THE GENERATION OF POSTMEMORY

WRITING AND VISUAL CULTURE AFTER THE HOLOCAUST

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3.1 Irma Morgensztern and her daughter, from Jeffrey Wolin's 1997 exhibition *Written in Memory: Portraits of the Holocaust. Courtesy of Catherine Edelman Gallery, Chicago, Illinois*

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MARKED BY MEMORY

> Even between mother and daughter a certain historical withholding intervenes.
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> —Gayatri C. Spivak, "Acting Bits/Identity Talk."

Toni Morrison's Sethe meets her own mother only once. As she tells her two daughters, one day, when she was still a little girl, raised primarily by Nan, who spoke to her in a language she has since forgotten, her mother took her behind the smokehouse, opened her dress, and showed her the mark under her breast: "Right on her rib was a circle and cross burnt right in the skin. She said, 'This is your ma'am. This,' and she pointed. 'I am the only one got this mark now. The rest dead. If something happens to me and you can't tell me by my face, you can know me by this mark." Sethe's answer expresses her sense of her own vulnerability, and her desire for mutuality and maternal recognition: "'Yes Ma'am,' I said. 'But how will you know me? How will you know me? Mark me too,' I said. 'Mark the mark on me too.' Sethe chuckled. 'Did she?' asked Denver. 'She slapped my face.' 'What for?' 'I didn't understand it then. Not till I had a mark of my own.'"[1]

In telling this story to her daughters, Sethe claims the mark of her slavery as a thing that can be spoken about to those in the next generation who, like Denver, were not there to be marked themselves. For

survivors of trauma, the gap between generations is the breach between a memory located in the body and the mediated knowledge of those who were born after. *Trauma*, in its literal meaning is a wound inflicted on the flesh. Roberta Culbertson stresses that "no experience is more one's own than harm to one's own skin, but none is more locked within that skin, played out within it in actions other than words, in patterns of consciousness below the everyday and the constructions of language."[2] The wound inflicted on the skin can be read as a sign of trauma's incommunicability, a figure for the traumatic real that defines a seemingly unbridgeable gap between survivors and their descendants. Paradoxically, the writing on the body that most objectifies its victims by identifying them as slaves or concentration camp prisoners is enclosed within the boundaries of skin, ultimately and utterly private and incommunicable—in Sethe's terms, "a mark of *my own*."

While theorists like Shoshana Felman and Geoffrey Hartman, in writing about the Holocaust, have consistently seen literary language as a privileged medium for the transmission of trauma, a prevalent visual figuration of trauma often takes the shape of a bodily mark, wound, or tattoo. Building on Charlotte Delbo's definition of a "deep" or "sense" memory located in the body (as opposed to the "ordinary memory" out of which stories are made), Jill Bennett comments specifically on its visual figuration:

> It is no coincidence that the image of ruptured skin recurs throughout the work of artists dealing with sense memory. . . . If the skin of memory is permeable, then it cannot serve to encase the past self as other. It is precisely through the breached boundaries of skin in such imagery that memory continues to be felt as a wound rather than seen as contained other . . . it is here in sense memory that the past seeps back into the present, becoming sensation rather than representation.[3]

In this chapter, I want to consider this visual figuration of trauma and transmission, particularly, the dynamics of identification by which the mark, and thus the sense memory that it represents, can, however partially and imperfectly, be transferred across subjects and generations. When Gayatri C. Spivak reads the above scene in *Beloved* in relation to the novel's repeated assertion that "this is not a story to pass on,"[4] she reflects on the mother's slap: "even between mother and daughter a certain historical withholding intervenes."[5] "And yet," she continues, "it *is* passed on with the mark of untranslatability on it, in the bound book *Beloved* that we hold in our hands."[6] The mark of untranslatability becomes the untranslatability of the mark. The implication, on the one hand, that interest and empathy are heightened within the matrilineal family in particular, and the articulation, on the other, of the "historical withholding" that intervenes *even* between mothers and daughters, make of Morrison's novel a theoretical text for the contradictions that define the intergenerational legacy of trauma and familial postmemory in particular. I begin this discussion of body memory with *Beloved* to find in Morrison's mother/daughter story a paradigm of relation, through which we might read the connections between the ways in which trauma is transmitted and received in vastly different historical circumstances.[7]

When Sethe's mother points out that "this your ma'am," she identifies the mother with the burned circle and cross on her skin. The mark *is* the mother—"this your ma'am"—and it is also the vehicle for mother/daughter recognition—"you will know me by this mark." When physical identity is altered by the mark of slavery and the daughter is separated from the mother by a radically different history, she both fears having to repeat her mother's story and longs for the recognition that ensures her identity as her mother's daughter. "How will you know me?"[8] The ambivalent desire to be marked, and thus to repeat the mother's trauma, is understandable between mothers and daughters whose bodily relation and resemblance is so violated by the mark as no longer to work as a vehicle of mutual recognition at the heart of the mother/daughter bond.

What concerns me here is how writers and visual artists of the postgeneration have been able to represent this intergenerational dynamic—the desire and the hesitation, the necessity and the impossibility of receiving the parents' bodily experience of trauma manifested in the visual mark or tattoo. In the previous chapter, we discussed and, indeed, performed the postgeneration's ambivalent wish to locate parental trauma

in a precise spot—like the spot on the lapel. Here that desire, and that ambivalence, are more intense and more intimate still: it is to identify so strongly as to receive from the parent the wound on the skin, and, at the same time, it is the disavowal of this bodily mirroring.

Witnessed by those who were not there to live it but who received its effects, belatedly, through the narratives, actions, and symptoms of the previous generation, trauma both solidifies and blurs generational difference.[9] What forms of identification and attachment can enable the transfer of body memory, and what artistic idioms can represent them? And what is the role of "historical withholding" in the transmission of trauma? Because of the distinctive cultural expectations bestowed on daughters and the gendered dynamics of subject-formation by which they are shaped, I am particularly interested, in this chapter, in exploring the specificity of the role of daughters in the work of familial postmemory.

REMEMORY AND POSTMEMORY

In the literature on trauma inspired by readings of Freud's work on mourning and melancholia, there is a familiar distinction between two modes of remembering. Variously labeled "mémoire profonde" and "mémoire ordinaire" ("deep" and "ordinary" memory) (Charlotte Delbo), "acting out" and "working through" (Dominick LaCapra), "perception" and "memory" (Juliet Mitchell), "traumatic memory" and "narrative memory" (Bessel van der Kolk and Ono van der Hart), "introjection" and "incorporation" (Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok), these modes are neither opposed nor mutually exclusive.[10] Rather, relying on a performative notion of language and other forms of expression, they account for varying degrees of working through, coming to terms with, or gaining distance from the past. But postmemorial witnesses are also subject to different, if always overlapping, modes of "remembering." In the stories of transmission on which I focus in this book, I see a range between what Morrison has called "rememory" and what I am defining as "postmemory"—between, on the one hand, a memory that, communicated through bodily symptoms, becomes a form of repetition and reenactment, and, on the other hand, one that works through indirection and multiple mediation.[11] Within the intimate familial space of mother/daughter transmission, however, postmemory always risks sliding into rememory, traumatic reenactment, and repetition.

In her extensive psychoanalytic discussions of children of Holocaust survivors, Judith Kestenberg has found the notion of "identification" insufficient in describing their relationships with their parents: "The mechanism goes beyond identification. I have called it 'transposition' into the world of the past, similar—but not identical—to the spiritualist's journey into the world of the dead."[12] Morrison's rememory is such a form of "transposition," a descent through what Kestenberg calls a "time tunnel of history"[13] into the world of the dead. Rememory is a noun and verb, a thing and an action. Communicable, shared, and permanent, because it is spatial and material, tactile, it underscores the deadly dangers of intergenerational transmission:

> "Some things you forget. Other things you never do. . . . Places, places are still there. If a house burns down, it's gone, but the place—the picture of it—stays, and not just in my rememory but out there, in the world." . . . "Can other people see it?" asked Denver. "Oh yes. Oh, yes, yes, yes. Some day you be walking down the road and you hear something or see something going on. So clear. And you think it's you thinking it up. A thought picture. But no. It's when you bump into a rememory that belongs to somebody else."[14]

In this passage Sethe underscores the materiality and the intersubjectivity of memory and the dire consequences of one person's empathic over-identification and adoption of another's memories.

In *Beloved*, the ultimate ghost story, haunting takes on material shapes. Rememory is the same for the one who was there and the one who was never there, for the I and the you in Sethe's conversation: "'Where I was before I came here, that place is real. It's never going away. Even if the whole farm—every tree and grass blade of it dies. The picture is still there and what's more, if you go there—you who never was there—if you go there and stand in the place where it was, it will

happen again; it will be there for you, waiting for you.'"[15] The "re" in "rememory" signals not just the threat, but the certainty of repetition: "It will happen again."

Children of Holocaust survivors often describe their relationships to their parents' memories in these very terms. In her memoir, *The War After*, for example, British journalist Anne Karpf, the daughter of an Auschwitz survivor, enumerates the bodily symptoms through which she experiences her mother's sense memories of the camps. Her discussion revolves around the mark on the skin. For a long period in her young adulthood she develops terrible eczema and scratches herself irresistibly first on her hands and arms and later her entire body:

> I wanted to divest myself of my skin, slip out of it like a starched dress left standing while my self crept away to hide. . . . My skin no longer seemed able to keep what was inside in. . . . After years of my scratching, a close friend asked whether the place on my inside forearm that I was repeatedly injuring wasn't the same place, indeed the very same arm, where my mother's concentration camp number was inked. I was astonished—it had never occurred to me. But I couldn't believe that the unconscious could go in for such crude symbolism, the kind you find in made-for-TV movies—it seemed like a base attempt to endow my own flimsy desolation with historical gravitas and dignify it with reference to my mother's. (I remain unconvinced).[16]

Her own welcome skepticism notwithstanding, Karpf's symptoms, like Sethe's intense desire to be marked with her mother's mark, illustrates what can happen in the absence, or even in spite of, "a certain historical withholding" between mother and daughter. Anne Karpf's relationship to her mother becomes incorporative and appropriative—more a form of "transposition" than identification. Memory is transmitted to be repeated and reenacted, not to be worked through: "I'd always envied my parents their suffering. This was so obviously shocking that I couldn't have admitted it, had I even been conscious of it. . . . their terrible experiences seemed to diminish—even to taunt—anything bad which ever happened to us."[17] In the absence of a bodily identity with her mother, Karpf, like Sethe, risks losing her sense of herself. She has to feel the same sense of cold and warmth, the same marking of her skin, the same danger and misery: "It was as if I'd finally managed to prise off some particle of my mother's suffering and make it my own. I'd grafted on to myself a bit of her pain."[18]

The child of survivors who "transposes" herself into the past of the Holocaust lives the "burden of a double reality" that makes "functioning" extraordinarily "complex."[19] Karpf receives her mother's memories in her own body as symptoms that plague even as they fail to lead to understanding. In the sense that they repeat the trauma of the past in what she calls an "awful, involuntary mimetic obsession,"[20] her mother's memories are rememories engaging both mother and daughter with equal vehemence. But Karpf's memoir allows us also to distinguish "transposition" from a different form of "identification," and thus "rememory" from "postmemory." When the mother's experiences are communicated through stories and images that can be narrativized, integrated—however uneasily—into a historically different present, they open up the possibility of a form of second-generation remembrance that is based on a more consciously and necessarily mediated form of identification. Postmemory, in this sense, corresponds to what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick terms "allo-identification" or "identification with" as opposed to the "auto-identification" or "identification as" that is closer to rememory.[21] But how can even such a more distant identification resist the envy and competition we see in Morrison and Karpf's texts? How, particularly, can the bodily memory of the mark be received without the violent self-wounding of transposition?

In *The Threshold of the Visible World*, Kaja Silverman, borrowing the term from Max Scheler, has theorized a "heteropathic" as opposed to an "idiopathic" process of identification—a way of aligning the "not-me" with the "me" without interiorizing it or, in her terms, "introduc[ing] the 'not-me' into my memory reserve."[22] Through "discursively 'implanted' memories" the subject can "participate in the desires, struggles, and sufferings of the other"—particularly, in Silverman's examples, the culturally devalued and persecuted other.[23] Thus the subject can engage in what Silverman calls "identification-at-a-distance"—identification that does not appropriate or interiorize the other within

the self but that goes out of one's self and out of one's own cultural norms in order to align oneself, through displacement, with another. Postmemory is a form of heteropathic memory in which the self and the other are more closely connected through familial or group relation—through an understanding of what it means to be Jewish or of African descent, for example. While postmemory implies a temporal distance between the self and the other, daughter and mother, Silverman's heteropathic recollection could depend solely on spatial or cultural distance and temporal coincidence. In both cases, an enormous distance must be bridged and, in the specific case of catastrophic memory—such as the memory of slavery or the Holocaust—that distance cannot ultimately be bridged; the break between then and now, between the one who lived it and the one who did not remains monumental and insurmountable, even as the heteropathic imagination struggles to overcome it.

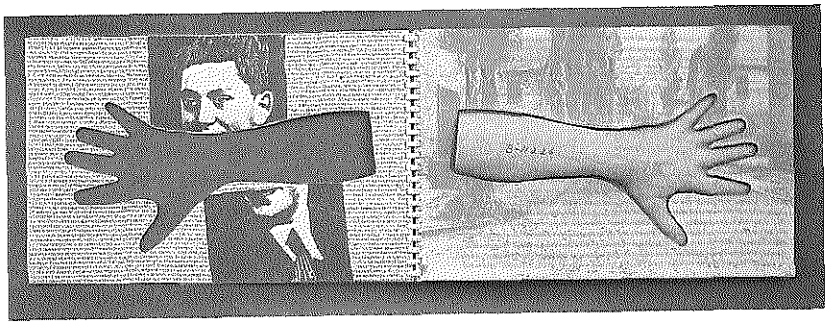
Silverman's instrument of heteropathic memory is the look, the wounding look of Roland Barthes's punctum, which designates something so unfamiliar and unexpected in the image that it acts like a "prick" or a "wound" interrupting any familiar relation between the viewer and the visible world.[24] The productive look of heteropathic identification can see beyond "the given to be seen," it can displace the incorporative, ingestive look of self-sameness and the familiar object it sees in favor of "an appetite for alterity" that enables an act of recognition across difference.[25]

For postmemorial artists, the challenge is to define an aesthetic based on a form of identification and projection that can include the transmission of the bodily memory of trauma without leading to the self-wounding and retraumatization that is rememory. The desire for this type of nonappropriative identification and empathy, and, of course, its often painful and disastrous flaws and failures, have formed the core of feminist theory and practice in the last thirty years. As Sedgwick writes, "For a politics like feminism . . . effective moral authority has seemed to depend on its capacity for conscientious and nonperfunctory enfoldment of women alienated from one another in virtually every other relation of life."[26] In this light, we might examine Spivak's implications that mothers and daughters are privileged intergenerational interlocutors when it comes to traumatic recollection. Can the daughter, in particular, both maintain the distance of allo-identification and receive a bodily memory that enables the trans-generational transmission of trauma and its empathic reception?

If identifications, learned and practiced within the family, can be expanded to cross the boundaries of gender, family, race, and generation, then the identification between mothers and daughters forms a clear example of how a shared intersubjective trans-generational space of remembrance, based in bodily connection, can be imagined. Because of a bodily closeness that is reinforced by cultural expectations, the case of mothers and daughters might indeed acutely exemplify the danger of an over-identification through which the more distant idioms of postmemory slide back into the appropriations of rememory. Through the care-giving role traditionally attributed to daughters, the pressures of inter-subjective relationships marked by trauma emerge in especially sharp focus. In looking at postmemory through the lens of the daughter, I bring feminist negotiations between commonalities and differences, and feminist theorizations of subjectivity and intersubjectivity, and of political solidarity, to bear on the theorization of memory and trauma. Daughters become paradigmatic insofar as they enable us to define the range of identificatory practices that motivate the art of the familial and the affiliative postgeneration. And yet, even as we consider bodily connections and bodily marks, identities need not be literal or essential. Indeed, as we shall see, identifications can cross lines of difference, and the daughter can function as a familial position or identificatory space open to extra-familial, even male, subjects.

FIFTY YEARS OF SILENCE

I have known since I was a child that my parents were concentration camp survivors, since both of them had a number tattoed on their left arm. I used to spend a lot of time studying their tattoos, wondering what it must have been like. My mother never talked about her experiences. My father only talked about it when he was scolding us, especially about eating everything on our plates. Once when I was at his side on an after-dinner walk, he told a friend the stories of the

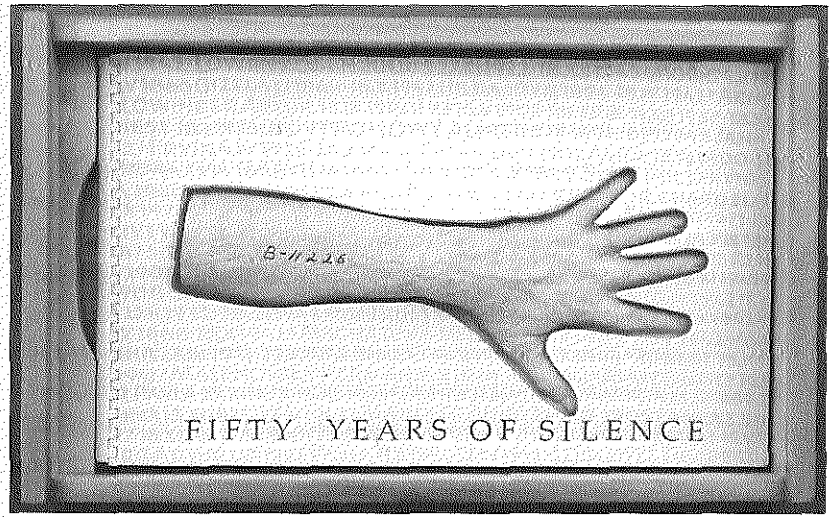


3.2 Tatana Kellner, *Layered Pages. From Tatana Kellner,* B-11226: Fifty Years of Silence *(Rosendale, N.Y.: Women's Studio Workshop, 1992). Courtesy of Tatana Kellner*

> medical experiments performed on him and the ten-day transport when people began devouring each other. I think he must have forgotten I was there. I didn't inquire any further for fear of hurting him.[27]

Tatana Kellner's two artists' books *Fifty Years of Silence*, which both begin with the above passage, are the work of a daughter of Holocaust survivors, born and raised in postwar Prague (figure 3.2). After emigrating to the United States and becoming an artist, Kellner invited her parents to help her with a work that would be based on their reminiscences of the war. She wanted to tape their stories, but they preferred to write them for her in Czech, and she undertook to translate their texts into English. "Except for questions I had in terms of accuracy, this is still not something we can talk about," she says.[28]

Fifty Years of Silence is the product of collaboration between the parents and the daughter. The parents' handwritten Czech text, in blue ink on translucent pages, faces its typewritten translation (on opaque white pages) by the daughter. Superimposed on both versions are large silk-screened photographs. Some were taken recently by Tatana Kellner on a trip to Prague and Auschwitz; these are mostly of roads, train stations, and what look like remains and memorial sites in the camp. Others are family photographs from the more than fifty years between the parents' youth in Prague before the war and their old age in an American suburb. On some pages, the superimposed photographs are combined with lists of names and with birth and death dates, taken



3.3 Tatana Kellner, book cover from *B-11226: Fifty Years of Silence. From Tatana Kellner,* B-11226: Fifty Years of Silence *(Rosendale, N.Y.: Women's Studio Workshop, 1992). Courtesy of Tatana Kellner*

from the memorial wall of Prague's Pinkasova synagogue. Strikingly, in the middle of each book, there is a handmade paper cast of her parents' tattooed arms: the daughter took casts to make the handmade paper arms and photographed the tattoos so as to copy them exactly, in her own hand, onto the pink surfaces (figure 3.3). The parents then wrote their stories around the empty hole left by the cast.

By embedding her parents' stories, written in their own language and their own handwriting, into her artwork, Kellner is able, in Paul Celan's terms, to "bear witness for the witness."[29] In editing and translating her parents' texts, in going to Poland to visit the camp where her parents had been interned, and in constructing her books, Kellner has found a mode of receiving and transmitting their testimony even as she attempts to respect their 50 years of silence. Like the stories of Sethe in *Beloved*, Eva and Eugene Kellner's are not stories "to pass on." But in the artwork of their daughter, they are passed on, and with them the process of transmission itself, the work of postmemory. *Fifty Years of Silence* suggests the silence with which Tatana Kellner grew up, as well as her own determined need to know. It represents the daughter's

responsive and protective "allo-identification," her effort to elicit the stories, and her continuing childhood fear of "hurting" them further. And Kellner's visual text and the willingness to print the Czech handwriting enables her to respect her parents' "historical withholding," their need for silence and the untranslatability of their story: "this is still not something we can talk about."[30] But, of course, in translating their text and publishing their narratives, she does inevitably violate the silence they had determined to keep. Kellner's work, like all postmemorial texts, situates itself in this paradoxical space.

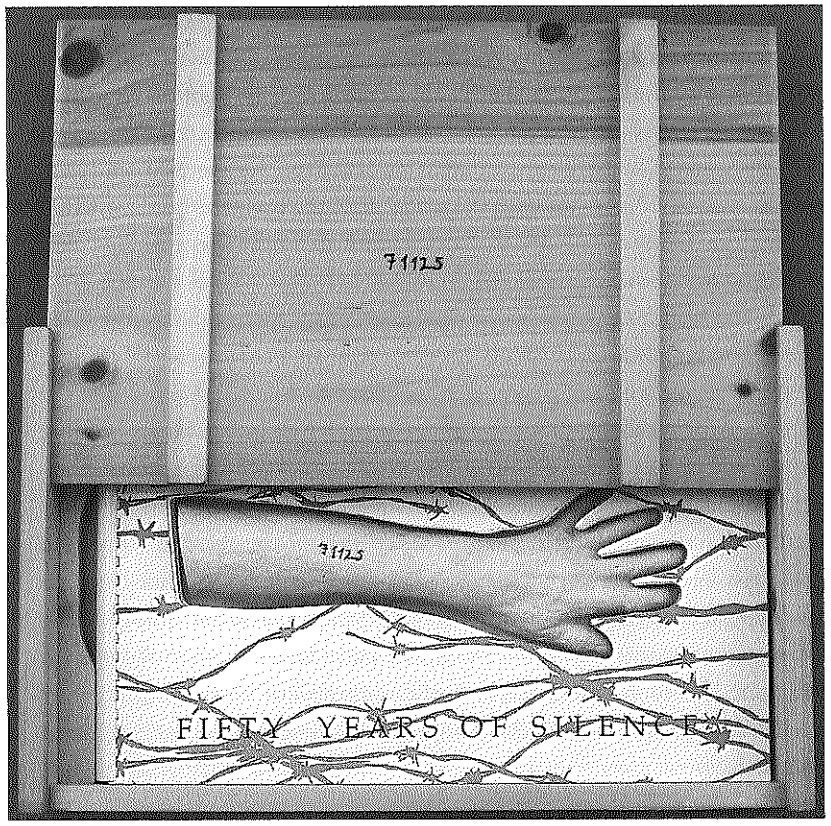
Rather than listen and talk with her parents, Kellner looks at their tattoos. Like Sethe's paradigmatic look at the mark on her mother's breast—a look both of recognition ("you will know me by this mark") and of nonrecognition ("but how will you know me?")—Tatana's look fundamentally structures her text. She suggests that visual images might expand the current emphasis on oral testimony and active listening as privileged modes of transmission. And the graphic modes she has chosen—casting, tracing, and photography—attempt precisely to convey to her own readers/viewers her parents' bodily wounding. For Kellner, as for other postmemorial artists, visuality is both a vehicle and a figure for the transmission of sense memory. The enlarged photographs dominate the pages of the two books in such a way that the written text itself becomes photographic—more a visual than a textual image—especially since the reception of the books in a museum setting, where I first encountered them, precludes detailed reading of the texts and relegates viewers to an uncomfortable shuttling between the impulse to look and the compulsion to read.

Like the tattoo's, the photograph's indexical relation to its object and the haunting, ghost-like presence of the referent it calls forth makes the photographic image a privileged link between memory and postmemory, a vehicle of the *productive look* that can supplement the active listening of postmemory. Kellner's multimedia work elicits a productive look of "allo-identification" that can see beyond the familiar, displacing an incorporative, ingestive look of self-sameness and familiarization in favor of an openness to the other, a granting of alterity and opaqueness. Its images have the power both of screening the real and of piercing holes that allow the real to show through.

Kellner's text is literally built around a hole, and thus this paradoxical dilemma of transmission structures Kellner's work nowhere more obviously than in the tattooed arm at the center of each book. The arm is almost unbearable to look at in its truncated presence, but it also leaves an empty space in the center of each turned page. Kellner has said that for her, visually, "it began with the arms" and she built the books around them.[31] The arms communicate visually and sensually the wounded skin and thus the bodily presence of trauma by provoking the viewer's own embodied response. At the same time, the empty space on the other side of the page is a reminder of absence, secrecy, silence, untranslatability.

After turning all the pages of *Fifty Years of Silence* one reaches the base on which each book rests: a sheet of pink handmade paper holding the cast of the amputated tattooed arm, a sculpture signed and numbered by the artist. The numbers tattooed on the two arms are thus mirrored in the numbers indicating the edition of the artwork, signed in the artist's hand. Here ultimately is the unbridgeable distance between the experiences of the two generations: while the artist numbers her own work, separate from her body, the parents' arms were themselves numbered—not as works but as bodies deprived of human agency—by their Nazi victimizers. On the daughter's part, creative choice, the sign of artistic power; on the parents' part, a reminder of forcible dehumanization and powerlessness.[32]

One might ask, however, whether Kellner, in numbering her work, has taken care to mark the gap separating her own process of knowledge and *marking* from her parents' experience of *being marked*. Has Kellner, in casting the arm, made too literal a signifier, has she revealed too much, has she slipped into the mimetic repetition that is rememory? She might indeed have, had the arm not been inscribed in the layered, mixed-media work that is *Fifty Years of Silence*. The photographs, the plaster casts and tattoos, combined with the writing, work together to engage us in multiple and complex ways, inviting us to look, to turn pages, to read, to confront the empty space left by the arm. As we shuttle, uneasily, between modes of reception, the text resists understanding and consumption. Indeed, in its very form, *Fifty Years of Silence* comments self-consciously both on the difficulties of remembrance and transmission and on the problematics of the artistic representation of



3.4 Tatana Kellner, book covers. *From Tatana Kellner, 71125: Fifty Years of Silence (Rosendale, N.Y.: Women's Studio Workshop, 1992). Courtesy of Tatana Kellner*

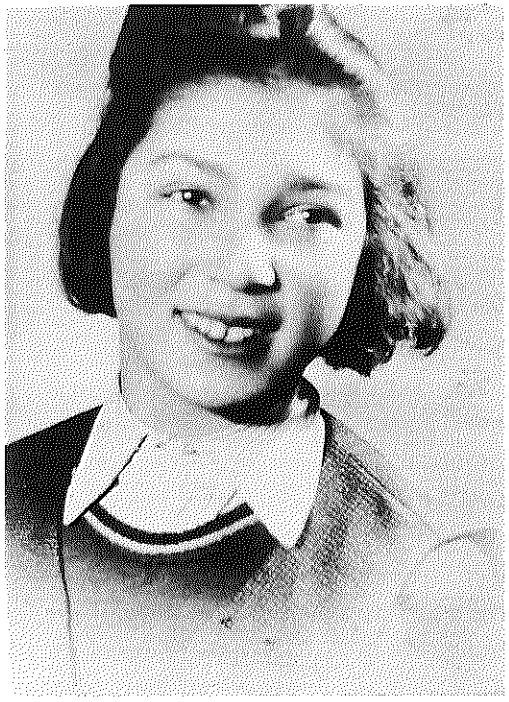
the Holocaust from a present vantage point. In its sculptural mode and book form, in its conjunction of narrative and image, Kellner's work creates a sense of depth and the promise of revelation (figure 3.4). At the same time, the excess of text, the flatness and illegibility of the superimposed images, the materiality of the arm we reach at the end of our reading, and the gaps left in the stories, cannot remove frustration, incomprehension, and unreality. Kellner's work is no more than an attempt at translation, from Czech to English, from the past to the present, from the camp world to ours. And in that process of failed translation, the second-generation daughter can hold the memory with which she has been entrusted, because she can respect and perpetuate her parents' act of "historical withholding." At the same time, she can acknowledge the inevitability of her own act of violation that emerges from the lack of recognition that marks the relationship of survivors to their children. But in Kellner's text, as in Spiegelman's, it is the father who talks, and the mother who withholds: "I think he must have forgotten I was there."

WRITTEN IN MEMORY

Jeffrey Wolin's 1997 exhibition and book, *Written in Memory: Portraits of the Holocaust*, offers other cross-generational moments of visual and verbal transmission of trauma. In these portraits, Wolin, an American artist born in 1951 as a descendant of Polish and Lithuanian Jews (not Holocaust survivors), photographs survivors and records excerpts from their edited testimony by writing them in his own hand right on the print. While a number of his images illustrate the workings of familial postmemory, one in particular, the image of Irma Morgensztern and her daughter (figure 3.1) figures powerfully the dynamics of mother/daughter transmission. Unlike the mother/daughter stories told by Morrison, Karpf, and Kellner, this one is mediated by Wolin, a male artist who receives the story from his interview subjects, then edits and writes it. Thus, this particular image enables us to envision mother/daughter transmission not as an identity position, but as an affiliative space of remembrance, available to other subjects external to the immediate family. It enables us to see the negotiation between the distance necessary for the allo-identification of postmemory and the closeness that enables the bodily transmission of the mark.

In the image of Irma Morgensztern, born in 1933 in Warsaw, Irma stands hugging a young woman who must be her adult daughter, and they both hold a portrait of a woman who must be Irma's mother. On the facing page is a 1945 photo of the 12-year-old Irma taken in Warsaw at the end of the war (figure 3.5).

The text describes the night Irma escaped from the ghetto. While it tells about her mother and father, no mention is made of the daughter, who is depicted as an earnest listener, witness, and inheritor. The



3.5 Irma Morgensztern, from Jeffrey Wolin's 1997 exhibition *Written in Memory: Portraits of the Holocaust. Courtesy of Catherine Edelman Gallery, Chicago, Illinois*

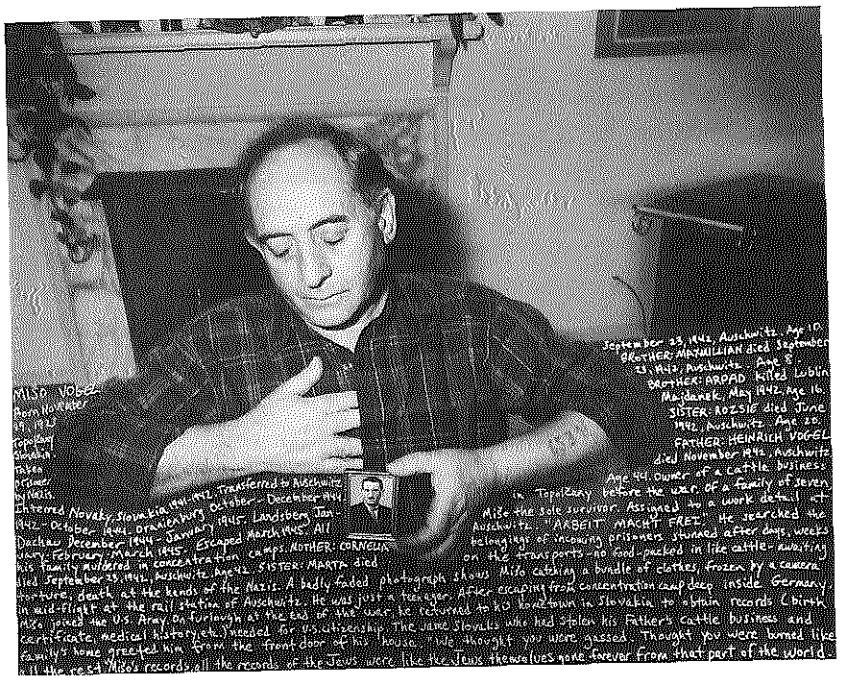
narrative tells about the complicated name and identity change Irma had to undergo in hiding. "It was terribly tragic the night before I left the Warsaw ghetto when they knew I'm going to be gone the next night. So we were sitting and talking and they were trying to put into my head who I am, that I'm from Warsaw and my name is Barbara Nosarewska, I never should forget. . . . And on the other hand they were trying to put into the other side of my brain that after the war I am Jewish and my name is Irma Morgensztern."[33]

Mother, daughter, and grandmother are intertwined in the image, but there is something terribly anachronistic about the fact that the woman in the portrait, the grandmother, is younger than the adult Irma, perhaps not much older than Irma's daughter, and that she will never age or have aged enough to act as a grandmother to the young woman in the picture. There are several mother/daughter pairs in the image: Irma and her daughter, in the present; Irma and her mother in the past looking at each other across the break of the white page, both smiling; and Irma and her mother in the present: but here the mother is just a portrait, younger than her daughter, frozen in an eternally past present.

Nor is the mother's story told—did she die in the war, did Irma ever find out what happed to her mother and father? The gesture with which Irma and her daughter hold her mother's portrait is protective and tender, as is the gesture with which they hold one another, but their eyes do not meet; each is in her own space, each in her own time zone. Even as the women hug, we sense that this is a fractured family, that the chain of transmission has been broken. With her mother covering most of her chest and the words of her story crowding around her body, Irma is shuttling between that night before she left the ghetto and the present moment, more than fifty years later. Her daughter is in the present, as we viewers are, trying to understand that past moment, to gain access to it. But just as Irma rehearses her separation from her mother and father, and from her past identity—"So while I was sitting with the cows in the pasture I was thinking 'that's me or not me?"[34]—so her daughter looks to her for a form of recognition that might assure her identity. But Irma's gaze is elsewhere: she does not return her daughter's look.

Wolin explains the role of the intercalated archival images when he discusses the founding photo of the exhibit, the image of Mišo Vogel (figure 3.6): "I wanted to show his tattoo, which is in and of itself a powerful visual statement. . . . I also had him hold a photograph of his father who died in Auschwitz. This image acted as a window and Mišo was, for a moment, transported back to a terrible time in his past."[35] So is Irma, transported back to a terrible time in her past, and by holding on to her daughter, she takes her back with her, even as she needs her daughter to take her back out to the present again. The photo is a window to the past, reinforced by the partly open door at the edge of the picture, marking both the invitation to go back and the threshold that is so difficult to cross.

The stylized, obviously posed position of the figures, the framing by the door and the plant and, especially, the writing on the print create a



3.6 Mišo Vogel, from Jeffrey Wolin's 1997 exhibition *Written in Memory: Portraits of the Holocaust*. *Courtesy of Catherine Edelman Gallery, Chicago, Illinois*

flat two-dimensionality that removes depth and thus temporality, showing memory to be firmly situated in the present. The past is in the present, spatially in the room, crowding out the figures, encasing them in a story that determines their very movements. Irma's daughter stares at the writing that surrounds her. The writing on the print is "written in memory"—both written in *memory*, out of one's memory, and *written-in* memory, a memory inscribed on the skin of the image itself, as a tattoo might be, as tattoos are in a great number of Wolin's images. Written-in memory, like photography (writing in light), mediates the transmission between memory and postmemory. But the handwriting here, and the photographic gaze itself, expand the familial circle. The artist—a male artist—inserts himself as another co-witness, another viewer and listener who is able to receive the stories and to transmit them, sharing in the familial, mother-daughterly network of looking that he enables. Through

his indirection, his extra-familial presence, he can become the agent of the allo-identification or *affiliative postmemory*, the medium of the historical withholding that precisely prevents mother-daughter transmission from becoming incorporative rememory.

In *Written in Memory* Jeffrey Wolin begins to articulate the aesthetic strategies of identification, projection, and mourning that specifically characterize postmemory. In the image of Irma Morgensztern (figure 3.1), he stages and shares in a moment of knowledge for the daughter, who is literally bodily surrounded, marked, by traumatic memories that preceded her birth but that nevertheless define her life. Along with the unnamed daughter, Jeffrey Wolin becomes an affiliative "witness by adoption,"[36] who, in his own hand, reenacts the split identity of Irma Morgensztern (written on the right side of the image) and Barbara Nosarewska (written on the left). The two sides of the photograph mirror the two sides of young Irma's brain. He both creates and severely delimits the space of the encounter between memory and familial as well as affiliative postmemory.

These trans-gendered and trans-generational affiliations mark the subjects of these memories as members of a generation and as witnesses of a particular historical moment. Wolin's text, shaped by identification with the victims, invites viewers to participate in a cultural act of remembrance, or in Shoshana Felman's terms, to "perceiv(e) history—what is happening to others—*in one's own body*, with the power of sight (of insight) usually afforded only by one's own immediate physical involvement."[37] As the daughter's body, like the mother's, is surrounded by the inscription of her mother's story, and as their bodies intertwine, they risk losing their physical boundaries and merging with one another. Yet their eyes do not meet, their hands do not touch, the writing is someone else's.

Photographic writing and the affect it can engender allow bodily sense memory to be passed on beyond the family to those who would witness affiliatively "by adoption." Describing his own affiliative relationship with survivors, James Young has said that their stories are "grafted indelibly into my own life story."[38] Wolin's images reproduce this "indelible grafting." His photographic writing demands reading as well as looking, thus drawing the viewer in even as it pushes us back

out. Wolin, this "witness for the witness," re-produces the marking of trauma by enabling the narrative and bodily encounter between mother and daughter and by staging it for others to witness. The challenge for the postmemorial artist is precisely to allow the spectator to enter the image, to imagine the disaster "in one's own body," yet to evade the transposition that erases distance, creating too available, too direct an access to this particular past.

AFFILIATIVE RELATIONS

Our access to the postmemory of the Holocaust has, until recently, been largely shaped by works by and about men, fathers and sons. Male narrators have dominated not only in the first generation (Levi, Wiesel) but also in the second: Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, David Grossman's *See Under Love*, the work of Patrick Modiano, Christian Boltanski, Alain Finkielkraut. Even Anne Michaels, a woman writer, envisions the transmission of the Holocaust along masculine lines in her *Fugitive Pieces*. Vladek Spiegelman boldly erases any gender differentiation when he states about his wife, Anja, who could no longer testify for herself: "She went through the same what me, *terrible*!"[39] Does it then make sense, even in the second generation, to single out the daughter as an agent of transmission? Of course, just as Anja did not go through "the same what me," so the position of the daughter as historical agent is not the same as that of the son.

Yet in thinking about postmemory as a feminist, I have found it fruitful not only to search for female witnesses of the first and second generation, but also to think about a feminist mode of knowing this past. In this effort, it seems to me that the works by Morrison, Karpf, Kellner, and Wolin, and their focus on the position of the daughter, might allow us to theorize not a female or daughterly but a feminist postmemory work defined by a particular mode of knowledge about the other, a particular intersubjective relation or "allo-identification." It is a question of how memory is constructed, of what stories are told or withheld—to whom and by whom. And, of course, it is a question of how family stories are structured and told, and of how they are repressed, suppressed, or silenced, and of how a feminist analysis can expose those structures.

Thus, I would say that some of the characteristics of Kellner and Wolin's postmemorial aesthetic can be fruitfully read through the lens of feminist theories of commonality and difference. Both these artists search for forms of identification that are nonappropriative. The mixture of media and the multiple responses they elicit, the oscillation between reading and looking, in particular, create a resistant textuality for the viewer. The mediated access they open allows for a "historical withholding" that does not absorb the other but grants the pastness and the irretrievability of the past, the irreducibility of the other, the untranslatablity of the story of trauma. The modes of knowledge they engage in are embodied, material, located, and thus also responsive and responsible to the other. But they also thematize the act of *holding*—caring, protective, and nurturing—made palpable in the use of hands as primary figures in their works. The lines of transmission they enact, moreover, are capacious enough to transcend gender and familial role, and thus they expand the circle of postmemory in multiple, inviting, and open-ended ways. In casting daughters as agents of transmission, and through them opening the space of remembrance beyond the line of family, their practice of postmemory, particularly, can become a reparative ethical and political act of solidarity and, perhaps, agency on behalf of the trauma of the other. Significantly, however, both artists enable us also to understand the risks of even such a well-intentioned identificatory practice, and the inevitable appropriations that inflect an empathic aesthetics. The particularities of mother/daughter relations provide the clearest insight into these messy contradictions.

5. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*. Barthes's compelling discussion of the relationship of photography to death has inspired much of the vast literature on visuality, photography, and the Holocaust, and on the transmission of affect in the act of memory. See esp. Shelley Hornstein and Florence Jacobowitz, eds., *Image and Remembrance*; Baer, *Spectral Evidence*; Barbie Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget*; Barbie Zelizer, ed., *Visual Culture and the Holocaust*; Bernd Hüppauf, "Emptying the Gaze"; Ernst Van Alphen, *Caught by History* and *Art in Mind*.
6. Among the numerous insightful discussions of Barthes's notion of the punctum, see Jean-Michel Rabaté, *Writing the Image After Roland Barthes*; Jacques Derrida, *The Work of Mourning*; Margaret Olin, *Touching Photographs*; Jay Prosser, *Light in the Dark Room*; Michael Fried, "Barthes's Punctum."
7. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 44. See my discussion of the necklace in Chapter 1.
8. For a feminist reading of *Camera Lucida*, focusing on Barthes's discussion of the detail, see Naomi Schor, *Reading in Detail*. On the relationship of photography to death and to the mother, see esp. Lawrence D. Kritzman, "Roland Barthes: The Discourse of Desire and the Question of Gender"; Peggy Phelan, "Francesca Woodman's Photography"; Amelia Jones, "The 'Eternal Return'"; and Jane Gallop and Dick Blau, *Living with His Camera*.
9. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 96.
10. Ibid.
11. Michael André Bernstein, *Foregone Conclusions*, 16.
12. We are grateful to Susan Winnett for suggesting the Seiffert novel to us. For a reading of Seiffert and postmemory, see Silke Horstkotte, "Literarische Subjektivität und die Figur des Transgenerationellen in Marcel Beyers *Spione* und Rachel Seifferts *The Dark Room*."
13. Rachel Seiffert, *The Dark Room*, 27.
14. Ibid., 28.
15. For a discussion of such display photos, see Cornelia Brink, *Ikonen der Vernichtung*, 82–99.
16. See Muriel Hasbun, *Saints and Shadows*, www.zonezero.com/exposiciones/fotografos/muriel2/default.html. For other examples of Muriel Hasbun's artistic work, see *Memento: Muriel Hasbun's Photographs*, www.corcoran.org/exhibitions/Exhib_current.asp?Exhib_ID=106, and "Protegida: Auvergne-Ave Maria," www.barnard.edu/sfonline/cf/hasbun.htm.
17. Transcript of soundtrack in Hasbun's installation *Triptychon: Protegida: Auvergne- Hélène*.
18. Andrea Liss, *Trespassing Through Shadows*, 86.
19. For a discussion of such illicit structures of identification, see Susannah Radstone, "Social Bonds and Psychical Order," and Karyn Ball, "Unspeakable Differences, Unseen Pleasures."
20. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 96.
21. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, 123–51.
22. Ibid., 128–29, 146–51.
23. Muriel Hasbun, e-mail communication with the authors, April 19, 2004.
24. Ibid.

3. MARKED BY MEMORY

1. Toni Morrison, *Beloved*, 61.
2. Roberta Culbertson, "Embodied Memory, Transcendence, and Telling," 170.
3. Charlotte Delbo, *Days and Memory*; Jill Bennett, "The Aesthetics of Sense-Memory," 92.
4. Morrison, *Beloved*, 316.
5. Gayatri C. Spivak, "Acting Bits/Identity Talk," 169.
6. Ibid.
7. The relationship of *Beloved* to the memory of the Holocaust has been a matter of extensive critical discussion, esp. in relation to Morrison's dedication to the "Sixty Million and More," since Stanley Crouch's devastating review of the novel, "Aunt Medea," in *New Republic* (October 19, 1987: 38–43). For more productive engagements of African American and Jewish memory in readings of *Beloved*, see, e.g., Emily Miller Budick, *Blacks and Jews in Literary Conversation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998) and Eric J. Sundquist, *Strangers in the Land: Blacks, Jews, Post-Holocaust America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009). In my own reading in this chapter, *Beloved* functions as a theoretical text that illuminates how the bodily mark of trauma can be transmitted between mothers and daughters. But it also functions as a text open to a *connective* approach to the subject of memory and postmemory, as elaborated more fully in chapters 8 and 9.
8. See Juliet Mitchell's *Mad Men and Medusas* for a model of recognition as a fundamental element of subject-formation that, when breached, can cause trauma. See esp. her chapter 9, "Trauma."
9. See Mitchell, *Mad Men and Medusas*. Mitchell goes so far as to suggest that "an actual trauma in one generation may not be induced until the next" (280).
10. See Delbo, *Days and Memory*; Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*; Mitchell, *Mad Men and Medusas*; Bessel A. van der Kolk and Onno van der Hart, "The Intrusive Past"; Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel*.
11. On reenactment in the work of post-Holocaust artists, see Ernst van Alphen, *Caught by History*.
12. Judith Kestenberg, "A Metapsychological Assessment Based on an Analysis of a Survivor's Child," 148, 149.

13. Ibid., 141.
14. Morrison, *Beloved*, 36.
15. Ibid., 47.
16. Anne Karpf, *The War After*, 102, 103, 106.
17. Karpf, *The War After*, 126.
18. Ibid. For a discussion of the recent prevalence of memorial tattoos, and 9/11 tattoos in particular, see Jane Caplan, "'Indelible Memories.'" See also Jane Caplan, *Written on the Body*.
19. Kestenberg, "A Metapsychological Assessment," 156, 150.
20. Karpf, *The War After*, 253.
21. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 59–63.
22. Kaja Silverman, *The Threshold of the Visible World*, 185. Silverman borrows the term coined in Max Scheler, *The Nature of Sympathy*. Psychoanalytic theories of identification tend to stress its incorporative, appropriative logic based on idealization of the other. See in particular Diana Fuss's helpful discussion in her *Identification Papers*. I appreciate Silverman's effort to theorize identification at a distance, but what I find particularly helpful is her alignment, through the theorization of the look, of the structure of identification with the structure of memory, a process whereby we can "remember," through seeing, the memory of another.
23. Silverman, *Threshold of the Visible World*, 185.
24. For Silverman's discussion of Barthes's terms, see her *Threshold of the Visible World*, 181–85.
25. Silverman, *Threshold of the Visible World*, 181.
26. Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 61.
27. The following discussion of Tatana Kellner's work is in part based on an article with a different focus that I cowrote with Susan Suleiman. See Marianne Hirsch and Susan Suleiman, "Material Memory." I am grateful to Suleiman for her permission to continue thinking and writing about Kellner's work, building on our work together.
28. Tatana Kellner, unpaginated.
29. Paul Celan, "Ash-Aureole" ("Aschenglorie"), in *Selected Poems and Prose of Paul Celan*, trans. John Felstiner (New York: Norton, 2001), 261.
30. Tatana Kellner, unpaginated.
31. Ibid.
32. Hirsch and Suleiman, "Material Memory," 101, 102.
33. Jeffrey A. Wolin, *Written in Memory*, 23.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid., cover.
36. Geoffrey H. Hartman, *The Longest Shadow*, 8.
37. Shoshana Felman, "Camus' The Plague, or a Monument to Witnessing," in Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, eds., *Testimony*, 108.
38. James Young, *The Art of Memory*, 19.
39. Art Spiegelman, *Maus I*, 158.

4. SURVIVING IMAGES

1. Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, 19–20.
2. Alice Kaplan, *French Lessons*, 29–30.
3. Sontag, *On Photography*, 19.
4. Ibid., 20.
5. Ibid., 21.
6. Geoffrey H. Hartman, *The Longest Shadow*, 152.
7. Ibid.
8. Barbie Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget*.
9. Susan A. Crane, "Choosing Not to Look," 309.
10. Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 105.
11. Ibid., 111. For a series of critical engagements with these questions, see Geoffrey Batchen et al., *Picturing Atrocity*.
12. See, e.g., the photographs collected in the controversial exhibition and catalog prepared by the Hamburg Institute for Social Research, *The German Army and Genocide*, which documents not only the atrocities committed but the passion for documenting atrocities photographically.
13. Georges Didi-Huberman, *Images in Spite of All*.
14. See Mendel Grossman, *With a Camera in the Ghetto [Lódz]*; Peter Hellman, ed., *The Auschwitz Album*; Joe Julius Heydecker, *Where Is Thy Brother Abel?*; Ulrich Keller, ed., *The Warsaw Ghetto in Photographs*; Jürgen Stroop, *The Stroop Report*; Gerhard Schoenberner, *Der gelbe Stern*; Teresa Swiebicka, ed., *Auschwitz: A History in Photographs*; Georges Didi-Huberman, *Images in Spite of All*.
15. Sybil Milton, "Photographs of the Warsaw Ghetto." Milton's judgment has more recently been repeated by two scholars who have attempted to historicize and thus to demystify the "atrocity photos" taken by the liberators in 1945. In her rich *Remembering to Forget*, Barbie Zelizer says: "Certain atrocity photos resurfaced time and again, reducing what was known about the camps to familiar visual cues that would become overused with time" (158). See also Cornelia Brink, *Ikonen der Vernichtung*: "The number of images that spontaneously come to mind when one speaks of concentration and death camps, is limited, and the impression imposes itself that since 1945 the very same images have repeatedly been reproduced" (9; my translation).
16. In *Remembering to Forget*, Zelizer traces in detail how certain liberator images, some of which were originally associated with specific dates and individual camps, eventually were mislabeled and associated with other camps,