and Garfinkel’s biases in his exploration of Israel, become more evident. Eisenstein’s view of the event is shrouded in sentimentality and the experience of watching it in the company of family members who survived the Holocaust; her lens is not a critical one, like Arendt’s, and she does not have the gall, nor necessarily the interest, to overtly question the ethics of conducting such a trial in Israel rather than the United Nations courtroom. Garfinkel’s Israel is politicized and problematized by his ethical questioning of the Land of Israel. However, this questioning narrows through his Canadian Jewish perspective, and his analysis is based on private experience, while Arendt introduces a deeper layer as she points to David Ben-Gurion’s “architectural design” of the State and the propaganda embedded into its national policy, allowing her analysis to reach beyond her own experience. Garfinkel’s

financial contribution to Canada Park near Jerusalem affords him the agency to criticize the outcomes of this project, and thereby the authority to criticize Israel. Garfinkel writes, “The JNF agreed to put up a sign in Canada Park saying: ‘Two thousand people lived in the village of Imwas and one thousand seven hundred in Yalu. Today they live in Jordan and Ramallah’,” and condemns the JNF for the details they neglected:

There was no mention that in the Six Day War, under the command of Yitzhak Rabin, the Israeli army demolished three Palestinian villages at that location, even though the villagers had not put up any resistance. There wasn’t a peep about the villagers marched off at gunpoint, pointed to Ramallah and beyond (Garfinkel 2008: 284).

Garfinkel, like Arendt, points out one of the ways in which the Holocaust was used as propaganda during the establishment of Israel, by discussing how youth were made to feel guilty about the Holocaust and encouraged to donate to causes such as Canada Park at his Canadian elementary school. His critical account of Canada Park reveals that Garfinkel is attempting to subvert the affiliative postmemory imposed on him at Bialik, as he fosters an attachment to Israel by creating affiliation with its Palestinian history.

Israel is a “site of entering” (Felman and Laub 1992: 254) for Garfinkel in which he is allowed to inhabit, in some way, the implications of an inherited cultural history that he is unable to inhabit in Toronto. Shoshanna Felman notes:

Israel becomes the place from which [Claude] Lanzmann³ can himself, for the first time, testify from the inside (as both an inside and an outside witness, the place ... Lanzmann for the first time finds a voice with which he can say “I” and with which he can articulate his own testimony (Ibid. 255).

3 Claude Lanzmann was the French filmmaker who created *Shoah*, the legendary 1985 nine-and-a-half-hour documentary about the Holocaust in which he personally interviews various witnesses to the events including survivors and bystanders.

Felman points to Israel as a unique place where one can experience implications of the Holocaust, a place where Lanzmann feels he can situate himself inside the stories of the Holocaust survivors he interviews. Felman writes:

The finding is thus also, at the same time, the finding of a site of entering, the discovery of the unique significance of a place: the discovery of Israel as the place where, on the one hand, the remnant of the extinguished European Jewry could gather (find each other), and where, on the other hand, Lanzmann, coming from the outside, can for the first time look inside and discover the reality of the Jews (as opposed to the anti-Semites' fictions – a reality materially created and conditioned as the outcome of history. The discovery of Israel is thus the finding of a place which enables Lanzmann, for the first time, to inhabit his own implication of the story of the Other (Felman and Laub 1992: 254).

In Israel, Garfinkel is an insider, an insider to the truth about Israel, an insider to the true nature of Jewish-Canadian fundraising. However, unlike Lanzmann, Garfinkel discovers the reality of the Palestinians, thereby discovering Mrs. Blintzkrieg's fictions. Garfinkel is able only to "inhabit his own implications of the story" of the founding of the State of Israel while in the country that is itself an implication of the Holocaust, Israel.

Though the entire premise of *Ambivalence* is, of course, Garfinkel's ambivalence towards the issues that present themselves between Israel and Palestine, Garfinkel's understanding of the Holocaust as a pillar of Canadian Jewish identity causes him to ultimately side with Israel. Through his "Blintzkrieg complex" (Garfinkel 2008: 295 – the haunting presence of his Bialik education – Garfinkel's ambivalence turns into a defined stance, as he claims, "Israel and Palestine: The place shoves you toward a position" (ibid. 320), realizing that "critical thought [about Israel] is equal to being a Nazi or a terrorist" (ibid. 295), and ultimately coming to the conclusion that there is no uncomplicated way of thinking about Israel that does not evoke the Holocaust, pogroms, and centuries of Jewish suffering that his family escaped by moving to Canada, as well as the expulsion and subjugation of the Palestinian people.

Poland & the Role of Mission Tourism in Canadian Postmemory

“Polish past inhabits the Jewish present” (Lehrer 2013: 93), writes ethnographer Erica Lehrer in her book *Jewish Poland Revisited: Heritage Tourism in Unquiet Places*. Bernice Eisenstein and Jonathan Garfinkel are both descendants of Polish Jews, and throughout each of their memoirs their Eastern European roots surface in the form of nostalgia. In their article “We Would Not Have Come Without You”, Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer write, “Like the small child who endows parental imagos alternately with good and bad qualities, the [Holocaust] survivor needs to split off nostalgic memory from traumatic memory in order to sustain positive aspects of nostalgia” (Hirsch and Spitzer 2002: 260). Eisenstein and Garfinkel have similar needs in regard to their nostalgia for Eastern Europe, as neither allows the Holocaust to overshadow their nostalgic experiences. This nostalgia for pre-war Jewish life in Poland emerges in different ways that reveal their respective understandings of a Jewish Homeland, though Garfinkel’s notion of a homeland is understandably further removed and more anecdotal in his memoir than Eisenstein’s notion is in hers.

Garfinkel’s memoir, *Ambivalence: Adventures in Israel and Palestine*, is based on his internal debate about Israel’s place as a Jewish Homeland, while Eisenstein never acknowledges Israel in this sense in her work *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors*. Though Eisenstein mentions Jerusalem,⁴ she does not address the issues surrounding Israel, but invokes Israel only to reject it as a Jewish Homeland when she writes, “An organized trip back to the holy land, back to Auschwitz” (Eisenstein 2006: 112). Through her dark humor, Eisenstein reveals that for her it is Auschwitz, or potentially even Poland, not Israel, that has the gravitational pull of a homeland. Her choice not to capitalize “holy land” is telling, as it dissociates her idea of a homeland from the accepted Jewish iconography.

Eisenstein’s notion of Poland as a homeland is complex. Poland is only mentioned throughout her memoir as a land of the dead – she lists the

4 Eisenstein only writes, “The year when I was twenty, I lived in Jerusalem” (p. 124), and continues to the Canadian setting of her narrative.

places her mother and brother visited on an organized trip: “Treblinka, Majdanek, Mauthausen, Auschwitz, remaining synagogues, graveyards” (ibid. 112) - however, she never visits Poland herself. The type of travel that Eisenstein’s mother and brother participated in is what Lehrer defines as “mission” tourism:

Mission tours, under one or another banner of Holocaust remembrance, employ a conventional, distancing, and generalized stance toward Poland, in large part enacting a disavowal of the country as anything but a site of tragedy for Jews, now redeemed by the State of Israel (Lehrer 2013: 93).

Lehrer’s main examples are tours such as March of the Living, but extend to organized tours such as the one Eisenstein’s mother and brother joined. Arlene Stein stresses travel to one’s ancestral homeland as a crucial point of memory recovery, explaining that second generation memory tourists “want to smell the smells, hear the languages, and walk in the footsteps of their ancestors ... they [seek] more direct encounters with their parents’ lost worlds” (Stein 2009: 301). While it is clear that Eisenstein has the same desires as these types of tourists, for her Poland does not represent the place for such memory recovery. Eisenstein explains the reason for not having visited Poland herself:

I did not join them on this trip. My mother and my brother wanted me to be with them, but I had come to hate flying with a superstitious zeal that formed paralysis. Instead, the journey I took was a silent one later, when I sat and watched my mother telling her story on tape (Eisenstein 2006: 113).

Eisenstein’s nostalgia and memory reconstruction of Poland therefore remain geographically anchored in Toronto, specifically in the Kensington Market environment, and narratively in her parents’ mythologies. While Eisenstein’s own perspective only evokes Poland by naming its death camps, she does not allow herself to develop what Lehrer calls a “generalized stance” towards Poland, but experiences it instead through her parents’ memories of pre-war Poland. Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska notes in *Patterns of Return: Survivors’ Postwar Journeys to Poland* that Holocaust survivors commonly resist bearing witness to Poland’s loss of its “Jewish soul”, not wanting to see their

birthplace “regressed by hundreds of years to a time when it was just a small village” (Adamczyk-Garbowska 2007: 8). Perhaps this was Eisenstein’s feeling as well when she chose not to travel to Poland with her mother and brother, which consequently allowed her to avoid the traditional positioning of Poland as a site of tragedy and Israel as a land of redemption in her memoir. The homeland of Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen to which Eisenstein refers never materializes in her account—she has never experienced concentration camps herself as a prisoner or as a tourist. Eisenstein is able to split the nostalgic memories of her childhood from the traumatic memories she has inherited from her parents. Within this framework, Eisenstein is able to reconstruct her homeland: “Yiddish was the soul and substance of the life in our home. A *veltele*, a world within a world” (Eisenstein 2006: 61). Eisenstein’s notion of a “homeland” is therefore the reproduction of a *shtetl*-like environment created by her family in Toronto, the world that existed within the Kensington Market of her childhood, built by the culture and traditions her family brought to Canada from pre-Holocaust Poland. Eisenstein proclaims: “Yiddish defines the world that I came from” (ibid. 65), and notes, “They [her parents and their friends] were one another’s home, their own having been confiscated and destroyed” (ibid. 166), thereby pointing to the fact that it is not necessarily Canada that is her homeland, but rather the way of life her family and “The Group” transported to Kensington Market from Będzin, Poland.

The Kensington Market Garfinkel recognizes is the ghost of what Eisenstein identifies as her homeland. Garfinkel seems simultaneously nostalgic towards the neighborhood’s formerly Jewish character and thankful for its departure:

Once there were synagogues on nearly every corner. On Chanukah, they say there wasn’t a window or storefront on Augusta Avenue or Baldwin Street that didn’t glow with festival candles. Gone are the Kosher butchers [Eisenstein’s family and the like], the Jewish tailors; gone to richer, suburban lives in Forest Hill, North York, Thornhill. Anywhere but this shmutsik ghetto that stinks of you-know-where, may those rotten shtetls only be remembered in Shalom Aleichem books (Garfinkel 2008: 7).

In *Ambivalence*, Garfinkel admits, “I have a nostalgia for all things Eastern European” (p. 10), and perhaps this is why he chooses to live in Kensington where “the windows ... are sticky with sweet and sour pork” (p. 7), and to be a part of the eclectic congregation of the *Anshei Minsk* synagogue. However, the hostility he expresses toward the *shtetl*-like character of Kensington’s past indicates that he does not connect with it in the same way that Eisenstein does, and that pre-war *shtetleh* are not necessarily the subject of his nostalgia. Garfinkel is too far removed not only in time, but also in sociopolitical milieu, and must search for his own version of the Jewish Homeland elsewhere.

Garfinkel’s travel memoir challenges the spirit of mission tourism. His trip resonates with what Lehrer defines as the “quest” mode of travel, “undertaken by a sense of lack” (Lehrer 2013: 93), travel that is “radical, connective, even ‘ethnographic’, sometimes [it] open[s] out into deeper explorations over time, sparked by meaningful ... encounters” (ibid. 93). Though Garfinkel does not explore Poland in his memoir, he avoids the destinations usually sought out by tourists in Israel—Yad Vashem, Memorial Hill, The Israel Museum—the places Mooli Brog claims “endow each [Jewish visitor] with collective identity and provide historic validity and moral meaning to life” (Brog 2003: 65). Garfinkel’s account is filled with unique and meaningful encounters with both Israelis and Palestinians, people he has met by chance through his travels off the beaten path. Garfinkel’s Palestinian friend Anwar, for example, who has educated himself in Jewish history, says to Garfinkel that “The Jews have not learned anything from Europe” (Garfinkel 2008: 302), inflicting the memory of the Holocaust onto Garfinkel’s contemporary Israel by implying not only that the Holocaust should have been a learning experience for the Jews, but also that the same mistakes are being made, not by Germany this time, but by Israel.

Throughout *Ambivalence*, Garfinkel is preoccupied with the issue of Jews taking over Palestinian homes. He wishes, but lacks the courage, to ask Shimon, the Jewish man who occupies a Palestinian home, the following:

You were a refugee on the boats from Europe. Your parents’ house was probably taken over by a Pole or a Russian at the end of the war.

How could you move into a house that belongs to someone else?
How can you be okay knowing that? (p. 224).

After the Holocaust, many Jews would return to their towns and villages in Eastern Europe to find that their homes were inhabited by non-Jews, to be turned away, and told that their homes were no longer theirs. Graffiti in a caboose Garfinkel finds in Jerusalem reads “Jew-Nazi” (2008: 149). The situation in Israel reverses the circumstances of occupier/occupied, but still prompts one to question whether or not this simple role reversal completely undermines the Israeli ideology in which Garfinkel was immersed at Bialik, in its resemblance to the situation many Holocaust survivors encountered after liberation. In *Ambivalence* Chagi Shmueli, the lawyer of Abu Dalo—the Palestinian who reclaimed his home from Shimon the Jew—states that Israelis “should apologize and give [Palestinians] compensation” that they should “[a]t least acknowledge that wrong was done” (ibid. 316), as the Germans did years after the Holocaust, compensating survivors and funding, to this very day, memorial sites such as the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum. Garfinkel wonders further: “Would I show the children of Bialik pictures of the graffiti ‘Abu Dis Ghetto-Warsaw Ghetto?’” (ibid. 335). By addressing the Palestinian housing issue, Garfinkel examines one of the outcomes of the Holocaust through his post-Zionist lens. Garfinkel’s thoughts begin to align with those of attorney Shmueli: “Admit the wrongs we’ve done. Give them compensation. Forget history and move on” (ibid. 318), but he nevertheless concludes, “I am not willing to concede the land. I cannot abandon the idea of a Jewish state” (ibid. 318; my emphasis). Garfinkel’s Jewish identity and understanding of his people and their collective history overcomes his critical thinking, his affiliative postmemory preventing him from abandoning the idea of a homeland for the Jewish people.

While Garfinkel’s idea of a Jewish state offers a solution to “the tragedy of the Holocaust that Jews had nowhere to go” (ibid. 63), it does not necessarily coincide with present-day Israel where Jews occupy Palestinian homes. Perhaps, through his nostalgia for Eastern Europe and his affiliative postmemory, Garfinkel is revealing an alternative to the State of Israel. Though he does not mention his trips to Poland in

Ambivalence, Garfinkel explores notions of Poland as his true Jewish homeland in his poetry and other works of non-fiction. In his article entitled “Road to Jedwabne” (2002), Garfinkel not only explores the controversial nature of contemporary Polish-Jewish relations and Holocaust remembrance in Poland, he also searches for his own Polish roots. In the article, Garfinkel compares the expectations of Poland that he developed at Bialik as a child to what he actually experienced and discovered there a trajectory and approach to the topic similar to that which he applies to exploring contemporary Israel in *Ambivalence*. Garfinkel writes:

This is the Poland I knew growing up: I attended a Zionist Hebrew School in Toronto from ages 5 to 13, where I studied Hebrew and Yiddish. If Poland was ever mentioned, it was only in the context of it being a cemetery for over three million Jews. Granted, the Poles weren’t Nazis. Poles, I was taught, were also the world’s biggest anti-Semites, and this is why Hitler chose Poland to help in his project. Sure, there were those who helped hide Jews, but those were exceptions. I was never taught anything about Polish culture. Nothing about the arts or politics or history of the country. In high school, if Jewish friends went to Poland, it was on the “March of the Living”, a whirlwind, week-long tour of the concentration camps Auschwitz, Majdanek, and Treblinka (Garfinkel 2002: 3).

Garfinkel’s remark that his peers only knew Poland through what Lehrer calls “mission tourism” is significant, calling attention to a perception of Poland as inextricably linked to the Holocaust, the death of centuries of Jewish life in Poland, and the positioning of Poland as Israel’s antithesis. Just as the expectations Garfinkel developed toward Israel through his education at Bialik are disappointed, his expectations of Poland are similarly uprooted by his experiences. Instead of finding “a cemetery for over three million Jews” (ibid. 3), Garfinkel discovers a kinship not only with Poland but also with the Polish-Catholics he meets during his visit. He notes the reactions of his Canadian peers to his “quests” to Poland: “Jewish friends of mine thought it bizarre to actually miss that country and want to spend time there” (ibid. 3 – and expresses his desire to return after his initial visit.

In emphasizing how far back Jewish history dates in Poland, Garfinkel points to Poland more concretely as a Jewish homeland than he does Israel: “In the 14th-16th centuries, [Poland] was the only country in Europe that would take the Jews in almost unconditionally” (ibid. 2). During these centuries, Poland served the purpose contemporary Israel serves today: a place for the Jewish people to go when they are in danger or have no other place to go in the world. The difference, perhaps, is that rather than taking the role of “occupier” as they do in Israel, the Jewish people became integrated into Polish society and were allowed religious and social autonomy: “Kazimierz the Great, King of Poland in the 14th Century, allowed the Jews to govern their own affairs and hold their own courts” (ibid. 2). Garfinkel does not reinforce the notion of Poland as a large Jewish graveyard, but instead, motions to it as the birthplace of the Hasidic movement, Klezmer music, and great Polish-Jewish authors like Bruno Schultz and Adam Mickiewicz. While his travels in Israel depict his malaise and restlessness as a Jew of the Diaspora and as a Canadian author, when writing on Poland in his article Garfinkel states, “I found myself, at one and the same time, walking on the burial ground that is Warsaw, that decrepit and sad city, while enjoying the Polish way of life” (ibid. 3). Though Garfinkel sees Warsaw as a “burial ground”, he also claims to have found himself in it, something he never achieves in his search for rootedness in Israel. In Poland, it is clear that Garfinkel is able to move past the traumatic history, separating traumatic memory from nostalgic memory. He declares his purpose while in Poland: “I was a poet and a playwright, and interested in knowing about my past” (ibid. 3; my emphasis). In this phrase, Garfinkel takes agency over his familial history: his family’s Polish history is no longer rooted strictly in his grandmother’s Galician origin; it is his own Polish roots that are being unearthed. Like Eisenstein, Garfinkel must rewrite his notions of the pre-war Jewish *shtetl*: “The shtetl was not a black and white division between Jews and Catholics. In many ways, it was one of the first places where multiculturalism existed, before there was even such a word” (ibid. 4). Perhaps this is why the shtetl that existed in Toronto’s Kensington Market never fully resonated with Garfinkel – it lacked the multiculturalism of contemporary Kensington and pre-war shtetlekh. David Gershon Hundert’s account of Jewish rootedness in Poland is similar to Garfinkel’s:

Polish Jews and their neighbours felt that the Jewish community was a rooted and permanent one. Jewish legends of origin reveal a positive outlook and a conviction of the antiquity of their residence in the country. A pun on the Hebrew name for Poland, Polin, is revealing. A group of exiled Jews is said to have crossed the Polish border and to have heard a divine voice saying to them, “*Poh lin*,” that is, “Dwell here” (Hundert 2004: 7).

Hundert’s retelling of this Jewish legend endows Poland with the spiritual pull of contemporary Israel, of a land given to the Jewish people by God. In “Road to Jedwabne”, it seems that Garfinkel has a similar divine voice whispering in his ear, causing him to recognize that the Jewish Homeland – Poland – includes non-Jewish Poles in the contemporary world, just as it included them in the pre-war era. Garfinkel’s method of producing affiliative postmemory is revealed once more in “Road to Jedwabne”: he is able to establish a feeling of rootedness through the connections and friendships he makes in Poland and through his incorporation of historical facts that ground his experiences. In his exploration of Poland, Garfinkel re-scripts his Jewish-Canadian identity as one that recognizes the Polish past in the contemporary Jewish-Canadian zeitgeist as a pillar of identity, to the degree that it recognizes the Holocaust as such.

Photographs & “Borrowed” Narratives

Dominick LaCapra defines trauma as that which brings about “a lapse or rupture in memory that breaks continuity with the past, thereby placing identity in question to the point of shattering it” (LaCapra 1998: 9). A break in continuity with the past that displaces identity is something Garfinkel and Eisenstein share: both experienced a break in their familial lineage when their respective families moved from Poland to Canada, and both feel that their ancestral homeland exists elsewhere and has been somehow lost or rendered unreachable through conventional means due to the Holocaust. LaCapra points to memory as a *site* of trauma, and while the memoir is a genre that generally gives an account of an individual writer’s memory and experience, in the case of *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors* and *Ambivalence: Adventures in Palestine and Israel*, the memoirists actively seek out the memories (traumas) and experiences of others. Both authors are not themselves Holocaust survivors, yet their writing is undeniably

post-Holocaust writing, as it is deeply inflected by the legacy of the Holocaust. Miriam Harries notes that, “Second-generation artists such as Eisenstein and [Art] Spiegelman ... must [be] accord[ed] ... the status of insiders, who, like the survivors, speak from inside the catastrophe” (Harris 2008: 132). Harris acknowledges the agency children of Holocaust survivors have in presenting Holocaust narratives and in representing inherited memory (trauma); however, the issue of agency is complicated by LaCapra’s distinction between “witnessing” and “agency”. “Witnessing is a necessary condition of agency,” LaCapra writes, “and in certain cases it is as much as one can expect of someone who has been through a limit-experience.” He later shifts perspective and remarks, “But just as history should not be conflated with testimony, so agency should not simply be conflated with, or limited to, witnessing” (LaCapra 1998: 12). Regardless of their generation or family history, both memoirists gain agency through the same means in their respective memoirs: *not* through witnessing (or experiencing) trauma directly, but instead, through witnessing the trauma of those around them. Eisenstein gains agency via her parents’ stories and histories, Garfinkel through the stories and histories he collects from Israelis, Palestinians, and Poles. By listening to others’ accounts of events and transcribing their own reactions to these narratives, the two authors form relationships with these narratives, which allows them “the status of insiders” (Harris 2008: 132) in their respective accounts.

Bernice Eisenstein describes her relationship with the Holocaust as an addiction, a feeling symptomatic of postmemory. “Postmemory,” Hirsch writes, “characterizes the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of the previous generation, shaped by traumatic events that can be neither understood nor recreated” (Hirsch 1997: 22). Eisenstein’s experience with the Holocaust and her homeland remains mediated through her mother’s experience, as exemplified by her illustration of a photograph (which forces the reader to see the photograph through Eisenstein’s interpretation) of her mother, grandmother, and aunt showing the prisoner numbers tattooed on their arms (Eisenstein 2006: 112), which she accompanies with the comment, “I briefly saw something I’d never seen in them or never recognized – a kind of

innocence, a lightness, as if their arms don't even carry the mark of the past" (ibid. 113). Even as Eisenstein tries to project her own interpretation of their essence onto the photograph, what becomes clear in her memoir is not her reliability as a witness, but instead the "striking gap between what [she] see[s] and what [she] can know" (Ulrich Baer quoted in Hirsch 2012: 61), which reveals the agency she takes in *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors*. Like many children of Holocaust survivors, Eisenstein is a "post-Holocaust genealogist" who is "content to reach back only one or two generations – to [her] parents and grandparents" (Stein 2009: 294). While Eisenstein is fascinated by Hollywood films about the Holocaust such as Sophie's Choice and *The Diary of Anne Frank*, literary critic Miriam Harris claims that Eisenstein and other "second-generation artists" like her stand in contrast to such films, and asserts that they must be accorded not only "the status of insiders" as previously mentioned, but also that they "therefore have the right to use humor as a coping mechanism" (Harris 2008: 132). The humor that Harris describes is at play throughout Eisenstein's work, showing her sense of agency in manipulating the subject matter of the Holocaust and related icons, as seen in her aforementioned manipulation of the tablet given to Moses into the shape of the letter "H" and in her reference to Auschwitz as "the holy land" (Eisenstein 2006: 112). In fact, the description of her "addiction" to the Holocaust – to all that relates to it including film, literature, thought, history – is quite hyperbolic:

There is no Holocaust Anonymous to go to, no Ten-Commandment Step Program, no audience to stand before and state, "Hello, everyone. I am addicted to the Holocaust. Today is my first day of being clean and I don't need the Holocaust anymore to feel like a worthy person". And if there were such a thing, I'm convinced that I would be interrupted, mid-confession, as the heavy doors at the back of the room are pushed open and my father and mother appear, asking me in unison, *Why are you here?* Great! Now I'm speechless, unable to continue. What could I possibly say to help them both understand other than, because I will *always* be your child (ibid. 25).

This hyperbolic characterization of her long-term infatuation with the Holocaust compares her obsession to drug addiction, a cause of embarrassment and shame, something that requires rehabilitation yet will always be a part of who she is. In this passage, Eisenstein also suggests it is her parents who feed her addiction while simultaneously pointing to the Holocaust as a source of personal validation. Eisenstein's expression of her "addiction" is a characteristic of postmemory that Arlene Stein describes in her article "Trauma and Origins: Post-Holocaust Genealogists and the Work of Memory" as the "therapeutic ethos". The demands of Stein's therapeutic ethos include various explorations:

Among the many ways [children of Holocaust survivors] accomplish this is by engaging in genealogical research, traveling to their parents' places of origin, and sharing accounts of their experiences with others. By excavating familial histories that were previously hidden and off-limits, they are filling in gaps in their knowledge of the past, narrating their parents' lives, and re-narrating their own autobiographies (Stein 2009: 298).

Bernice Eisenstein's genealogical explorations do not extend past her parents, aunts, and uncles, the characters whose mythologies inhabit the world she was raised in; and while her grandparents and those who perished in the Holocaust are mentioned, their stories are not explored in detail. Eisenstein never travels to Poland with her mother, as previously mentioned, accessing her parents' place of origin through their memories instead. Through her memoir, Eisenstein engages with the reconstruction of her parents' narratives while simultaneously narrating her own life, which eventually becomes superimposed upon the Holocaust stories she records. Hirsch reflects on her own experience of her parents' story through a wartime photograph taken in Greater Romania: "Our reception of the photo, the questions we pose in examining it, the needs and desires that shape our postmemorial viewing, inevitably exceed the image's small size and its limited ability to serve as evidence" (Hirsch 2012: 59). Eisenstein's illustration of the photograph of her mother, grandmother, and aunt showing the numbers tattooed on their forearms reveals the same dilemma; though they are "posed as [she] had wanted to draw them" (Eisenstein 2006: 113), it does not give

Eisenstein any information beyond what is seen—their numbers, the watches on their wrists, their facial expressions—the rest is inferred by Eisenstein, not witnessed.

As aforementioned, Garfinkel, a member of the third post-Holocaust generation, does not write directly about the Holocaust. Instead, his travelogues uncover not only the ways in which Bialik imposed Zionist ideology upon him as a youth, but also how he has used affiliative postmemory to subvert this ideology by forming new, meaningful relationships with people in Israel, Palestine, and Poland. In both memoirs, the authors produce postmemory by referring back to and absorbing into their own narrative stories that are not necessarily their own, and by projecting their own experiences onto those narratives, as exemplified in Eisenstein's illustration of the photograph depicting her mother, grandmother, and aunt as well as in the agency Garfinkel possesses while questioning the ethics of the State of Israel and discovering his Polish roots. Garfinkel's postmemory is affiliative, as he inherits the trauma of the Holocaust through his ancestral lineage and education rather than the kind of experience that Eisenstein had with her parents. His search for the Jewish Homeland in Israel and Poland illuminates how his own narrative has been marked by the severing of familial ties—particularly his grandparents' move to Canada from Eastern Europe—an event that preceded his birth. The Holocaust has a haunting presence in his play *The Trials of John Demjanjuk: A Holocaust Cabaret* (2005), his non-fiction writings, and in his poetry. In his poem "Childhood" he writes, "There were no monsters in the moat, / no Mengeles beneath the bed" (Garfinkel 2005: 19). Garfinkel's alignment of the infamous doctor who conducted horrific experiments on prisoners in Auschwitz with monsters under the bed reveals the presence of the Holocaust in his childhood consciousness, and distinguishes his postmemory from Eisenstein's; hers is steeped in genealogy and stories told by family members, while Garfinkel uses popular tropes that are familiar to most to show how his narrative is being dominated and inflected by the Holocaust.

Though neither author states so overtly, it becomes evident through each of their explorations that both Eisenstein's and Garfinkel's

notions of a Jewish Homeland are conceptual and deeply rooted in postmemorial nostalgia for the pre-Holocaust world their relatives inhabited. The Holocaust is a pillar of Canadian Jewish identity, which fuels postmemory in subjects like Bernice Eisenstein who have a familial connection to the event, and affiliative postmemory in subjects like Jonathan Garfinkel – who have been conditioned by their environment to absorb the event and its outcomes (such as the establishment of Israel) into their identity narratives.

Through Bernice Eisenstein's *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors* and Jonathan Garfinkel's *Ambivalence: Adventures in Palestine and Israel* we see two post-Holocaust descendants of Polish Jews who, in different ways, exhibit symptoms of postmemory, described by Lehrer as a yearning and searching of "genealogical memory – the desire to know who [one's ancestors] were and how they lived" (Kugelmass quoted in Lehrer 2013: 96 – due to a sense that their "history is incomplete" (ibid. 96). Both Eisenstein's and Garfinkel's notions of a homeland are filtered through their own experiences and understandings of what the Jewish people endured in the Holocaust. Eisenstein's homeland is quite clearly the world her parents imported from Poland, the Yiddish-speaking Kensington Market, and while it may seem that Garfinkel's notion of a Jewish homeland is the State of Israel, his journey leads to a more complex understanding and a more ambivalent stance toward it, described as his inability to "abandon the idea of a Jewish state" (Garfinkel 2008: 318; my emphasis). The idea of a Jewish state that Garfinkel refers to is not necessarily present-day Israel where Jews occupy Palestinian homes, but rather a solution to "the tragedy of the Holocaust [when] Jews had nowhere to go" (ibid. 63). His explorations of Israel and Poland indicate that his homeland is manifested in the modern shtetl – the international and multicultural community he discovers in his travels – as he directly points to his rootedness in Eastern Europe in both *Ambivalence* and "Road to Jedwabne", while never suggesting it is necessarily where he wants to station his life.

When comparing Eisenstein, a descendant of Holocaust survivors, to Garfinkel, a descendant of Jews who escaped Poland prior to German occupation, it seems that both authors have "reconstruct[ed]

and [sought] to re-experience their parents' and grandparents' lost cultural worlds, because it is these imagined landscapes—not the comparatively secure, mundane landscapes they physically inhabit—that feel familiar, defining, authentic” (Lehrer 2013: 96). In their memoirs, Eisenstein and Garfinkel reconstruct and search for worlds that they experience as vestigial limbs of their history. Though both authors were born in Toronto into Jewish cultures and communities, they still engage in postmemory, evincing a sense of displacement. Lehrer elaborates, “Marianne Hirsch makes clear that post-memory is a condition not confined to actual children of survivors, but is a position that can be emphatically inhabited by further-flung ‘inheritors’ of mediated history” (ibid. 98). Canada, specifically present-day Toronto, is identified in each memoir as part of the Diaspora, and though both authors belong to a large, openly Jewish community, they undeniably express having lost the cultural world of their ancestors’ Poland by portraying the “homeland” as an imagined ideal. Eisenstein writes, “The collective memory of a generation speaks and I am bound to listen, see its horrors, and feel its outrage” (Eisenstein 2006: 25). “Nothing can bring back what we lost,” Garfinkel similarly reflects. “After the Shoah, we live, as Eva Hoffman wrote, in an era of symbolic action” (Garfinkel 2002: 7). Their statements mirror the mindsets of their respective generations: the second post-Holocaust generation is looking back and the third is looking forward. For Jewish-Canadians like Eisenstein and Garfinkel, the Holocaust fuels and informs their writing in equal measure, helping them understand their position as Jews of the Diaspora.

Works Cited

Primary Sources

- Eisenstein, Bernice, 2006. *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors*, McClelland & Stewart, Toronto.
- Garfinkel, Jonathan, 2008. *Ambivalence: Adventures in Israel and Palestine*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York.
- , 2005. *Glass Psalms*, Turnstone Press, Winnipeg.
- Michaels, Anne and Bernice Eisenstein, 2013. *Correspondences*,

McClelland & Stewart, Toronto.

“The Road to Jedwabne”, October 25, 2002. *Dooneyscafe.com*.
(Accessed November 22, 2014).

Secondary Sources

Adamczyk-Garbowska, Monika, February 2007. “Patterns of Return: Survivors’ Postwar Journeys to Poland,” Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC.

Arendt, Hannah, 2006. *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, Penguin Classics, New York.

Bialystok, Franklin, 2013. “‘Post-War Canadian Jewry’,” in: Ira Robinson (ed.), *Canada’s Jews: In Time, Space and Spirit*, Academic Studies Press, Boston, pp. 93-119.

—, 2014. “‘Were Things that Bad?’ The Holocaust Enters Community Memory from Delayed Impact: The Holocaust and the Canadian Jewish Community,” in: Richard Menkis and Norman Ravvin (eds.), *Canadian Jewish Studies Reader*, Red Deer Press, Calgary, pp. 283-331.

Brog, Mooli, 2003. “Victims and Victors: Holocaust and Military Commemoration in Israel Collective Memory,” *Israel Studies*, 8, 3, pp. 65-99. *SocINDEX* (Accessed April 27, 2014).

Brown, Michael, 2013. “Steps Forward and Steps Backward: Toronto Jewry at the Beginning of the Second Decade of the Twenty-First Century,” in: Ira Robinson (ed.), *Canada’s Jews: In Time, Space and Spirit*, Academic Studies Press, Boston, pp. 184-240.

Felman, Shoshana and Dori Laub, 1992. *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, Routledge, New York and London.

Groensteen, Thierry, 2007. *The System of Comics* (trans. by Bart Beaty and Nick Nguyen), University of Mississippi Press, Jackson.

Harris, Miriam, 2008. “Releasing the Grip of the Ghostly: Bernice Eisenstein’s *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors*,” in: *The Jewish Graphic Novel: Critical Approaches*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, NJ, and London, pp. 129-143.

- , 1997. *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, and London.
- Hirsch, Marianne, 2012. *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust*, Columbia University Press, New York.
- Hirsch, Marianne and Leo Spitzer, 2002. “‘We Would Not Have Come Without You’: Generations of Nostalgia,” *American Imago*, 59, 3, pp. 253-276.
- Hundert, David Gershon, 2004. *Jews in Poland-Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century: A Genealogy of Modernity*, University of California Press, Berkeley.
- LaCapra, Dominick, 1998. *History and Memory after Auschwitz*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London.
- Langman, Lauren, 2006. “The Social Psychology of Nationalism: To Die for the Sake of Strangers,” in: *The Sage Handbook of Nations and Nationalism*, SAGE, London, pp. 66-83.
- Lehrer, Erica, 2013. *Jewish Poland Revisited: Heritage Tourism in Unquiet Places*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, IN.
- Massey, Irving, 1994. *Identity and Community: Reflections on English, Yiddish, and French Literature in Canada*, Wayne State University Press, Detroit.
- Menkis, Richard, 2014. *Traumatized Generations?*, Concordia University, Montreal (lecture).
- Smith, Sidonie and Julia Watson, 2010. *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, London.
- Spiegelman, Art, 1986. *Maus I*, Pantheon Books, New York.
- , 1991. *Maus II*, Pantheon Books, New York.
- , 2001. *Metamaus*, Pantheon Books, New York.
- Stein, Arlene, 2009. “Trauma and Origins: Post-Holocaust Genealogists and the Work of Memory,” *Qualitative Sociology*, 32, 3, pp. 293-309 *SocINDEX* (Accessed April 27, 2014).
- Tulchinsky, Gerald, 1992. *Taking Root: The Origins of the Canadian Jewish Community*, Lester publishing, Toronto.
- , 1998. *Branching Out: The Transformation of the Canadian Jewish*

Community, Soddart Publishing, Toronto.
—, 2008. *Canada's Jews: A People's Journey*, University of Toronto
Press, Toronto, Buffalo, London.