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Towards postmemory of hope: the case of Gabriel Josipovici's *In a Hotel Garden*

Introduction

This article explores Gabriel Josipovici's novella *In a Hotel Garden* (1993) in the context of Marianne Hirsch's popular notion of postmemory, introduced in her 1993 article *Family pictures: Maus, mourning and post-memory*¹. Contemporaneous and arising from the dynamic context of rapidly developing trauma, memory and Holocaust studies in the early 1990s, Hirsch's and Josipovici's views on the way the lives of the postgeneration (i.e., children and grandchildren of survivors of cultural or collective traumatization) are affected by their ancestors' trauma appear to differ. As this study demonstrates, Josipovici's story points to a broader understanding of postmemory so that it entails not only pain and terror but also a glimpse, however subtle, of hope. In this way, Josipovici does not stand in opposition to Hirsch but anticipates the evolution of her thinking. The perspective he adopts in his text seems to correspond with the scientific discussion on trauma transmission. Some of the voices there are less definitive than the dominating conviction, still very much alive today in Holocaust research, that "Since the 1960s and 1970s, the children of Holocaust survivors have been recognized as members of a unique population who have 'inherited' the psychic markers of those who lived through and survived a horrific past"². I trace the development of Hirsch's notion of postmemory, discuss Josipovici's struggle with his own Jewishness and his mother's war trauma, and review notions related to trauma transmission. I conclude by considering these aspects in the context of Josipovici's novella.

¹ The hyphenated spelling of "post-memory" proposed in the article was abandoned in Hirsch's subsequent publications. For this reason, I will use the term's most common – unhyphenated – spelling throughout this study.

² JACOBS J., *The Holocaust across generations*, New York University Press, New York 2017, p. 1.

Postmemory

Hirsch proposed the term “postmemory” in her analysis of Art Spiegelman’s use of photography in his graphic novel *Maus*. The photos Spiegelman incorporates in his work – of his mother, who committed suicide twenty years after the Second World War, or of his brother Richieu, whom he never knew as the boy did not survive the war – are viewed by Hirsch as documents of both the father’s memory and the son’s postmemory, that is the memory “of the child of the survivor whose life is dominated by memories of what preceded his/her birth”³. Developed in the context of the Holocaust experience of Spiegelman’s father and the way it is aestheticised in his son’s art, Hirsch’s theorisation of postmemory was from the start closely related to trauma and, as it seems, trauma transmission. Although this connection was not yet explicitly stated in Hirsch’s article, it was clearly implied. For example, Hirsch writes of Art’s stay at the mental institution, where he is dressed in his father’s striped uniform, in the “Hell Planet” section of *Maus* as “a more pronounced version of the insanity he lives through every day of his post-memory life”⁴. Mediated through narrative and imagination and reflected in the photographs, the ghost-like presence of postmemory emerges as a disintegrating and maddening force in Hirsch’s analysis.

Postmemory became the chief strand in her scholarly research as Hirsch elaborated the theory in subsequent publications, especially in *Family frames: photography, narrative and postmemory* (1997). While the concept of postmemory originated in the context of the Holocaust, here she expands the analytical frame to include “other second-generation memories of cultural or collective traumatic events and experiences”⁵. Hirsch discusses postmemory most insightfully and comprehensively in *The generation of postmemory* (2012). In this work, Hirsch further explores postmemory as a consequence of “traumatic recall but (unlike posttraumatic stress disorder) at a generational remove”⁶. She refers to postmemory in terms of “a structure of inter- and transgenerational return of traumatic knowledge”⁷ or “this inter- and transgenerational transfer of trauma”⁸. Interestingly, in the extended delineation of the mechanisms of postmemory that *The generation of postmemory* offers, this aspect of postmemory, while still central to Hirsch’s argument, does not seem to determine the overall nature of this capacious notion. Postmemory is explained there as:

The relationship that the “generation after” bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before – to experiences they “remember” only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up. But these

³ HIRSCH M., *Family pictures: Maus, mourning and post-memory*, “Discourse” 1992/93, vol. 15 (2), p. 8.

⁴ Tamže, p. 19.

⁵ HIRSCH M., *Family frames: photography, narrative and postmemory*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1997, p. 22.

⁶ Taž, *The generation of postmemory*, Columbia University Press, New York 2012, p. 6.

⁷ Tamže.

⁸ Tamže.

experiences were transmitted to them so deeply and affectively as to *seem* to constitute memories in their own right. Postmemory's connection to the past is thus actually mediated not by recall but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation. To grow up with overwhelming inherited memories is to be dominated by narratives that preceded one's birth or one's consciousness, is to risk having one's own life stories displaced, even evacuated, by our ancestors. It is to be shaped, however indirectly, by traumatic fragments of events that still defy narrative reconstruction and exceed comprehension. These events happened in the past, but their effects continue into the present. This is, I believe, the structure of postmemory and the process of its generation⁹.

What deserves special attention in the definition above is the word "relationship" as it seems to indicate significant changes in Hirsch's understanding of postmemory. The term is broad enough to encompass a wide range of reactions to the trauma of the past (not only those characterised by trauma transmission), allowing us to think about the potential effects of inherited traumatic memory in terms of a spectrum. Also important here is that Hirsch uses the term "generation after" instead of "second generation" used in earlier discussions. In this way, postmemory is no longer limited to the children of the survivors, but continues to affect all descendants of those who experienced the initial trauma. This move is actually confirmed by the already quoted terminology, namely in Hirsch's reference to inter- and transgenerational transfer of trauma, with the former defined as trauma transfer between survivors and their children and the latter as trauma transmission across further generations. Hirsch made this transgenerational aspect of postmemory very clear using the plural form "subsequent generations"¹⁰ when discussing the impact of inherited memories in *School photos in liquid time* (2019), co-written with her husband, Leo Spitzer. Importantly, this extension of postmemory across generations signals not only the after-effects of trauma through time but also, perhaps paradoxically, enables the loosening of trauma's paralysing grip, creating space to process inherited memory and allowing for optimism. This optimism is voiced, however subtly, first in the inscription placed at the beginning of *The generation of postmemory*: "For Quinn, Freya, Chloe, and Lucas: the future". Later Hirsch touchingly closes the acknowledgments section at the very end of the book with a similar reference: "In the spirit of (...) hope for a future that is yet to be imagined – a better future that knows the past but is not shadowed by its darkneses – this book is dedicated, with love, to our grandchildren, Quinn, Freya, Chloe, and Lucas"¹¹. Significantly, this personal dedication becomes a general directive for the development of Holocaust studies in one of Hirsch's interviews where the words are closely repeated: "The Holocaust is one event in a global space of remembrance that looks toward a future that will know the past deeply but that will not be paralyzed by its darkneses"¹².

⁹ Tamže, p. 5.

¹⁰ HIRSCH M., SPITZER L., *School photos in liquid time*, University of Washington Press, Seattle 2019, p. 14.

¹¹ HIRSCH M., *The generation of postmemory*, p. 294.

¹² *An interview with Marianne Hirsch*, <https://cup.columbia.edu/author-interviews/hirsch-generation-postmemory>, [dostęp: 06.06.2023].

In general, Hirsch's writing is characterised by a constant intertwining of theoretical reflection and personal experience. She has never tried to conceal the fact that her research on postmemory springs in part from her own lifelong struggle with intergenerational trauma. She opens her 1993 article with a recollection of the rented apartment in Providence, Rhode Island, where she and her parents, Romanian Jews, stayed when they immigrated to the United States in the early 1960s. The image of the owners' family, broken and muted by the Holocaust experience, as well as the display of photographs in their flat, sensitized Hirsch to the agony of loss and the importance of memory, and how both are augmented through pictures. This experience helped also bring her own situation to conscious reflection. Hirsch explains that she conceived postmemory to fill "the need for a term that would describe the *quality* of my own relationship to my parents' daily stories of danger and survival during the Second World War in Romanian Cernăuți and the ways in which their accounts dominated my postwar childhood in Bucharest"¹³. She ponders:

Why could I recall particular moments from my parents' wartime lives in great detail and have only very few specific memories of my own childhood (...)? Why could I describe the streets, residences, and schools of pre-World War I Czernowitz and interwar Cernăuți, where they grew up, the corner where they evaded deportation, the knock on the door in the middle of the night, the house in the ghetto where they waited for deportation waivers – all moments and sites that preceded my birth – when I had lost the textures, smells, and tastes of the urban and domestic spaces in Bucharest where I spent my own early life?¹⁴.

Accompanied by her husband and her parents or friends, Hirsch made a series of trips to the places of her parents' childhood in the years 1998, 2000, 2006 and 2008. The discoveries, observations and reflections gathered during these expeditions were recorded in *Ghosts of home* (2010), "an intergenerational memoir and an interdisciplinary and self-reflexive work of historical and cultural exploration"¹⁵. A systematic study of the life of the Jewish community in the city of Czernowitz (Austria-Hungary), later Cernăuți (Romania) and now Chernovtsy (Ukraine), the book also emerges from the emotional confrontation with memories and postmemories which held the Hirsch family hostage for years. Among the grave reminiscences of persecution and pain that the sentimental journeys inevitably evoked, there is a deeply symbolic story of a green heating stove, rediscovered in Lotta's (Hirsch's mother's) apartment in Chernovtsy during the family's first visit to the city. As Lotta recalled, cakes were baked in it "(w)hen the bad times came"¹⁶. In the course of subsequent journeys, Hirsch was obsessed with the thought of returning to the place to look at the green, massive construction, and touch the tiles once more. This, however, never happened. The information at the very end of *Ghosts of home* – that the present owners of the

¹³ HIRSCH M., *The generation of postmemory*, p. 4.

¹⁴ Tamže.

¹⁵ HIRSCH M., SPITZER L., *Ghosts of home*, University of California Press, Berkley 2010, p. xx.

¹⁶ Tamže, p. 294.

flat dismantled the stove – seems to loop neatly back to the questions posed in the Preface: “But what do these trips to the past actually reveal? What do we find when we identify the streets where our forebears walked, the houses they inhabited, the locations where they suffered mistreatment, deportation, extermination?”¹⁷. Thus the suggestion, never directly formulated in the book, is that you cannot stop time and that, having established a local museum of the Jewish community in Chernovtsy, the authors can now move on with their own lives.

While postmemory is a dynamic theoretical construct that draws attention to inter- and transgenerational trauma transmission, it is also useful as a frame for analysing this mental pain in artistic expression. The gradual shift towards healing and hope that has been identified in the evolution of Hirsch's theory of postmemory creates a link between Hirsch's and Josipovici's approach. Also stemming from his personal experience, Josipovici's interest in the processes subsumed by Hirsch under the label “postmemory” (though he never used the term himself) manifested itself in his texts – of both fiction and non-fiction – written during the 1990s. While Hirsch's early study of postmemory focused on secondary (and then also tertiary) traumatization, Josipovici's treatment of the topic exhibited an early bias toward the more optimistic end of the spectrum. With typical delicacy, lightness and grace, Josipovici shows in his writing an acute awareness of the complexity of the processes of postmemory, pointing at the same time to the possibility of hope, future-oriented thinking and resilience in the face of ancestral trauma.

Gabriel Josipovici

Born in 1940 in Niece to a family of Romano-Levantine Jews, Josipovici survived the Holocaust thanks to the heroic effort and loving determination of his mother, Sacha Rabinovitch (his father had deserted them by then). In her biography, *A life* (2001), authored by Josipovici himself, the son recalls the difficult time spent in La Bourboule, a village in the Massif Central, where the family was seeking refuge from the Nazis.

The details about Josipovici's little sister, who was born there, are heart-rending:

You asked me about your baby sister. I think I know most of the little there is to know about her – she only lived for about ten days – she couldn't have left much mark on you (...) (b)ut she left a sort of double-edged mark on Sacha. Partly remorse because she had almost starved herself to feed you and she knew she must have debilitated the baby – and partly relief because of a dream she'd had when she was only about twelve, that she was grown up and had a child of her own, a little boy, and they were in the garden, he was playing, with a hoop I think, and he came running up to her – and fell dead at her feet. And ever since she'd had you she'd dreaded that (...) something would have happened to you. So when Elizabeth (...) died she felt this doom had been hers (...) and that you would survive¹⁸.

¹⁷ Tamže, p. xxi.

¹⁸ JOSIPOVICI G., *A life*, London Magazine Editions, London 2001, p. 95.

Such dramatic events, terrifying choices and surreal visions cemented a bond between mother and son that remained strong until Sacha's death in 1996. After the war, they lived together in Egypt and then for many years in England, providing each other with care and support. This included also professional advice; an avid reader, poet and translator, Sacha was Josipovici's most trusted critic. Being too young to remember for himself, in return, he eagerly absorbed her stories of the past and in 1967 accompanied her on a trip La Bourboule to help her "exorcise (...) the memory of those war years"¹⁹.

For a long time, the question of Jewishness remained a contested area in Josipovici's life. In the essay *Going and resting* (1993) he wonders:

I have often asked myself what it is that makes me a Jew. Since I am not circumcised, have not taken my bar mitzvah, do not attend synagogue or celebrate any of the feasts (...), the answer ought to be simple: nothing. Yet all my ancestors were Jews, and, as I grow older, I feel more and more affinity with Jews and their (our) past. I may not be much of a Jew, but I am more of a Jew than anything else²⁰.

Embracing Jewish identity must necessarily involve taking a stance on the Holocaust. Josipovici wrote extensively about this issue in his 1998 article *Rethinking memory: too little/too much* where he addresses the problem of war atrocities and the agonising experiences they engender, experiences that would be gladly excised from memory but need to be preserved to preclude the re-enactment of the tragedy. Jewish survivors of the Holocaust and their relatives found themselves in this mnemonic conundrum in the aftermath of the Second World War. For a nation "whose survival has, in the past, always depended on memory"²¹ the injunction *zakhor* (in Hebrew, "remember") was not to be disobeyed. However, Josipovici wonders if the use of the word "remember" is apt in a situation when the number of eyewitnesses to the cruelties of war are now so few. He asks, "But how can we ask people not to forget what they have never experienced?"²². On one level, Josipovici questions the possibility of remembering the past only through retelling it. Yet, he also touches upon an underlying moral conflict implicating a dramatic plea to be allowed to let go. "We should ask ourselves," Josipovici insists, "how often our involvement with the details of the Holocaust has more to do with our own pathology, with our suppressed guilt and our suppressed masochism"²³. Far from advocating consigning the Holocaust to oblivion, he warns against "letting ourselves be sucked into *the idea of horror*"²⁴. For solution,

¹⁹ Tamže, p. 94.

²⁰ JOSIPOVICI G., *Going and resting*, [in:] Goldberg T. G. and Krausz M. (eds.), *Jewish identity*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia 1993, p. 309.

²¹ Tenže, *Rethinking memory: too little/too much*, "Judaism" 1998, vol. 47, [reprinted as *Memory: too little/too much* in:] Josipovici G., *The singer on the shore*, Carcanet, Manchester 2006, p. 275.

²² Tamže, p. 276.

²³ Tamže, p. 288.

²⁴ Tamže, p. 287.

solace and some semblance of liberation he looks into the future, postulating that the only way you can truly honour the victims of the Nazis is by realising your potential²⁵.

Questions of memory have always been central to Josipovici's thinking. His recent book, *Forgetting* (2020), which synthesises the discourse on the cultural vicissitudes of remembrance initiated in Josipovici's previous texts, such as *Writing and the Body* (1982), *Touch* (1996), *On Trust* (1999) and others, fully attests to this claim. The issues raised and the author's sources of inspiration are varied and range from Alzheimer's disease and the scientific achievements of Alexander Luria and Oliver Sacks, on the one hand, to the literary take on memory in Shakespeare, Beckett and Stevens and the cultural practice of erecting monuments (also those commemorating the Holocaust), on the other. The theme of Jewishness, inextricably connected with that of martyrdom, memory and solidarity, is an important component of this extensive discussion. In "Remember Kosovo! Remember Auschwitz!" Josipovici clearly returns to his argumentation from *Rethinking memory: too little/too much*, on which much of the chapter is based.

Albeit a frequent topic of Josipovici's personal reflections, the troubled Jewish identity, heavily marked by "the anguished interconnectedness of the need to forget and the fear of forgetting"²⁶, has been rarely and only peripherally thematised in his creative writing. Such novels as *Goldberg: Variations*, *After* and *Now* feature characters of Jewish origin, yet Josipovici never foregrounds their Jewishness or Holocaust-related topics. Victoria Best suggests that it is Josipovici's mother's "early and painful suffering (that) becomes the traumatic ground in which his writing may take root"²⁷. Yet, unlike the art Hirsch studies in the context of postmemory, his stories do not seem to be shaped by obsessive return and besetting remembrance of the acquired traumatic knowledge. The closest any of Josipovici's texts comes to Hirsch's idea of postmemory, so akin to his own considerations and personal struggles, is *In a Hotel Garden*. Instead of being concerned with "the fears and terrors that ensue in the aftermath of trauma"²⁸, the novella takes the form of an experiment designed to put the hypothesis of inter- and transgenerational transmission of trauma to the test, or at least to look at it from a different, more optimistic perspective. Published in 1993, *In a Hotel Garden* coincided with Josipovici's attempts to embrace his Jewish background (*Going and resting*) without allowing himself to be stifled by the memory of suffering that goes with it (*Rethinking memory: too much/too little*). His stance in *In a Hotel Garden* appears to be consistent with the results of scientific research which indicate that (in)direct contact with trauma may trigger a variety of reactions; that the link between the horrific experience and subsequent disorders in family members is not deterministic.

²⁵ Tamže, p. 289.

²⁶ JOSIPOVICI G., *Forgetting*, Little Island Press, Manchester 2020, p. 6.

²⁷ BEST V., *The cost of creativity in the work of Gabriel Josipovici*, "LISA" 2014, vol. 12, n. pag., <https://doi.org/10.4000/lisa.5810>, [dostęp: 17.07.2013].

²⁸ HIRSCH M., *The generation of postmemory*, p. 6.

Scientific perspective on trauma transmission

Long before Hirsch explicated the notion of postmemory and its artistic expression, her concerns had come to the attention of mental health researchers who began studies of families of Holocaust survivors in the 1960s. Interest in the transmission of trauma grew significantly after the addition of post-traumatic stress disorder to DSM-III (*third edition of Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders*) in 1980, which marked “a paradigm shift (...) in the way (...) psychological trauma was conceived and managed”²⁹. As Natan P. F. Kellermann noted in 2001, “Over a period of 3 decades, more than 400 papers have been published on the transmission of trauma from Holocaust survivor parents to their offspring”³⁰. Early on in the study of intergenerational transmission of trauma, the idea was widespread and rarely questioned. Indeed, critical opinions were rather scarce. However, recent research has proved more divergent and inclusive. Whereas some studies show that second and third generations are affected by their parents’ and grandparents’ Holocaust trauma, others argue that there is no evidence for secondary and tertiary traumatization. The discrepancies between studies are explained by “variations in methodologies, sampling methods, and clinical status of the samples”³¹. While clinical reports point to the existence of severe emotional problems among the descendants of Holocaust survivors and subsequent transmission of these problems over generations, more systematic and controlled studies do not corroborate the idea of increased rates of psychopathology in the offspring of Holocaust survivors compared with control groups³². The question, which might be expanded to include also the third generation, remains: “Is sufficient evidence available for secondary traumatization to exist in second-generation Holocaust survivors, or is it restricted to selected clinical cases, as (important) exceptions to the rule?”³³. Since the complex psychological phenomenon of trauma transmission still keeps the scientific and the clinical literature divided,³⁴ Kellerman proposed a new idea. Instead of asking if children of Holocaust survivor parents are affected by their parents’ trauma, he suggests

²⁹ JONES E., WESSELEY S., *Psychological trauma: a historical perspective*, “Psychiatry” 2006, vol. 5 (7), p. 217.

³⁰ KELLERMANN N. P. F., *Transmission of Holocaust trauma – an integrative view*, “Psychiatry” 2001, vol. 64 (3), p. 257.

³¹ GILADI L., BELL T. S., *Protective factors for intergenerational transmission of trauma among second and third generation holocaust survivors*, “Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice and Policy” 2013, vol. 5 (4), p. 384.

³² BAR-ON D. i in., *Multigenerational perspectives on coping with the Holocaust experience: an attachment perspective for understanding the developmental sequelae of trauma across generations*, “International Journal of Behavioral Development” 1998, vol. 22, p. 317.

³³ VAN IJZENDOORN M. H. i in., *Are children of Holocaust survivors less well-adapted? A meta-analytic investigation of secondary traumatization*, “Journal of Traumatic Stress” 2003, vol. 16 (5), p. 460.

³⁴ BAR-ON D. i in., dz. cyt., p. 316.

we should more appropriately ask “Which kinds of Holocaust survivor parents influence which kinds of children in which ways and under which circumstances?”³⁵.

As Kellermann points out, four major ways of explaining trauma transmission in the vulnerable group have been suggested. These include psychodynamic, socio-cultural, family system and biological models of transmission³⁶. The psychodynamic model draws upon psychoanalytically oriented theories and pertains to the way children unconsciously absorb the repressed and insufficiently worked-through experiences of survivor parents. Also concerned with processes beyond conscious control, the biological model rests on the assumption that parental traumatization may be transmitted to the next generation in the same manner as some hereditary diseases. The remaining two approaches, which will prove particularly useful in analysing Josipovici's novella in the next section, concern familial relations and interpersonal patterns of behaviour. In the “tight little island” scenario, the family environment is considered pathological and thus capable of jeopardising the mental health of children living in it as this family arrangement allows little contact with the outside world of non-survivors. In such post-Holocaust families, parents and children show great devotion towards each other; both sides are also highly motivated to protect other members of the family from suffering. Moreover, children are ready to adopt parental attitudes of heightened vigilance and distrust towards the world as well as act on the expectations to compensate with their own lives for the losses their parents suffered. This mutual interdependence within which “parents live vicariously through their children, and children live vicariously in the horrific past of their parents”³⁷ results in frequent problems with the separation-individuation process. Apart from that, descendants of Holocaust survivors affected by their parents' trauma may be characterised by catastrophic expectancy and fear of another Holocaust. They may suffer from dysphoric (low) moods, experience nightmares of persecution and have difficulties with intimate relationships³⁸.

The fact that descendants of survivors display “a wide spectrum of reactions, both detrimental and adaptive, to the Holocaust”³⁹ suggests “the presence of mediating factors that may mitigate the transgenerational impact of trauma”⁴⁰. It has been observed that proper communication within the family may lead to “the presence of resilience, hardiness and posttraumatic growth”⁴¹. Proper communication strongly implicates memory and the role unrestrained sharing of traumatic experiences may play in stabilising family relations. Holocaust survivors' ability and willingness to openly

³⁵ KELLERMANN N. P. F., dz. cyt., p. 265.

³⁶ Tamże, p. 260.

³⁷ Tamże, p. 262.

³⁸ Tamże, pp. 259–265.

³⁹ SORSCHEN N., COHEN L. J., *Trauma in children of Holocaust survivors: transgenerational effects*, “American Journal of Orthopsychiatry” 1997, vol. 67, p. 493.

⁴⁰ Tamże.

⁴¹ GILADI L., BELL T. S., dz. cyt., p. 389.

talk about their traumatic experiences is related to lower levels of psychological distress among their children⁴², provided that the parental communication style is not guilt-inducing or disturbing. Conversely, persistent silence about the trauma of the past may cause parents' emotional withdrawal and leave children feeling unprotected and frightened⁴³. The difficult task of managing memory, as both traumatizing and mitigating factors in trauma transmission, is crucial in dealing with family trauma across generations.

In a Hotel Garden

The issue of passing on and appropriating memories lies at the heart of *In a Hotel Garden*. The plot of the novella is structured around one of Josipovici's mother's pre-war recollections of her short-lived affair that took place during a family holiday in Italy. The book tells the story of two young people, Ben and Lily, who meet while on a trip to the Dolomites. Trapped in troubled relationships with other people, they are full of questions and doubts about the future. While Ben is accompanied by his grumbling girlfriend, Lily comes alone to "think things through"⁴⁴. Their growing fascination with each other echoes Sacha's experience, still more accurately recreated in Lily's grandma's youthful romance. Introduced as a Levantine Jew and a very independent old lady, the woman is clearly modelled on Josipovici's mother. She is also the source of the story which compels Lily to travel to Siena to search out the eponymous hotel garden where her grandma spent a few mesmerising moments with her lover before they parted, as it turned out later, forever. The affair closely traces the details of Sacha's story. The respectable Jewish families of the young couple met during a holiday in the Italian mountains and took to each other immediately. Lily's grandma and the young man – an aspiring musician – spent hours dancing, talking and walking the mountains. The attraction between them was so strong that the man followed Lily's grandma to the hotel in Siena, even though they had already said goodbye in the mountains. However, sudden and passionate, the affair did not last beyond the summer when the young couple returned to their separate lives; the man to his fiancée whom he soon married.

Inspired by Sacha's story, the adventurous love undergoes a significant transformation in the book. As Lily's grandma found out a few years later, the man, his wife and children perished in the Holocaust⁴⁵. It is hard to disagree with Monika Fludernik,

⁴² Tamže, p. 385.

⁴³ SCHARF M., *Long-term effects of trauma: psychosocial functioning of the second and third generation of Holocaust survivors*, "Development and Psychopathology" 2007, vol. 19, p. 604.

⁴⁴ JOSIPOVICI G., *In a Hotel Garden*, Carcanet, Manchester 1993, p. 97.

⁴⁵ In reality, the man, whose name was Giorgio Nathan Rogers, survived the war. Sacha realised the fact much later when Richard Rogers – the famous architect who designed the Pampidou Centre – turned out to be his nephew. She was considering contacting Giorgio, but probably due to her congenial shyness, as Josipovici speculates in *A life* (p. 64), she never did.

who claims that *In a Hotel Garden* is a text which “centrally thematises the Shoah, but represents it only indirectly”⁴⁶. The tragic death of the man and his family is mentioned only in passing in Ben’s conversations with Lily and his friends and the impact of this fact on Lily’s grandma is never explicitly discussed. It is only the pervasiveness of the story in the lives of the old lady and her granddaughter that may testify to its importance. Recounted multiple times, memories of the distant love affair are etched in Lily’s mind, becoming almost her own: “I can’t remember when she first told me what happened in the garden (...). I don’t think she told me in any connected way. She always spoke about it as though I knew already. As though we’d been there together”⁴⁷. The garden scene is central to the series of recollections as it is there that the lovers experienced a sort of spiritual union which, transcending time and space, sealed their future together. Upon the future that never came to be, Lily comments: “it’s the silence that’s so frightening”⁴⁸.

Whereas Lily’s grandma’s compulsive clinging to the story is symptomatic of traumatic loss which further aggravated the pain of enforced emigration from Istanbul to Egypt and then to England to avoid anti-Semitic persecution, Lily’s overall family situation is difficult to assess. Composed almost in its entirety of dialogues and thus offering virtually no insight into the characters’ minds, *In a Hotel Garden* becomes a guessing game in which the reader might be tempted to recognise Lily’s family environment as possessing some of the qualities that increase the danger of trauma transmission. The questions Ben asks about Lily’s relations with her parents often cause embarrassment. Some of them are left unanswered, like when he asks about emotional closeness in the family when she was still a child. Lily comes from a broken family as her parents present contrastive and, as it seems, incompatible attitudes towards life: her father is a successful and overenthusiastic entrepreneur who expects everybody to follow his lead, while her “mother’s just given up”⁴⁹. Although Lily claims that she gets on well with both, her joyful and pragmatic father and her dreamy and vulnerable mother, she avoids spending time with them, finding it difficult to cope with their conflicting personalities; neither her father’s denial of sadness and despair nor her mother’s resignation to both seems to appeal to her. An interesting fact about Lily’s family situation is that both her parents were exposed to the cruelties of the war, her father as an officer in the British Army and her mother as a Holocaust survivor who fled from the anti-Semitic persecution, though no details of their suffering are ever mentioned in the book. To what extent (if any) their extreme attitudes are a result of the experience of war remains unclear. If attributed to the Holocaust, Lily’s mother’s withdrawal from life can be explained by the fact that the war experience was probably never openly talked about at home. Lily’s knowledge of her mother’s past (at least

⁴⁶ FLUDERNIK M., *Echoes and mirrorings. Gabriel Josipovici’s creative oeuvre*, Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main 2000, p. 8.

⁴⁷ JOSIPOVICI G., *In a Hotel Garden*, p. 108.

⁴⁸ Tamže, p. 135.

⁴⁹ Tamže, p. 96.

the part of it she is willing to share with Ben) is limited to a few dry facts about fleeing to Egypt during the war, meeting her future husband and marrying him. Moreover, as we learn in the book, the story Lily's grandma entrusted her granddaughter with was most probably never revealed to the rest of the family. The bond that was forged between the two women may have been provoked by Lily's desperate need to escape the tense family situation – emotional bereavement, on the one hand, and expectations of successful life, on the other. In this way, Lily becomes exposed to two ways of responding to the Holocaust experience – silence and obsessive remembrance; the former causing emotional insecurity, the latter leading to overidentification. It is not only the name that both Lily and her grandma share but the common past which continues to shape Lily's life long after her grandma's death. Entangled in complex relationships with both her mother and her grandma, Lily may be conceived of as both a second- and a third-generation Holocaust survivor.

Lily's profile emerging from the tentative analysis above reveals her as a person struggling with some of the family factors and personality disturbances characteristic of secondary/tertiary traumatization, with postmemory playing a pivotal role in the process. With a sense of humour typical of many of Josipovici's works, however, the gravity of the situation is mitigated by the presence of Ben, Lily's "control sample". Brought to light through witty conversations between his friends, Francesca and Rick, Ben's case bears many similarities to that of Lily. Despite the lack of Jewish background, his family relations seem problematic as he complains about being neglected by his parents. Besides, he is characterised by severe emotional insecurity and restlessness. Whereas Lily is struggling with patterns of family history, Ben is trying to break with recurrent patterns of behaviour in his love relationships. The frailty he is troubled with – the inability to make commitments – has been recognised by Josipovici also in Swift and Kafka (and himself). Francesca describes this pervasive lack of constancy in his relations with women in the following way: "That's how it is with him (...). He meets them and then he thinks about them and then he thinks he can't live without them and then when he has lived with them for a while he realises it was all a mistake and can't wait to see them disappear"⁵⁰. Moreover, Ben struggles with identity issues as he tends to rely on his partners for authenticity and animation his bland existence appears to be devoid of. Lily's erratic attempts at allying the present and the past to understand "why I was alive and what I had to do"⁵¹ turn her into an alluring enigma Ben is immediately attracted to.

By virtue of the significant variable of Lily's Jewish background, the parallel worlds of the two main characters turn *In a Hotel Garden* into a dramatic enactment of the scientific conundrum of trans- and intergenerational transmission of trauma and the underlying issue of increased risk of psychopathology in the descendants of Holocaust survivors. As the situation created in the book seems to indicate, with the pas-

⁵⁰ JOSIPOVICI G., *In a Hotel Garden*, pp. 31–32.

⁵¹ Tamže, p. 136.

sage of time, psychological problems that descendants of Holocaust survivors might develop cease to be specific to Jewish communities. The book emphasises the complexity of psychological interdependencies in the familial context, which is further illustrated by the dynamic and often contentious interrelationship between Francesca and Rick, as well as between them and their recalcitrant son, Robert, whom they try to discipline. Although Lily's case is clearly an instance of "internalization of the stressor imagery"⁵², diagnosing her (and Ben's) struggles as psychopathology, idiosyncrasy or psychological normality remains an open question. Decision-making in this matter is further complicated by the fact that apart from portraying the characters' private perplexities, Josipovici's book takes a broader outlook on trauma through which the balance between Lily's and Ben's life situations is, in a somewhat disturbing manner, highlighted. Some of the inhibitions that Ben displays throughout the story are ascribed by Lily to his Englishness, intimating quite a provocative idea that both cultures, Jewish and English, stereotyped respectively as hermetic and unaffectionate, might be equally taxing for their people.

Drawing definite conclusions about this apparently simple story is obscured by insufficiency of information as well as the fact that many alternative interpretations seem to be still available at the book's closure. It is hard to resist the impression that the speculative nature of the interpretation process in the case of *In a Hotel Garden* is meant to reflect the problem of contingency of life, which seems to permeate the whole novella. The question "What if?" troubles Lily in the same way it troubled her grandma and many other families of Holocaust survivors, as one of the chapters in Hirsch's *Ghosts of home* – having the question as its title – clearly demonstrates. And thus, with the final words of the novella Ben's friend's good judgment and, as the reader might fear, her amateur analysis of Ben's behaviour on which much of the reader's understanding of his personality rests lose credibility, threatening to overturn the apparent symmetry of Ben's and Lily's realities. Moreover, despite the growing attraction between Lily and Ben – a situation which seems to be a re-enactment of Lily's grandma's distant experience – the woman does not seem interested in continuing the relationship. The fact that she has decided to stay with Frank, her current partner, because of his dog may indicate that she is either not adamant about her decision or that the bizarre explanation is meant to conceal the real reason, such as fear of some unknown disaster (another Holocaust?) which, like in the case of her grandma's affair, could prove fatal.

It must be noted, however, that the presence of dogs in *In a Hotel Garden* is far from incidental and, when understood symbolically, may help construe Lily's peculiar declaration as an assertion of independence and autonomy. As a dialogic novel *In a Hotel Garden* presents the characters' dilemmas in the form of dynamic and often disorienting exchanges. Some of the conversations take place when Ben is accompanying Rick on his walks with the dog. Consequently, discussions about serious matters concerning Ben's and Lily's life struggles are often interspersed with both

⁵² SCHARF M., dz. cyt., p. 604.

men's reactions to the dog's playful behaviour, creating a stark contrast between the human and the animal realm, and a funny (though at times frustrating) effect of distracting the reader from the main plotline. Although the connection may seem too far-fetched, the dog's blitheness in the story recalls Friedrich Nietzsche's famed reflections in *Untimely Meditations* on the blissful existence of the grazing cattle, firmly anchored in the present and thus never fretful or melancholic about the past. Insofar as Nietzsche's philosophy has exerted a continuous impact on the development of Josipovici's views since the beginning of his writing career, this particular aspect of Nietzsche's thinking deserves special attention as it constitutes a significant part of Josipovici's discussion in *Rethinking memory: too little/too much* (and later in *Forgetting*). In his text Josipovici concentrates on Nietzsche's observation that unlike animals, man "cannot learn to forget but clings relentlessly to the past: however far and fast he may run, this chain runs with him"⁵³ (61). By advocating, in a somewhat radical and provocative manner, an unhistorical existence as part of a general "hygiene of life"⁵⁴, Nietzsche argued for the recognition of the centrality of willed or active forgetting to (a happy) life. Quite unable to go that far (would it be possible at all?), Lily learns an important lesson in the story. As the quotation below clearly demonstrates, the moment we meet her in the book she puts great trust in the causative power of her grandma's narrative legacy.

– You said this morning that when you saw the garden through the doors of the hotel it was like coming home, he said.

– Yes.

– What did you mean?

– As if I'd known it all my life, she said. As if at last everything was going to come clear. (...) As if it was where I came from (...). As if once I entered that garden I would know who I was⁵⁵.

This attitude, however, changes with the development of the events. As Lily begins to doubt whether the garden she had found was the place from her grandma's memory, she learns to embrace her own individuality: "I suppose it's to do with a past, she says. Having your own past and nobody else's. This is you. There isn't anyone else like that. There never was and never will be. So it's a responsibility"⁵⁶. The last sentence may indicate Lily's growing awareness of the fact that building the past (and the future) begins with present choices, something that Ben is also gradually growing to accept.

⁵³ NIETZSCHE F., *Untimely Meditations*, Breazeale D. (ed.), przeł. R. J. Hollingdale, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1997, p. 61.

⁵⁴ Tamże, p. 121.

⁵⁵ JOSIPOVICI G., *In a Hotel Garden*, p. 115.

⁵⁶ Tamże, p. 134.

Conclusion

Speaking about the memory and the postmemory of the Holocaust is a delicate matter as pain and suffering wish neither to be ignored nor inflated, and Josipovici seems to have been fully aware of the fact when writing *In a Hotel Garden*. Rather than promote easy solutions, he posed questions, allowing answers to some of them to show through the dynamic fragmentation of dialogue. Published in 1993, when trauma, memory and Holocaust studies were gaining momentum, this superficially negligible story gestured beyond the uncompromising (and still common) way of approaching Holocaust survivors and their descendants in terms of “successive generations of trauma carriers”⁵⁷. Josipovici’s attempt at refocusing the perspective on trauma and trauma transmission in the direction of hope and healing resonates not only with Hirsch’s changing theoretical outlook or contemporary scientists’ amazement at “the remarkable resilience in Holocaust survivors and their offspring”⁵⁸ but also with recent compelling studies of Holocaust art – for instance, Gerd Beyer’s *After postmemory: Holocaust cinema and the third generation* (2010) or Matt Reingold’s *On the limits of trauma: postmemories in the third-generation Holocaust graphic novels Flying Couch and The Property* (2021) – in which postmemory is no longer tied to trauma transmission. It appears also to chime with recent voices within memory studies which by identifying “postmemories of joy” – a direct inspiration for the title of this essay – question “the overwhelming impression that trauma is the central if not dominant dynamic in the family lives and memories of COS (children of survivors)”⁵⁹. The memory of the garden scene which motivates Lily’s actions throughout *In a Hotel Garden* is as much about impending death as it is about love.

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⁵⁷ JACOBS J., dz. cyt., p. 1.

⁵⁸ SAGI-SCHWARTZ A., *Does intergenerational transmission of trauma skip a generation? No meta-analytic evidence for tertiary traumatization with third generation of Holocaust survivors*, “Attachment & Human Development” 2008, vol. 18 (2), p. 106.

⁵⁹ WOLF D. L., *Postmemories of joy? Children of Holocaust survivors and alternative family memories*, “Memory Studies” 2019, vol. 12 (2), p. 74.

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Towards postmemory of hope: the case of Gabriel Josipovici's *In a Hotel Garden*.

Abstract: This article analyses Gabriel Josipovici's novella *In a Hotel Garden* (1993) in the context of Marianne Hirsch's notion of postmemory, introduced in her 1993 article *Family Pictures: Maus, Mourning, and Post-Memory*, and successively expanded in subsequent publications. Insofar as both the writer and the scholar have their own experience of struggle with the inherited memory of the Holocaust, their views on the way the lives of the postgeneration (i.e., children and grandchildren of survivors of cultural or collective traumatization) are affected by their ancestors' trauma appear to differ. While Hirsch concentrates on aesthetic representation of trauma transmission, Josipovici aims in his book at rechanneling the idea of postmemory into the direction of hope and healing. Interestingly, by doing so Josipovici does not oppose Hirsch but anticipates the evolution of her thinking. Gesturing beyond the dominating tendency in Holocaust studies, still very much alive today, to perceive the descendants of Holocaust survivors in terms of "subsequent generations of trauma carriers", Josipovici's stance in *In a Hotel Garden* seems consistent with the results of scientific research according to which (in)direct contact with trauma may engender a variety of reactions and the link between the horrific experience and subsequent disorders in family members is not deterministic.

Keywords: Marianne Hirsch, Gabriel Josipovici, *In a Hotel Garden*, postmemory, trauma transmission

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