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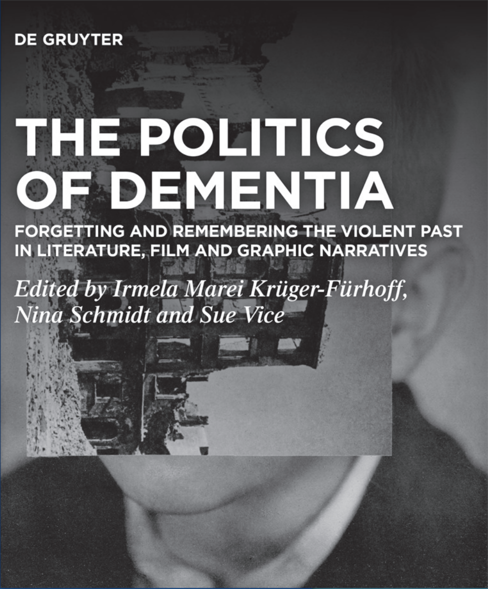

THE POLITICS OF DEMENTIA

FORGETTING AND REMEMBERING THE VIOLENT PAST IN LITERATURE, FILM AND GRAPHIC NARRATIVES

Edited by Irmela Marei Krüger-Fürhoff, Nina Schmidt and Sue Vice

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The Politics of Dementia

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Introduction: Refracting History, Trauma and the Generations through the Prism of Dementia

In public discourse and the day-to-day provision of health care, dementia – often used as an umbrella term for different forms of memory loss that may or may not meet neuropsychological criteria – is predominantly regarded as an illness afflicting individuals, and rightly so. Even though diseases of memory such as vascular dementia, Lewy body dementia and, above all, Alzheimer's disease, have great impact on relatives, caregivers and communities as well as the person living with the condition themselves, dementia and the everyday stories that we tell about it are not commonly understood as entailing any wider political meaning in a socio-historical sense. Issues of care, its affordability and its practice are, of course, important questions of social justice and therefore inherently political. However, although the ideological implications of certain types of narrative that circulate about dementia, and of the language used in both medical and popular accounts, have been addressed (e.g. Zeilig 2013; Burke 2015, 2018), dementia is not usually considered in relation to questions of national or global history, that of wars, genocides, colonialism or other atrocities and events, even by scholars of the (medical) humanities. In the present volume, we aim to expand upon the notion of a politics of dementia by analysing the condition as represented in literature and theory in the context of just such political history. The fact that authors, artists and intellectuals increasingly write dementia into their narratives of central historical episodes of violence and trauma is taken to be the result of deliberate choices, with all the cultural and social benefits, yet also the liabilities, that this entails. As the essays collected in this volume show, the notion of dementia is used in order to represent the involuntary and often paradoxical aspects of looking back at troubled or contested historical eras, in ways which ordinary forgetting or conscious suppression would not achieve.

In Western societies at least, memory loss is not always depicted purely as a contingent, 'neutral' neurobiological process increasingly present in an ageing population; rather, it can also be understood within the context of larger societal issues and political debates. Memory theorists and cultural studies scholars have raised questions about the fact that our memory culture will undergo a significant change once the last eyewitnesses of twentieth-century catastrophes have died: living memory will turn into cultural memory (J. Assmann 1988). The impending loss of juridical, historical and moral witnesses (A. Assmann 2007) turns the individual

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experience of the illness into one with wider repercussions, since it adds what we might consider to be an ‘untimely’ memory loss to one already anticipated. Even what Marianne Hirsch (1997, 2008) has called postmemory, by means of which the next generation receives the imprint of past affronts despite not experiencing them directly, is thrown into question by the eyewitnesses’ memory loss.

The increasing number of protagonists with dementia in recent fiction and film therefore seems related to millennial anxiety about the end of the “era of the witness” (Wieviorka 2006). Across a wide range of cultural productions, medical concepts of dementia are conflated with psychological assumptions, historical speculation and popular understandings of psychoanalytical concepts (successful coping mechanisms, denial, disavowal or the return of the repressed). We believe that it is precisely this amalgamation of the neurological and psychological or psychoanalytic with historical perspectives that has contributed to dementia having become, sometimes to the detriment of people living with this condition, a cultural “metaphor for wider social ills” (Zeilig 2013, 258). In the present volume, the contributors analyse examples where the detail of such an amalgamation is revelatory not only of political trends and events, but of attitudes towards the condition of dementia itself. The representation of historical events and their political interpretation responds to cultural discourses of dementia, and vice versa; each shapes the other. If, as the literary scholar Michael Rothberg (2009) argues, memory is multidirectional, in the sense that remembrance of events such as the Holocaust can reanimate that of other histories of genocide, war and colonialism, the same, we argue, may hold true for dementia and the dynamics of forgetting and remembering that it entails. That is, the image of an individual’s memory loss may cast new light on public political events, either by resembling their features of suppression, denial and sudden recurrence, or by constituting the content of what is forgotten yet intermittently recalled by the individual. In turn, historical occurrences may best be conceived in terms of, or in relation to, patterns of personal forgetting. This dynamic is multidirectional in several respects. First, in a more general sense of the term, the progression of disease is often erratic rather than steady or predictable, so that it may seem to change at different rates over time, and a person’s memory loss may even seem to stabilise for a while or indeed have periods of improvement. Dementia thus does not have a uniform direction of ‘decline.’ Second, as dementia tends to occur in old age, it is accompanied by reflections and assessment of the life course – by the person confronted with the diagnosis themselves or those close to them. Since any individual’s life is lived in relation to political and historical events, it is here that Rothberg’s concept of multidirectionality meets the dynamics of remembrance and forgetting entailed in dementia and its social repercussions. As cultural representations place the two in parallel, narratives of dementia try to shed new light on the ways in which national and international atrocities are constructed, suppressed or selectively recalled.

In *Lethe: The Art and Critique of Forgetting*, Harald Weinrich (2004, 134) states, in the wake of Sigmund Freud's concept of meaningful errors and slips[1] and his conceiving of the unconscious as "something previously known that has been forgotten but has not thereby disappeared from the world," that "forgetting loses its innocence." While Freud and Weinrich address how individuals deal with difficult memories, the historian Ulrike Jureit (2019, 144) extends this claim to cultural memory, arguing in almost identical terms that, after Auschwitz, "forgetting has lost its innocence."[2] While echoing Weinrich's psychoanalytically determined phrase, Jureit does not insinuate a generalised notion of 'collective amnesia,' nor does she direct blame at individuals with dementia, but, rather, addresses the question of how societies remember the Second World War and the Holocaust adequately, with the viability of practices of 'forgiving and forgetting' cast into question. Against this backdrop, the present volume analyses how forms of individual and cultural forgetting, as envisaged in contemporary literary texts and other works of art, tie into cultural concepts of pathological memory loss, how globally diverse experiences of violence and trauma are represented as relating to dementia (its reality, its spectres, its flashes of unexpected recall), and in what ways this affects our understanding of the fraught and entangled histories of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

In line with recent developments in memory studies that shift focus from acts of remembrance of, for instance, moments of national pride or mourning to considering processes of forgetting and their meaning for the future (Erll 2017, 117), this volume examines how different media and genres – novels, auto/biographical essays, documentary as well as fictional films, graphic memoirs and comics – represent dementia for critical explorations of memory, trauma and contested truths. In ten essays and one piece of graphic art, the contributors analyse the ways the diseases of dementia are only seemingly individual or ahistorical. Rather, the condition of dementia is used in contemporary cultural texts to represent or respond to violent historical and political events – such as the Holocaust, the Argentinian dictatorship of the years 1976–1983 or post/colonial conditions in settings that range from Australia and Singapore to Europe and the Americas – all of which are, in one way or another, difficult to remember. They therefore fall victim to forms of individual or societal suppression and denial. When artists enlist the notion of dementia in such contexts, this does not function as a means of apportioning blame

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[1] As developed in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (Freud 1962 [1901]).

[2] Orig.: "Das Vergessen hat seine Unschuld verloren."

or judgement on the individuals living with that condition for their difficulties with memory or cognition but is, rather, a way of approaching and exploring the 'multidirectional' paths that forgetting can take, ranging from the organic or age related to politically willed or socially endorsed forms. By joining approaches from literary studies with insights from memory studies, trauma studies, the critical medical humanities, media, film and comics studies, anthropology and disability studies, the following essays seek to examine the politics of dementia.

1 Dementia and meaning making

Although links between dementia and questions of political and moral responsibility may be particularly prevalent in the context of the Second World War and the Holocaust, they also appear in cultural negotiations of other traumatic experiences disrupting the social fabric, such as racial discrimination, sexual violence, forced migration and natural or nuclear disaster (Tan 2001; Chariandy 2007; Ozeki 2013). Francesca Melandri's novel *Sangue giusto* (The rightful blood; 2017) interrelates dementia with Italy's colonial history (especially in relation to Libya and Ethiopia), its fascist past, the corruption of the Berlusconi years and present-day migration from the African continent to Europe. Against the backdrop of these examples, the 'dementia turn' in recent literature, film and comics may best be understood – to quote **Kirstin Gwyer**'s contribution to this volume – as "an illustrative paradigm for a far broader cultural sense in which neoliberal global-capitalist societies experience themselves as existing in a twilight zone of (post-genocidal, post-conflict, postcolonial, post-nuclear, post-terrorist) post-traumatic aftermath" (p. 18). Examining the growing prevalence of dementia as a narrative trope in twenty-first-century fiction, Gwyer explores the specific twist that memory loss adds to the discourse of postmemory by giving the first generation licence to forget and the later born licence to fill in, but also to preserve, their blanks.

Against the backdrop of portrayals such as these, **Pieter Vermeulen** takes a different stance in criticising cultural attempts to convert figures of suffering and exclusion – including, more recently, portrayals of individuals with dementia – into embodiments of moral and historical truths. Vermeulen interrogates the ways in which literary texts by Will Self, Emma Healey and Johan Harstad negotiate the temptation to accord dementia a certain epistemological or moral privilege. Challenging scholarly discussions of dementia that rely on Giorgio Agamben (1998, 2000), Vermeulen argues that dementia should not be (mis)used to lose ourselves in critical abstraction at the expense of socioeconomic issues, and that representations of dementia can also help foreground issues around care, inequality and the decline of the welfare state.

To many, dementia's most prevalent feature is memory loss. However, in the case of elderly protagonists in narratives about traumatic injustice and violence, the altered workings of the brain due to old age, disease or both may also reveal events that were previously 'forgotten' because suppressed or seemingly overcome – as indeed psychologists have found (Shmotkin et al. 2011; Quindeau 2019). In other words, dementia may paradoxically enable remembering, with the potential to complicate a person's previously 'clear' perpetrator or victim status, as notions of chronological time dissolve for the ill person and the potential safe distance from past atrocities melts away. There is a tendency for fictional stories of dementia narrating a breakdown of short-term in favour of long-term memories to draw on the detective story (Burke 2018; Falcus and Sako 2019, 114–143) as well as crime fiction more generally or to offer otherwise unusual combinations of plot elements and genre citations. This is the case in, to name but a few, Elie Wiesel's novel *The Forgotten* (1992), Martin Suter's *Small World* (1997), Nicole Krauss's *Great House* (2010) and Young-ha Kim's short story "Diary of a Murderer" (2020). In examples such as these, dementia reveals rather than further conceals uncomfortable truths – as several of the contributions to this book also argue. In her review of medical dementia scholarship and literary dementia narratives from the 1980s to the 2010s, **Martina Zimmermann** discusses how bestselling fiction by J. Bernlef, Debra Dean, Alice LaPlante and Emma Healey represents dementia in terms of that historical moment's scientific knowledge about the condition. She interrogates how these novels employ elements from detective fiction in their exploration of memory, post-war trauma and historical amnesia, and how, by giving agency to protagonists with dementia, they promote empathy and person-centred care. Zimmermann's argument, therefore, returns the focus of analysis to the individual living with memory loss.

2 Dementia's paradoxical relation to buried truths: Detective plots and conceptual fallacies

In perpetrator or former colonising societies, dictatorships and tyrannies around the globe, dementia-induced memory loss can be represented or interpreted as a wilful refusal to remember, and so individuals of certain generations might be understood as strategically using their status as ill people or succumbing to their disease at a particular moment to avoid confrontations with disturbing aspects of their past. These can be memories that torment the victims of violence or those that haunt the perpetrators. Equally, the image of a neurobiological forgetting, characterised by recall of early life at the expense of recent experience, might suggest the inevitability of confronting a problematic or repudiated past. Just as childhood memories might be accessible to the person living with dementia whose memory is otherwise unreliable, so recall of past atrocity might resurface despite a lifetime spent trying to forget or suppress those very events. Fictional texts – especially in the genre of metamemory (Neumann 2008), which combines individual memories with critical reflections on the functioning of memory – are one way to inspire debates on these political aspects of dementia and the questions implied by it, about who bears what kind of moral responsibility for remembering the past.

The nature of such metamemorial reflexivity is evident in fictional texts that display a kind of multidirectional memory. For instance, in his novel *Ohnehin* (Anyway), set in 1990s Vienna, the Austrian author and son of Holocaust survivors Doron Rabinovici (2004, 25) introduces the character of the former *Untersturmführer* (second lieutenant of the SS) Herbert Kerber who – after becoming stuck, mentally, in the year 1945 – is diagnosed with Korsakoff's syndrome, a memory disorder caused by severe thiamine (vitamin B1) deficiency, often a result of alcoholism. While the novel's main protagonist, the neurologist Stefan Sandtner, believes that the disintegration of Kerber's short-term memory brings to the fore long-term memories that he had kept secret, Kerber's son suspects that the ex–SS officer is feigning both his dementia and his being stuck in the era of the war's last days to avoid interrogation at a possible war crimes trial. *Ohnehin*'s exploration of the medical condition of dementia in relation to Austria's Nazi past and reluctant post-war engagement with it can be understood as literary commentary on the Waldheim affair of the years 1986–1988, triggered by the events surrounding the presidential election campaign of Kurt Waldheim, former secretary-general of the United Nations, "during the course of which it emerged that [he] had lied about the extent of his involvement in the Nazi war machine, which did not stop him becoming president" (Krylova 2017, 3). In a pun on Alzheimer's, Waldheim's 'condition' of not being able to remember his Nazi past was satirically called 'Waldheimer's disease' by Austrian contemporaries who were left dissatisfied with the politician's justifications of his past and who objected to the antisemitism inherent in his defence.

While Rabinovici's novel never reveals the truth about Kerber's dementia, instead withholding a definitive answer on the precise nature of and reason for the old man's faltering memory (see Garloff forthcoming), one might assume real-life historical examples to be less ambiguous. This is not so in a famous case in Germany from the first decade of the twenty-first century: Walter Jens, a rhetorics professor and influential post-war public intellectual, developed dementia around the same time the media uncovered the fact that he had applied for membership of the Nazi Party and published an antisemitic essay while still a university student. **Nina Schmidt** discusses whether his son Tilman Jens's 2009 memoir *Demenz: Abschied von meinem Vater* (Dementia: A farewell to my father) suggests that pathological memory loss is imbued with an aspect of 'free will.' Schmidt asks to what extent this idea can be understood as a moral reproach on Tilman Jens's part or as a (perhaps desperate) attempt by the son to trade contingency for individual choice and responsibility, even – or especially – in the face of his father's dementia. Schmidt argues that the generational conflict played out so publicly in the case of the Jens family speaks beyond this one example, revealing the different meanings dementia can assume in a post-war and post-unification German context.

Kristina Lucenko analyses Susan Faludi's 2016 memoir *In the Darkroom* on the feminist author's fraught relationship with her father, Stefánie (formerly Steven, and before that Istvàn). Lucenko explores the complexities of remembering, forgetting, inventing, faking, validating and confessing within the dynamics of the child-parent relationship and against the backdrop of transgender and transsexual politics, the history of the Holocaust and Jewish history in Hungary. She argues that throughout her auto/biographical account, Faludi foregrounds the political and ethical dimensions of listening and speaking across divides, especially when Stefánie's dementia triggers disquieting hallucinations rooted in traumatic personal memories and first-hand experience of what is today part of collective memory.

3 Dementia as catalyst and plot device: Urgency and contestation

Cultural representations of Holocaust survivors have established a template for other representations of the dynamics of forgetting and remembering, to the extent that Wulf Kansteiner (2017, 305) describes Holocaust memory and memory studies as "intertwined." This takes the form in the cases under discussion here of making the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) overlap with the ways in which dementia is imagined to uncover 'intact' painful memories of violent experiences. However, it is not clear that there is a causal connection between early trauma and later memory loss: even at a clinical level, researchers are divided about whether traumatic events predispose individuals to dementia in later life or protect them from it: Sperling et al. (2011) argue that trauma is likely to entail dementia, while Ravona-Springer et al. (2011, 709) cannot find evidence to support this link. What is more, the latter speculate that "individuals who survived concentration camps and then lived into old age may carry survival advantages that are associated with protection from dementia and mortality," so that their survival of the earlier atrocity is a sign of resilience. In novels like Harriet Scott Chessman's *Someone Not Really Her Mother* (2004), Kristin Harmel's *The Sweetness of Forgetting* (2012) and Jillian Cantor's *The Lost Letter* (2017), fictional Holocaust survivors with dementia seem to serve as a symbol designed to convey the idea of a transition from living to historical memory, rather than represent a medical reality. In each of these three novels, a younger female relative's discovery of the survivor's suppressed or forgotten history is at the heart of the plot. The focus is therefore not necessarily centrally on the survivor, who is not yet dead yet cannot remember and is relegated to the narrative's background, but on the next generation, embodied by a child, grandchild or younger carer who seeks to come to terms with their own identity in light of a 'new' past unveiled by the dementia of someone they are close to. Against this backdrop, several of the contributions to the present volume ask how and to what end dementia is used as a plot device or as a catalyst for new versions of the bildungsroman, and how, when used in this way, such fictional or auto/biographical narratives conceptualise the interrelations between 'real,' repressed and re/imagined memories.

Sue Vice explores the recent appearance of dramatic and fictional texts about former Kindertransport refugees who are portrayed as suffering from dementia, asking why the historical rescue operation should be associated with memory loss and how such narratives relate to British and North American national memory and identity. Vice argues that plays by Wendy Graf and Rose Lewenstein as well as fiction by Linda Newbery respond to anxieties about the contemporary threshold moment, as living Holocaust memory turns into history, ambivalently representing the refugees' return to a painful past even in the context of their adopted homes.

Irmela Marei Krüger-Fürhoff analyses how, in a short story by Irene Dische and an animated webcomic by Stuart Campbell, Alzheimer's disease brings knowledge to the fore that had hitherto been prey to disavowal or repression, in ways that benefit from and are even symbolised by the innovative use of narrative and visual techniques. Drawing on Freud's concept of screen memories, Krüger-Fürhoff argues that both works turn dementia into an unexpected as well as unpredictable accomplice in the process of unveiling the past and offer their readers insights that exceed the protagonists' grasp. In these fictional narratives, memory loss enables belated disclosures and re-evaluations of the past, leading to a new kind of knowledge.

4 Dementia and genocide: An artist's approach

While this volume consists mainly of academic analyses, it also includes an artistic contribution by the writer, visual artist and anthropologist **Dana Walrath**. Building on the graphic memoir *Aliceheimer's: Alzheimer's through the Looking-Glass* (2016), on caring for her late mother; the poetic fiction of *Like Water on Stone* (2014), set during the Armenian genocide; and the art installation *View from the High Ground* (2016), which draws viewers' attention to the process of dehumanisation that is the precondition of genocide, the graphic narrative presented here reflects on connections Walrath sees between intergenerational trauma, her mother's individual experience of dementia and the sociohistorical phenomenon of collective amnesia. At the same time, Walrath's contribution celebrates the power of visual-verbal storytelling to bring buried or denied elements of the past to the fore and to connect the need for reconciliation on an interpersonal level (here: the reconciliation of an artistic daughter with her late mother) with political imperatives of acknowledging the past and learning from it for the future. The comic demonstrates once more the fact that we may "have left the 20th century but we have not yet left it behind,"[3] as Aleida Assmann (2012, 37) aptly puts it.

5 Dementia as ethical challenge: Vulnerable subjects, (post)colonial concepts and political imperatives

Individuals who develop dementia after having survived forced migration may return to their childhood language and re-experience memories of their earlier life and deracination. This can challenge their successful integration into the country of destination – or, indeed, that country's narrative of multiculturalism and equal prospects for all. Such is the case in J. Bernlef's 1984 novel *Out of Mind* (or *Hersenschimmen* in Dutch), which presents an elderly man's Alzheimer's-related misinterpretation of events in the present day as recurrences of disturbing experiences with US immigration after the Second World War (Krüger-Fürhoff 2015). In a similar vein, David Chariandy's 2007 *Soucouyant: A Novel of Forgetting* deals with the aftereffects of Caribbean migration to Canada via the portrayal of an immigrant mother's dementia, sounding out "the in-between space of (un-)belonging,

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[3] Orig.: "wir dieses Jahrhundert zwar verlassen, aber noch nicht hinter uns gelassen haben."

'between countries and belonging to neither,' [. . .] where one is under pressure to recall roots and cultural fragments and to forget them at the same time" (Minto 2010, 887).

A novel which seems to follow in the footsteps of Bernlef's and Chariandy's work is Fiona McFarlane's *The Night Guest* (2010). In her reading, **Emily Thew** draws on Sara Ahmed's concept of strange encounters to explore the affective relationship between dementia, hospitality and acts of meaning making in a postcolonial context. McFarlane uses free indirect discourse to convey the viewpoint of Ruth, a widow living in Australia brought up as the daughter of missionaries in Fiji, whose present confusion and memory lapses hint at dementia. Ruth imagines that she is visited by a tiger, while she is in actuality visited by Frida, a mysterious carer, meaning that either could be the novel's eponymous 'night guest.' Thew reads Ruth's reactions to both tiger and carer as her memory falters as a mixture of violent projections and the return of the colonial repressed.

MaoHui Deng's analysis of Royston Tan's feature film *3688* (2015) shows that the representation of dementia can serve to negotiate contested political issues in former colonial settings through popular culture. Deng argues that the memory loss and language confusion of an elderly character known as Uncle Radio shines a light on the past linguistic diversity eradicated by the Singaporean government's 1979 Speak Mandarin Campaign, launched with the aim of forging a new sense of postcolonial national identity from the top down. In Deng's reading, *3688* offers the possibility of remembering and re-presenting the nation's multilingual past by way of a character with memory loss. At the same time, Deng weaves a valuable critique of Western-centric understandings of time into his analysis, with repercussions for how we view the person living with dementia.

Psychology, narratology and public discourse seem to agree that as human beings we are what we remember – an understanding that, at its worst, leads to ableist or even disablist thinking; at the same time, we are also steered in our actions by what we have forgotten, and by that which intrudes into our memory or consciousness anew, once we forget that we have forgotten. Addressing the collective level, Aleida Assmann (2012, 35) writes in relation to historical injustices and, more specifically, acts of genocide: "Forgetting protects the perpetrators and weakens the victims, which is why acts of remembrance in the form of testimony have become an ethical duty and a form of belated resistance."[4] This

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[4] Orig.: "Vergessen schützt die Täter und schwächt die Opfer, weshalb inzwischen das Erinnern in Gestalt des Zeugnisses zu einer ethischen Pflicht und einer Form des nachträglichen Widerstands geworden ist." Apart from the concrete historical context which gave rise to it, this development seems to be a logical consequence also of the age-old tradition of regarding

is consensus in the West, at least – if not universally across the globe today. In individual cases, however (and notwithstanding questions of juridical responsibility), forgetting may also have liberating and healing qualities for those who have been subject to violence in the past (Shmotkin et al. 2011; Erll 2019, 55). This is suggested by Deng's and Raquel Medina's critical readings of fictional and documentary films in the context, respectively, of colonial legacies in Singapore and the Argentinian dictatorship's human rights violations.

Raquel Medina analyses the 2015 Mexican documentary *Tiempo suspendido / Time Suspended* by Natalia Bruschtein, which deals with the historical memory and legacy of the military dictatorship in Argentina (1976–1983). The film focuses on Laura Bonaparte, one of the co-founders of the protest movement Madres de la Plaza de Mayo that campaigned for relatives who were 'disappeared' during the military dictatorship of Jorge Rafael Videla and his successors. Now an elderly woman – the filmmaker's grandmother – living with Alzheimer's disease, she is repeatedly confronted with the now-forgotten loss of several close family members during the shooting of the film. Medina asks whether this forced and forceful way of reminding and remembering should be read as a form of violence in itself, exerted on Laura by her granddaughter. By investigating the film's aesthetics and the interaction between the protagonists, Medina critically explores the ethical boundaries of representation for the sake of preserving the past at the crossroads of individual and collective remembrance and forgetting.

This volume arises from a conference we held at the Freie Universität Berlin in October 2018 which sparked engaging debates among its international participants from diverse disciplinary and cultural backgrounds. We are grateful to numerous institutions and individuals for their generous support of the academic event and help with this publication: the Einstein Foundation Berlin; the Schlegel Graduate School of Literary Studies at Freie Universität Berlin; the Freie Universität Berlin for a generous open access publication grant; the editors of the "Media and Cultural Memory" series and the anonymous peer reviewers; Myrto Aspioti and everyone at De Gruyter; our copy editor Carrie Watterson; our indexer Dave Prout; and former PathoGraphics colleagues Susan Merrill Squier, stef lenk, Alexandra Hummel and Ulrike Schulz. Berlin-based artist D. M. Nagu granted us permission to use a collage from his 2017 series *National Portrait Gallery: The Destructive Character* for the cover of this volume. While the series title alludes to a London museum and a concept by Walter Benjamin, the collages combine photographs of war-bombed cities

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the act of remembering as something positive and forgetting as essentially negative (Brockmeier 2002, 16). Brockmeier traces it back to antiquity and examines the reasons for and effects of these connotations up to the present day.

with portraits of ‘racial types’ which circulated in Nazi Germany, thus overlaying historical devastation with individual experience; at the same time, the obliterated faces may hint at psychic dynamics such as forgetting and disavowal. Last but certainly not least, we wish to thank all of our workshop participants and contributors to this volume. Their sustained interest in the ways dementia – as a specific set of illnesses, a concept and a cultural metaphor – is employed to produce meaning on individual and communal as well as political levels drove our work on this book. As it refracts history, trauma and the generations through the prism of dementia, *The Politics of Dementia* seeks to stimulate new debates on memory culture, adhering at the same time to issues of patient care and the lived reality of people with dementia.

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Dementia and Meaning Making

Kirstin Gwyer

In the Shadow of No Memories? The Role of Dementia in Contemporary Aftermath Writing

The mechanisms of our metaphorical conceptualisation of dementia have been the subject of extensive scrutiny in recent research at the intersection of neuroscience, sociology and pathography studies. Foregrounding the "range of emotionally charged metaphors about dementia" that "pervades the popular imagination" (Zeilig 2014a, 258) in contemporary Western societies – from the media and political discourse to film and literature but also medico-scientific terminology – current work in this area has been aimed at sensitising us to the assumptions informing the cultural narratives we tell ourselves about this complex of disorders that remains empirically and medically beyond our full grasp.[1] Particularly in the contact zone between dementia studies and gerontology, significant advances have been made in exploring how the interrelation between social construction and biomedical condition has coloured not only cultural images but also the clinical picture of dementia. In highlighting "the problematic consequences of popular discursive practices that associate dementia with disaster" (Zeilig 2014b, 88) and frame it "as a dread disease and major public health crisis" (Ballenger 2017, 716) in a society on the brink of being overwhelmed by the "apocalyptic demography" (Robertson 1990) of its growing older dependent population, these investigations are contributing in essential ways to an emerging trend in the theory of dementia care away from an emphasis on cognitive and mental deterioration and towards a more embodied approach to notions of subjectivity and personhood.[2]

And yet, running counter to this push for an embodied, decatastrophising approach, an apocalyptically heightened figurative use of dementia in popular culture not only persists but is apparently proliferating to the point where, two decades into the twenty-first century, dementia seems to have come to represent "the locus of and repository for all society's fears" (Zeilig 2014b, 89). Accordingly, while investigations to date have concentrated primarily on the metaphors through which we evoke dementia, a secondary research focus on our invocation of dementia as metaphor is taking shape. The scope of the enquiry is expanding to take

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[1] See also e.g. Ballenger 2006; Leibing and Cohen 2006; Basting 2009; Behuniak 2011; Swinnen and Schweda 2015; Hartung 2016, Ch. 4; Zimmermann 2017a; Falcus and Sako 2019.

[2] See e.g. Higgs and Gilleard 2017.

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in the growing body of cultural productions where the "only seemingly individual or ahistorical" diseases of dementia, as Krüger-Fürhoff, Schmidt and Vice put it in the introduction (3) to the present volume, are enlisted "to represent or respond to violent historical and political events" and figure dynamics of remembering and forgetting at a collective, societal level.

The focal point of this essay will be the intersection where dementia as a lived reality connects with, and risks being displaced by, dementia as a way of making sense of the world. Through an exploration of the shared fund of imagery used to paint both dementia as an apocalypse and apocalyptic scenarios through dementia, I shall suggest that the metaphorical relationship between the two should in fact be thought of as one of analogical participation rather than simple correlation: though dementia undoubtedly represents a "locus" and "repository" of societal fears (Zeilig 2014b, 89), they are fears that feed on, and feed into, a greater and more complex set of cultural anxieties. The images we use to think about dementia, often in the synecdochal figure of Alzheimer's disease, point to "the biomedical aspects of the condition that are most dreaded by society" (Zimmermann 2017b, 74), chief among them "the patient's dependence, inertia, and loss of self" (90). However, our use of dementia as an image suggests that the constellation of memory erosion leading to a loss of self and sense of inertia also resonates with us in more general and abstract terms, through what it captures about our perception of our own present reality. Drawing on examples from current popular and scientific practice, as well as from two representatives of recent post-trauma fiction, where dementia is commonly invoked as a theme and trope, I will propose that the 'dementia turn' we observe in contemporary literature, film and comics may be understood as an illustrative paradigm for a far broader cultural sense in which neoliberal global-capitalist societies experience themselves as existing in a twilight zone of (post-genocidal, post-conflict, postcolonial, post-nuclear, post-terrorism) post-traumatic aftermath, wracked with "mnemonic convulsions" but "terminally ill with amnesia" (Huyssen 1995, 7, 1). In this twilight zone, the amnesiac state diagnosed by Huyssen at the end of the twentieth century is increasingly acutely experienced as a degenerative condition at once irremediable and inexorable, without hope for either retrospective or prospective recuperation.

1 Figuring dementia

Studies investigating the metaphorical evocation of dementia have noted a prevalence of doomsday imagery centred on natural disasters, disease or other cataclysms of biblical proportions across both popular and scientific discourses.[3] Dementia is the “quiet epidemic” (Wilson 2014), the “21st century plague” (Smyth 2013) or “leprosy of the early 2000s” (Behuniak 2011, 84), a “rising tide” and “silent tsunami” (qtd. in Zeilig 2014a, 260). Sometimes, the scourge is by flame rather than flood: “a story of hell,” of being ravaged by a “forest fire,” by “the holocaust of my brain” (qtd. in Zimmermann 2017b, 83, 85, 82). Dementia is conceptualised as “a lethal threat at both the individual and social levels” (Behuniak 2011, 85), and its carriers – “zombies,” the “living dead,” the “grey hordes” (77, 79), members of the “apocalyptic demography” (Robertson 1990) – are coming for us. In response to the perception of dementia as a silent but devastating threat, the other semantic field to have been identified as dominating popular rhetoric in the West is the language of “military and war-like metaphors” (Zeilig 2014b, 85). In this rhetoric, dementia is a “killer” (Zeilig 2014b, 84), requiring an “all-out fight-back” (qtd. in Zeilig 2014a, 261), or even – suffused with the righteous conviction of waging a holy war – a “millennium demon” calling for a “crusade” (qtd. in Zeilig 2014a, 260).

However, although it is not unusual for calls for the eradication of a pernicious disease to be couched in the language of warfare – as with HIV/AIDS or cancer – the twist where dementia is concerned is that the militaristic language it elicits tends to be more closely related to the experience of being under siege, taken hostage or hijacked in ways that seem informed not by war in general but by underlying cultural anxieties about specifically terrorist warfare. The image of the “time bomb” recurs frequently, gesturing towards “politically motivated terrorism” (Zeilig 2014a, 261). Susan Schneider Williams (2016), whose late husband, actor Robin Williams, had Lewy body dementia, refers to “the terrorist inside my husband’s brain,” sending “a firestorm of symptoms our way” (1308) and leaving him “trapped in the twisted architecture of his neurons” from which she “could not pull him out” (1309). Even the image of the “crusades” to fight the “millennium demon” has acquired a secondary metaphorical frame following the repeated contentious invocation of crusader history after 9/11, in the context of George W. Bush’s global “war on terror.”[4]

The convergence of apocalyptic zombification and terrorism that emerges from these images is troubling yet telling. As an attempt to evoke the lived reality of a condition, the yoking together of the figure of dementia as a terrorist who takes control of a hostage’s brain to leave them “like a 747 airplane coming in with no landing gear” (Schneider Williams 2016, 1309) and of the ghoulish

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[3] See e.g. Innes 2009; Zeilig 2014a; also Martina Zimmermann’s contribution to this volume.
[4] See e.g. Johnsrud 2017.

visions of walking death, of a “living body without a mind” (Gerritsen et al. 2018, 599) is profoundly problematic. As Susan Behuniak has shown with specific reference to the Alzheimer’s variant of dementia, “the social construction of those with AD as zombies generates not only the negative stereotypes and stigma associated with people constructed as ‘other,’ but also the emotional responses of disgust and utter terror” (2011, 72). However, as in earlier incarnations of the runaway zombie metaphor as an evolving receptacle for Western fears for going on a century, the metaphor of the undead reveals far more about the cultural context in which it is figuratively deployed than about the object to which it is temporarily attached.

Since the figure’s initial appropriation from Vodou culture and its application to the bare life of slave labourers in US-occupied Haiti in the 1920s, zombies in the Western imagination have been associated with everything from the Second World War, National Socialism, concentration camp inmates, the threat of communism and nuclear destruction, race relations, the Vietnam War, capitalist brainwashing and mindless consumerism, pandemics including AIDS and Ebola, and the viral spread of information in the mass media to, more recently, globalisation and mass migration, postcolonial or urban-proletarian rage, and terrorism.[5] The indeterminacy of the image becomes apparent from even this incomplete list. Indeed, indeterminacy might be considered the defining feature of the modern-day zombie, for the one thing that all its recent manifestations have in common is how difficult they make it to locate the perceived threat they are meant to embody. Before they are infected, and sometimes even afterwards, contemporary zombies look just like the next person, and anybody could be one. This is also where the metaphor’s connection to acts of domestic or clandestine terrorism is clearly in evidence: “Like the ‘sleeper-cell’ terrorist, the zombie can potentially be anyone” (Muntean and Payne 2009, 247). In consequence, “as with the friendly suburban foreign students-cum-terrorists of 9/11,” the “inside/outside or us/them differentiation breaks down” (Schmeink 2016, 221), and “fear and terror emerge from the possibility of becoming a victim at any time” (210).[6]

A similar sense of the self/other separation not holding also informs contemporary views of dementia. Societally but even medically, it is conceived as a set of conditions that could not only affect anyone at any time, but which ‘contaminate’ those ‘exposed’ to them long before they develop any active form of the syndrome themselves. At a societal level, this arises in part from our tendency to

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[5] See Luckhurst 2016 for a comprehensive cultural history of the figure of the zombie. On specifically the figure of the zombie terrorist, see, e.g. Edwards 2015.

[6] See Stratton 2011 for a further striking example of indeterminacy in the figure of the zombie for displaced persons perceived as a threat to the neoliberal state.

conflate dementia with ageing and to think of it as a looming horizon worse than death. It also manifests itself in the perception that "the time and lives of caregivers and family members are consumed by the disease" alongside those of the primary sufferers (Behuniak 2011, 82). Both conflations derive their sense of dread from the unacknowledged understanding that zombies are not just among us but are us, or that we are them.[7]

More recently, the phenomenon of "collateral contamination" has also become a focus of scientific research investigating the "senescent-cell bystander effect" in dementia-related conditions and conceptualizing this as a zombie attack: "The emergence of senescent neurons means the AD brain contains zombie-like cells that kill healthy bystander neurons. We do not know what creates the zombies, but to fully treat AD they must be destroyed. This presents a paradox: to cure a neurodegenerative disease, we have to kill more neurons" (Chow et al. 2016, 658). Presented under the subtitle "The Continuing Saga of the Zombie Apocalypse" and condensing imagery of a zombie contagion with the arbitrariness of a terrorist strike taking out innocent 'healthy' bystanders and prompting murderous retaliatory violence, this makes for uncomfortable reading, even though – or precisely because – the article's reference to "zombie cells" is fully in keeping with scientific practice.[8]

Though the process of 'senescence-inducing senescence' is not exclusive to dementia-related neurodegeneration, its association here with zombified mindlessness and its illustration as a form of infiltration by something that is already there, like sleeper cells in our brains, connects with and risks fuelling the popular reading of dementia as a disease that can, and given enough time will, happen to anyone and to which any of us, unwittingly, may already be a 'host.' As Chow et al. (2016) suggest, in their subtitle's reference to a continuing saga (though their suggestion of a 'full treatment' partially obscures this), the zombie apocalypse is already underway in this scenario, and, while the end of the world has been delayed, its ultimate arrival remains always on the horizon. In the absence of an identifiable cause for the zombies' emergence, the destruction of subsequent neurons under zombie attack remains for now a (hypothesised) postponement of the inevitable rather than a 'cure' – or at least a cure that would be distinguishable from annihilation. It offers neither resolution nor prevention, just deferral.

Viewed narrowly in terms of the fears it communicates about human neurohealth in an ageing society, this sense of living in deferment reads as a sort of

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[7] See also Behuniak 2011, 79, on this point.

[8] See also, e.g., the more recent, more neutrally worded, Bussian et al. 2018.

generalised, prognostic equivalent of what Arthur Frank has termed the “remission society” (2003 [1995], 8). Rather than life in limbo between disease and cure, where survivors become the walking wounded, it seems to denote existence in an aftermath of (self-)diagnosis but before full-blown (and fatal) morbidity, turning us all into the walking dead. However, as the second part of this essay will propose, the convergence of dementia and zombifying cataclysm suggests that our sense of living in apocalyptic latency extends well beyond the concrete context of dementia as a neurological syndrome. A closer look at Schneider Williams’s dementia-as-terrorist pathography at the intersection of scientific and popular discourse and of medical report and literary rendition, where figurative evocation of dementia meets the invocation of dementia as a figure, will serve to illustrate this, before I move on to examine the reverse aspect of the material discussed so far: the use of dementia as a metaphor for living in a latent apocalypse.

2 Dementia as figure

Schneider Williams’s use of the figure of a terrorist plane hijacking articulates a cataclysmic personal event that defies comprehension through the figure of another, the culturally specific but broadly accessible reference point of 9/11. It is a shorthand for devastation and an attempt to mentalise the unimaginable. At the same time, it is also a way of acknowledging changes in her late husband’s behaviour without holding him, the hijacking victim, responsible. Through no fault of his own, Williams, once her “safe harbor” (Schneider Williams 2016, 1308), is now exuding threat: his is the brain left in ruins, the “twisted architecture” (1309) in which he becomes trapped after the “firestorm of symptoms” (1308) hits, but he is also the plane being steered towards impact. In this respect, the terrorist imagery also captures the breakdown of the inside/outside and self/other distinction that is believed to characterise the disease: dementia terrorises because what feels like a hostile external invader turns out to be a clandestine fifth column already at home in the host, and it torments not just the primarily afflicted but also those who care for them. Inasmuch as the “firestorm of symptoms” hits both spouses, it also represents a “traumatic experience” for Schneider Williams herself, as she is vicariously exposed to “persecution” (1308) by the disease’s pathology and feels as if she is “drowning” in Williams’s symptoms “along with him” (1310). In the wake of the “firestorm,” she is left “powerless and frozen,” “in the darkness of not knowing” (1309) and with an enduring sense of living in suspended time, as she is compelled to go over and over the same old ground: “After Robin left, time has never functioned the same for me.

My search for meaning has replicated like an inescapable spring" (1310). Her experience of the aftermath of her husband's illness and death bears the hallmarks of PTSD, including a sense of stasis and meaninglessness, dissociation and compulsive repetition. However, the language used to evoke this echoes descriptions of Williams's dementia, of his being "stuck in a frozen stance" (1309) where he feels "blank" and "lost in confusion" and experiences persistent "looping" (1310). In this overlap of symptomatic terminology, dementia itself seems to have acquired figurative properties: dementia is a "firestorm" (1308) or a 747 "coming in with no landing gear" (1309), but the apocalypse's aftermath feels like dementia.

A broader examination of recent literature responding to culturally unintegrated cataclysms including 9/11 but also the Holocaust and other acts of catastrophic historical violence suggests that the correlation we encounter in Schneider Williams's writing between dementia and trauma is not unique. In fact, the use of dementia as a post-apocalyptic metaphor to denote both an individual and a sociocultural condition is becoming increasingly prevalent in contemporary post-trauma writing of the twenty-first century. But what exactly is the condition being represented? The answer seems to reside in how the pathology of dementia is perceived as intersecting with the symptomatology of trauma.

Trauma is characterised by a breakdown of memory, by cognitive and linguistic impairment, unimaginable from the outside and unthinkable from within: it derives from an unrecorded point of origin, an apocalypse that has already happened by the time it manifests itself, and so a missed revelation, a moment experienced and describable through the symptoms it leaves behind but never in itself. By analogy, in the case of dementia, once the condition becomes symptomatic, the apocalypse in a sense has already occurred and is manifesting itself through the erosion of memory, reasoning and language.

Unlike the effects of dementia, certainly for now, those of trauma are sometimes reversible. If a traumatised individual can be helped to retrace their steps, return to the point of apocalyptic origin and restore it to the order of memory and narrative, they may be able to resume the thread of their life story and move on. However, if the traumatic event is of a scale where it is perceived society-wide to have damaged not just individuals and institutions but, as in Jean-François Lyotard's seismic analogy for Auschwitz, "also the instruments used to measure earthquakes" – so our very capacity to record and relate what has happened – such recuperation may not be possible, and the trauma may cause an insurmountable breach (Lyotard 1988, 56).

The sense of coming 'after,' but therefore never really after, such an insurmountable breach can be argued to have informed, more or less consciously, every work of cultural theory or critical analysis responding directly or indirectly to the traumatic upheavals of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, and particularly the Holocaust, from deconstruction to trauma theory to all recent forms of individual or collective memory theory. All seem founded on the perception of a "common pattern" in which "a disaster occurs of overwhelming, disorienting magnitude, and yet the world continues" (Berger 1999, 6), but existing structures of thought and language have been shattered in ways that "effect their own erasures from memory" and can only be "reconstructed by means of their traces, remains, survivors, and ghosts: their symptoms" (19).[9] Even works of cultural theory that appear to deal with epistemological or economic developments rather than social or political trauma may exhibit these features, as James Berger proposes with regard to "theories of the modern by Foucault and of the postmodern by Lyotard, Baudrillard, and Jameson," all of which "take as their starting point some cataclysmic and irrevocable shattering or flattening or decentering that infiltrates and rearticulates all areas of culture" and which thus in effect "diagnose a post-apocalyptic condition" (Berger 1999, 31).

Over the past century, the world has seen a procession of such unintegratable events. For the majority of us alive today, our relationship to these events has been indirect, falling into broadly two categories. Either the traumatic event has been communicative, as in the case of "postmemory," in the term coined by Marianne Hirsch initially for the second-generation descendants of Holocaust survivors, whose "memory" of the past, while interpersonally transmitted, "is mediated not through recollection but through imaginative investment and creation" (Hirsch 1997, 22), though the idea of postmemory has since also been applied well beyond this context. Or, more commonly, the traumatic event has been culturally mediated as in, for instance, Alison Landsberg's notion of "prosthetic memory" in which empathetic engagement with the past through modern mass technologies allows an uninvolved individual to develop a personal response to a collective memory (2004). In Gary Weissman's more critical conceptualisation, such efforts to "feel the horror of what otherwise eludes" us are "fantasies of witnessing" (2004, 23).

As in the case of the cultural theories indicated above, both the postmemory and the prosthetic memory strands of investigation are founded on the premise of coming after an inconceivable, unspeakable traumatic upheaval that is knowable to us only in the form of secondary symptoms or mediated traces. However, in both instances, this has, paradoxically, made it possible for the aporetic founding origin of unintegratable primary trauma to be displaced by a secondary recuperative focus on the potential of forms of "after-memory" to work through its

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[9] For further compelling explorations of the relationship between the Holocaust and the postmodern, see also LaCapra 2001; Eaglestone 2004; Davis 2007.

traumatic effects belatedly and vicariously.[10] As Hirsch has more recently suggested with regard to postmemory: “Perhaps it is *only* in subsequent generations that trauma can be witnessed and worked through, 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” (2001, 222).

Two decades into the twenty-first century, such recuperative impulses seem increasingly less plausible. Communicative memory of some of the greatest traumatic upheavals of the twentieth century is itself on the verge of being a thing of the past, leaving us with little sense of any retrievable origin of our post-apocalyptic “ghost world of digital data, computerized information that’s manipulable, rewritable, copyable, rebootable and erasable” (Grossman 2004). In the grip of an “archive fever” (Derrida 1996 [1995]) caused, paradoxically, by the “virus of amnesia” (Huyssen 1995, 7), the information we frantically gather in this ghost world no longer seems verifiable outside of itself and can feel both self-perpetuating and self-consuming. This media-fuelled sense of living in a post-traumatic afterwards without an origin has been further reinforced in the twenty-first century by more recent sociocultural disasters, in particular acts of terrorism, that have affected virtually – or have virtually affected – the whole world but the majority of us only in mediated form, through a “firestorm” of images. This has particularly been the case with 9/11, whose perpetrators exploited the event’s mediality as a staged spectacle in anticipation of its imagery replicating like a virus across the global mass media. At the same time, the nature of terrorism is such that it not only derives its traumatic force from the event itself but also projects it into the future “by the threat of the worst *to come*, rather than by an aggression that is ‘over and done with’” (Derrida 2003, 97), and so by opening up a wound that “remains open by our terror before the *future* and not only the past” (96). This is not trauma that can be worked through in any conventional sense. Rather, it seems to instate an experience of history or temporality as a form of aftermath at once symptomatic and ominous.

Living in such a post-apocalyptic pre-apocalypse is an existence in “latency,” to borrow a phrase recently applied by Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht (2013) to the period since 1945 and into the present as a time suspended between the impossibility of leaving the catastrophic past behind and the impossibility of moving forward beyond a horizon of equally catastrophic looming inevitabilities. Post-9/11, a similar sense prompted Art Spiegelman to propose as “the twenty-first century’s dominant metaphor” the idiom “waiting for the other shoe to

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[10] For a more detailed investigation into the retroactive displacement of post-traumatic memory by postmemory, see Gwyer 2014, Ch. 1.

drop" (2004, 1). In the context of such apparently insurmountable latency, neither postmemory nor prosthetic memory, as forms of post-traumatic after-memory attempting to re-present and work through the past vicariously, seems to fit the bill any longer. Increasingly, we are seeing in their stead the invocation of dementia in aftermath writing: as a lived condition affecting individuals, particularly individuals who might otherwise have retained a connection to a pre-latency past, and as an analogy for the inexorable de-menting of a culture unable to recall this past unaided but also unable to stop compulsively trying to relive it in surrogate form.

In this 'shadow of no memories,' to appropriate the title of Art Spiegelman's post-9/11 graphic novel *In the Shadow of No Towers* – between the analeptic shadow cast by the absent memories of the past and the proleptic pall of being unable to escape them – post-apocalyptic memory appears to have progressed from postmemory to prosthetic memory to 'prosthetic amnesia,' where fantasies of witnessing may be ceding to a fear of, and perhaps a longing for, un-witnessing. In this reading, the figure of dementia appears at once as a symptom and – in the guise of an unattainable horizon of complete oblivion – as the only possible cure to our "mnemonic convulsions" (Huyssen 1995, 7).

This essay will conclude on a brief illustration of how ideas of individual and cultural remembering and forgetting are dealt with in two twenty-first-century works of autobiographically informed aftermath fiction. Of these, one might be deemed to fall broadly under the heading of postmemory and the other under that of prosthetic memory, though each in fact defies such categorisation. Both texts communicate a sense of latency through imagery of a fall or, rather, of falling, as an ongoing descent without origin or impact and so effectively a process of eternal suspension. They also both invoke dementia as a theme and trope to convey an experience of this existence in suspension as one of an extended 'zombified' present. However, in both cases, the primary zombified individuals in suspension are not those who have the disease but those who fear, or fail to achieve, vicarious forgetting.

3 After postmemory: *Diary of the Fall*

Michel Laub's *Diary of the Fall*, originally published in Portuguese as *Diário da queda*, is a novel about three generations of a Jewish emigrant family in Brazil, narrated by the unnamed middle-aged third-generation son who, like his father and grandfather before him, is struggling with how to remember the unrecordable (Laub 2015 [2011]). From the narrator's account, it emerges that his grandfather was a Holocaust survivor and former Auschwitz inmate, who, nearing the end of his life, reportedly ‘lost his mind’ in a manner not medically defined by the narrator. Left with nothing but “a kind of memory that comes and goes” (1., 3), the grandfather spent his last years locked in his study, committing his story as he remembered it to a series of notebooks.[11] This is replicated in the experience of the narrator’s father, who has been diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer’s disease and has also taken to spending hours in his study, working on a project that is structurally similar to the grandfather’s. It is replicated a further time in the diary of the son, as a reflection on and of the older two generations’ undertaking.

Each account represents a differently conflicted relationship with the past as it has, or has not, entered into generational memory. Of the grandfather, the representative of first-degree memory in the survivor generation, we learn that he did not like to talk or think about what had happened to him. Accordingly, the record he kept in the period approaching his death by suicide suggests that, as his mental deterioration progressed, what was starting to fail him were above all his screen memories. His diary appears as a desperate last effort to hold onto these in defiance of underlying memories resurfacing. Rather than tell his life story, the grandfather has written “a kind of encyclopaedia” (1., 25) in short, repetitive, causally unconnected sections, painstakingly detailing how he felt the world should be rather than how it was: a treatise with “interminable entries on the ideal city, the ideal marriage, the ideal wife, the wife’s pregnancy accompanied with diligence and love by the husband” (2., 25). Among all these mirror opposites of things as they were, there is not a single mention of his time in Auschwitz or what happened to the many family members he lost there. With this willed screening-out also failing him, in the end only death seems to promise true oblivion.

While the grandfather’s memory affliction appears to have consisted in an inability to forget, as he finally finds himself unable to keep suppressing his experiences, the father, as a representative of the postmemory generation, suffers from having grown up in the shadow of memories he never had but tried imaginatively to reconstruct. Unlike the grandfather, who never spoke to his son about Auschwitz, the father’s interactions with the narrator as he is growing up revolve around it obsessively but without his having a memory to attach to the signifier. His postmemory connection to the past means that, even before the dementia, his own belated story, “evacuated by the stories of the previous generation” (Hirsch

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[11] In reflection of the mental disorientation it thematises, this unpaginated book is arbitrarily divided into achronological and non-sequential paragraphs whose numeration restarts in each of the repetitive unnumbered subsections of the text. Paragraph numbers will be included in brackets in the main body of the text, followed by page numbers as would correspond to the English text’s 2015 edition.

1997, 22), is already a de-mented one, constructed around an inaccessible narrative memory. Against this backdrop, his Alzheimer's appears as an embodiment of what is already his reality: an inherited memory dis-ease, which is set to transmit itself to the next generation.

The third-generation narrator, meanwhile, is determined to resist this transmission, and yet the transmission has already begun before his narrative sets in, and it is unclear whether it really can end with him. The titular reference to a fall, which in one respect denotes a literal fall caused by the narrator, also stands for his own existence as one long metaphorical descent from an unremembered point of origin to an uncertain point of impact. The literal fall occurs when, as teenagers, the narrator and his friends are invited to the birthday party of the only non-Jewish student at their school, a boy named João, whom they have been bullying. At the party, the Jewish boys deliberately drop and seriously injure João, which sets in train a series of events leading, initially, to a friendship between the narrator and João but ultimately to an extended period of reverse bullying during which the narrator is persecuted as a Jew by the non-Jewish boy and his friends in a way that he, initially, seems penitentially to have endured or even self-destructively engineered. The narrator's figurative fall, however, long precedes these events, dating back, in his mind, to before his birth, and it extends well beyond the narrator's adolescence and possibly beyond the end of the book. Its point of origin, as the narrator understands it, resides untraceably in the absent memory of the Holocaust, and, by extension, in the second generation's postmemorial response to this, which has seen the narrator raised by a father so intent on inculcating in his son the conviction that Jews must never be victimised again that, according to the narrator, this turned him into a perpetrator.

After outlining how he has spent his life since the age of fourteen trying forcibly to induce amnesia through heavy drinking in order to move on from the never known but unforgettable past, the narrator provisionally concludes his diary by declaring that the de-mented narrative of Auschwitz will end with him, and he reveals that his own account has all along been addressed to his unborn son, representative of the fourth generation, who, the narrator hopes, will be a blank slate, unencumbered by his three male ancestors' memory affliction of being simultaneously unable to remember and unable to forget: "You'll be starting from zero and you don't want to have to carry the weight of all that" (40., 182).

However, the form of the text seems to belie its intention and runs counter to the narrator's determination to move on from the past for the sake of the next generation. In the following passage, the narrator comments on the grandfather's notebooks that imagine the world as it should have been but was not:

> My grandfather filled sixteen notebooks without once saying what he felt about my father [. . .], not one word [. . .] about how life goes on after you leave a place like Auschwitz, the renewal of hope when they have a child after leaving Auschwitz, the rediscovery of joy on seeing that child growing up like a riposte to everything they saw in Auschwitz, and just the horror of knowing that someone survived Auschwitz only to waste all their free time on that sterile enterprise, on the pointless, inexplicable exercise of imagining every real phenomenon as something to be transformed into its exact opposite, to the point that all defects, all features disappear [. . .], that horror must somehow be related to Auschwitz. (18., 53–54)

Rather than reinforce the contrast the narrator would establish between himself and his ancestors, the passage serves to highlight the parallels between them. Like theirs, the narrator's account does not capture emotional content or use any of the words whose absence he laments in the grandfather's narrative – hope, joy, life – with reference to his own unborn son. The reason for this, for both, seems to be that there is no such thing as life *after* Auschwitz. The resulting narrative reads almost exactly like the grandfather's "sterile enterprise": the positive feelings, but also the "defects," the "features," the "characteristics," the "horror," are all empty placeholders in the narrator's text, but none more so than the obsessively repeated "Auschwitz," the narrative's main signifier without a referent.

Structurally, the narrator's account, like the grandfather's and the father's, fails to unfold as a coherent narrative with a beginning, middle and end. His repetitive, non-sequential paragraphs consist of rambling sentences that keep looping back over already covered ground. Information pertaining to his own life is overlaid with similarly constructed segments from his father's and grandfather's accounts, such that a section titled "A Few Things I Know about Myself" in fact starts by listing things he knows about his father and grandfather (and about Primo Levi) rather than himself. This, along with the absence of page numbers, undermines any sense of progression across the three generations. It also illustrates – and extends to us – the narrator's difficulties in orienting himself relative to his material and indicates his erosion of selfhood, an erosion that is reinforced in this episode by the slide in pronouns from "he" to "you" to "they" to "someone."

In all these respects, the narrator's record of his deliberately but incompletely benumbed existence itself reads like a dementia narrative, albeit only formally. If the second generation's postmemory was the construct of a memory without content, the narrator's de-mented narrative is the product of a forgetting without content, which reverses the thrust of postmemory, making it prospective as well as retrospective. Rather than represent a safely contained first-generation memory ailment imaginatively compensated for by postmemory descendants or through prosthetic memory, dementia here has come to figure the apparently inescapable post-traumatic condition of coming after Auschwitz when Auschwitz is not only a memory inaccessible to working through but a memory placeholder that not even Alzheimer's can erase. Even when the narrator imagines his own end, in a plane crash scenario with "me plunging through space towards the dark empty countryside where not even my teeth will be identifiable" (30., 152–153), the image, though seemingly informed by the more recent cultural trauma of 9/11, also appears to connect back to the Holocaust as a traumatic benchmark in the reference to unidentified teeth as a person's sole remains, albeit from a position of such remove that all that persists is a trace of a stock image. With the shadow of the unremembered but unforgettable past already extending beyond his own life, we cannot help but wonder whether the narrator, too, in his claim that his son will get to start from zero, is imagining the world as he thinks it should be rather than as it is.

4 After prosthetic memory: *Falling Man*

Like the non–record keepers in *Diary of the Fall*, the protagonists of the second text, Don DeLillo's 9/11 novel *Falling Man* (2011 [2007]), find themselves unable to move out of their shadow of no memories. The novel – which starts immediately after the first of the World Trade Center towers has fallen and ends just before the second collapses – depicts the aftermath experience of Keith Neudecker, a lawyer who worked in the North Tower. Keith has escaped the tower's fall but appears unable to escape his own post-traumatic falling, without a clear point of origin or conclusion, and the text as a whole reads as an extended evocation of Keith's description of making his way down the interminable tower staircase before the collapse: like "the timeless drift of the long spiral down" (137).

The image doubles up as a figure for Keith's ensuing existence in post-traumatic suspension, which in turn both reflects and is reflected in the text's main recurring trope, a falling shirt. The falling shirt is how Keith remembers what was in fact a person jumping to their death from one of the floors above him. Unable to integrate the sight of a body in a "white shirt, hand up," already "falling before he saw it" but also "gone and then he saw it" (242), his mind transforms the image into an empty item of clothing with fluttering sleeves, which haunts him as an insurmountable traumatic flashback to what was always already a screen memory (see also 4, 88, 246). Like Auschwitz in Laub's novel or like the cipher 9/11 itself, the falling shirt is an unfillable empty signifier, and, like the shirt in his mind, Keith himself is now in "timeless drift" (137), caught between the impossibility of recovering the past and the concomitant impossibility of restoring the future.

At the same time, the falling shirt also seems to gesture towards the fallen (or adrift) state of twenty-first-century Western civilisation more broadly. Though it appears connected to Keith's experience of traumatic dissociation, the sense of a "timeless drift" (137) seems to have been at least latently present in him long before 9/11. The interminable poker games he plays after 9/11 in a futile attempt to forget the unrememberable are just an intensification of his mind-numbed existence prior to the terrorist attacks. Moreover, his sense of suspended and substanceless descent is shared by a large number of other protagonists, whether or not they were direct witnesses of the terrorist attacks. This chiefly includes his estranged wife, Lianne, whose access to events resides somewhere between the personal connection of postmemory and the cultural one of prosthetic memory but whose experience is aligned with Keith's through a description of her "feeling like a skirt and blouse without a body" (23). Though Keith is more immediately traumatised by what has happened and acts as the novel's introductory focaliser, it is Lianne who represents "the book's centre of consciousness" (Greif 2007, 19). Indeed, it seems to be precisely the "mediatedness" of her exposure that makes her more broadly representative of Western existence in the aftermath of 9/11: her knowledge of events is second-hand and primarily derived from mass-media coverage.

A sense of suspended descent also characterises the couple's young son, Justin, who does not believe that the Twin Towers have collapsed because he has not seen the TV footage of it and who keeps searching the skies for more planes, "waiting for it to happen again" (72), convinced that "this time the towers will fall [. . .], they'll really come down" (102). Indeed, in his nescience of events, Justin more than any of the characters could be said to embody the majority position of the Western world. The reality of 9/11 as we know it is determined by its reproduction and is not real to us in its absence. At the same time, our access to this reality through its reproductions, or as a reproduction, renders it permanently unreal. In the absence of an accessible reality prior to the image, there also seems to be no reachable future horizon where the towers are no longer falling but have "really come down" (102).

Finally, the disembodied shirt is given simulated re-embodied form in the figure of performance artist David Janiak, known as Falling Man, who haunts Lianne throughout the text, just as the image of the falling shirt haunts Keith. Janiak's performance, which consists in his jumping from tall buildings, suspended by a harness, may be intended as a nod to those who fell from the towers to their death, but it captures above all the "empty shirt" condition irremediably afflicting a society in which screen images, in both senses of the term, have displaced genuine experience and memory, and it replicates the sensation of being "in stationary fall" (34) that ensues.

This is a condition particularly well illustrated by the specific cultural trauma of 9/11, the "most photographed and filmed event in history," experienced even by the majority of those directly affected largely "as a real-time documentary about 9/11" (Wetmore 2012, 57). The protagonists' individual experience of living in the fallout of an event of which they have no authentic, personal recollection merges here with the broader sense that "increasingly, we are witnessing a world without memory [. . .]. Rather than concretizing history in narrative and popular memory, culture, in its degraded commodified form, serves to induce amnesia" (Best 1995, xi–xii). In this respect, the aftermath of 9/11 in DeLillo's depiction also reads as an illustration of existence in the Baudrillardian "hyperreal" (Baudrillard 1994 [1981]), in an age of simulation where what was once real has been replaced by simulacra without prior or outside reality, such that, as in Justin's example, images precede and engender the real, and there can be no authentic memory because there is no origin or original to remember. In this convergence, the post-traumatic is hyperreal, and the hyperreal is post-traumatic.

This reading seems to be supported by the fact that DeLillo complements his leitmotif of traumatic screen memory flashbacks with that of dementia, as a trope for a more general form of memory damage that is neither sudden onset nor transient. Lianne, whose father died by suicide after an Alzheimer's diagnosis and who fears that it is only a matter of time before she herself becomes symptomatic, volunteers conducting weekly "storyline sessions" with a group of individuals in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease. In these sessions, Lianne encourages the group members to counter the blanks in their memories with narrative and write down what they remember about their lives before their minds "slide away from the adhesive friction that makes an individual possible" (30). In fact, it is Lianne herself, like Keith and other 'memory-typical' characters in the novel, who feels that her mind has come unstuck and that she has lost the plot that would enable her to pick up the thread of her life and move on. The storyline group members' dementia gestures towards this broader de-menting of a culture incapable of forming authentic memories as well as reflecting the traumatised mind unable to return to a traumatic point of origin.

Yet the comparison also makes it quite clear that, like Keith's falling shirt memory, this cultural de-mentedness is an inauthentic, and therefore irresolvable, condition: not forgetting proper but partial, prosthetic amnesia. We are told the storyline group members still succeed in "finding narratives that rolled and tumbled" (30) even as their symptoms are steadily worsening. Lianne interprets this as "a kind of protection perhaps, a gathering against the last bare state" (156), with the implication that, ultimately, all protection will fail and everything will be eclipsed in the face of this state. On both counts – in their initial ability to achieve narrative coherence and in their final attainment of oblivion – the group members thus demonstrate a progression that is denied those leading ‘empty-shirt’ existences.

Caught between an inability to remember and an inability to forget, the story of those marked by prosthetic dementia comes to read like the novel’s overall plot, which reproduces the idea of a substanceless, suspended descent at a structural level. Sonia Baelo-Allué has suggested that, by the end of the text, *Falling Man* “comes full circle” (2012, 77), which both is and is not entirely true. Though the novel loops back to the start in the sense that it ends where it began, with Keith walking in a daze away from the South Tower that has just collapsed and the North Tower that is about to, and though it retrospectively fills in some of the content that has gone missing from Keith’s traumatised memories of the day, it is questionable whether this in fact amounts to an “assimilation and reconstruction of events” that would “help readers work through” the trauma that Keith cannot (Baelo-Allué 2012, 77). The final image of the text takes us back to the falling shirt that set the scene at the outset, but the additional content provided by the third-person narrator on Keith’s behalf towards the end signals that the image is displaced at both the start of the text and its conclusion: in both instances, it already appears out of context and chronological sequence, a flashback to an image ‘originally’ witnessed from inside the tower, through an office window, but which even at this moment of its first sighting was already a screen memory, unassimilated and therefore unintegratable, a surrogate doomed to remain only partially known and incompletely forgettable. Right down to its structural level, *Falling Man* seems to suggest that there is no way out of this existence in suspended descent with no point of origin to return to and no ground zero to reach.

5 Conclusion

The figurative invocation of dementia in the texts investigated in this essay seems to run counter to more recuperative trends manifested in recent postmemory, “prosthetic memory” (Landsberg 2004), or post-postmodern fiction, where the presence of dementia in a member of the ‘memory generation’ may appear to facilitate or legitimise a transfer of remaining recollections to, and the retroactive rescue of memory by, later generations.[12] Yet even in these latter examples, the use of dementia as a narrative device is carefully qualified and at best only

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[12] Cf. e.g. Hacker 2003; Goldberg 2014; Richmond Mouillot 2015; Moore 2016.

ambiguously enabling of an 'after-memory' recuperation of the past. Even here, it is often not any remaining mental content that is communicated either to later generations or to the reader but, rather, the experience of de-menting itself. Whether overcoded by a recuperative narrative or, as in the texts discussed here, in openly eroding form, the presence of dementia in such writing seems to mark a response to a broader cultural sense of existing in a state of post-apocalyptic suspension, anticipating final obliteration. Whether this inter-cataclysmic state is considered in more narrowly post-traumatic terms as an extension of a state of postmemory or prosthetic memory, as the latest instalment of a "zombie apocalypse" (Chow et al. 2016), or as life in "remission" (Frank 2003 [1995], 8), or whether it is viewed as indicative of a broader cultural "latency" (Gumbrecht 2013) in a lingering postmemory "hyperreality" (Baudrillard 1994 [1981]), dementia evoked figuratively to convey an existential condition appears as the latest in a long line of attempts to conceptualise contemporary existence as an aftermath.[13] In this constellation, dementia as a figure captures the experience of coming after a memory-breaching event that effects its own erasure and defies our efforts to think and speak it, but it also conveys the impossibility of forming authentic new memories to take the place of the increasingly evacuated signifiers of past upheavals that shape our present and determine who we are, but of which we have no first-hand memories. As with earlier related metaphors, including postmemory or prosthetic memory, the choice of dementia as a motif may therefore also gesture towards an unacknowledged longing for forgetting and putting the past to rest. However, contrary to its predecessors, the image of dementia suggests that such putting to rest is impossible except in the form of self-erasing oblivion. Dementia as an aftermath condition does not mean forgetting; it means living in the shadow of forgetting.

Though indisputably, and perhaps indefensibly, problematic in their appropriation and displacement of dementia as a lived neurodegenerative condition, the figurative practices surrounding dementia, both in the metaphors we apply to it and in its metaphorical application, suggest that there may be more to our catastrophising fear of the "apocalyptic demography" (Robertson 1990) than concern for our welfare systems and care-giving capacity, and more to the "disgust and utter terror" (Behuniak 2011, 72) inspired by dementia than a vicarious response to memory erosion, inertia and loss of self as a biomedical horizon. As ever, the underlying fear is not that the 'zombies' may be coming for us. The fear is that they may already be us – or we may be them.

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[13] See also Pieter Vermeulen's contribution to this volume.

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Pieter Vermeulen

Homo Sacer / Homo Demens. The Epistemology of Dementia in Contemporary Literature and Theory

1 Literary knowledge in between the disciplines

What, if anything, can literature and critical theory contribute to our understanding of dementia? Their contribution to insight into disease and illness has customarily taken place under the rubric of the medical humanities, as that interdisciplinary field has gained institutional visibility since the beginning of the new millennium. In the so-called first wave of the medical humanities (Whitehead and Woods 2016, 1), literature participated in a fairly strict division of labour: while the biomedical sciences provided scientific knowledge, literature figured as a purveyor of affect – as a conduit of feeling that humanises the encounter between the biomedical apparatus and ill bodies and minds. In offering ethical considerations, educational perspectives and personal accounts of illness experience (3), literature functioned less as an independent source of knowledge than as a corrective to the dehumanising drift of science. This relation of complementarity informed two distinct roles for humanities scholarship: either it served as a "positive, pliant and benevolent" helpmate of medicine, or it did duty as its "antagonistic, noisy and opinionated" bad conscience (Viney et al. 2015, 3; similarly Maginess 2017, 6).

Arguably, this bifurcation between antagonistic and conciliatory roles precludes a truly *interdisciplinary* encounter between literature, critical theory and biomedicine. A recent wave of critical medical humanities scholarship has called for a more "robust commitment to new forms of interdisciplinary and cross-sector collaboration" (Viney et al. 2015, 2). In this new dispensation, the humanities would no longer only supply experience, education and empathy but would recognise that encounters with illness are often marked by negative affects – by "affective distance, and even a lack of care" (Whitehead and Woods 2016, 5). A *critical* medical humanities would continue to honour "a tradition of antagonistic thinking" (8), but it would mobilise critical ideas for constructive purposes: while "sensitive to imbalances of power, implicit and explicit," such a critical medical humanities would include "activist, skeptical, urgent and capacious modes of making and re-making medicine [. . .] and hence [medicine's] ability to transform, for good and ill, the health and well-being of individuals and society" (Viney et al. 2015, 3). The emphasis, in this critical or second-wave medical humanities, is

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on “critical openness, plurality and cooperation” (4) – on “creative boundary-crossing in and through which new possibilities can emerge” (Whitehead and Woods 2016, 8). In this new interdisciplinary constellation, literature and critical theory can become more than placeholders for ethics and affect, and can claim recognition as sources of knowledge in their own right.

In the neoliberal university, it seems vital for the survival of literary and critical studies to pursue a more equitable role such as this in the production of knowledge. The shift to a constructive interdisciplinarity, moreover, resonates with developments in research policy and within the field of literary studies itself. As fundamental research in many European countries is increasingly dependent on funding provided by the European Research Council, the ERC’s organisation of its research agenda in light of ‘grand challenges’ and ‘missions’ all but enforces an interdisciplinary mode of operation, as challenges and missions are defined without explicit consideration for discipline-specific research agendas (even if it is not hard to see how this set-up implicitly privileges the social and hard sciences and forces the humanities to abandon a ‘blue skies’ approach for a commitment to discipline-external missions and challenges). In the so-called 9th framework programme for research and innovation, which sets the strategic agenda for the ERC’s funding decisions in the decade following Horizon 2020, there will likely be little space for humanities research. The one proposed ‘grand challenge’ that might leave some room for humanities scholarship is called “Citizen Health and Wellbeing.” This challenge is linked to a ‘mission’ titled “Decreasing the Burden of Dementia,” which aims to “halv[e] the human burden of dementia by 2030” (Mazzucato 2018, 26). For better or worse, this is the institutional context in which humanities scholarship will likely operate in the near future, and it is a context in which the constructive attitude that proponents of a critical medical humanities promote becomes all but inescapable. In the conversation with other subjects, the humanities should participate as co-creators of knowledge, not just as either critical consciousness or therapeutic humaniser.

This compelled constructiveness dovetails with developments internal to the discipline of literary studies. Recent years have seen a shift away from critique and reading practices powered by suspicion and towards a more affirmative consideration of the affordances and attractions of the literary. Rita Felski’s “postcritical reading” (2015, 12), Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus’s “surface reading” (2009) and Heather Love’s call for “close but not deep” (2010) description (rather than critical interpretation) provide labels for a shared intent to apprehend the potentials of aesthetic objects and the nature of our attachments to them. For these scholars, such an affirmative approach is ultimately more productive than what they (often somewhat reductively) see as the overly negative attitude of poststructuralist critique. They call on literary studies to forego political posturing and to reconnect to the field's base commitment to the study of texts and their effects on bodies and minds. As my essay seeks to show, such a return to disciplinary specificity and to the generation of a particular kind of literary knowledge offers a promising avenue to allow literary studies a voice in the larger interdisciplinary dialogue.

This essay, then, makes a double argument about the capacity of literary studies to contribute to an interdisciplinary understanding of dementia. I argue that literary studies has the resources to attend to the repetitions, reductions, indirections and fragmentations that mark the language of dementia. The fragmentary character of the language of dementia is something that decades of attention to trauma testimony and more than a century of modernist complexity have adequately prepared literary studies for; the protocols literary studies have developed for attending to linguistic complexity can be mobilised in the often perplexing and deeply paradoxical encounter with dementia. At the same time, such a disciplinary contribution to interdisciplinary dialogue is often overshadowed by a tendency in a significant strand of literary and cultural representations of dementia to convert the cognitive decline and memory loss associated with dementia into a singular kind of epistemological privilege (even if cognitive and mnemonic decline are only two aspects of the multifaceted reality of dementia). According to this concept, people living with dementia somehow acquire a direct access to a truth that is uncontaminated by the instrumental and logical reasoning to which 'well-functioning' (i.e. neurotypical) brains are confined. In the next section, I provide a number of examples of such moves in different literary genres (to underscore that these moves are not genre specific) and argue that they are especially significant in the genre of detective fiction – a genre traditionally committed to the powers of ratiocination. The third section shows how such an elevation of non-neurotypical states of mind as sites of epistemological privilege resonates with a tendency in the field of critical theory to credit particular mental pathologies (paranoia, psychosis, schizophrenia) with exceptional epistemological powers. A cognitive impairment like dementia could become another such paradoxically valorised mental affliction. I turn to the work of Giorgio Agamben, which has been exceptionally influential in theoretical thought in the past two decades, as a particularly important instance of such a rhetorical procedure in order to underline its debilitating abstractness and its inability to address the complex everyday realities of living with dementia. In my final section, I propose an approach to literary fiction dealing with dementia that resists such inflated critical gestures and instead generates disciplinary knowledge that can contribute – although not uncritically – to the interdisciplinary challenge of understanding and improving the lives of people with dementia.

2 Blindness and insight in dementia literature

When we look at some of the ways dementia figures in contemporary fiction, we can see literature negotiate the temptation to accord dementia an awkward epistemological privilege. My examples come from three literary subfields – one highbrow and experimental, one middlebrow and one young adult. I begin with the last. In Norwegian author Johan Harstad's young adult novel *172 Hours on the Moon* from 2008, NASA organises a global competition to assemble a crew of three youngsters for a trip to the moon, more specifically to a moon base that was abandoned in the 1970s for lack of resources. All but one of the astronauts die on the trip in strange fights with mysterious doppelgängers. Extremely fast and strong, these doppelgängers are evidently intent on the destruction of humankind. The plot's final horrific twist is the revelation that the one survivor is actually a doppelgänger, who travels to Earth to inevitably wipe out human life. By forcing us unwittingly to inhabit the mind of that destructive doppelgänger, the novel creates a particularly powerful and disturbing experience.

Still, the novel somewhat prepares us for this apocalyptic climax through one character with dementia who, we read, used to work as "a custodian with the highest security clearance at NASA" but whose warnings about the moon trip are not taken seriously in the care home in which he lives, since he is reduced, as the narrator notes, "to a bag with eyes, a box no one really knows where to send" (Harstad 2012, 24). The conclusion to the plot redeems the old man's pronouncements and retroactively qualifies them as visionary prophecies. The ex-custodian's failure to communicate convincingly, in the logic of the novel, comes to stand for a deeper oracular knowledge of the apocalyptic doom that awaits the world. Cognitive attrition, by means of which dementia is represented in this text, is, in short, converted into epistemological privilege.

This move is emphatically part of the novel's generational logic. The novel makes it very clear that the lunar travel competition is a cynical ploy by older generations to revive a disastrous space exploration project from the 1970s and to sacrifice a younger generation in the process. This generational logic, in which a baby boomer generation sells out the welfare state and ruins the planet for generations born after 1980, is a constant feature of Harstad's novels – *172 Hours on the Moon* is not the only of his novels to end with planetary collapse (Vermeulen 2017). In this respect, it is significant that in the novel the character living with dementia is called Himmelfarb – a Yiddish name meaning 'colour of the sky' and thus intimating the character's singular capacity to read the signs of the coming apocalypse. Yet in this context of doom and forgetting, the name also inevitably points to the Holocaust – and to a generation of survivors who, unlike the cursed baby boomers, *have* remembered enough to see and read apocalyptic signs. This is something the post-war generation, the novel suggests, has chosen to forget. The trope of dementia, then, points not directly to a fatal forgetting but to a more complex dialectic of remembrance and forgetting: in the plot, dementia paradoxically stands for an act of *unforgetting* (or an inability to forget), something post-war generations conveniently forget to attend to.

The appeal of dementia as the placeholder of an alternative epistemology is particularly significant for the detective novel, as that genre was traditionally beholden to the force of human ratiocination. A fundamentally conservative genre, traditional ('golden age') detective fiction invites the reader to identify with a rational guide who manages to distil a coherent narrative out of a bewildering array of details and to help isolate and eliminate criminals from society (Porter 1981; Moretti 2005). Detective fiction is then an extended paean to order and reason in which the figure of the detective is tasked to "re-establish sequence and causality" (Porter 1981, 30) and reinscribe the social world as an eminently legible and orderly place. Such exalted claims for the rational powers of the detective seem rigorously incompatible with the symptoms of dementia. This is perhaps nowhere clearer than at the end of Henning Mankell's Wallander series, where, in the ninth book in the series, Mankell decisively signals the end of Wallander's career by showing him, as the novel has it, "descend[ing] into a darkness that some years later transported him into the empty universe known as Alzheimer's disease" (2009, 501; see also Simonsen 2015). No resurrection, then, for Wallander – as there was for Sherlock Holmes when Arthur Conan Doyle gave in to public pressure to continue the Holmes franchise in 1901 after having seemingly killed the character in 1893: "After that," Mankell (2009, 501) writes, "there is nothing more. The story of Kurt Wallander is finished, once and for all."

Works that bring dementia to bear on the template of the detective novel, then, point to an ambition to query the model of rationality encoded in the genre. Indeed, there is a more general tendency in dementia fiction to single out individuals who embody ideals of rationality. Examples are Lisa Genova's *Still Alice* (2007), in which a linguistics professor at Harvard develops early-onset Alzheimer's; Matthew Thomas's *We Are Not Ourselves* (2014), in which the affliction hits a neuroscientist; or Alice LaPlante's thriller *Turn of Mind* (2011), which is narrated from the perspective of a neurosurgeon with dementia (see also Martina Zimmermann's essay in this volume). The collision of dementia and intellectual prowess serves to underline the cruelty of the syndrome; yet within the genre of the detective novel, it often serves as an occasion to explore alternative modes of access to truth.

Emma Healey's bestselling 2014 novel *Elizabeth Is Missing* signals its critique of traditional modes of rationality through its variation on the template of the detective novel. *Elizabeth Is Missing* offers an exceptionally compelling account of the demented mind: half of the novel is narrated by Maud, who moves through different stages of what the reader deduces must be dementia as the story progresses. We are invited to share her disorientation and lack of understanding of events as she finds herself in situations that she, like the reader (since the openings of the chapters all take place in medias res) is at a loss to understand and with which she (again like the reader) needs to learn to cope. *Elizabeth Is Missing*, in short, is the kind of novel that can contribute to interdisciplinary discussions of dementia: it offers a fictitious internal, first-person perspective that other disciplines count on literature to deliver.

Yet the novel does not fully sustain the modest realism of its evocation of dementia. The chapters focalised through Maud alternate with instalments of a story situated in Maud's youth in the immediate aftermath of the war, when her sister Sukey unaccountably disappeared. The disappearance was never resolved and has, we are meant to infer, remained an open wound throughout Maud's life; in the novel's narrative present, it resonates with what Maud takes to be the (not so) mysterious disappearance of her friend Elizabeth from her house. To the reader's mild frustration, it takes Maud until the end of the novel to remember what her daughter has told her: that Elizabeth has been moved to a hospital. Yet the resonances between the two disappearances in Maud's mind do allow her to solve the old crime. Because the dialectic of remembering and forgetting – instantiated by Maud's dementia – reorganises the information that has remained half buried in Maud's mind for more than half a century, she finally links up the different clues and identifies a particular patch of land where her daughter then digs up Sukey's remains. As Maud says, "It is my fault because I looked in the wrong places, I collected rubbish from everywhere else, and all the time the real things were lying out there, waiting for me" (Healey 2014, 258). It took a cognitive impairment and the dementia-induced reorganisation of Maud's memory to distinguish the rubbish from the clues.

Significantly, the novel presents this solution as the quasi-automatic outcome of non-transparent and mysterious mental processes, *not* of a more traditional process of ratiocination. Again, dementia seems to hold an exceptional relation to a truth that remains inaccessible to 'normally' functioning brains, and detection and dementia appear to be intimately connected. Katsura Sako (2016, 323–324) has noted that the collaborative nature of the discovery, in which Maud and her daughter both play crucial roles, exemplifies a tendency in contemporary detective fiction by women writers to abandon the authority of the rational individual for more co-operative modes of discovery. Another kind of female intimacy is even more significant. The strand of the novel situated in Maud's youth is haunted by a "mad woman" who roams the streets in despair over the death of her daughter, yet whom the young Maud also believes to hold the knowledge about the disappearance of her sister. When the police interrogate the old Maud after the identification of the remains, she explicitly mentions the enabling role played by the mad woman ("It's what the mad woman said" [Healey 2014, 267]). Madness and dementia, that is, both play a role in the revelation of the truth. As Lucy Burke (2017a, 95) has argued, this shows that "the novel arguably retains a residual affinity for the kind of medieval figuration of wisdom in folly that Michel Foucault identifies in *Madness in Civilization*." Indeed, the novel develops a "fundamentally ethical figuration of both women as agents of truth – almost as the embodiment of a will or drive to truth – insatiable, furious and relentless" (96). The solution at the end of the novel suggests that society sidelines this aberrant yet paradoxically epistemologically privileged perspective at its own peril. Even if the epistemological privileging of dementia, as I have been arguing, is problematic, the marginalising that the novel argues against equally misses the specificity of dementia.

Such an elevation of a particular dementia epistemology is not only a feature of young adult fiction and genre fiction, but also of contemporary experimental writing. The last instalment in British author Will Self's decidedly high modernist trilogy of novels – *Umbrella*, *Shark* and 2017's *Phone* – is a case in point. The trilogy has been described as an "embuggeringly difficult and repetitive stream-of-fractured-consciousness" work (Leith 2017) and as "a brilliant, epic anti-tweet" (White 2017). *Phone* itself consists of one continuous 600-page paragraph in which "five different free-indirect points of view cycle in different time frames, transitioning without warning mid-sentence" (Leith 2017). The novel begins in the consciousness of the 78-year-old Zack Busner, a retired psychiatrist who is suffering a breakdown in a restaurant. The novel opens with the evocation of a telephone ringing:

> . . . . ! and again . . . . ! Two groups of four . . . . ! on it goes . . . . ! insistently persistently . . . . ! not that one hears it quite so much nowadays . . . . ! if one does it's a fake – a recording of an old phone . . . . ! done with a lot of echo . . . . ! so's to suggest it's ringing in a largish, darkish hall . . . . ! poorly lit by tall, narrow windows . . . . ! many little stained panes . . . . ! altogether depicting a square-jawed medieval knight. (Self 2017, 1)

The passage conveys what we could call high modernism's hyperrealist ambitions: the attempt to capture the overwhelming and disorienting influx of data and impressions on what Virginia Woolf famously called "an ordinary mind on an ordinary day." In this passage, the sequences of four dots do not mark elisions but reflect the ringing of an old-fashioned phone, which the novel amplifies as part of the information overload beleaguering the contemporary mind. Even the customary diacritical marker of silence, then, has become loud and intrusive. The passage reflects the trilogy's overarching ambition to capture the madness of twentieth- and twenty-first-century life and to tap into the imbrication of consciousness and technology.

It transpires that dementia – or, more specifically, Alzheimer's – functions as some kind of master pathology for coping with this madness, as Busner turns out to be experiencing the onset of the condition. In a way that comes remarkably close to the link between dementia and detection in *Elizabeth Is Missing*, where forgetting enables a better grasp of clues and signs amidst semiotic detritus, Busner reflects that "Alzheimer's itself may be a form of good mental health – after all, what could be saner in a world in which every last particle of trivia is retained on some computer than to . . . *forget everything*" (Self 2017, 30). Cognitive regression (which is the aspect of dementia this novel foregrounds, even if we know it to be a much more multifaceted syndrome), in other words, appears as a salutary capacity for information sifting. As Self himself said in an interview, "Perhaps dementia is the only sane response to a world in which all information is retained. The individual has to obliterate this overload of data. Alzheimer's becomes the abiding condition of the human subject in a situation of total access to information" (Doherty 2018). The double nature of dementia – as both a form of cognitive regression and a shortcut to insight – is announced in the novel's epigraph, which is taken from psychiatrist R. D. Laing: "These arabesques that mysteriously embody mathematical truths only glimpsed by a very few – how beautiful, how exquisite – no matter that they were the threshing and thrashing of a drowning man" (Self 2017, n.p.). The indifference signalled in the words "no matter" here points to a mismatch between the grandiose claims made on behalf of struggling individuals, "threshing and thrashing," and their lived experience.

3 Abjection and abstraction: Dementia theory

The literary tendency to inflate the epistemological promise of dementia resonates with analogous developments in the field of critical theory. The fact that this tendency can be observed in different cultural domains strongly suggests that it taps into a deep societal unease about the dubious ways we deal with dementia, and with people with dementia. Even if the epistemological elevation of people with dementia might be explained as a form of guilty overcompensation, it is important to underline that it is not very helpful in coming to terms with dementia as a social phenomenon. Especially since the rise of poststructuralist theory in the 1970s, the field of critical theory is prone to exploring figures of extremity, whether these are subalterns, cyborgs, posthumanoids or *Muselmänner*. In this field, the elevation of abjected figures inhabiting the borderlands of mental life is not uncommon:

think of Deleuze and Guattari's staging of the schizophrenic as a radical and revolutionary nomad who scrambles, decodes and reconfigures the elements of reality in the unrestrained pursuit of desire (2009); think of Fredric Jameson's recognition, shortly after his dismissal of conspiracy thinking as "the poor person's cognitive mapping," that paranoid thought yet constitutes an attempt "to think a system so vast that it cannot be encompassed" by customary categories and perceptions (1992, 2); or think of recent claims that psychosis is a productive posture through which we can apprehend the dissociated realities of digitalised finance (De Boever 2018). All these positions seek out postures of mental extremity to find an alternative access to truth.

This rhetorical move, which converts mental distress into a site of truth, is ingrained in critical theory (as well as in the literary imagination, as my examples show). The work of Giorgio Agamben provides a case in point, not least because it is regularly invoked in discussions of dementia and Alzheimer's (and has had a great influence on critical thinking, especially once the aftermath of 9/11 made the timeliness of his work unmistakable). In *Homo Sacer*, Agamben notoriously identifies the concentration camp as the paradigmatic figure of Western political governmentality. In the very last pages of that book, Agamben introduces the *Muselmann* as "the most extreme figure of the camp inhabitant." The *Muselmann*, according to Agamben, is "a being from whom humiliation, horror, and fear had so taken away all consciousness and all personality as to make him absolutely apathetic." "Mute and absolutely alone," we read, "he has passed into another world without memory and without grief" (Agamben 1998, 185).

It is not hard to see why descriptions like these have resonated with dementia researchers. Lucy Burke (2019, 5) has argued that analogies between the Holocaust – as "the most unspeakable form of suffering" – and dementia are widespread in cultural and journalistic as well as academic registers, and they serve to encapsulate the syndrome's "extreme impact upon personhood." The spectre of the death camp recurs in humanities scholarship on dementia. Anthropologist Lawrence Cohen, for instance, has claimed that dementia provides "a more compelling, or at the least more generative, exemplar" of the paradoxes that mark devalued forms of life – more compelling, that is, than the examples of the *Muselmänner* and the brain-dead patients that Agamben himself invokes. This is the case, Cohen (2006, 9) writes, "given the strong ambivalence that comes to haunt the value of severely demented life" – its uncertain positioning in relation to notions of personhood, autonomy and agency.

While this is a description of dementia one may subscribe to, it misunderstands Agamben's – and much of critical theory's – larger project. This is a project less committed to "strong ambivalence" than to the paradoxes of extremity, less interested in the complex and textured mixture of societal values than in the rhetorical affordances of paradox. The rest of the career of the *Muselmann* in Agamben's oeuvre makes this clear. If he makes only a cameo appearance at the end of *Homo Sacer* in 1998, in *Remnants of Auschwitz*, a sequel of sorts published two years later, the *Muselmann* receives a full chapter that teases out the paradoxes of his existence – his status as "an indefinite being in whom [. . .] humanity and non-humanity, [. . .] vegetative existence and relation, physiology and ethics, medicine and politics, and life and death continuously pass through each other" (Agamben 2000, 48). This position as a limit figure between the human and the inhuman paradoxically makes the *Muselmann* an adequate witness to the horrors of the twentieth century. For Agamben, testimony is "an ethos of bearing witness to that for which one cannot bear witness" (Mills 2008, 81). This means that the *Muselmänner*, rather than the survivors, count as, in Primo Levi's terms, "the complete witnesses" (Agamben 2000, 33) to the Holocaust. Exposure to extreme suffering, in other words, acquires a form of epistemological power. The *Muselmann* is cast as an *ethical* figure in order to shift epistemological authority from traditional reason to testimonial truth.

Agamben's *Muselmann* points to a more general critical proclivity for (mis-) reading immobility and despair as paradoxically appropriate modes of witnessing violence, for seeing inarticulacy as the oblique communication of an unspeakable truth and for celebrating forgetting as an indirect mode of fidelity to the immemorial. When we conceptualise dementia as "the exception inherent in the normative construction of aging," as anthropologist Jessica Robbins (2008, 17) does, or when we see it "as the proxy or promise of bare life," as fellow anthropologist Lawrence Cohen (2006, 11) does, we underline the proximity of Agamben's reflection on the production of bare life to the phenomenon of dementia. To the best of my knowledge, Agamben uses the term "demented" – *demente* in Italian – only once, and not in the *Homo Sacer* volumes but in a short essay titled "What Is the Contemporary?" (Agamben 2009, 43–44). In this essay, Agamben puts forward the thesis that in order to capture contemporary life, we need to be able to keep our distance from it: so as not to be blinded by the flashy hyperpresence of the present, we need to cultivate the capacity to see darkness. "The contemporary," Agamben writes, "is he who firmly holds his gaze on his own time so as to perceive not its light, but rather its darkness." Only in this way, Agamben argues, can the contemporary see the "demented grin on the face of his age." Perceiving obscurity, Agamben notes, is not the same as lacking vision – as the neurophysiology of vision shows, the absence of light activates a series of peripheral cells in the retina called "off-cells" (44), and "to perceive [. . .] darkness is not a form of inertia or of passivity, but rather implies an activity and a singular ability" (45).

Dementia is linked to a paradoxical ability to see darkness and thus to witness the truth. And if, as I suggested above, this notion has become a pervasive trope in literature and theory, it is important to underline the problems with such a valorisation of darkness and illness if literary studies is to make a disciplinary contribution to an interdisciplinary understanding of dementia. Of course, putting such intellectual emphasis on representations of dementia has the merit of helping remove the stigma that attaches to it, but we must also observe that this critical elevation of dementia misses crucial aspects of the condition as a lived reality – aspects which are *also* present in the literary works discussed. Before the next section explores a more enabling disciplinary approach to dementia, I want to point to three such limitations.

First, dementia is not only an extreme condition of cognitive impairment – it is a *differentiated, slow, gradual process of mental and physical decline*, different stages of which require different forms of care and afford different ideas of personhood, creativity and agency. Such differentiation and pluralisation are derailed by the focus on abjection and abstraction (Burke 2019). Second, dementia requires (often mundane and unglamorous) *modes of response and engagement* that are not captured by the category of 'witnessing,' or by tendencies in literature and intellectual thought to elevate dementia's mental changes as a sign of its oracular, truth-generating capacities. It requires modes of attention, attachment and care that, for instance, the novels by Will Self and Emma Healey also evoke. A third problem is that Agamben's work on bare life generates an ahistorical abstraction that is not "able to address the specific historical and economic determinants that render people more or less vulnerable"; as Lucy Burke (2019, 18) has remarked, such an approach is decidedly unhelpful in our thinking "about the ethics and politics of long life, illness, dependency, and care." It distracts from the socioeconomic and political contexts in which we all have to deal with dementia – contexts in which the decline of the post-war welfare state, for instance, is a big issue. If dementia circulates in literary and cultural discourses of violence, it is necessary also to make visible the *slow violence* of diminishing welfare provisions (a reality *Elizabeth Is Missing* hints at, for instance, by situating its earlier murder story before the establishment of the NHS and robust welfare institutions in the UK; the decline of the welfare state is also an abiding obsession in Harstad's works). For this, an oracular capacity to stare the gloomy present in the face is arguably less useful than a readiness to tackle more mundane and unglamorous, but ultimately also more urgent, challenges.

4 Dementia and literary knowledge

If literary studies wants to make a disciplinary contribution to an interdisciplinary understanding of dementia, it needs to do more than offer critical abstraction or promise empathetic relief. It is my conviction that literary studies is well equipped to throw light on the complex mental processes, intersubjective exchanges and socioeconomic ramifications of dementia. Take, as an example, this passage from the beginning of the twelfth chapter of *Elizabeth Is Missing*, narrated from the perspective of Maud:

> *Have you moved?*
>
> "No," I say, "I've been here ages."
>
> I'm sitting in a sitting thing, for sitting on, facing a computer screen with red writing running along it: "Please make sure your GP has your new address." Every now and then there is a high-pitched beep and a name flashes across the screen [. . .] Helen [i.e. Maud's daughter] squeezes my wrist when I start to read them out loud. She is sucking on one of those strong mentholly lozenges you get for sore throats, so I suppose we must be here for her. (Healey 2014, 152)

The passage offers a first-person perspective of a moment in the life of a person living with dementia – a perspective not available in other scientific disciplines, and not even in other artistic genres like film or documentary. Contemporary literature's update of the modernist stream of consciousness – not only in this work but also in, for instance, the so-called neuronovel (think of Mark Haddon's *Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* [2003], narrated from the perspective of a person with autism, or Jonathan Lethem's *Motherless Brooklyn* [2004], which adopts the point of view of someone with Tourette's syndrome; Roth 2009) – is a means by which it can provide otherwise unavailable fictitious insights into the workings of a mind with dementia. As readers, we share Maud's disorientation: we, like Maud, need to try to identify the disembodied voice ("*Have you moved?*") and make sense of objects whose names she has forgotten ("a sitting thing") and of her belief that her daughter has a sore throat, which seems to explain why she finds herself in the waiting room of a doctor's office.

Yet it would be wrong to see the passage as only an exercise in empathy (although it certainly is that). After all, the reader's disorientation in the passage is not the same as that of Maud: we, as readers, do know the name of the "sitting thing"; we do realise that the idea that Maud is still caring for her daughter rather than being fully dependent on her daughter's help is an illusion; and we do understand that the question "*Have you moved?*" refers to changing residence, not just changing positions. The result of this divergence is a sense of dramatic irony, creating a certain emotive distance between reader and character. Rather than serving as a conduit for empathy, then, literature here furnishes insight into the limits of empathetic identification. And the complexity of the novel's engagement with empathy is compounded in another way: through the repetitiveness of Maud's experience of finding her bearings, and through the frustration of seeing her forget again and again what she has just come to find out, the reader's experience of exasperation and irritation comes close to that of a typical caregiver, who faces these scenarios every day. In this way, the novel directs empathy at the disheartening plight of Helen, Maud's daughter, rather than at Maud herself (even if at other times, our sympathy for Maud increases when we suspect that her daughter is not empathetic and patient enough). The complicated interplay of alternating forms of empathy and affective distance reveals fiction to be "a site in and through which empathy is not only felt and imagined, but also negotiated and contested"; rather than providing merely an occasion for celebrating fellow-feeling, literature offers insight into "the difficulties and deficiencies in our intersubjective encounters" (Whitehead 2017, 13).

Such an insight in the complexity of understanding and feeling for people with dementia already moves beyond the uses of literature as conceptualised in the first wave of medical humanities research, in which literary feeling was called upon to compensate for the deficiencies of biomedicine. As Alan Bleakley (2015, 21) has argued, what literature can offer medical students is a necessary "tolerance of ambiguity," which can prevent "misdiagnoses and over-diagnoses, but also [. . .] the hierarchical structures endemic to medical culture." Yet crucially, these insights are not only of educational or therapeutic value: the paradoxes and ambiguities of dementia, and of interactions with people with dementia, *are constitutive of the phenomenon of dementia itself*; they are meaningful if we want to understand the psychological, social and political dimensions of dementia. The disorienting and profoundly ambiguous encounter with a person of whom we cannot possibly know whether they know us, let alone know whether they know that we do not know whether they know us, is more similar to the engagement with a hermetic modernist poem or a Beckett play than with, say, a step-by-step diagnostic algorithm. Encounters with people with dementia take place in the contested terrain between fact and fiction, between reality and performance. In the institutional context of interdisciplinary research programmes, this is a terrain where literary studies can make a vital contribution – beyond both empathetic particularity and critical abstraction.

In *Paper Minds: Literature and the Ecology of Consciousness* (2018), Jonathan Kramnick has argued for an insistence on disciplinary specificity in the context of wide-ranging interdisciplinary dialogue. Every discipline, Kramnick (13) argues, partly constructs its own objects; literary dementia, for instance, is not gerontology's dementia, nor is it welfare economics' dementia: "Every discipline has its own expertise and its own way of explaining whatever part of the world fits with its particular interest," and true interdisciplinarity happens only "when two or more expertises join together on some project or in some conversation." The value of disciplinary specificity, then, goes hand in hand with ontological pluralism, which holds that not all phenomena can be reduced to biology and physics, and "some things are known only at their own level of explanation" (18). The world that interdisciplinary projects study, then, is "irreducibly plural" (Kramnick 2018, 21). In such a pluralist universe, literary studies can gain and contribute disciplinary specificity. Literature's capacity to imagine a first-person experience of dementia and foreground the complications of such experience allows it to articulate a kind of knowledge about dementia that can productively enter interdisciplinary dialogue.

The question remains whether Kramnick's pluralist universe finds its counterpart in pluralist universities, clinics and funding schemes. The very congruence of the movements in the field of medical humanities (towards a 'critical' interdisciplinarity), in research policy (towards an interdisciplinary focus on 'grand challenges') and within literary studies (towards affirmation), should give us pause. Kramnick notes how 'strong' interdisciplinary programmes are often legitimised through a managerial logic of innovation and disruption that simply wishes to erase disciplinary boundaries. Such "corporate silo busting," for Kramnick (2018, 24), is the academic version of broader processes of neoliberalisation that, in other sectors of society, are also eroding welfare state provisions and institutional support for, among others, people with dementia. As Lucy Burke (2017b, 2–4) has remarked, the tendency to code the rise of dementia as a "crisis," a "timebomb" or an "epidemic" emerges in a neoliberal context that reduces illness and ageing to economic costs.

To flourish in an interdisciplinary context, then, literary studies and critical theory need to be critical of interdisciplinarity's participation in a more encompassing programme that, among other things, may erode the funding for dementia care. The project of contributing to knowledge about dementia is inevitably a compromised one in a broader context that might seem to demand resistance rather than participation. Yet here also, the passage above from *Elizabeth Is Missing* might begin to provide useful knowledge. It shifts the focus from the interaction between doctor and patient (the "primal scene" [Whitehead and Woods 2016, 2–5] of traditional medical humanities) to the strangeness of the components making up the doctor's office environment – screens, beeps, flashes, chairs – and to Helen, the caregiver whose efforts go almost unnoticed in the novel. In this way, it begins to show that proper care provisions are not a matter of personal kindness and ethics, but a multifaceted endeavour in which many actors participate and in which infrastructure and continued investment are key. It shows that empathy is not a goal in itself; it can only circulate if welfare provisions are in place. Resisting the legitimisations of cuts to health care, then, is a project in which dementia patients, caregivers, scholars from various backgrounds such as neurology, geriatry and health studies, and literary scholars can find a common cause.

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Martina Zimmermann

Dementia and the Politics of Memory in Fiction. From the Condition as Narrative Experiment to the Patient as Plot Device

This essay historically situates dementia fiction of the early 2000s that features Alzheimer's disease or a similar type of dementia in the context of the Second World War and the Holocaust.[1] It will delineate shifts that have occurred in how dementia is deployed in fiction that negotiates the various crimes committed and traumas predominantly caused by Nazi Germany. To do this, it will focus on the period from the 1980s onwards, commonly referred to as "Alzheimerisation" (Adelman 1995), when literary writing first employed the term "Alzheimer's disease." The period between 1980 and today is not distant enough to offer truly historicist conclusions. But to my mind, we can distinguish different phases of dementia literary writing (including significant periods of overlap), especially regarding how memory and forgetting have been explored and deployed in bestselling dementia fiction. I would distinguish: (i) literary fiction of the 1980s developed during what Jens Brockmeier (2015) refers to as the "memory boom" and Andreas Huyssen (2003, 4) sees as marked by an "explosion of memory discourses"; (ii) literary life-writing by dementia caregivers of the 1990s as part of the continuation of the memory boom period; and (iii) bestselling literary fiction of the early 2000s.

This essay brings a fictional text from the 1980s into conversation with several titles of the new century (for reflections on literary life-writing, I point to the contributions by Kristina Lucenko, Nina Schmidt and Dana Walrath in this volume). I take Debra Dean's bestseller *The Madonnas of Leningrad* (2006) and Alice LaPlante's acclaimed *Turn of Mind* (2011) as my present-day examples and read them against J. Bernlef's bestselling novel *Out of Mind*, first published in

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[1] An early version of this essay was conceived as a contribution to the conference "Dementia, Violence, and the Politics of Memory in Contemporary Literature, Film, and Comics," Freie Universität Berlin, in September 2018. A revised and expanded version was presented at a Centre for the Humanities and Health seminar, King's College London, in January 2019. Different parts of it were shared at the "Conversations on Care and/in the Community" workshop at Birkbeck, University of London, in June 2019, and during the "Ageing, Illness, Care" conference at the University of Huddersfield, in September 2019. I am grateful for the engaged and inspirational discussions which added to the revision of this essay in its final form. But most of all I owe sincerest thanks to Irmela Marei Krüger-Fürhoff, Nina Schmidt and Sue Vice for the invitation to Berlin and their generous editorial input throughout. I am funded by a UK Research and Innovation Future Leaders Fellowship (MR/T019794/1).

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Dutch as *Hersenschimmen* in 1984 and translated into English four years later. Within the period of Alzheimerisation, *Out of Mind* is arguably the first fictional text that melded the experience of dementia with the Nazi horror: dementia equals a death sentence and removes agency from the patient. This essay will explore how *The Madonnas of Leningrad* and *Turn of Mind* build on this move to connect dementia to cultural memory. Beyond that, it will question the possibilities of linguistic characterisation, narrative perspective and implied readerly activity (by which I mean empathy and reading for the plot) to release the patient from such imagery and lack of agency.

Over the period under investigation, studies concerned with the language of dementia patients significantly shifted in focus, and I will explore how literary representations resonate with these changing linguistic approaches, how remembering and forgetting are explored as tied to language use. Early psycholinguistic studies particularly concentrated on language breakdown, i.e. the deterioration of linguistic skills, explained by worsening cognitive skills. Since around the mid-1990s, interest has gradually shifted towards sociolinguistic dimensions. These sociolinguistic studies emphasise patients' continued linguistic capabilities and agency, assigning an important role to context in dementia discourse.[2] My readings take context as the space and atmosphere in which the patient remembers. I will trace how the situated interaction between patient and caregiver in fictional representations follows the gradual shift from psycho- to sociolinguistic perspectives. In addition, I will look at the role of cultural memory in each text and ask how its presence relates to a character's continued agency and maps onto language breakdown.

The memories explored in this essay concern the Nazi horror in *Out of Mind* and *The Madonnas of Leningrad* and an evil crime committed in *Turn of Mind*. Why read these novels together? In each text, the patient's disease-imposed forgetfulness is played out against salvation – deliverance from the disease, acknowledgement of the patient's inner life, redemption of the criminal. Their melodramatic turn makes us read for the plot and invest in their patient-narrators (Brooks 1995). But each text exemplifies a different understanding of dementia. *Out of Mind* can be taken as a linguistic study of the condition as embodying decline and loss. *The Madonnas of Leningrad* also develops dementia as a condition of dispossession, but its alternating narrative perspective draws the reader into an awareness of the patient's continued inner life. *Turn of Mind*, in the style of Henry James's novella *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), to which the detective story's title alludes, plays on

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[2] Vai Ramanathan (1997, Ch. 1) offers an excellent overview of the developments outlined in this paragraph.

the reader's belief in the patient's continued capabilities (Brooks 1995, 166–167). LaPlante challenges notions of loss as she creates a patient on whose lasting agency and memory the reader relies to find out whodunit.

Finally, the nexus of cultural memory, care environment and patient agency in bestselling writing points to one further aspect explored in this essay: empathy. Suzanne Keen has argued that "the contract of fictionality offers a no-strings-attached opportunity for emotional transactions of great intensity." But although, as Keen (2007, 168) continues, the reader of a novel "may enjoy empathy freely without paying society back in altruism," I would argue that reflections of quality of care and related patient agency in these novels *can* have a larger cultural and societal impact. This is especially the case where shifts in representations of linguistic capabilities, care environment and cultural memory are enjoined; where reading for the plot is intimately linked to reading for the patient's wellbeing in the present of her condition, not the past held in her memory.

1 *Out of Mind*: Psycholinguistic concepts of breakdown and torture of the mind

Given the popularity among critics and scholars of *Out of Mind* (e.g. Bitenc 2012, 308–314; Krüger-Fürhoff 2015, 106–108), I here limit myself to exploring what the protagonist's condition looks like.[3] This is worthwhile because, at around the time of the book's publication, the neurologist Joseph Foley (1992, 30) and colleagues asked questions like "What do demented people experience? What does their condition mean to them? What is their reaction to it? What are their gratifications? What are their frustrations?" The scientist saw these questions answered in *Out of Mind*. In the novel, Maarten Klein is in his 70s when he progressively loses his ability to narrate coherently and to perceive himself as a person. He increasingly loses language; first the ability to speak English, which he had learned after having moved to the United States from the Netherlands after the Second World War, and later the use of the first-person singular pronoun.

Bernlef wrote against the background of the flourishing psycholinguistic approaches to dementia of the time. These approaches, for example, Barry Reisberg's "global deterioration scale (GDS) for age-associated cognitive decline and

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[3] My reflections on *Out of Mind* in this essay rely on my previous analysis of Bernlef's text: I explored what *Out of Mind* reveals about the cultural image of dementia in the mid-1980s, especially focusing on the fictional deployment of dementia for the exploration of post-war trauma at that moment in time (Zimmermann 2020, Ch. 4).

Alzheimer's disease," were concerned with the worsening of language skills. The different stages defined ranged from "word and name finding deficit[s]" to the point when "all verbal abilities are lost" (Reisberg 1983, 174–175). Placed in this context, Bernlef's novel can be read as pushing the reader to ponder the psycholinguistic implications of denying a patient's continued identity and agency once they can no longer verbally articulate it. Such a reading is particularly meaningful, given the clinical work going on at the time. Towards the end of the 1980s, the most up-to-date scientific publications debated "evidence of awareness and sensitivity" in patients with advanced dementia (Tappen 1988). And contemporary literary critics indeed thought of Maarten Klein as having Alzheimer's disease (Desai 1989).

The question of the experiential side of Maarten's dementia brings us to the role of cultural memory in *Out of Mind*. Bernlef's narration builds on the medico-scientific understanding that dementia enhances the vividness of long-term memories at the expense of short-term recall (see also Irmela Marei Krüger-Fürhoff's essay on screen memories in this volume). Long-term memories, for Maarten Klein, manifest themselves in dementia-related hallucinations. And these hallucinations make Maarten victim to the most unsettling experiences of his youth, which had been lived in the face of the atrocities committed by Nazi Germany during the occupation of the Netherlands. In the following passage, for example, Maarten imagines himself to be addressing the liberators, voicing a guilty recall of his collaboration with the Nazis. The passage remains ambivalent, as the doctor's administration of a tranquillizer, in Maarten's confused mind, could also be read as Maarten's fear of a Nazi's attempt to kill him: "A man with a square face and short-trimmed hair enters with a syringe in his hand. I try to get off the bed but that blonde one holds me down while I feel the needle jab into my arm. 'I want to live! I want to live!!' 'Don't strap him down,' I hear a man's voice say. [. . .] Then I suddenly understand everything. 'You've got the wrong man. I wasn't on the wrong side. Maybe I was no hero, but I wasn't on the wrong side. I never hid any fugitives'" (Bernlef 1988, 110). Maarten's dementia is not obviously presented as stemming from his experiences from the Second World War, but Bernlef's choice to connect dementia and the Nazi atrocities, makes the horror of dementia transparent to the reader. *Out of Mind* thus fuses the depiction of dementia-related psycholinguistic disintegration with the notion of dementia as torture of the mind and – by extension of the German occupation to include the Holocaust – as a death sentence.

2 *The Madonnas of Leningrad*: Empathy for a patient deployed as plot device

Published in 2006, Debra Dean's debut novel, *The Madonnas of Leningrad* was a bestseller in the United States. As in Maarten's case, the dementia Dean (2006, 5) imposes on 82-year-old Marina enhances long-term memories at the expense of short-term recall – in the words of the invisible narrator, "Whatever is eating her brain consumes only the fresher memories, the unripe moments. Her distant past is preserved, better than preserved. Moments that occurred in Leningrad sixty-some years ago reappear, vivid, plump, and perfumed." This fictionalised disease characteristic, for Dean, is well suited to a composition of two narrative strands. One strand is set in the United States of the present day, as Marina and her husband, Dimitri, prepare for and attend their granddaughter's wedding. The other strand is set in the winter of 1941, during the Siege of Leningrad. As a museum guide in the Hermitage before the war, Marina, during the Second World War, has to join in packing and stowing away the precious artworks so that they may not fall into the hands of the German enemy. As the galleries of the Hermitage gradually empty, Marina begins to "mentally restock[] the Hermitage" (75), to create a "memory palace" (128). Following the principles of mnemonics, she learns by heart the position of each painting in each room and memorises what each painting looks like.

Dean's parallel construction thrives on imagery and experiences shared between past and present. Marina compares the effects of old age on the body, "this withered old carcass" (Dean 2006, 9), to the ravages of the war on "the body she had during the first winter of the siege" (9–10). The short periods of rest between intense hours of packing in the Hermitage are likened to "disappearing for a few moments at a time. Like a switch being turned off. After an hour or so, the switch mysteriously flips again" (5). The same vocabulary depicts Marina's mental absences in her state of dementia (13). The mini mental state examination (MMSE), one of the tools for diagnosing Alzheimer's disease, reminds Marina of school and university exams in her youth – the latter passed "with distinction," while her doctor "was not impressed" (8) with her performance in the former. The MMSE is a battery of tests used to define a patient's stage of cognitive decline; a specific score places the patient in one of the categories of the Global Deterioration Scale, for example. With a maximum possible score of 30 for normally performing individuals, the MMSE score falls with an increasingly steeper decrease over time in the case of Alzheimer's disease.

One further example for concepts shared between the two narrative strands in *The Madonnas of Leningrad* is the lack of trust of the young in the memory of the old. While in 1941, Marina doubts the words of babushka Anya (Dean 2006, 136), the corresponding event in the present turns Marina herself into the object of such doubt, as her daughter-in-law dismisses Marina's recurring ruminations on the past as fictitious, warning Marina's daughter Helen, "I don't know how much credence you want to give everything she says" (102). I will linger on this notion of doubt, because I find it goes beyond how Marina's illness experience is marginalised by others. It extends to the implications of Dean's two-plot strategy for how we, as readers, are led to perceive Marina as lacking agency, particularly in the novel's final chapters.

Using her memory palace to the full, in the last chapter set in the past, Marina gives soldiers a guided tour of the Hermitage. Fully aware of the power of her memory, Marina muses that "without her here to keep the memory of its art alive on the walls, the museum would be merely another decaying shell" (Dean 2006, 174). In the narrative's final, present-day chapter, the reader belatedly becomes aware that Marina has experienced this guided tour in the present day of her imagination. Her visions turn out to be "a gift" (80) that helps her forget the cold as she risks death from hypothermia after having run away from the wedding venue. A construction worker finds Marina in a building site, gesticulating to walls and ceilings and seemingly talking in Russian. Reporting on this, he unknowingly gives credit to the marvel of Marina's memory palace: "'It was like she was saying everything was beautiful. [. . .] You had to be there,' he insisted. 'She was showing me the world'" (228).

The construction worker's statement is available to the reader through Marina's daughter's memory of him. This triangulation explicitly points the reader to the privileged access they have to Marina's memory throughout and as embodied in the past narrative strand. Why is this important? By the time Dean published her narrative, psycholinguistic concepts of breakdown, as explored above, had gradually been replaced by a sociolinguistic focus "on preserved abilities" rather than "decrements and deficits" (Müller and Schrauf 2014, 23). Such discursivist paradigms support continued identity and agency by, for example, explaining a patient's behaviour and assertions in relation to their past experiences – we might think, for example, about Anne Davis Basting's TimeSlips creative storytelling project or the Trebus Project, which captures life stories (Basting 2009, Ch. 11; "Welcome to the Trebus Project").

Such sociolinguistic understandings are absent from the storying of Marina's dementia. Marina's past and the richness of her memory palace are not accessible to those who care for her, and as such they are not integrated into their perception of Marina's behaviour. More to the point, the reading for notions of loss in this narrative can be taken as the perspective of Marina's daughter or husband, and the novel indeed ends on their point of view: "Marina herself has left, though no one is able to pinpoint exactly when that happened, only that at some point she was no longer there. It is all over but the waiting" (Dean 2006, 225).

When a neuropharmacologist like me offers such a reading, she runs the risk – maybe more so than a trained literary scholar – of being exposed to charges that she merely mines this novel for notions of loss, without considering the ethics of readership. Lucy Burke has thought about the ethics of readership in relation to Emma Healey's *Elizabeth Is Missing*, published in 2014. Healey's account, in many ways, is comparable to Dean's (Zimmermann 2020, Ch. 7). Also a debut novel and a bestseller, the novel features an older, progressively declining dementia patient.[4] Healey's novel, too, is composed of two narrative strands: one set in the present day of Maud's increasing memory loss, one evolving around the disappearance of Maud's sister Sukey after the war. The mystery is solved by Maud's digging in her friend Elizabeth's garden. The people in Maud's environment attribute this behaviour to her dementia, but in fact it leads Helen to discover Sukey's body. For Burke, *Elizabeth Is Missing* "tells a story about ways of thinking about and living with dementia in a fundamentally inhospitable culture" (2018, 96). And similarly, Sarah Falcus and Katsura Sako describe the novel as "drawing attention to the social environment which judges and isolates those with dementia" (2019, 130).

To make a similar reading work for Dean's novel, we have to assign to the *reader's* agency a process of learning that ensures, as Burke puts it, the "ethical recognition of a person with dementia" (2018, 99). This learning is not an easy task in Dean's novel, even if the reader were to read for a meaningful merger of the two narrative strands. This is partly explained by how the separating out of two strands plays into notions of disruption. And these, in turn, are strongly underpinned by the role of cultural memory in this novel. In fact, the parallel construction attunes the reader actively to look for war-related language shared by the two strands – like the comparison of the nursing home to the death camp (Dean 2006, 46). The close knitting together of dementia and Nazi horror resonates with, and thereby enhances, psycholinguistic concepts of breakdown, as when we become privy to Marina's experience that "her thoughts seemed to move through sludge, words falling away, whole sentences lost in the muck. The paintings themselves seemed to be disintegrating, shot through with light and shadow like leaves eaten into lace by insects" (177). To put it simply, for the plot set in the past to move forward, Marina's dementia has to progress, her brain has to "empty." Marina, in fact, thinks of

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[4] It is not explicitly mentioned that Maud has "dementia" or "Alzheimer's disease." But the 82-year-old's forgetfulness is typified in situations and scenes that pertain to the cultural mainstream as far as age-related dementia is concerned (like going to the shops and forgetting why one went, not remembering how to lay the dinner table, or mistaking close relatives for strangers).

herself as “becoming like the museum. Everything, it is leaking. It is horrible” (96). But why does dementia feature in Dean’s novel at all? Why not set the narrative in wartime Leningrad in the first place? After all, it is the plot set in the past that we read it for. To think through this question, I will first take a closer look at the composition of a third text, Alice LaPlante’s *Turn of Mind*.

3 *Turn of Mind*: A piece of detective fiction or a case study of cognitive decline?

Turn of Mind, published in 2011, deals with 74-year-old Amanda O’Toole’s mysterious death. Particularly disconcerting in this fictional detective case is that four fingers from Amanda’s right hand have been surgically removed after rigor mortis had set in. Chief suspect is 64-year-old Jennifer White, a retired hand surgeon and Amanda’s long-term friend and neighbour. Yet, Jennifer has been diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease, and her MMSE cognitive rating scale of 19 out of 30 makes it seem impossible that she could strategically plan, execute and cover up such a crime.

LaPlante’s novel is entirely organised by the motif of dementia – on the level of story, text and narrative. The text is split into four parts, each shorter than the previous one – with plot time initially decreasing by a third and, in the final part, tumbling to only a quarter of the section before. Like *Out of Mind*, it is told in short paragraphs of varying decreasing length. Matching the textual indicators of decline, these four parts are set in different locations. In Part 1, Jennifer still lives in her own house. Part 2, by comparison, is set in a nursing home – described by Jennifer as “the descent from one circle of hell into the next” (LaPlante 2011, 143). Such a change in setting, if we follow Constance Rooke on the home in fiction, signals Jennifer’s imminent loss of self and identity in society (1992, 255). This becomes reality in Part 3, when Jennifer escapes the nursing home and the narrative traces her inability to interact adeptly with the outside world. Part 4 takes the reader into a prison-like public nursing facility.

Any murder mystery centrally relies on plot.[5] “Everything in the story’s structure,” writes Peter Brooks, “and its temporality, depends on the resolution of enigma” (1984, 18). Jennifer’s move to the nursing home helps thicken the plot. It also brings out the conceptual connection between *Turn of Mind* and

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[5] For deliberations on the role of detective fiction in dementia discourse developments, see Zimmermann (2020, Ch. 6).

literary texts that refer to the Holocaust. Maarten Klein confuses being placed in a nursing home with being deported, Dean’s narrator compares the care home to the death camp and Jennifer wonders in conversation with the resident manager Laura, “What did you do [to get sent here]? Everyone here has committed a crime. Some worse than others” (LaPlante 2011, 155). The nursing home as a locus of confinement merges notions of disease and crime, detention and punishment. This means that the patient is treated like a criminal. But a key characteristic of a criminal (as well as of a detective) is the ability to plot. It is this genre-required in/ability to plot that makes *Turn of Mind* a page-turner. From the first moment, when Jennifer is being interrogated by the police, the narrative is focalised through her only. The reader permanently lives under the horizon of her perspective and perception. Jennifer is both actor and witness, and therefore has control over what is revealed. This means that the reader reads not only for the question of whodunit but also *against* the trajectory of the disease, hoping that the mystery will be solved before Jennifer’s condition deteriorates further. In this regard, the continuous shifts in location have two functions in the novel because the effect is one of confusion: they work for *Turn of Mind* as a piece of detective fiction as much as a case study of dementia. How exactly does this play out?

A detective novel “is created [. . .] in four movements,” writes Robin Winks: (i) confronting the problem; (ii) looking for evidence; (iii) assessing the evidence; and (iv) revealing the identity and motivation of the criminal (1988, 7). In *Turn of Mind*, these four movements are connected to four different settings and stages of Jennifer’s condition. Thus, the continuous change of location increases tension as it pushes towards discovering evidence and draws the reader in the direction of dénouement, while tracing Jennifer’s decreasing cognitive capabilities and agency. This effect is enhanced as Jennifer’s felt space continuously shrinks. Space, according to the philosopher Hermann Schmitz and his co-authors Rudolf O. Müllan and Jan Slaby, “is not originally encountered as the measurable, locational space assumed in physics and geography, but rather as a predimensional surfaceless realm manifest to each of us in undistorted corporeal experience, for example in [. . .] sensing atmospheres” (2011, 245). “These atmospheres,” writes Mathias Wirth about Schmitz’s theory of feelings, “corporeally affect patients, doctors, nurses, and relatives” (2018, 4).[6] In *Turn of Mind*, they also affect the detective and her view of Jennifer – as witness or criminal.

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[6] I am indebted to Brian Hurwitz for pointing me to the work of Hermann Schmitz and Mathias Wirth.

Initially, we are encouraged to believe in Jennifer's authority as conferred upon her by the detective, the chief integrative figure of a mystery. The inspector trusts the continued power of Jennifer's mind to solve the crime: "I want your brain. I need your brain" (LaPlante 2011, 161), she asserts. But when story and text both play into mainstream understandings of dementia as a relentless process of degeneration resulting, for instance, in the loss of agency and wits, trusting Jennifer's continued capabilities means hard work for the reader. A steadily shifting narrative perspective suggests that Jennifer, in fact, does lose the ability to plot – and by this I mean both her ability to follow a sequence of everyday activities and her ability to scheme or intrigue. Told in the first person, only Part 1 truly suggests the presence of a plotting individual (Brooks 1984, 114). Part 2, although still told in the first person, attends already much more to Jennifer's shrinking felt space, her sensory and visceral experiences. Plotting, for Jennifer, becomes the most rudimentary process of survival; in her own words: "When I have a clear day [. . .] I plot. I am not good at it. [. . .] My plots are simple." What follows is a list of most elementary activities: "Walk to the door. Wait until no one is looking. Open the door. Leave. Go home. Bar the front entrance against all comers" (LaPlante 2011, 187). With the beginning of the narrative's third part, the first-person pronoun disappears. Reminiscent of Bernlef's narrative strategies, the story is now told in the second person.

Part 4 is written in the third person. But, unlike in Bernlef's *Out of Mind*, this third-person perspective does not easily admit the reader into the patient's world of experience in free indirect style. The reader constantly wonders whether the text traces Jennifer's experience from within – or whether we are entrusted to an invisible, omniscient narrator. This confusion brings home the power of the narrative perspective in LaPlante's mystery: "An internal perspective," as Keen writes, "best promotes character identification and readers' empathy" (Keen 2007, 96; see also Strauß 2017, 89).[7] Such an internal perspective is best achieved through first-person self-narration or figural narration. Narration that moves inside many characters (as in Dean's account, where the narration moves from Marina to her husband to her daughter and back) creates distance. The instability of the narrative perspective in the final part of *Turn of Mind* then raises two questions: first, how well we could follow the patient up until this point; and second, how disease-imposed changes distance character from reader. The reader might wonder what has happened in the story so that LaPlante can confidently make this narrative choice in the final part.

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[7] I am indebted to Heike Hartung for pointing me to Sara Strauß's book chapter on Alice LaPlante's *Turn of Mind*.

At the end of Part 3, the inspector is convinced she has solved the mystery. For her, Jennifer has killed Amanda, and Jennifer's daughter Fiona has covered up the crime. Jennifer is transferred to a public nursing facility where she will stay for the remainder of her living days. Here, in Part 4, we find ourselves listening to Fiona, as she tells her mother how grateful she will always be that Jennifer covered up her manslaughter. With the mystery being solved, access to the patient's mind is no longer needed. In the words of LaPlante's narrator, "But when all is done, when the end is near, what is left? What is one left with? Physical sensation [. . .]. Now that it is over, now that it's near the end, she can think. She can allow herself to drift to places that before she would not go" (2011, 297). Put differently, dementia is allowed to progress to yet another stage – or, as Dean's narrator puts it in relation to Marina, "It is all over, but the waiting."

As the reader closes the novel, a nagging realisation remains. Yes, Jennifer serves as not much more than a listening vessel in Part 4, and one could argue that, as a patient, Jennifer simply makes for an extremely suitable unreliable narrator in what is designed as a gripping read. This impression is enhanced by how, as Falcus and Sako observe, the "interactions between the characters are described in the text without much of Jennifer's interpretative commentary, like lines in the transcript of a play, suggesting her lack of cognitive and emotional response to what she hears and sees" (2019, 133–134). However, the patient as criminal reveals herself as a red herring on several counts. We remain unclear about how much Jennifer actually plotted herself. We also realise that the patient truly led on inspector and reader – even when she is no longer able to act as a witness; the shift in narrative voice "achieves a distancing effect from the protagonist [so that] the reader calls Jennifer's complete innocence into question" (Strauß 2017, 100). And Jennifer's condition ensures that the crime committed by her daughter will remain unpunished forever. In the end, Jennifer's agency is an illusion – her actions are determined by the progression of her disease – it is her disease-imposed silence that protects her daughter. Or as Jennifer muses early on: "I wonder what will remain in my mind, at the end. What basic truths will I return to? What tricks will I play and on whom?" (LaPlante 2011, 74). These words resonate both with the condition itself and the mystery at hand.

LaPlante exploits psycholinguistic notions of breakdown to create the most unreliable narrator possible in fiction; she mercilessly traces Jennifer's "death of the mind" (LaPlante 2011, 136). But, in following Jennifer's decline and reading for the question of whodunit, we exercise sociolinguistic thinking: we constantly piece together what remains – in terms of narrative capabilities and the presumable reliability of Jennifer's mind. This kind of reading for the plot, I would argue in reliance on Michael Bérubé (2018, 135), prevents the reader "from reading right past the text to the 'content' within"; and by content, Bérubé means a diagnostic reading that focuses on the question of accuracy of the representation of a person with dementia.[8] This readerly activity elevates Jennifer from the rank of a cardboard figure typically required by the genre to a character with agency; an activity, as Pieter Vermeulen argues in this volume, that perhaps accords dementia a moral privilege. Concurrently, given that the action takes place in the here and now of Jennifer's illness, this activity frees the patient from what a long history of memory politics in dementia fiction has created: the idea of the patient as living in the past and on an emptying memory. Unlike in *The Madonnas of Leningrad*, dementia in *Turn of Mind* does not serve as an access point to a separate storyline in and of the past. Everything of interest to the reader happens in the present. Where the story needs the past, it is accessed through Jennifer's diary-like notebook (from which a page apparently holding a clue has been excised). A common therapeutic intervention in cases of dementia, this fictional diary includes information entered by visitors for Jennifer to read when she has "a better day" (e.g. Silva et al. 2017). For the reader (as well as the detective), the notebook works as an interface between perceived reliability and supposed cognitive impairment, between past and present.

At a recent Dementia, Narrative and Culture Network workshop for academics and service users, Veronica Franklin Gould, president and head of research at Arts 4 Dementia, emphasised how arts interventions re-energise people despite their early dementia symptoms – and here we are compelled to think of Marina's revival in the final chapter of Dean's novel (Gould 2018). Gould particularly stressed the power of living and interacting with the patient in the present and ranked these activities much higher than reminiscence strategies that keep the patient in the past of their not necessarily happy long-term memories.

4 The politics of memory in the literary history of dementia fiction

Bernlef's *Out of Mind* enmeshes dementia with notions of trauma, war and extinction at a time when the 40th anniversary of the end of war in Europe was being commemorated. This move introduced the disease as a metonym for memory loss and forgetting, and, as the essays collected in this volume suggest, this link endures to the present day. It contributes to negative characterisations of persons

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[8] I owe thanks to James Rákóczi for telling me about Michael Bérubé's work.

living with dementia, with pessimistic views of the patient impacting on the kind and quality of care provided, which have found reflection in subsequent fictional representations of dementia. As the victim of a veritable death sentence (which does not leave any room for agency), the patient turned into a narrative prosthesis from the 1980s onwards (Zimmermann 2017a, 83–85).[9] Twenty years after Bernlef's intervention, Debra Dean's Marina suffers the consequences of this pessimism about ageing, as her relatives do not believe she can tell her own story (and her agency to remember in the Hermitage is valorised as an activity of the young Marina). For Alice LaPlante's Jennifer the situation is slightly better – perhaps also because, at 64 years old, she is notably younger than the other two characters. The detective believes in her continued capabilities – and, as the one through whom *Turn of Mind* is focalised, she in fact controls the plot.

The idea of 'losing the plot' has become central to how society pitches the dementia patient in the literary imagination. At least in part, this can be traced to the period of the memory boom, when caregivers, for example, pictured their loved ones as losing their personalities because they were losing awareness of their painful and identity-defining past. *Out of Mind* emerges from this period. It negotiates the contemporary notion, as explored by Paul John Eakin, that serious impairment of the ability to tell or understand stories severely impacts on our sense of self (1999, 46; Zimmermann 2017b, 7–12). Dean develops this further. The perceived absence of a functioning memory leads others to doubt the patient's continued identity, a perspective reflected in how Marina's condition remains a vehicle for telling a story set in the past. Dean's choice appears particularly problematic when placed in conversation with Bernlef's narrative experiment and LaPlante's murder mystery. *Out of Mind* narrates the experience of dementia exclusively from within the patient's mind, necessitating the reader's belief in Maarten as narrator with a continuous identity. The process of reading itself ensures Maarten's authority and agency. During the period of Alzheimerisation, *Out of Mind* was arguably the first and most prominent piece of fiction to explore what dementia might feel like from within, leaving readers "with what we *think* dissolution of memory and breakdown of language may feel and look like" (Krüger-Fürhoff 2015, 108). It established the narrative techniques that have since been used again and again to portray the patient's supposed loss of articulacy and agency, identity and self.

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[9] I am adapting this term from David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder (2000, 6), who use it to emphasise that "the prosthesizing of [. . .] a rhetorical figure carries with it ideological assumptions about what is aberrant."

In addition, Bernlef popularised the fact that dementia enhances the vividness of long-term memories at the expense of short-term recall. Exploring the patient's past has since turned into an essential element of dementia fiction; eventually, as in *The Madonnas of Leningrad*, it became a narrative device. Although issues of cultural context are beyond the scope of this essay, the atrocities committed by Nazi Germany are forever etched into cultural and political memory and thus taken up by writers from around the world, not just those from Europe. We do not need actively to invest in Marina's continued identity to gain access to her past. What is more, by reading under the oppressive horizon of war-related metaphorical concepts and experiences, the reader's agency might easily fulfil what Dean's construction is able to challenge: we might miss the precious insight to be gained from how the two narrative strands meaningfully come together; we might miss Marina's continued rich inner life and experience. We might miss how identity-denying, extermination-related imagery keeps directing notions of loss which continue to dominate the current cultural dementia narrative.

Turn of Mind can be taken as proof of this. In the twenty-first century, a murder mystery may be the genre of choice for subjects that everybody wants to understand but cannot: the dementia experience. In the final pages of *Out of Mind*, Bernlef's Maarten Klein experiences freedom, freedom from the disease through his death (and freedom from the Nazi occupation of his mind). Jennifer, by comparison, loses her freedom. Yet she remains the winner in the hide-and-seek between detective and murderer – in a narrative told entirely in and about the present of Jennifer's illness. Until the narrative's final lines, *Turn of Mind* plays on the question of what this story is about – the careful tracing of a mind in dissolution or the dismantling of a crime. And this continued and persistent tension explains the power of LaPlante's text. *Turn of Mind* forces the reader to stay with the crime at hand, while kindling empathy for a patient increasingly challenged by the consequences of cognitive decline. Thinking in terms of genre, the plot-reliant detective story can return agency to the patient. But it does so more effectively when removed from the oppressive discourse of war-related extermination terminology, in a narrative space that privileges what Schmitz et al. (2011, 245) term the "affective involvement" of the person with dementia, in this way freeing the patient from being deployed as a narrative device without agency, while opening avenues for more supportive and enabling approaches to care.

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Dementia’s Paradoxical Relation to Buried Truths

Nina Schmidt

Over/writing the Father? Dementia and the National Socialist Past in Tilman Jens's *Demenz*

1 Introduction: A German life-writing genre of the second generation

Väterbücher or *Väterliteratur* (literature or books about fathers) are two established, albeit not unproblematic, terms in German literary history.[1] They denote a corpus of texts – the publication of which peaked in the late 1970s and early 1980s – from what was then West Germany and Austria. Julian Reidy (2015, 203) describes them succinctly as "prose texts with an autobiographical basis, aiming at coming to terms with the past in the microcosm of the family."[2] With Jennifer Cameron (2011, 37), we can add: "Protagonists reflect upon their families' relationship to the Nazi era, usually in a narrative of generational conflict between father and son or daughter."[3] Authors' "conflict over origins and identity against the background of fascism" (Brandstädter 2010, 284) were what drove the production of this genre.[4] East German literature of the time did not produce any such *Väterliteratur*. Ernestine Schlant (1999, 4) explains why: "As a Communist regime, East Germany saw itself *ipso facto* as inimical to fascism and hence under no obligation to acknowledge its own Nazi past. Fascism was interpreted

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[1] All translations mine.

[2] The original German phrase reads, "autobiographisch gefärbte und auf Vergangenheitsbewältigung im Mikrokosmos der Familie abzielende Prosatexte." For the sake of readability and with an international readership in mind, I will provide the German phrases in the footnotes only and work with what I hope to be adequate translations of the literature in the main body of the text.

[3] These texts often focus on the father figure but the mother, too, is important to many a *Vaterbuch*. Reidy (2015, 204) points towards Bernward Vesper's, Peter Härtling's, Günter Seuren's and Brigitte Schwaiger's work. Mothers have also been at the centre of standalone texts (e.g. in writing by Christoph Meckel, Julian Schutting and Helga Schneider). A term to describe mother accounts has not emerged, although Katra A. Byram experiments with *Mütterliteratur* (mother literature) to highlight the gendered nature of the term *Väterliteratur* as she sets out to analyse what it distorts. Byram (2018, 42–43) contends, "Gender expectations have screened certain elements of *Väterliteratur* from widespread perception."

[4] Orig.: "Konflikt um Herkunft und Identität vor dem Hintergrund des Faschismus."

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as an outgrowth of capitalism, and capitalism was still the reigning economic system in West Germany. It hence fell upon West Germany to deal with this past."

As the authors took to task their fathers or parents, they aimed to address the German public as well as their kin: each example of family history – each microcosm – was meant to speak to the macrocosm that is wider society. Most *Väterbücher* authors were representatives of the so-called second generation (born c. 1930–1945, in Michael Ostheimer's classification [2013, 173]), that is, the sons and, though less often, also the daughters of the perpetrator / wartime generation (the latter born c. 1900–1925, according to Ostheimer).[5] Through literary writing, these authors belatedly tried to trace their fathers' or parents' lives and reckon with their ideological convictions as well as the crimes they (might have) committed during the Second World War and the Holocaust. The perpetrator status of the fathers or parents written about differed; their roles ranged from that of high-ranking Nazi officials to collaborators or profiteers to ideological followers of and bystanders to the National Socialist regime.

Historically, the majority of these texts emerged in the wake of the student movement, under the banner of 1968. As the genre turns attention towards the family unit and the home, Ostheimer (2013, 195) views it as a forum in which sons and daughters pass moral judgement on their fathers/parents, their own awareness raised by events such as the Eichmann trial (1961) in Jerusalem, the Frankfurt Auschwitz trials (1963–1965) and "the idea of an intergenerational balance sheet of justice."[6] The children criticised their fathers/parents for their (in)actions under Nazism as well as, often, for their post-war silence.

I would argue that, in essence, *Väterliteratur* is a symptom of the widespread failure to confront the fathers with questions in person, during their lifetime, when a critical, productive and honest conversation about their past under National Socialism would still have been possible – at least in theory. I do not intend to cast blame on the children's generation for this circumstance. Sociopsychologically, it may not be all that surprising that within most German families, such conversations did not take place. Members of the parent generation typically stayed silent, for they were traumatised, conscious of their guilt or showing signs of what psychoanalysis has termed 'derealisation': an inability to bring together the historical events of the Second World War and the Holocaust (their scope) with one's

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5 Julian Reidy (2012, 13) takes authors born in the years of the Nazi dictatorship as well as in the immediate post-war years to be members of the second generation. Mathias Brandstädter (2010, 118–120) is critical of regarding *Väterbücher* authors as members of one generation. He finds authors' years of birth less relevant than the thematic focus and formal features of their writing.

6 Orig.: "die Vorstellung von einer intergenerationellen Gerechtigkeitsbilanz."

own individual life and actions of those years, thus avoiding feelings of shame, guilt or grief (Lohl 2019; with recourse to Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich's *Inability to Mourn* [1967]). In this emotional and social climate, many children were too afraid of what they might find to press their parents on the issue of complicity with much persistence. The psychologist Dan Bar-On (1989, 425) termed this "the 'double-wall' phenomenon": "Perpetrators did not want to disclose their inner conflicts, and others – their children, the potential confessors, and maybe most of us – did not want to know about it."

Väterbücher, then, are texts that try to make up for missed conversations or, indeed, confrontations. When authors constructed these accounts, their fathers were typically deceased (Ostheimer 2013, 166), which meant they had to face significant gaps in knowledge about their fathers' pasts and inner lives. These circumstances complicated finding any kind of definite answer to the question that, like Bar-On (1989, 427) in his psychological study, these authors too seem to have posed: "did a conflict of morality exist, and did it ever surface" over the course of the years following 1945? In attempts to counter a difficult point of departure, the sons and daughters often turned to archival materials (both from official as well as family collections) before engaging in what could be described as imaginative life writing: filling in the remaining gaps creatively.

What the writing descendant as well as the reading public gains from such creative nonfiction will be one of the overarching questions to bear in mind as we turn our attention to a more contemporary book: the journalist Tilman Jens's 2009 account *Demenz: Abschied von meinem Vater* (Dementia: A farewell to my father) about his father, renowned scholar and author Walter Jens.[7] This text, I argue, can be regarded as a new or belated *Vaterbuch*. While written in a very different era to the genre-defining examples of the 1970s and 1980s, the text's thematic focus as well as a number of its formal – e.g. stylistic – features warrants reading it as such. Crucially, it too emerges from failed and discontinued attempts to talk openly (T. Jens 2009, 65, 73–79). What is furthermore significant is that Tilman Jens writes it at a point in history that sees the last witnesses of the Holocaust and the Second World War dying and the memory of these catastrophic events

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[7] Gert Ueding (2009) identifies the subtitle as a reference to Peter Weiss' *Abschied von den Eltern* (1961; *Leavetaking*). There is an intertextual reference to Weiss's text in the main body of *Demenz* that corroborates Ueding's association (T. Jens 2009, 34), regardless of the irony that Weiss, as an author of Jewish descent, writes under decidedly different circumstances to Tilman Jens. Additionally, examples of the *Väterbücher* genre resonate with *Demenz*'s title, as they, too, feature the word *Abschied* in their titles, e.g. Seuren's *Abschied von einem Mörder* (Farewell to a murderer; 1980) and Hanns-Josef Ortheil's *Abschied von den Kriegsteilnehmern* (Farewell to the participants in war; 1992).

beginning to solidify. I will consider how this influences and motivates his text and the decision to bring together the narration of the father's dementia in old age with details of a youth under National Socialism.

2 The case of Walter Jens – a moralist with feet of clay

After studying classical philology and German studies at Hamburg and Freiburg, Walter Jens (born 1923 in Hamburg) became an eminent scholar, translator, author and professor of rhetorics at the Universität Tübingen. A distinguished public intellectual, he was a member of the Gruppe 47 from 1950,[8] president of the then West German PEN Centre from 1976 to 1982 and, as president of the West German Akademie der Künste, he was a major figure in the reunification of the *Akademie* with its East German equivalent after the fall of the Wall (Seger 2003, 847). Jens corresponded with Ingeborg Bachmann, Ernst Bloch, Heinrich Böll, Willy Brandt, Paul Celan, Günter Grass, Siegfried Lenz, Thomas Mann, George Tabori and many other significant political and literary figures besides (849). Becoming professor emeritus in 1988 (847), he continued to write scholarly books and articles and to engage in public debates. Newspapers and other media channels regularly requested his commentary on sociopolitical and cultural events as well as current affairs.

In November 2003, the *Internationales Germanistenlexikon 1800–1950*, an authoritative reference work documenting the lives and achievements of influential scholars of German studies was published, including an extensive entry on Walter Jens (Seger 2003; Dunphy 2005). The encyclopaedia's chief editor, Christoph König, had incorporated newly accessible information from the NSDAP (Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei) membership register held at Berlin's Federal Archives, and the news broke in the German media that Walter Jens had been a member of the Nazi Party from 1942.[9] As his son, Tilman Jens (2009, 25),

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[8] The Gruppe 47, named after the year of its foundation, "reestablished a literary community [in Germany] after the Second World War based on explicit principles of candor and commitment to an open society and a literature that reflected that openness, rather than its opposite of abject obedience to state ideology or abstruse evasiveness (as in the literature of Inner Emigration)" (Donahue 2014).

[9] Previously held at the Berlin Document Center, created by the US Armed Forces and managed by the United States until 1994 (Fehlauer 2010). For more about the register, the information it held on men who became leading political figures of West Germany, and the slow

pointedly puts it, the revelation “astonishes some, horrifies many.”[10] Taking up a seemingly detached observer role, the journalist son explains the explosive nature of this revelation about his father, then an 80-year-old man: “Walter Jens, the solitary and loner, courageous naysayer for decades, joined the NSDAP in September 1942 and – this seems to be the sticking point – he remained silent about it for nearly sixty years” (T. Jens 2009, 25).[11] Making matters worse, Walter Jens publicly announced he could not remember anything. Numerous other literati of the *Flakhelfer* generation could be listed here who, like Walter Jens, in subsequent years saw themselves confronted with evidence of their Nazi Party membership late in their lives (Martin Walser, Siegfried Lenz, Dieter Wellershoff and Erich Loest among them) and who often reacted similarly (Herwig 2013, Chs. 3, 7).[12] Arguably, the highest-profile revelation was of Günter Grass in 2006 having been conscripted into the Waffen-SS at age 17, late in 1944 (Pietsch 2006, 360–365; Kölbel 2007; Mews 2008, 334–342; Herwig 2013, Ch. 6).

Contrary to the impression his tone in the above quotation may give, Tilman Jens is of course highly invested in the revelation, both emotionally and intellectually. He highlights that his father loved to assume “the role of the Enlightenment philosopher” (T. Jens 2009, 27, similarly: 60) – a self-stylisation that post–November 2003, the son realises Walter Jens did not consistently live up to.[13] In the wake of the media reports, a nationalist essay which Walter Jens had published in 1943, then a student of literature, resurfaced, adding to the scandal. In it, he uses Nazi expressions such as “literature of degeneration” (T. Jens 2009, 61).[14] And although the historian Götz Aly (2004) describes the essay by the then 20-year-old student as marked by *völkisch* ideas but not as antisemitic, it fuelled the public debate. The impression of the young Walter Jens as a conformist hardened.

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negotiations between the US and the FRG about the wider archive’s transition into the hands of the German authorities, see Herwig (2013, esp. Chs. 1–3).

[10] Orig.: “sorgt bei manchem für Erstaunen, bei vielen für Entsetzen.”

[11] Orig.: “Walter Jens, Solitär und Einzelgänger, der couragierte Nein-Sager über Jahrzehnte, ist im September 1942 der NSDAP beigetreten und hat darüber, das scheint der Knackpunkt, fast 60 Jahre lang geschwiegen.”

[12] The military term *Flakhelfer* translates as ‘anti-aircraft helper’ or ‘gun assistant.’ As a generational term, it more broadly describes those who were teenagers in Nazi Germany and indoctrinated from an early age, because a large proportion of the country’s male teenage population (especially boys born in the years 1926–1928) were drafted to join the anti-aircraft artillery in the final years of the Second World War.

[13] Orig.: “die Rolle des Aufklärers.”

[14] Orig.: “Entartungsliteratur.”

The apparent incongruity of his father's reputation as one of the Federal Republic of Germany's "literary intellectuals who had dispensed the lessons of Auschwitz to the nation, long accorded an almost priest-like status on the basis of an apparently unimpeachable moral probity and intellectual integrity" (Niven 2018, 37) and his dubitable behaviour as a young man under Nazism lies at the heart of the journalist's issues with the father figure from that point on and must be understood as a key motivation for his writing *Demenz*. Although written while his father was still alive, it has much in common with the discoveries and motivations of many of the authors of the original *Väterbücher* in the 1970s and 1980s. Christoph Meckel, for example, started writing *Suchbild* (Picture puzzle) upon discovering his then-deceased father's Nazi-era diary, a document which reveals Eberhard Meckel, who was also a writer, to have sympathised with Nazi ideology to a much larger extent than the son previously knew (Meckel 2005 [1980], 179).

3 *Demenz* – all about illness?

Around the time the scandal broke, Walter Jens began to show the first signs of dementia – the illness of which he eventually died in June 2013. As the son describes in his book, the illness was first misdiagnosed as a form of depression, a condition that Walter Jens had suffered from at least once before in his life (T. Jens 2009, 41–43). In the final chapter to her memoir *Unvollständige Erinnerungen* (Incomplete recollections), published in the same year as *Demenz*, Tilman Jens's mother, the philologist Inge Jens,[15] admits that her husband's depression diagnosis did not scare her, that she and her family were in fact clinging to it – for it seemed familiar and manageable – and that even when the doctors eventually did talk about dementia, she did not understand the import of this new, more accurate diagnosis straight away (I. Jens 2009, 272, 275).[16]

With *Demenz: Abschied von meinem Vater*, it seems that Tilman Jens pursues several aims: the book most obviously, and as indicated by its title, traces

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[15] A German studies scholar and author in her own right, member of the PEN Centre Germany and editor of the diaries of Thomas Mann, among others.

[16] The specific form of dementia he had is described by Inge Jens (2017) as "eine Sonderform der Demenz, eine sogenannte Angiopathie" (a variety of dementia, a so-called angiopathy). She repeatedly uses the term *Angiopathie* in her 2016 publication *Langsames Entschwinden: Vom Leben mit einem Demenzkranken* (Slowly fading away: About life with a dementia sufferer), too. Tilman Jens (2009, 42) explains in *Demenz* that it was vascular dementia the father suffered from, with elements of Alzheimer's.

the story of Walter Jens's dementia, especially the illness's progression and lived reality, and the effect on family dynamics as well as the strain his father's illness puts on his mother. Facing the fact that dementia is a terminal illness, it further explores questions such as what constitutes a good life and a good death. The telling of his story strikes Tilman Jens (2009, 42) as important because of the public nature of his father's life and the stigma which forms of dementia, especially Alzheimer's, still carry (perhaps more so at the time of writing than now) – reflected too in the family's and even Walter Jens's doctors' initial denial of the diagnosis.[17] From this perspective, Walter Jens is a case in point to counter the idea that one's intellect can save a person from developing dementia (T. Jens 2009, 42–43). Tilman Jens (2009, 27) draws legitimacy for his public project from the way the father had ultimately overcome his depression in the 1980s, namely "in public, pointed speech," as the son recalls.[18] Moreover, the author is eager to highlight the fact that by writing and publishing *Demenz*, he acts in line with his immediate family's wishes. Prominently placed in the book's inside blurb is the declaration: "My mother, my brother and I all agree, we do not want to, we will not hide his suffering."[19]

Yet even though it is styled to be so, Tilman Jens's *Demenz* is not merely a negotiation of the illness and its consequences or a text that counters the marginalisation of people with dementia – if it is that at all, since it remains steeped in ableist/disablist language, likely more so than its author was aware.[20] It is also, and maybe more so, a text that seeks out the cracks in the father's image and one that retrospectively questions the validity of some of his intellectual work, too. It is thus an *Abschied* (farewell), as the subtitle has it, in at least two senses: the text bids farewell to Walter Jens as a leading intellectual in the view of cognitive decline and memory loss as much as it bids farewell to the dominant father figure as untouchable, morally and ethically, in the light of new knowledge about his past.

Stylistically, in Tilman Jens's writing about the past and the present, about the able academic and the man with dementia, about the former role model and

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[17] Martina Zimmermann (2017a, 90) explains, "Society sees the core stigma attached to Alzheimer's as centering on the patient's dependence, inertia, and loss of self."

[18] Orig.: "in öffentlicher, zugespitzter Rede."

[19] Orig.: "Meine Mutter, mein Bruder und ich sind uns einig, wir wollen, wir werden sein Leid nicht verstecken."

[20] Compare Tilman Jens's use of mainstream cultural metaphors to do with darkness and shadow, state(s) of sleep or 'living death,' ideas of a return to childhood and the language of descent (T. Jens 2009, 14, 43). For scholarly commentary on this kind of imagery and the damage it does to people living with dementia, see e.g. Zeilig (2013) and Zimmermann (2017a; 2017b).

the fallen moralist, the son creates a dichotomous image. The extent of the hero's fall could hardly be made clearer. On the one hand, there is "the father I knew"; however, "he is long gone."[21] On the other hand, Tilman Jens (2009, 140) discovers "a completely different father, a creaturely father."[22] I argue that the split in Tilman Jens's perception or, at least, in the representation of his father 'now' and 'then,' is due both to his father's illness and to the public disclosure of his membership in the Nazi Party. Although this double imagery may be rhetorically convenient when juxtaposing images of a father that do not seem to add up, we may wonder what this type of rhetoric obscures: his father was not replaced by someone else but changed and developed as a person over a lifetime both in terms of his ideological leanings and his attitudes towards dis/ability; lastly, Walter Jens has aged and fallen ill himself.

Trawling through the family archive, Tilman Jens unearths a significant number of recordings of past TV appearances, manuscripts of old speeches and old correspondence. Having access to this private documentation of his father's public thinking, as well as all that Walter Jens had published during his prolific academic and literary career, the controversial statements on *Sterbehilfe* (assisted dying) Jens senior made when still well trigger the son reviewing the material at a time that he is trying to understand whether Walter Jens's past philosophical opinion on assisted dying holds in practice and should be understood in the sense of an advance directive, a guideline for Inge Jens and her sons. This question is at the centre of *Demenz*'s opening chapter (T. Jens 2009, 5–21) as well as its concluding reflections (128–140) and is reflected in Tilman Jens's choice of epigraph to the book as a whole, too, taken from Walter Jens's joint 1995 publication with the theologian Hans Küng: *Menschenwürdig sterben: Ein Plädoyer für Selbstverantwortung* (Dying in dignity: A case for self-responsibility).[23]

Tilman Jens quotes a particularly incisive statement his father made during a 1996 interview: "I don't think that someone who does not recognise any of their closest relatives anymore at the end is still a person in the human sense. Which is why I think everyone should be able to decide: at this or that point, I want to be allowed to die."[24] He reacts with sadness and anger to this incendiary find, as he reports (T. Jens 2009, 13), and critiques the father's detached reasoning on the

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[21] Orig.: "Der Vater, den ich kannte, der ist lang schon gegangen."

[22] Orig.: "einen ganz anderen Vater [. . .], einen kreatürlichen Vater."

[23] *Menschenwürdig sterben* has been revised and reissued with an additional text by Inge Jens reflecting on her husband's illness in 2009.

[24] Orig.: "Ich glaube nicht, dass derjenige, der am Ende niemanden mehr erkennt von seinen nächsten Angehörigen, im Sinne des Humanen noch ein Mensch ist. Und deshalb denke ich sollte jeder bestimmen können, dann und dann möchte ich, dass ich sterben darf."

topic in retrospect, exposing its flaws and reading it as the effect of internalised disablism.[25] It dovetails with Walter Jens's attitudes towards ageing more generally, as expressed in the past: Tilman Jens (8) remembers him casually remarking he would rather be dead than become a wheelchair user or have to face incontinence.

The reader will note that both in the reasons he gives for speaking up about his father's condition in book form and in his view on assisted dying, Tilman Jens rhetorically takes a morally consistent stance that he knew would likely meet with general approval. But when it comes to the concurrence of the onset of Walter Jens's dementia and the uncomfortable late revelation of his opportunism in the 1940s, as evidenced by the uncovered party membership and his student essay, the son seeks to establish a causal connection between the two facts – the onset of illness and the historical revelations – that was perceived to be provocative. It was deemed slanderous, vengeful and bitter – in short, immoral – when *Demenz* first came out (e.g. Ueding 2009; Radisch 2009).

4 The son's linking of dementia and the NS past: The convenience of memory loss

"He doesn't want to talk, he cannot remember. Full stop" (T. Jens 2009, 25); this is how the son summarises Walter Jens's inadequate handling of the historical finds.[26] Syntactically, through use of parallelism, what is hinted at here is someone vacillating between not wanting and not being able to speak or remember, respectively. A resolute 'full stop' is being put to any attempts to address the matter, highlighting the fathers' resistance. Later in the text, Tilman Jens writes more clearly about his understanding of what is happening to his father: "In the winter months of 2003 / 2004, he resigns. He does not fight the paralysing sadness – his memory deteriorates rapidly. More and more frequently he can't recall terms and names" (91).[27] He appears to blame the illness, or at least the

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[25] According to family lore, Walter Jens's mother scolded the young boy from an early age: "Du bist unbeholfen, Du bist ängstlich, Du machst, gebückt durch Deine Asthma-Krankheit, eine schlechte Figur, also musst Du ein Geistesriese werden" (You are clumsy, you are anxious, you are stooped, bent over by your asthma, so you have to become a giant of the mind) (T. Jens 2009, 14).

[26] Orig.: "Er [. . .] mag nicht reden, er kann sich nicht erinnern. Punktum." For Walter Jens's handling of the situation, see also Herwig (2013, 105–110).

[27] Orig.: "In den Wintermonaten 2003 / 2004 gibt er sich auf. Er kämpft nicht an gegen die lähmende Traurigkeit – sein Gedächtnis verfällt rapide. Immer häufiger fallen ihm Begriffe und Namen nicht ein."

pace of its progression, on Walter Jens himself, on what the son regards a matter of willpower: “He who wants to forget, who does not want to remember anymore, cuts ties to the past, does not need mnemonics. Nor a desk or books” (92).[28] Disablist thinking underlies this statement, as it exaggerates the extent to which one can control the course of one’s illness, thus making the ill person responsible for their lack of health.

From a patient’s advocate perspective, Martina Zimmermann (2017a, 91) therefore problematises the interpretative link Tilman Jens is establishing, questioning its legitimacy: “Jens interprets dementia as a psychosomatic expression of mental distress. But scientific evidence that would justify this perspective continues to be patchy. Regardless, in the light of the condition’s chronic, degenerative, and incurable character, such an interpretation appears most unethical.”[29] Ostheimer (2013, 369), for the same reason, finds *Demenz*’s line of argument to be “bordering on the cynical.”[30] From a cultural studies point of view, the crucial question that remains and seems worth exploring nonetheless is why, then, despite this, is the narrative of Walter Jens having made a near-wilful decision to give in to dementia and to forgetting so attractive to Tilman Jens? And why can it be assumed to be plausible to at least part of the readership of *Demenz*?

For one, Tilman Jens does believe in the validity of the research that points towards psychosomatic factors playing a role in the progression (if not the onset) of dementia. He summarises the medical research he found in support of the bold hypothesis of his first book in the follow-up publication *Vatermord: Wider einen Generalverdacht* (Patricide: Against a general suspicion) (T. Jens 2010, 130–138), referring – among others – to a 2003 talk by Joachim Bauer, a version of which can be found online (2016). However, Jens is less of an expert in these matters than Zimmermann and may be more inclined to believe in the validity of findings by Bauer and others because he simply cannot accept the timing or the nature of the father’s illness to be purely coincidental: “It is hard to believe in mere

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[28] Orig.: “Wer vergessen will, wer sich nicht mehr erinnern mag, die Verbindungen zur Vergangenheit kappt, der braucht keine Gedächtnisstützen. Und auch keinen Schreibtisch mehr und keine Bücher.” Elsewhere, Tilman Jens (2009, 85, 97) speculates on the deep shame and fear his father must have felt upon receiving the letter by König first alerting him to the discovery of the filing card confirming his NSDAP membership and requesting a statement.

[29] Zimmermann (2017b) voices additional strong criticism of Tilman Jens’s book in her monograph *The Poetics and Politics of Alzheimer’s Disease Life-Writing* (see Chapter 3 in particular, elaborating on sons’ writing about a parent’s dementia from what Zimmermann terms a “carefree” perspective).

[30] Orig.: “ans Zynische grenzende Argumentation.”

contingency, given the striking temporal coincidence" (T. Jens 2010, 130).[31] This is because the historical significance of Walter Jens's long silence about his party membership looms too large vis-à-vis his public standing – and because, as the historian Ulrike Jureit (2019, 144) puts it with regard to the German/European context, after Auschwitz, "forgetting has lost its innocence."[32] In this context, to simply accept forgetting at face value, without inquiry, has become near impossible culturally; processes of forgetting and acts of remembrance are both morally loaded in the contemporary German discourse and will be for the foreseeable future.[33] Walter Jens's silence is therefore always already suspect. Worse, it is clearly at odds with his professional ethics and antifascist identity as a member of the renowned Gruppe 47. The famous professor becomes yet another case of the leading writers and thinkers of the young Bundesrepublik partaking in the widespread post-war German repression of the past – just like the majority of the German population who lived through the war (T. Jens 2009, 86–91). The shock that reverberates for the journalist son, and which he processes in *Demenz*, is that the father this son so admired is no exception here, that he shows the same weakness – or pragmatism – as others have in this regard. This collective behaviour – no matter how conscious or not it was, and we can suspect varying degrees of intent – had a regrettable lasting effect, as Tilman Jens (2009, 74), speaking here as a representative of later generations and analyst of the situation, stresses: "The raised moral pointing finger of all those who pretended to have been on the right side [of history] from their first breath has stifled many opportunities for fair discourse."[34] Against this background, Tilman Jens cannot help but interpret dementia as a wall to hide behind.

Tilman Jens's aversion to the kind of "amnesia" that was displayed in judicial trials post-1945, too, is expressed clearly in the book, particularly as, in most if not all cases, amnesia was used as an excuse, a way out of admitting culpability for war crimes, the "line of defence" (2009, 107) of choice.[35] He addresses this in the context of relaying the story of Albert Schaich, a childhood neighbour whom the Jens family trusted and whom Tilman Jens describes as

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[31] Orig.: "an eine reine Zufälligkeit kann ich, angesichts der frappierenden zeitlichen Koinzidenz, schwer glauben." The question whether stressful life events qualify as a risk factor in developing dementia diseases is being researched by scientists, yet the evidence is deemed inconclusive by e.g. Sundström et al. (2014).

[32] Orig.: "Das Vergessen hat seine Unschuld verloren."

[33] Which is not to say that German memory culture does not continue to change and develop; see Niven (2018) for more.

[34] Orig.: "Der erhobene moralische Zeigefinger all derer, die vorgaben, vom ersten Atemzug an auf der richtigen Seite gewesen zu sein, hat so manchen fairen Diskurs erstickt."

[35] Orig.: "Amnesie"; "Verteidigungslinie."

his “adopted grandfather” (111).[36] Schaich turned out to have been a staunch Nazi until the very end of the war and stood trial in 1948 for the murder of another local man in April 1945, a prisoner under his watch – facts of which the Jens family were unaware until 1995, when a local newspaper published an article on the historical events. Though the gravity and quality of each man’s secret differed considerably, the neighbour’s posthumous exposure after a lifetime’s silence can be read as having foreshadowed Walter Jens’s own later confrontations with the past. Tilman Jens’s narrative reconstruction of the neighbour’s crime in contrast to his character as he knew him suggests such a perspective when it stresses how his parents tried to keep the newspaper article from him (103) and how Schaich’s past came to catch up with him in later life, when this man, too, developed dementia (113–115).

As Walter Jens’s firstborn son, a fact he himself emphasises, Tilman Jens (2009, 74) feels “betrayed” by his father; he is convinced “there would have been so many opportunities to talk about the small, if drastic, errors that would later have made the process of reformation so convincing and clear” (63).[37] Very much like the older generation of *Väterbücher* authors,[38] Tilman Jens consequently takes on the role of public prosecutor against the father in *Demenz* – and, to an extent, also the role of judge over this vexed case (a position he shares with his writing’s implied readership). The *Väterliteratur* genre and its “narrator-centered confessional mode” (Byram 2018, 47) lends itself to this perspective. What is more, by writing and publishing *Demenz*, “the speaking son” (Vedder 2012, 283) supplants the father, who (through illness) falls silent.[39] The text, therefore, is inextricably linked to the aforementioned idea of the balance sheet of justice between two generations.

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[36] Orig.: “Wahlgroßvater.”

[37] Orig.: “betrogen”; “Es hätte so viele Möglichkeiten gegeben, von den kleinen, wenn auch drastischen Irrtümern zu erzählen, die den Prozess der überzeugenden Läuterung später hätten so anschaulich werden lassen.”

[38] Tilman Jens was born in 1954, while the authors of the original *Väterbücher* are around 20 years older: e.g. Meckel was born in 1935, Seuren in 1932, Paul Kersten in 1943, Sigfrid Gauch in 1945, Elisabeth Plessen in 1944.

[39] Orig.: “der sprechende Sohn.” Ulrike Vedder makes a similar observation with regard to Jonathan Franzen’s essay “My Father’s Brain” (collected in *How to Be Alone* [2002]), emphasising the son’s role as the narrator of the father’s story and speculating on how the act of narration – while its result is a form of memorialisation – secures the son’s (symbolic) survival in the face of the father’s forgetting. Carrying this further (and, I would think, possibly too far), many a journalist writing for the review and arts sections of the national newspapers in Germany charged Tilman Jens with literary patricide, a charge so grave that the son felt the need to reply to it with a second book, titled *Vatermord* (2010).

My metaphor of Tilman Jens as a kind of 'judge of morality' is flawed, of course, in at least one respect: it suggests the son writes from an objective position, while feelings of betrayal expressed in the book paint a picture of him as very much emotionally involved in the exposé. He describes how, during the phone call with a journalist colleague who leaked the news about his father's NSDAP membership to him early, "I begin to freeze and shake" (T. Jens 2009, 46).[40] For the rest of the day, he reports a "fear even to call my parents" (49).[41] And he begins to question his attitude towards the familial past during the Nazi period and his personal failure to uncover the facts sooner, in a self-critical manner that builds on the legacy of the *Väterbücher* authors of the 1970s and 1980s: "Why did I never want to know more? For example, what my father had meant by suggesting that he was longing for the end of the regime, but that ultimately he had been one who *fitted in*. I made life easy for myself. Pestering one's parents with uncomfortable questions was something only others had to do" (51).[42] Another's words echo here: "The mistake I made was to believe them," writes Meckel (2005 [1980], 180) about his parents in the afterword to *Suchbild*, and further: "Other children had Nazis for parents – I did not" (181).[43]

Reacting to his own shortcomings as well as his father's, Tilman Jens describes his beginning to gather circumstantial evidence against his father from the moment he learns of the existence of the filing card documenting Walter Jens's NSDAP membership. Note that the legal imagery is employed by Tilman Jens (2009, 49) himself here, speaking of a "string of evidence" he is constructing.[44] With this new knowledge, many childhood memories seem suddenly suspicious, as does the fact that Walter Jens was such a good storyteller: "Suddenly, the few but happily repeated stories from his youth seem strangely smooth and unbroken" (50).[45] This indicator of inauthenticity suggests that Walter Jens, the professional speaker who once prided himself on his excellent memory (the son recalls this in several instances: 13, 14, 48, 58, 59), may not have been entirely

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[40] Orig.: "Mir wird kalt, ich beginne zu zittern."

[41] Orig.: "Angst, bei meinen Eltern überhaupt nur anzurufen."

[42] Orig.: "Warum habe ich niemals genaueres wissen wollen? Zum Beispiel, was mein Vater denn gemeint hat mit der Andeutung, dass er zwar das Ende des Regimes herbeigesehnt hätte, aber eben doch *ein Angepasster* gewesen sei. Ich habe es mir einfach gemacht. Die eigenen Eltern mit unbequemen Fragen belästigen, das mussten einzig die anderen."

[43] Orig.: "Mein Fehler war es, ihnen geglaubt zu haben"; "Andere Kinder hatten Nazis zu Eltern – ich nicht."

[44] Orig.: "Indizienkette."

[45] Orig.: "Auf einmal kommen mir die wenigen, aber gern wiederholten Geschichten aus seiner Jugend merkwürdig glatt und ungebrochen vor."

truthful about his wartime past including when still in good health – or at least selective about which memories he shared.

The fact that this otherwise prolific writer struggled to pen his autobiography also takes on new significance. Therefore, the son quotes Walter Jens, “I realised: you cannot reveal yourself to be the person you are” (T. Jens 2009, 23).[46] The previously enigmatic statement suddenly makes sombre sense to the writing son in light of recent revelations (28).[47] So do other instances in which he now finds his father’s actions have fallen short of his ethical requirements: when displaying forbearance with the editor and publisher Hans Rößner, PhD in German studies, regarding his astonishing SS past and post-war reinvention as ostensibly left-wing (52–54) or when lying to Inge Jens about the exact moment he found out about the existence of the record of his compromising NSDAP membership (56, 81). The son concludes, “The evidence is damning” (79).[48]

Neil H. Donahue (2014) finds that Tilman Jens in *Demenz* “conflates the personal and the public, the private and the historical, – though he does so consciously and deliberately in order to measure the former, the personal, against the latter, the public-historical, as his father had always advocated and done, – until the moment in question.” Doing so, the son beats Walter Jens at his own game. In Donahue’s favourable view, Tilman Jens becomes the praiseworthy successor, employing the tools of analysis, a sharp rhetoric and critical thinking in his assessment of the father’s integrity, emerging as the filial apprentice who surpasses his mentor. It is part of what made the book appear provocative at the time of its original publication – yet over/writing the father can also, more neutrally, be regarded as part of the inevitable succession (which is always also a supersession) of the generations.

The image of the father starts to crack as Tilman Jens reviews his father’s life and work under a lens. Dramatically and emotionally describing him as the “man of my life” (T. Jens 2009, 46) and as the father who was and who will always remain his “role model” (63–64), he cannot make the different father images pursued in the text match up.[49] Just like the son’s review of a younger Walter Jens’s bold interventions in the German *Sterbehilfe* debate compared to his unclear words in illness (132–133), what is highlighted here is the disjunction between rhetorical theory and real-world practice.

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[46] Orig.: “*Ich merkte, Du kannst Dich als der, der Du bist, nicht zeigen.*”

[47] In contrast, Inge Jens (2009, 264–268) reads Walter Jens’s excuses concerning his autobiography entirely in the light of dementia, speculating in her memoir that he must have been more ill in the years 2002 / 2003 than the family was aware.

[48] Orig.: “Die Indizien sind erdrückend.”

[49] Orig.: “Mann meines Lebens”; “Vorbild.”

At the heart of the text, *Demenz* negotiates a changing father-son relationship and the author's own identity as the famous professor's eldest son in the light of the evidence of new truths that emerged – as well as in the light of the dementia. The eponymous illness figures as both reality and metaphor. On the one hand, there is the lived reality of progressive and ultimately terminal illness and, on the other, the "political dementia" (T. Jens 2009, 87), the "fatal disease of staying silent" (73, similarly: 89), that Tilman Jens 'diagnoses' his father and many of his contemporaries with.[50] While the latter, at least partly, is self-inflicted, and therefore a regrettable stain on the individual's biography – signifying nowadays a form of "symbolic contamination with the absolute evil" (Assmann 2019, 37)[51] – the former is much less so. It is, therefore, a slippery slope to bring the two together in the way that Tilman Jens does. The author allows himself the provocation, recognises it as such. He is aware, too, of the advantage he has over his father (and his father's generation as a whole), given his safe position at the writer's desk of today: "It is much easier to settle accounts with the despised Nazis from the writing desk than in real life" (T. Jens 2009, 112).[52]

Notably late in the text, Tilman Jens qualifies his superiority with a confession of his own. He writes that he was not able to communicate the medical diagnosis of dementia to his father, as it implied that he would not recover (T. Jens 2009, 119–124). This withholding is likely to strike a contemporary readership as astonishing, a grave offence, because it is the opposite of common practice today (Hitzer 2018). Imagining a conversation in the subjunctive – "would have, could have" – Tilman Jens signals regret.[53] He knows that, together with his mother,[54] he thus deprived his father of his agency early and of dealing with the facts of his late life

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[50] Orig.: "politische[] Demenz"; "fatale Schweigekrankheit."

[51] Orig.: "symbolische Kontamination mit dem absolut Bösen." Analysing the strong public reaction to Günter Grass's late public confession of having joined the Waffen-SS shortly before the end of the Second World War, Aleida Assmann (2019) points out how the societal and cultural frames of memory (à la Maurice Halbwachs) have shifted since the 1950s – making a membership in the Waffen-SS (in the case of Grass) unspeakable from the 1960s onwards.

[52] Orig.: "Am Schreibtisch lässt sich mit den verhassten Nazis weit leichter abrechnen als im wirklichen Leben."

[53] Orig.: "Hätte und wäre." Fellow journalist Andreas Wenderoth, author of *Ein halber Held* (Half a hero), which is an auto/biographical book about his father's dementia (and most comparable, in design, to Arno Geiger's *Der alte König in seinem Exil* [2011]; *The Old King in His Exile*), relays in detail a conversation he and his mother have with Horst Wenderoth about the diagnosis (2016, 106–109). It is an example of how Tilman Jens 'could have' informed the father – regardless of any question about the way in which or for how long he might have been able to retain the information.

[54] And younger brother, presumably, although from the book itself, it does not become clear to what extent, if at all, Christoph Jens was involved in this decision.

for himself. “It was not meant to be” (T. Jens 2009, 123) reads as the weakest point made in the text.[55] It is evidence of another missed conversation within the Jens family – but this time, it is not the father who holds back vital information. Although written with regard to the withheld diagnosis, the culminating sentence of the son’s confession, “I too will be silent” (T. Jens 2009, 124), therefore hangs heavy with meaning in the context of both the metaphorical and actual dementia discussed.[56]

5 Conclusion: Memory politics at a historical junction

Rereading *Demenz* ten years after its original publication, a more nuanced assessment of the text seems possible. This essay recognises the problematic aspects of Tilman Jens’s portrayal of his father in his state of dementia while at the same time, it acknowledges the relevance of his critique of the *Flakhelfer* generation’s post-war silence and derealisation of the war years, and the effects of this on succeeding generations. Ultimately, at the specific historical junction at which it was written, the story of Walter Jens’s individual pathological forgetting comes to stand in for a collective process; dementia, beyond being a reality that is evidently difficult to process for the Jens family, becomes a tempting, for it is a timely, metaphor. It is not without problems that, at their most extreme, lead to Tilman Jens portraying Walter Jens as seeking refuge in dementia, staging the onset of illness as an easy way out of confronting uncomfortable questioning or as a means to avoid a crisis of identity – yet just like the father’s behaviour, the son’s, too, must be read in context.

As the wartime generation comes to a close, Tilman Jens’s 2009 text reflects a set of specific German fears of forgetting as loss, of historical facts or evidence, of ‘how it’s really been’; Patrick Finney (2017) describes these as deeply felt cultural anxieties about authenticity. Hand in hand with these fears go worries about a neglect or erosion of the collective post-war responsibility to remember, as fully as possible, the history of National Socialism and the Holocaust as we move into a future without direct witnesses, a future in which our memory discourse will have to rely exclusively on mediated history as relayed in, for instance, films and books

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[55] Orig.: “Es hat nicht sollen sein.”

[56] Orig.: “Auch ich werde schweigen.”

(including Jens's). Writing against "large-scale forgetting" (T. Jens 2009, 87),[57] Tilman Jens therefore does collective memory a service when he complicates the picture his father's vocal generation had painted of themselves in the decades after the end of the war and in the face of historical responsibility. He saw unfold what earlier *Väterbücher* authors could only anticipate and points out the cracks in what over the decades has become, at times, too smooth a story. Almost by the by, and despite its shortcomings, the text Tilman Jens produces thus indicates that new opportunities, too, may arise at the same time that living memory is lost – for what, following Finney (2017, 158), we may want to call "'fuller' historical readings" of the Nazi past. And so, although fraught with anxiety itself, the example of *Demenz* may actually assuage some of our own contemporary concerns about future interpretations of history and the course remembrance activities will take. It gives us reason to assume that successive generations will continue to hold previous ones to account.

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[57] Orig.: "Das große Vergessen."

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Kristina Lucenko

“That I Could Live as Not Myself”: Holocaust Survival, Trans Identity and Dementia in Susan Faludi’s *In the Darkroom*

Susan Faludi’s 2016 *In the Darkroom* is not primarily, or even largely, about dementia. In the 463-page memoir, Faludi’s father’s dementia is narrated in 13 pages that make up the book’s final chapter, titled “Escape.” The memoir’s prevailing concerns about gender, national and religious identity categories are explored through the story of Faludi’s father, Stefánie, a “refractory subject” who enacted a lifetime of multiple border crossings and reinventions (Faludi 2016, 2). The memoir begins with the revelation of Stefánie’s gender transition at the age of 76 and unfolds through Faludi’s investigation into Stefánie’s survival along two major pathways: as a Jew who grew up in Nazi-occupied Hungary, and as Stefánie, a transgender person who came out late in life.[1] However, in this essay I offer a reading of *In the Darkroom* that places dementia at the centre of analysis. Doing so further expands the already capacious generic boundaries of the memoir, so that it becomes part dementia narrative, part family memoir, part investigative journalism, part Hungarian history and part cultural criticism.

The memoir is mostly set in Budapest, Stefánie’s birthplace and the city to which she returns to live in 1989. In 2004 Stefánie reaches out to Susan after the pair had been estranged for 25 years to announce her gender transition and to invite Susan to write her story. Over the next decade the pair re-establish their relationship as Susan makes multiple visits to Budapest to work on the book with Stefánie; it is this ten-year reconciliation that the memoir traces. Stefánie shares threads of information about her past that Faludi weaves into richly researched histories of their family’s roots in Hungary, and more broadly of Hungarian Jews and of modern sexology. Although it is a complicated and painful collaboration, with anger and frustration on both sides, the pair ultimately achieves a kind of

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[1] Throughout this essay I use the terms “transgender” and “trans” interchangeably. In doing so, I follow the helpful discussion of Susan Stryker (1998, 149): “I use transgender not to refer to one particular identity or way of being embodied but rather as an umbrella term for a wide variety of bodily effects that disrupt or denaturalize heteronormatively constructed linkages between an individual’s anatomy at birth, a nonconsensually assigned gender category, psychical identifications with sexed body images and/or gendered subject positions, and the performance of specifically gendered social, sexual, or kinship functions.”

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empathetic harmony. This shared empathy is essential to supporting Stefánie as she develops dementia and to honouring her memory after she dies.

As I will argue, *In the Darkroom* offers a dementia narrative that explores the complexity of remembering, forgetting, inventing and surviving as part of identity development and expression against the backdrop of the Holocaust and Jewish history in Hungary, as well as through the lens of transgender politics. Understanding that her father's history of disguise, erasure and transformation is so integral to her survival during the war, and later as Stefánie, Faludi represents the onset of dementia as not only occasioning hallucinations rooted in traumatic memories linked to survival, but also as a condition that forecloses alteration, reimagination and escape. In offering a complex narrative about ageing, dementia and trans identity in which self-determination and empathy are crucial to survival, *In the Darkroom* alludes to the importance of trans-affirmative approaches to supporting ageing trans adults with dementia.

If we follow the logic of Arthur W. Frank's (1995, 21) claim that illness narratives create a "social rhetoric of illness" and determine future understandings and representations, then *In the Darkroom*, perhaps the only memoir that features a transgender person with dementia, creates a more inclusive social rhetoric of dementia by representing the needs and barriers to care for trans people living with dementia.[2] When Stefánie experiences dementia-induced hallucinations and the police take her to the local hospital's psychiatric ward against her will, she immediately calls Susan to advocate for her. Stefánie's trust in her daughter is the outcome of a slow, decade-long process of familial reconciliation after a quarter-century of estrangement. That Stefánie can call upon her daughter to serve as a trusted advocate stands in stark contrast to experiences of trans people with dementia whose adult children deny their gender identity and expression in medical and residential care settings. The dialogue enabled by the book's creation uncovers wounds of their early relationship, but it also allows for those wounds to heal and for the pair to reconcile. Stefánie and Susan's reconciliation and their eventual closeness is in marked contrast to the

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[2] In the introduction to their edited collection, Westwood and Price (2016, 4) note that while there has been an increase in research and scholarship on lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people and ageing, and on the diversity of dementia experiences, little work has been done on LGBTQ* people with dementia, and no voices of LGBTQ* people with dementia appear as part of that research and scholarship. As Martina Zimmerman (2017b, 128) argues, the "imbalance between caregiver-authored third-person accounts and patient-authored first-person narratives on the book market easily furthers sociocultural preconception of patients as being unable to narrate their story and, therefore, unaware of themselves as individuals."

fraught or lost familial connections that can leave transgender elders with dementia vulnerable to discrimination and mistreatment in formal care settings.

In this essay I draw from research across a range of disciplines to explore what the memoir's depiction of Stefánie's dementia reveals about trans people, ageing, and dementia, and thus what the book contributes to our understanding of how narrative can create more ethical, inclusive, and supportive ways to live and age. I will first point to research on LGBTQ* ageing in critical gerontology and social work for context on the barriers and discrimination facing trans people with dementia. I will then turn to Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's materialist feminist concept of misfitting, which offers a framework for thinking specifically about the relations between various entities – human, infrastructural/ social, cultural, political – in the context of Faludi's examination of identity ontologies and Stefánie's dementia. Following Garland-Thomson, I consider how misfitting can include communicative exchange and narrative as part of embodied interaction with environments. Drawing on feminist theories on silence and listening as rhetorical arts, I look at Cheryl Glenn's ideas on silence as a purposeful communicative strategy and Krista Ratcliffe's theory of rhetorical listening to foster dialogue across commonalities and differences. Faludi's self-scrutinizing narrative method allows her to foreground the ethical stakes in telling this shared story, both literally, through the journalistic emphasis on questioning and active listening, as well as in principle, through an inclusive and open dialogic exchange. It is a process that requires listening and speaking back to multiple intersecting cultural and political processes, values and institutions.

1 "'Write my story,' my father had asked me in 2004 – or rather, dared me"

As a child in Budapest, Faludi's father was a Jewish fugitive under the Nazi occupation; as an adult her father emigrated to the United States, started a family and built a career as a photo retoucher; after more than 30 years in the United States he repatriated to post-communist Hungary; and at the age of 76 her father underwent gender reassignment surgery to become Stefánie. In an email to her daughter after twenty-five years of estrangement, Stefánie writes, "I have decided that I have had enough of impersonating a macho aggressive man that I have never been inside" (Faludi 2016, 6). That initial email soon leads to an invitation: "'Write my story,' my father had asked me in 2004 – or rather, dared me" (1). In the preface, Faludi (2) states that she takes up Stefánie's challenge "with a vengeance, and with my own purposes in mind." Faludi's "vengeance" becomes clearer as we learn that her father had violently tyrannised their family during her childhood and up to her parents' divorce in the suburbs of New York City, once smashing teenage Susan's head against the floor in a rage because of her growing interest in a local Catholic Charismatic Renewal church, and once violating a restraining order and breaking into their home to stab the man her mother had started dating.

In excavating past truths and past trauma – personal and collective – the memoir and its making enact a complicated and powerful form of collaborative memory work and reconciliation. Using language that emphasises the pair's adversarial dynamic, Faludi (2016, 41) describes their relationship as "a contest [. . .] between erasure and exposure, between the airbrush and the reporter's pad, between the master of masking and the apprentice who would unmask him." As Faludi suggests in her description of the memoir's origins, lingering power dynamics between parent and adult child and a desire to avenge past wrongs fuel its production, bringing to the fore ethical tensions at work in representing what G. Thomas Couser (2004) calls "vulnerable subjects." Couser (xii) defines the conditions that render subjects vulnerable as ranging from the "age-related (extreme youth or age) and the physiological (illnesses and impairments, physical or mental) to membership in socially or culturally disadvantaged minorities," and argues that "the closer the relationship between writer and subject, and the greater the vulnerability or dependency of the subject, the higher the ethical stakes, and the more urgent the need for ethical scrutiny." As a transgender Jewish person living in a country experiencing a rise in antisemitism and anti-trans bigotry, and as a person who develops dementia and receives care there, Stefánie fits within Couser's vulnerable subject taxonomy in more ways than one.

In fact, in depicting Stefánie, Faludi is representing someone who is "doubly vulnerable, or vulnerable in two dimensions" (Couser 2004, x). Stefánie's developing cognitive impairment makes her vulnerable in life to a specific form of discrimination experienced by transgender adults living with dementia. At the onset of Stefánie's dementia at the end of the book, she is misgendered by hospital staff who repeatedly ask, "So, do you *believe* you're a woman?" (Faludi 2016, 452). This example illustrates what Alexandre Baril and Marjorie Silverman (2019, 8) describe as a form of violence experienced by trans people with dementia: denial of agency by pathologising trans identity as a cognitive disorder. The question also echoes, to some degree, Faludi's "censorious judgment" (Faludi 2016, 23) towards Stefánie's trans identity at the start of their reconciliation, in particular Faludi's preoccupation with her father's penchant for "frou-frou fashions" (77) – judgement that Faludi shamefully admits and scrutinises throughout the book.

It is worth noting Faludi's use of the gendered pronoun "him" in the statement about her mission to "unmask" her father, which points to Faludi's initial objective: to demonstrate that in becoming Stefánie, her father was denying a history as a violent and oppressive husband and father. As a transgender woman, Stefánie's explorations in feminine attire and attributes are represented and derided by Faludi (2016, 78) as "surface ephemerality," at least when the pair first begins to reconcile. Faludi is frustrated and angry when Stefánie makes claims about herself as a yielding, submissive woman who loves to gossip, dress up and shop, despite a continuing tendency towards domination and "age-old obstinance" that Faludi (77) remembers so vividly as belonging to the father of her childhood. In addition to revealing Faludi's scepticism about Stefánie's gender expression, Faludi's use of gendered pronouns in the book also suggests the enduring psychic energies Stefánie invested in maintaining concealed or hidden identities in different spaces and times. Faludi uses "he/him/his" pronouns when referring to Stefánie pre-transition and throughout the book refers to Stefánie as "my father." As Faludi explains in an interview (Wang 2016) about the memoir, "This was my *father's* preference. As she liked to remind me, 'I'm still your father.' On all matters of gendered naming and pronouns, I went with my father's druthers." Faludi further explains in an online forum of the feminist journal *Signs* ("A Response" 2017), "[Father] is how my father wished to be identified. 'I'm still your father,' she liked to say. I paired 'my father' with 'she' not to cast doubt on my father's gender but to express honestly the roles in play in our relationship." As writer and witness, as estranged daughter and investigative journalist, Faludi explicitly and implicitly registers the complexity of the pair's relationship and how it shapes the narrative up to and including her father's dementia.

During the making of the book, Faludi (2016, 8) seeks answers to questions about her father's early life as a young Jewish man in Nazi Europe with an invaluable talent for passing as a gentile, about her father's violent behaviour as an "imperious patriarch, overbearing and autocratic" and about her father's motives and experiences as a transgender woman. At the same time that Faludi approaches this task as an experienced journalist, she registers a self-awareness of her partisan stake in the process, "the grievance of a daughter whose parent had absconded from her life." Over the course of the collaboration, Faludi (2016, 1) confesses that her purpose shifts from "preparing an indictment, amassing discovery for a trial [. . .] in pursuit of a scofflaw, an artful dodger who had skipped out on so many things – obligation, affection, culpability, contrition" to reconciliation and making "a new sort of friend" (77). This new, hoped-for but tentative friendship with a new parent, as Faludi narrates it, reveals what Sarah Falcus and Katsura Sako (2019, 28–29) call the "blurring of autobiographical and biographical acts in life narratives of dementia [. . .] in which we are asked to recognise shared, human vulnerability as well as to attend to the socially situated nature of vulnerability in relationships of care and dependence." After all, the project begins as a request by Stefánie to her daughter to listen to and then tell her story. As per Couser, it is important for readers to ethically scrutinise Faludi's power as narrator of the experience of a vulnerable subject, a trans person looking back on a traumatic past, just as it is important for Faludi to self-scrutinise her own objective and purpose in learning and telling Stefánie's story.

2 "Feminism [. . .] became the part of my life that I chose. The part I couldn't escape was my father"

As a cisgender feminist, Faludi is telling a complex story that is both personal and political. The conflict between Susan and Stefánie arises from their shared personal history; it is also shaped by transgender and feminist politics. Indeed, Faludi (2016, 57–62) points to her childhood – specifically her father's overbearing and violent domination of their family and the structures of gender oppression that worked against her mother throughout their marriage and divorce – as fomenting her feminist consciousness. The memoir's exploration of gender identity's ontology – or as Faludi (57) asks in the memoir, "Is identity what you choose, or what you can't escape?" – has been situated within critical conversations about the historically fraught relationship between second-wave feminism and trans studies, in particular the ways in which some cisgender feminists have strongly disputed transgender identities, experiences, and rights.[3] Faludi (94) does not hide her scepticism towards Stefánie's trans identity, at times reducing it to another pretence in a long line of impersonations and reinventions, "my father's latest transition, from man to woman." When Stefánie tries to engage Susan in wardrobe selection, Susan brushes her off, angrily thinking to herself, "Change your clothes all you want, you're still the same person" (52). In the context of their

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[3] Susan Stryker (2017) refers to this fraught relationship in her critique of Faludi's memoir as advancing "a skewed representation of trans communities and identities" and argues that Faludi does not do enough to distinguish between "Stefánie's personal behavior and stereotypes that still have the power to harm trans lives and that are still unfortunately far too prevalent in feminist discourse." For more on second-wave feminism's hostility towards transgender practices, see Stryker (2006), Whittle (2006), Koyama (2006) and Hines (2014).

difficult personal history, Faludi seems to mean that Stefánie is still the same person who aggressively controlled their family and escaped retribution. But it is impossible to not read these statements as examples of Faludi subscribing to biological determinism based on "exclusionary assumptions [some feminists] embed within the fundamental conceptual underpinnings of feminism" (Stryker 2006, 7). That Faludi (2016, 41) divulges her own exclusionary thoughts is not only in line with her journalistic ethos of "exposing flaws, not concealing them," but is important in the context of the open but often painful dialogue that drives the book's becoming.

When Stefánie develops dementia in the memoir's final chapter, the pair has nonetheless, after ten years of difficult dialogue, "arrived at an understanding, even a closeness." Faludi (2016, 451) describes Stefánie's dementia as having activated a powerful surge of traumatic memories and perceptions that overflow with "all that she had been, all that she had experienced, suffered, fled." At this point in the memoir, Faludi (2) has amassed a detailed history of Stefánie's "lifetime of self-alteration," and so she, and readers, acutely feel the weight of "all" that is rising. As Stefánie's dementia develops and she is repeatedly taken to the hospital against her will, her dominant disposition is one of being persecuted, pursued and captured. She recounts to Susan a series of unwelcome figures on her trail – her own uncaring mother, her ex-wife, criminals and arsonists, Nazi guards and Arrow Cross.[4] In this string of haunting figures, the relationship between the specific sufferings of the war as well as the specific sufferings of hiding and avoiding visibility as a trans person are woven together to comprise Stefánie's psychic distress.

Faludi's use of water metaphors to capture dementia's immersive and copious quality – flooding, rushing, welling – serves as a powerful counternarrative to tropes and metaphors that emphasise the experience singularly as one of loss and deprivation, as something that dissolves the complexity of personhood.[5] As Faludi (2016, 451–452) writes, Stefánie's "histories now flooded into every synapse. My father's mind seemed to me like the limestone beneath [Budapest's] Castle Hill; it was being hollowed out by what welled up from below." Faludi's description of Stefánie's dementia as fluid and multidimensional can be productively linked to intersectional approaches within dementia studies

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[4] The Arrow Cross was a fascist Hungarian political party founded by Ferenc Szálasi that was active between 1935 and 1945. The Arrow Cross collaborated with the Nazi regime to murder and deport tens of thousands, mostly Jews and Romani people.

[5] For more on metaphoric language and dementia, see Martina Zimmermann (2017a). See Westwood and Price (2016, 5–6) on the challenges of the concept of "personhood," especially in the psychosocial model of dementia.

that understand dementia as “a contextually contingent, embodied experience” that can produce uneven and disadvantaged outcomes for certain individuals and groups (Westwood and Price 2016, 6).[6] As Baril and Silverman (2019, 1) have explored, trans adults living with dementia “may forget they transitioned and reidentify with their sex/gender assigned at birth or may experience ‘gender confusion.’” As such, intersectional paradigms of care need to ensure that trans adults with dementia are “actively respected and supported in the expression of the gender identity, whether binary or fluid, whether static or changing” (11). Without intersectional approaches, disadvantaged outcomes can be generated within care systems of bodily discipline through what Pia Kontos and Wendy Martin (quoted in Westwood and Price 2016, 6) call “the interrelationship between the body and social and political processes in the production and expression of dementia.” Intersectional frameworks help us see that *In the Darkroom* is a narrative about embodiment in context. It is about intersecting identities and oppressions, the desire throughout life, illness and death to be recognised and accommodated by other people and systems, and the material and psychic costs when that recognition is not only denied but annihilated and erased.

The pair’s closeness at the end of the memoir serves as the interrelational backdrop for the narrative of Stefánie’s dementia. This closeness matters because Stefánie’s dementia develops and advances quickly – in a compressed time frame of six months. Faludi (2016, 451) says that their newly established closeness has arrived “just in time,” which signals both temporal and spatial aspects of dementia, especially relevant in the context of witnessing and caregiving practices. That is, emotional bonds that sustain caregiving require time to form. And although caregiving at a distance presents very real challenges, those challenges can be mitigated to some degree through emotional closeness. The closeness signals something positive – a hard-earned reconciliation between a parent and an adult child with a complicated history. It also draws attention to issues around caregiving and the fact that many older LGBTQ* people experience conflict with family of origin and rely on caregiving systems that do not include

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[6] The term intersectionality was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989, 139) as part of a growing body of Black feminist criticism to foreground how “single-axis” frameworks in feminist theory and antiracist policy discourse tend “to treat race and gender as mutually exclusive categories of experience and analysis” and, as a consequence, erase the experiences of Black women. In their study, Baril and Silverman (2019, 3) identify “the intersections between the multiple systems of oppressions faced by [transgender people living with dementia], namely cisgenderism, ableism/cogniticism and ageism.”

adult children.[7] The precarity of the arrived-at place of closeness is emphasised by the onset of dementia, and the degenerative aspect of dementia is affectively magnified through the disruption of their late mutual affection. The onset of Stefánie's dementia triggers disquieting hallucinations that link her personal memories to a collective history of violent persecution. As Leigh Gilmore (2001, 93) argues, survivors of trauma can experience temporality as "permanent simultaneity": "At any time for the survivor of trauma, the alarm of memory can sound in the present tense." As Stefánie's hallucinations suggest, this memory alarm can be triggered by dementia. Stefánie's dementia also adds a new dimension to Gilmore's concept of permanent simultaneity. And though not explicitly treated in the memoir, by emphasising the temporality and temporariness of this closeness – it comes just in time to be altered by dementia – Faludi not only demonstrates their shared vulnerability but also gestures towards what Judith Butler (2016, 21) calls a "broader condition of dependency and interdependency that challenges the dominant ontological understanding of the embodied subject" as "discrete, singular, and self-sufficient."

3 "They totally miscast me"

Stefánie's embodied experience as a transgender person developing dementia and Faludi's embodied experience as long-distance advocate and caregiver are bolstered by their dyadic closeness, but they are also reliant on what Butler calls "infrastructural and social conditions of support" of public health and social care systems. As Butler (2016, 19) asserts, "We cannot talk about a body without knowing what supports that body and what its relation to that support – or lack of support – might be." Faludi explains that Stefánie's hallucinations manifest as a steady stream of interlopers who break into her home and want to capture and imprison her: "Nazis were battering down her front door" (Faludi 2016, 452), and "hordes of night intruders were storming through her house, rifling through the kitchen cabinets and bureau drawers and her purse, painting the walls in invisible ink" (453). These hallucinations, rooted in traumatic memories,

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[7] According to a recent Alzheimer's Association report (2018, 5): "Many LGBT older adults may not have a relationship with their legal or biological families, and are instead supported by their families of choice" or require social supports and services. The report (11) further states that LGBTQ* adults face barriers to receiving support and services because of discrimination and lack of cultural competency, and thus many distrust providers who deliver care under the structure of heteronormativity. As I attempt to show in this essay, *In the Darkroom* offers an example of barriers to and possibilities of social structures for LGBTQ* people with dementia.

set off a series of interactions with local police and hospital staff that expose the lack of support available to her as a transgender person. As previously mentioned, when Stefánie reports to Susan that she has been misgendered at the hospital, she adds, “They don’t like trans people” (452). Here Stefánie explicitly identifies herself as a target of discrimination, and it is suggestive of a potential future as her dementia advances, for Stefánie and for others like her.

If, as Falcus and Sako (2019, 27) assert, experiences of dementia are often “sidelined or even silenced” within the cultural discourse and the genre of autobiographical narratives, then the experiences of trans people with dementia are doubly marginalised and require speaking subjects and listeners. The lack of representation of transgender people in general, and in dementia memoirs and dementia research in particular, affects how dementia is understood, how treatment is determined, how care is delivered and how policies are shaped. Of course, given the diversity of identities, perspectives and experiences that reside under the umbrella term “transgender,” it is important, as argued by Chryssy Hunter, Jenny-Anne Bishop and Sue Westwood (2016, 31), not to generalise about dementia experience based on a particular account but to see transgender people as “complex individuals from a wide range of intersecting social backgrounds, with their own wants, needs, interests, likes and dislikes.”[8] Given the memoir’s attention to questions of how intersecting identities are formed, sustained, impeded and erased, it offers insights into how Stefánie is supported and not supported, fits and misfits, in specific spaces and at specific times, including but not limited to her experience of dementia.

Rosemarie Garland-Thomson’s concept of misfitting can help us understand the lack of support Stefánie experienced throughout her life and the self-determination she needed to develop in order to survive. Garland-Thomson (2011, 604) theorises misfitting to defamiliarise prevalent ideas about disability as lack or defect and to shift attention to “location rather than being, the relational rather than the essential”; this redirecting of attention to “the interactive dynamism between world and body” exposes the resourcefulness, adaptability and “productive power of misfitting.” Although Garland-Thomson (2011, 598) formulated the concept of misfitting with disability theory in mind, she argues that its application extends beyond the category of dis/ability to foreground particular bodies as “always situated in and dependent upon environments through which they

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[8] Hunter, Bishop and Westwood (2016, 125) continue: “Because of this diversity, rather than thinking of a unified trans* community it is more useful to understand different groups of trans* people as constituting a collection of sub-communities, with some shared characteristics but with many and significant differences, including a variety of different socio-political and medical aims.”

materialize as fitting or misfitting." Garland-Thomson (602) also historically and ethically contextualises misfitting within regimes of power that have targeted people who "fall into varied devalued social categories" and have been "purged through forms of eugenic eradication such as the European Holocaust, American lynching, the prison-industrial complex, and coercive heteronormality." An important political and ethical function of the misfit is to foster an awareness of unjust practices of exclusion or segregation in the public sphere and to insist on recognising and honouring particular bodies through the arrangement of accommodating spaces (597).

4 Rhetorical silence and rhetorical listening

Misfitting provides not only a way to think about the specific environments Stefánie occupies and her experience within those spaces, but it also leads to the question of what the role of communication is in misfitting. Following Garland-Thomson, I am interested in how misfitting can also include a communicative exchange as part of embodied interaction with environments. Theories of reciprocal communication speak to the dialogic nature of Faludi's memoir, which is rooted in journalism's idiom of inquiry and listening, and the meanings produced through dialogue. Marcie Bianco (2017) highlights *In the Darkroom*'s dialogic process and effect in developing "an understanding of identity that bespeaks its production through dialogue." Cheryl Glenn's notion of rhetorical silence is also useful in theorising how both speaker and listener take turns being productively silent in order to "transform the interactional goal of rhetoric, which has traditionally been one of persuasion to one of understanding" (Glenn 2002, 284), as is Krista Ratcliffe's theory of rhetorical listening, proposed as a "stance of openness that a person may choose to assume in relation to any person, text, or culture" (Ratcliffe 2005, 17). These rhetorical theories together can provide a way to think about communicative misfitting and open up the possibility of reparative work. Both silence and listening allow Stefánie and Susan to share painful memories and make sense of the larger social and cultural forces shaping history and each of their identities, as well as their shared family history.

Faludi comes to know and understand through Stefánie's memories the details of her survival as a young Jewish man in Nazi Europe. Readers come to know through Faludi's memories the details of how her feminism was shaped by her father's threatening and violent behaviour during her childhood, as well as also the deep conflict between her own identity as a liberal feminist and moments of scepticism about Stefánie's identity as a trans woman. Although these potent and painful memories are separate and asynchronous, they become woven together to animate the pair's reconciliation. By attending to key moments and contexts of speaking and listening leading up to and throughout Stefánie's dementia, we might reconsider dominant understandings of dementia as only or primarily loss and deterioration. Thinking about rhetorical silence and rhetorical listening can also centre the experiences of LGBTQ* people in dementia care contexts; doing so has, as Westwood and Price (2016, 6) assert, ethical, conceptual, practical and rights implications.

Throughout *In the Darkroom,* Susan's and Stefánie's positions as listener and speaking subject shift and change. In addition to this shifting relationality, the many instances and meanings of silence throughout the text warrant our attention because, as Glenn (2002, 263) states, "like the zero in mathematics, silence is an absence with a function." Glenn (263–264) wants us to be more sensitive to the many functions and possibilities of silence in helping to fashion our communication, noting that "when silence is our rhetorical choice, we can use it purposefully and productively – but when it is not our choice, but someone else's for us, it can be insidious, particularly when someone else's choice for us comes in the shape of institutional structure." And as Kennan Ferguson (2011, 126) notes, silence is a site of multiple, overlapping, opposing and indeterminate strategies and conditions, and it can be deployed and interpreted in many ways, from isolating individuals or groups to forging a sense of community. Indeed, soon after Stefánie dies, Susan is "comforted by the knowledge that my father had died here in the female wing, surrounded by women" (Faludi 2016, 462). Susan's grief is mitigated knowing that Stefánie is recognised and supported in a female space into which her body, as it ceased to function, fitted.

The acknowledgement and recognition of fitting is especially poignant in the context of a Rosh Hashanah service father and daughter attend together with a Jewish reform community in the fall of 2014, just months before Stefánie develops dementia. As Faludi (449) explains, Rosh Hashanah "celebrates the birth of the universe, but other births as well. So many of the prayers involve pregnancy, motherhood, a yearning for children." As they sit together, Susan looks at Stefánie and reflects on what she has learned about her father's history and their renewed relationship:

> What of your mother, Stefi, who grieved the loss of two newborns before she had you, yet left her only child with nannies and nursemaids and went out on the town every night? And what of your father, who left you to fend for yourself on the streets of wartime Budapest? Who didn't come to your bar mitzvah? Who wrote in his will, "To my son, István Faludi, one lira?" And what of your daughter, who didn't have the grandchildren you wished for, and who let you evict her from your life until, by an act of extraordinary reinvention or reassertion, you invited her back in? (Faludi 2016, 449)

In these reflections, which become a meditation or prayer, Susan centres Stefánie, acknowledging her struggle and will to survive trauma and create a self and a life without meaningful networks of support or protection. This centring is essential to atonement and creates a space for Susan to recognise her father's perspective as valid, true and felt. And when the rabbi's husband asks whether they are related, Susan understands that she can make visible and public these poignant inner reflections: "I paused, not wanting to get into explications, yet also not wanting to cause any pain. One way or another, I thought, an identity would be denied. '[She is my] mother,' I said" (450).

Ratcliffe's theory (which she proposes as a way to foster cross-cultural communication) emphasises rhetorical listening as a listener's capacity to identify her internalised beliefs and values and to imagine how these ideas may have shaped her and how they may affect others. Ratcliffe (2005, 205) also notes that rhetorical listeners "situate themselves openly in relations to all kinds of discourse" without the intent to "win" or "persuade" or appropriate a point of view or even smooth over difference. Rather, the emphasis on listening to difference "asks us, first, to judge not simply the person's intent but the historically situated discourses that are (un)consciously swirling around and through the person and, second, to evaluate politically and ethically how these discourses function and how we want to act upon them" (208). Ratcliffe's model of rhetorical listening can help think through key moments in the memoir, since acts of listening by both father and daughter are essential to their reconciliation, especially in maintaining their connection as Stefánie's dementia advances.

5 "I'm Stefi now": Becoming recognised

In the first chapter of *In the Darkroom,* it is 2004 and Susan is travelling to Budapest to see her father for the first time as Stefánie. She reflects upon whether the inscrutable, explosive parent she knew growing up had been so troubled because she had been living "a miscast existence, a life led severely out of alignment with her inner being" (Faludi 2016, 16).[9] Faludi's use of the word "miscast" here to broadly emphasise the performativity of gender identity can be connected to and extended by the notion of misfitting, in that misalignment is located not (or not only) within the individual but in "spatial and temporal points of encounter

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[9] In trans life-writing texts, narratives of transitioning often use the trope of becoming properly aligned with one's inner self to achieve what Evan Vipond (2019, 21) calls "cultural intelligibility as normatively gendered subjects."

between dynamic but relatively stable bodies and environments" (Garland-Thomson 2011, 594).

In the book's last chapter, it is May 2015, and Stefánie is calling Susan to report that the police have wrongly taken her to the psychiatric ward of St. János Hospital. Faludi, in the United States at the time, describes the phone call in detail: Stefánie declares that she had caught an intruder who had tried to start a fire in the basement. She called the police, who "mixed everything up" and took her away instead: "They totally miscast me. You need to talk to these doctors and get it all cleared up" (Faludi 2016, 455). By this time it has been several months since the onset of Stefánie's dementia and her hallucinations and more than ten years since Stefánie first reached out to Susan after their long estrangement. By now readers understand the multiple meanings of being miscast and the many specific places and moments that Stefánie had navigated her way out of, as a misfit, a "discrepancy between body and world" (Garland-Thomson 2011, 593). Stefánie explains how she survived the Holocaust in Hungary: "I know how to fake things" (Faludi 2016, 255). Even as Stefánie's faking ability is presented as an act of survival, it is also a destructive force in their relationship. We might consider whether, from Susan's/Faludi's perspective, disowning the "macho aggressive man" palliates the violence inflicted on their family. In fact, Faludi's (78) initial scepticism about her father's gender expression and its "surface ephemerality" seems to serve as a form of payback for that early violence. These are crucial challenges to issues at the heart of narratives that offer "an 'insider' perspective on dementia, and [whose] claim to value comes from the authenticity and intimacy promised by the auto/biographical perspective" (Falcus and Sako 2019, 26).

The involuntary commitment at St. János Hospital in May 2015 was not the first time that Stefánie was institutionalised after she developed dementia. Earlier that year, in February, Stefánie thought criminals were trying to break into her home late at night. She screamed until the police arrived and an ambulance took her to the hospital. By the next day Stefánie had managed to slip away and return home, and in a phone call to Susan "recast [the] traumatic experience as an escapade. 'A to-do over nothing!' she said'" (Faludi 2016, 452). After further conversation, Stefánie reveals having been misgendered by the doctors and nurses. This scene of misfitting highlights the ongoing dynamism in identity categories. The misfitting materialises when Stefánie is both misgendered and not recognised as transgender, and when her gender identity is interpreted as a symptom of her dementia, which she rightly understands arises from discrimination against LGBTQ* people. It materialises as well when she is not recognised as a person living with dementia. Stefánie escapes the hospital, once again cleverly navigating as a misfit as she had done so many other times and places in her life. Faludi (2016, 452) notes Stefánie's resourcefulness in evading the hospital staff, or rather Stefánie's pride in her own resourcefulness: "'I escaaaped!' my father gloated when I reached her on the phone later that day. She sounded her usual self, preening over her aptitude for evasion." This encounter with the hospital reveals the intersectionality of dementia and transgender identities, and the material consequences of misfitting, which requires Stefánie to draw on her lifetime of resourcefulness and self-protection developed through role play and impersonation. As she tells Susan, "It strengthened me for life that I did these things back then. That I could live as not myself but as a non-Jewish person. And that I could get away with it" (424). To live "as not myself" is to emphasise a break or gap, a misfit between body and world, her body being denied proper and fitting care. The scene calls attention to misrecognition and discrimination as part of Stefánie's personal history, and her Jewish identity, and repeated instances of being miscast. Given the chronic and degenerative nature of dementia, this scene also invites the reader to project forward in time, to a possible future in which Stefánie will no longer be able to pull off an escape from a misfit.

This scene of misfitting also calls attention to the communication between Stefánie and Susan, specifically Faludi's discussion of listening as her father's dementia develops. Faludi bookends *In the Darkroom* with a mention of Tivadar Puskás, a colleague of Thomas Edison and the inventor of the telephone exchange and its corresponding salutation, "Hello." In Chapter 2, Faludi describes her first phone conversation with Stefánie after not speaking for 27 years. She remarks on her father's distinctive and expressive way of pronouncing the word "Haaallo" and her tendency to remind anyone who would listen that Puskás, a Hungarian, first shouted the word *hallom*, which means "I hear you," when he first picked up the telephone receiver in 1877. At the start of the memoir, Faludi is doubtful that her father will listen and hear her. Later, when the pair talk on the phone a few months into Stefánie's dementia diagnosis, Stefánie again explains the coinage's provenance. When Susan points out that she has told that story before (Faludi 2016, 454), Stefánie responds, "Hey listener! [. . .] You are the one who listens to me." Stefánie's brazen directive here comes after her dementia diagnosis and winds the narrative to a controversial interaction often referred to by dementia caregivers as "therapeutic lying," which is adopting a loved one's sense of reality in order to retain a closeness that is slipping away (see Elvish, James and Milne 2010).

Faludi (2016, 454) describes her own developing understanding of her father's persistent hallucinations about spies and intruders attempting to capture her, so that instead of using reason and logic to assure her that no such villainy is afoot, she "learned not to argue. It seemed to relieve her when I entered into her mental road map, acknowledged her perceptions, no matter how fantastical.

[. . .] And so I listened. Yes, I'd say, how awful to have strangers flocking through your house at night. [. . .] Yes, the ambulance driver must be a card-carrying Arrow Cross officer." Faludi's decision to enter into the "mental road map" and affirm her father's association of these medical personnel with her persecutors in the past can be read as an assertion of the agency of misfitting, a willingness not to correct or overpower but to recognise both Stefánie's trauma and the space to which Faludi must adapt to maintain a connection with her father. It might also be partly the residual behaviour of a fearful daughter towards an authoritarian parent. The narrative leaves open the possibility that dementia care of vulnerable subjects can generate generous empathy and complicated detachment. As Stefánie's life draws to a close, Faludi listens to the affective nature of her father's experience, rather than assert "facts" or "truth" in an ableist, normative fashion. This strategy recalls Baril and Silverman's (2019, 10) view of selfhood as "multi-faceted, changeable and not normatively 'rational.'" As Ratcliffe (2005, 31) explains, rhetorical listening is not self-interested or directive but rather proceeds from a logic of accountability that "recogniz[es] that none of us lives autonomous lives." This logic of accountability works in the memoir in tandem with Butler's notion of interdependence when Faludi (2016, 453) accepts that "there was no use reasoning" with Stefánie, whose "hallucinations were true because she believed them to be true." Dementia demands a new kind of logic, a new kind of reasoning, a new kind of listening.

As the reader understands through their radically different perspectives, and their many arguments and strained silences, each wants the other to be and do something that she is not and cannot be, especially in the beginning of their collaboration. Frequently conflict arises when Faludi asks Stefánie about her past, or to look at family photographs, or to go places in Budapest she went as a child. These requests are met with wilful silence, a refusal to engage the past: Stefánie says things like "it doesn't pay to live in the past," it is "irrelevant," "not interesting," "not me anymore" (Faludi 2016, 77). Susan's insistence that her father look at old family photos is also a wilful refusal to acknowledge who Stefánie is *now*. Just as Stefánie does not want to look at old family photographs, documents and letters, preferring instead to show her daughter her new collection of dresses, negligées and cosmetics, Faludi doesn't want to look at Stefánie's ultra-feminised closet so at odds with her own feminist views and style. As I mentioned previously, silence is an absence with a function, sometimes multiple – we might see "not looking" as functioning in the same way: as rejection, resentment, self-protection, resistance, disempowerment and more.

The big questions that drive the production of this narrative and undergird Faludi's investigation are sometimes explicitly stated and sometimes implied. For example, "What should transsexuals' relationship be to their 'former' selves, and what did it mean to erase your past?" (Faludi 2016, 161). Given the "return" of the Holocaust in Stefánie's hallucinations, is identity something we actively choose and shape, or is it something inherent or imposed that we cannot escape? What is the relationship between the rise of Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán and his right-wing Fidesz party and the country's wilful silence on its role in the murder of two-thirds of its 825,000 Jews? When Stefánie proudly gives her daughter a coffee-table book of Hungarian history that celebrates the country's great progression from the Magyar Conquest to the 1989 "Rebirth of Parliamentary Democracy" and reduces the fate of the nation's Jews in the Second World War to a footnote, Faludi (207) asks, "And what of the Hungarian government, gendarmerie, military, and civil service, and the central role they played in the internal evisceration of the last intact Jewish community in Axis Europe? The text was silent." Faludi (206) acknowledges and compares the country's transformation and frequent silence with her father's:

> Like her, the city was attempting a rebirth at an advanced age. Like her, it had undergone an identity makeover from one end of the spectrum to the other. Hungarians had a name for the about-face from Communism to capitalism: they called it 'The Change.' Wandering the streets of Pest and sitting at my father's table in Buda had a strangely unitary feel. In both places I was watching people engaged in an intense negotiation with the meaning of identity – and the possibility of leaving the past behind, of learning to forget.

In this stark and quite negative comparison, Faludi represents her father's refusal to engage his past (as a Holocaust survivor, as her violent father) as a wilful erasure akin to Hungary's wilful erasure of its own authoritarian, totalitarian and violent history. This realisation comes in 2008, only four years after they begin to talk, and still six years from the shared Rosh Hashanah service in which Susan recognises and acknowledges Stefánie as her mother, a moving moment of forgiveness and closeness. Still, the derisive comparison between Stefánie's belated gender transition and Budapest's regeneration lingers.

In the Darkroom's exploration of the complexity of identity arising from the history of the Holocaust in Hungary and transgender politics culminates in the final chapter, as Faludi (2016, 451) describes the onset of her father's dementia, noting the paradoxical relationship between losing grasp of reality and the intrusion of traumatic memories: "They say that dementia is a disintegration of the self, a bleeding away of identity. Watching it take over my father's life that winter, I was tempted to think of it as the opposite: an onrush of all that she had been, all that she had experienced, suffered, fled." By the end of the memoir, readers understand that in the ten years since the project began, the pair has collaborated on a difficult memory project to tell Stefánie's history, their family history and Hungary's history. Faludi's observation that her father's dementia opened a door to suppressed histories is reached after the pair engages in a sustained and often heated dialogue in a number of spaces. One space is Stefánie's "bunkered fortress" high in the Buda Hills, poring over boxes of family artifacts and photographs (43). Another space is the apartment building in Pest where Stefánie grew up, now home to a Reform synagogue. Yet another is the Hungarian Jewish Museum, where Stefánie sees a 1945 photograph of bodies exhumed by the Soviets from a mass grave on the grounds of the Jewish Maros Street Hospital and is reminded that he had been there as a member of a youth film club: "'The smell,' she said, raising her hand to her face. 'You could not get it out of your nose'" (208–209).

In 2008, four years into their collaboration, Stefánie and Susan visit the House of Terror, opened in 2002 and built by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and his far-right Fidesz party, which commemorates the post-war period of 1944–1989 and presents a narrative of Hungarian victimisation by the Soviets with a brief treatment of Hungarian victimisation by the Germans. As Csilla Kiss (2015, 244) points out, the museum "gloss[es] over the responsibility of the Horthy regime that ruled Hungary until October 1944 – and forget[s], like elsewhere in the region, that without local collaboration the Nazis would not have been as effective as they were." This state-sanctioned historical cover-up authorises and in fact compels from visitors a political forgetting of Hungary's collusion in the murder of hundreds of thousands of Jews during the Second World War. But in a moment that I would characterise as one of misfitting, Stefánie remembers another history, one that she witnessed herself and recounts to her daughter. Faludi (2016, 210) writes, "The history that was absent within the museum had assailed her on the sidewalk. 'I was *here*,' she said. 'Right here. In front of this building. When they brought Szalasi in.'" Stefánie goes on to describe how, in 1945, when Ferenc Szálasi, leader of the fascist Arrow Cross Party, was arrested and imprisoned in his former headquarters, the Jewish film director Béla Pásztor filmed his capture for the news. In this scene a misfitting materialises in the space Stefánie occupies in front of the building and the memory she relays to her daughter, which denies the museum's efforts to forget both Stefánie's past and the nation's past. Remembering and forgetting are both registered through the interaction of Stefánie, Susan and the museum space.

It is only at the end of her life that Stefánie begins to grapple with what it means to be Jewish and begins to acknowledge the ways Hungary reconstructed a history of silence and absence, exhibiting a kind of oppositional consciousness and politicised identity that, according to Garland-Thomson, arises from the experience of misfitting. On a visit to the Hungarian National Museum during Holocaust Remembrance Year in 2014, the pair sees a revisionist staging of memorabilia that pitches Hungary as defenceless and Germany as solely culpable for the mass murder of its Jewish citizens. When the pair descends three flights to the basement, they see that the museum has gathered in a small, obscure room an exhibition of photographs of Hungarian Jewish Holocaust survivors and their descendants. Reading the testimonies of survivors whose photographs are displayed in the basement, Stefánie becomes suddenly impassioned and cries out, “Let the people in Hungary look at them! [. . .] They turned their backs. [. . .] They said, ‘Waaall, it’s none of our business.’ They never looked at who was taken. These people were just like them. They spoke the same language. They were your neighbors. They were your friends. And you let them die!” (Faludi 2016, 442). In this moment and space, Stefánie embodies, for the first time and to Susan’s surprise, the political and ethical dimensions of listening and speaking as she acknowledges the interdependence that should have prevented the violence and trauma of mass murder. And significantly, basements serve as liminal and dangerous spaces throughout the text – as Stefánie tells Susan, it is the basement of the Grand Hotel Royal in Budapest during the Nazi occupation where Jews were shot, it is the basement of the suburban home in Westchester where her father kept a workshop and constructed furniture and elaborate toys that became “stage sets he desired for his family” (14), and it is the basement of her Buda Hills home where at the end of the book Stefánie imagines an intruder is trying to kill her.

It is not long after this museum visit in 2014 that Stefánie develops dementia, and as readers we understand the significance of the memoir’s memory work and of the pair’s reconciliation. In conveying the depth and profundity of their peace-making, Faludi (2016, 451) uses words often deployed to describe political relationships:

> In 2004 I set out to pursue the stranger who was my father. I didn’t anticipate a laying down of arms, nor did I achieve one. In the years to come, our relationship would lurch from contention to detente to contention again. But by fall 2014 [. . .] we seemed to have arrived at an understanding, even a closeness. The accord came just in time. When I visited her that September, my father was as lucid and strong as I’d ever seen her. Less than half a year later, her constitution was in ruins.

This intergenerational peace treaty and Stefánie’s willingness, though reluctant, to explore what it means to be a Hungarian Jew, come as prominent politicians use and promote antisemitic, anti-Roma and xenophobic rhetoric to invoke an ethnically pure Hungarian past and future. The complicated interdependence that is promoted through Faludi’s intergenerational narrative, and its emphasis on coming together through reluctant but necessary remembering, is in opposition to the country’s developing radical intolerance constituted by a collective forgetting. This developing intolerance is not limited to antisemitism but includes the views of conservative politicians and the majority public that transgender people are deviant, defected, aberrant, ill, criminal and sinful and should not be protected by legislation (225). The interpersonal understanding Faludi and her father reach through rhetorical listening is not mirrored in Hungarian society, which suggests that the country's rising violence and tensions will not ease until those who wield power listen to those who lack it. The memoir explores how traumatic history is re-entered and retold – and how it changes depending on who remembers it (or not), who tells it and who listens.

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Dementia as Catalyst and Plot Device

Sue Vice

Journeying into Uncertainty: Representations of Memory Loss in Kindertransport Fiction and Drama

In this essay, I ask why the image of memory loss, one that is often explicitly identified as dementia, appears in close association with contemporary representations of the Kindertransport. In doing so, I will explore the figure of the former *Kind*, or refugee child, in plays by Wendy Graf and Rose Lewenstein, as well as fiction by Linda Newbery.[1] Detailed readings of these works reveal a fictive ambivalence about forgetting on the part of individuals whose experience is firmly associated in the public mind with its opposite, that of remembrance in the form of memorial and educational practices. Although the *Kinder* are sometimes described as refugees or exiles rather than survivors, the Kindertransport initiative is central to "public narratives about the Holocaust," notably so in Britain (Sharples 2012, 15). We might expect portrayals of dementia in this context to be symbolic expressions of anxiety at the impending end of the "era of the witness" (Wieviorka 2006). However, despite a focus on childhood disruption, each of the twenty-first century examples discussed here has a more consolatory effect than this suggests.

The presence of the image of dementia in the examples here contrasts with previous fictional versions of the Kindertransport experience, in which loss of memory is associated with suppression rather than disease, and its recovery with anguish rather than reassurance (Brookner 1988; Sebald 2001). This absence of consolation is also evident in an earlier text which this essay's twenty-first-century examples recall in intertextual terms, Diane Samuels's play *Kindertransport*, first staged in 1993. Dementia's role as an organic state that entails forgetting acts in the more recent works to absolve the former *Kind* of responsibility for managing the memory of the past and to pass the mantle of its recall to the next generation. This entails an "optimistic" effect (Behrendt 2010, 400), with an emphasis on mollification and coming to terms with the past that might sit uncomfortably with the painful nature of what is remembered.

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[1] While a Kindertransport background is unmistakably present in Newbery's *Sisterland* and alluded to in Lewenstein's *Now This Is Not the End*, the former refugee Eva in Graf's *Leipzig* has, rather, travelled directly from Germany to the United States – even though her story includes details so familiar from the Kindertransport experience that critics assumed this was the context for her protagonist's history too.

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Despite their transformation of an often-harrowing history into narratives with a positive tenor, the historical background to the Kindertransport and its contemporary standing is significant in these recent representations. The initiative brought 10,000 unaccompanied children, principally from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia, to Britain just before the war, starting a month after the so-called Kristallnacht pogrom of 9/10 November 1938 and ending when war broke out nearly a year later. The trajectory of Kindertransport representations follows that of Holocaust literature more broadly, in the sense that the witness genres of testimony and poetry from the early post-war years (Gissing 1988; Mayer 1999) have been succeeded by the symbolic portrayals of fiction (Riggs 2011; Graham 2015), even if, as in the case of Alison Pick's novel *Far to Go* (2010), they are often still based on family history. Such a pattern can equally be seen in the careers of individual writers. The former Kindertransport refugees Lore Segal and Karen Gershon both published testimonial writing about their experience of relocation in the immediate post-war period, then turned more definitively to fiction in the following decades (Segal 1964, 2013; Gershon 1966, 1980). The works discussed in the present essay fall into a category that is even further removed from testimony and could be described as a historically based realism that draws on archetypal or mythic structures (see Krongold 2020). In such a genre, the by-now familiar details of a *Kind*'s journey and life are adapted by writers without biographical connections to these events for broader symbolic or didactic purposes.

The increasingly significant and celebratory public memory of the Kindertransport, as shown by such events as the commemoration of the death of the British founder of the Czech initiative, Sir Nicholas Winton, in 2015 and the 80th anniversary conferences and exhibitions in London and Berlin in 2019, underlies the realist myths characterising its representation in the twenty-first century, which persist despite the revelation of more uncomfortable truths in recent historical reassessments (Craig-Norton 2019). The events of the Kindertransport are used in Britain to introduce schoolchildren to the topic of the Holocaust, in formal education as well as in museal spaces such as the National Holocaust Centre in Laxton, UK (Pearce 2018; Vice 2018). In these contexts, the fact of the children's leaving home to be saved is emphasised, while the backdrop of the murder of most of those who were left behind tends to be omitted (McDonald 2018). By contrast to the triumphal national narrative in Britain, the high personal cost of the Kindertransport is foregrounded in the texts analysed here. It is implied that such rupture and exile can be explicitly acknowledged only under the condition of dementia, as a state that makes plausible the fictional characters' state of memory loss. In these twenty-first-century examples, therefore, it seems that forgetting is the condition for remembering.

1 Suppressed memory: Diane Samuels, *Kindertransport* (1992)

One of the best-known literary versions of this refugee experience is Diane Samuels's play, simply called *Kindertransport*, first performed in Britain in 1993 and in the United States a year later. Its plot underlies several of those mentioned here, whether overtly or implicitly, in challenging the notion of the Kindertransport as simply a rescue story with a happy ending. In Samuels's play, we learn that the Jewish child Eva Schlesinger travelled from Hamburg to Britain in 1939 where she was adopted by Lil, a kindly mother figure. In her eagerness to fit in to her new British surroundings, Eva changed her name to Evelyn and her birth date to that of her arrival in the new country. The audience learns that Evelyn was baptised and, in later life, hid her Jewish ancestry from her daughter Faith, who discovers it during the action of the play.

The setting of *Kindertransport* is the attic of Evelyn's London house, yet it opens on a scene from the past, as Eva's mother, Helga, is getting her daughter ready to leave Germany for Britain in 1939. This is a staging not just of Evelyn's past but of its role in her memory. We see in theatrical terms that the protagonist is haunted by the history she has hidden, in the form of the child Eva and adult Evelyn appearing on stage together, as the stage directions make plain. The past is shown, as Samuels (1995, vii) puts it, not "to explain how things are now, but as a part of the inner life of the present." This psychological perception is enacted as Helga in 1939 teaches her daughter to thread a needle, the staging allowing two temporal zones to coexist:

> HELGA: You have to be able to manage on your own.
>
> EVA: Why? [. . .]
>
> HELGA: See. You don't need me. It's good.
> *The door opens. EVELYN enters.* (2)

The adult Evelyn walks through the door onto this scene from her own past, construed by her in the present, just as it was at the time, as one of abandonment. Evelyn's "inner child," in Eric Berne's phrase (1961, 199), is still fully present. Later, we learn that Evelyn's parents were deported to Auschwitz but her mother survived, yet when they are reunited after six years apart, her daughter cannot acknowledge her. Thus, the observation by the real-life former *Kind* Edward Mendelsohn, included in the published script's prefatory collection of personal accounts, that neither he nor his parents "were able to find in each other the hoped-for image we had built up during our period of separation" (Samuels 1995, xv), is acted out:

> EVA: I wish you had died.
>
> HELGA: I wish you had lived. (86)

These expressionist utterances originate in the characters' psyches, rather than constituting naturalistic dialogue, serving to remind the audience that the "primitive" (Klein 1975, 8) responses of childhood have lived on in Evelyn's mind. This is a syndrome that the conceit of dementia's medically necessitated reversions to the past in the later examples makes manifest.

There is no dementia in Samuels's play. Evelyn and the other characters frequently use the verb 'forget' but in the sense of a deliberate act of putting aside or concealment. In the examples that follow, the opposite is the case, and forgetting due to neurological changes in the brain releases a hidden history. However, as the persistence of a repudiated past in *Kindertransport* suggests, the ground is established for dementia's appearance in the later works as the vehicle for the return of the repressed (see also Krüger-Fürhoff in the present volume). Other aspects of the play are influential in this way, including a focus on hiding and rediscovering a suppressed Jewish ancestry, the haunting of the present by a lost or rejected German parent, the figure of a daughter or granddaughter who tries to unearth the history's true details and the inheritance of tainted "structures of feeling" (Sierz 2015) over generations, including emotions of fear and withholding passed on from mother to child.

2 Retrieved memory: Wendy Graf, *Leipzig* (2006)

The influence of *Kindertransport* on the new generation of realist myths of dementia is apparent in Wendy Graf's play *Leipzig*, first performed in Los Angeles in 2006. *Leipzig* follows a dramatic pattern very close to that of Samuels's play, although Graf has not cited it as a forebear. Even the play's title seems responsive to the earlier work: while *Kindertransport* emphasises the transition from one mode of life in Germany to another in Britain, the naming of *Leipzig* after the eponymous city draws attention to the protagonist's originary location and her wish to return there at the end of her life.

The central character in *Leipzig* is now living in Boston, and she, like the character in the earlier play, is also called Eva. She too has hidden the Jewish refugee element of her German past from her daughter Helen and has brought her only child up as a Catholic. The Eva of *Leipzig* pretends that her former governess Bridget, the adoptive American parent who is the counterpart to Samuels's character Lil, is her biological mother. But the new element in this case is that the ageing Eva in Graf's play has begun to suffer from dementia. As Eva's memory loss worsens, it prompts her to wish explicitly to recall the past, as she declares to her daughter Helen:

> EVA: I don't want to forget about it. All my life everyone told me to forget. I tried to push it down, bury it, rub it out, but it was always there, every day . . . always with me.
> (Graf 2006a, 16)

This contrasts with Samuels's play, where Evelyn's memories are, rather, the unwelcome signs of an inability to suppress the past. Nonetheless, as in *Kindertransport*, Eva's present in *Leipzig* is peopled by the spectres of her now-dead German family. They appear on stage in the form of a memory-scape, by means of which we learn that Eva in this case has also interpreted being sent away from home as a rejection, and we hear her plead with her father, "Please, Vati, please [. . .] let me stay!" (43). The parents address their daughter in the present, so that the voice of her long-dead mother is more real to Eva than that of her own daughter Helen, as is evident in a late scene set in a nursing home:

> MUTTI: Tell her you want some pie.
>
> EVA: I . . . pie.
> *Helen is visibly happy.*
>
> HELEN: Yes, pie! Of course you remember pie! (75)

The script notes to *Leipzig* claim that, just as in Samuels's *Kindertransport*, "Throughout the play, past and present intertwine and often collide, emotionally and physically" (Graf 2006b, 2), so that, although the dialogue is almost entirely in English, we are given to imagine that Eva communicates with the characters of her past in German. The collision of temporal zones is evident in a scene where the child Eva plays in a park in Germany with her parents. In the present, Helen, who knows nothing of her mother's history, and her father, George, although he shares his wife's secret, interpret Eva's behaviour simply as evidence of dementia's unmotivated confusions, as the stage directions reveal:

> We hear faint park music again. No one hears it except for Eva [and the audience]. She listens for a moment, hums along with it. Helen and George look at her strangely, then exchange glances. Mutti appears in a dim light and calls to Eva. (Graf 2006a, 10)

This scene dramatises the fact that Eva's German family are "all newly alive in her disintegrating memory" (Citron 2006), while showing again the benefits of a theatrical representation of memory's palimpsestic qualities. The stage directions for Graf's play convey the potential for lighting and music to "parenthesize" the different temporal layers of disordered recall, while the characters of the past are made visible or vanish through "scrims or other illusions" that take place outside "the realistic exits of the stage" (Graf 2006a, 2).

All the works discussed here draw on a pattern of mnemonic objects, including jewellery, photographs, letters and food, and some of those in *Leipzig* seem to signify not only the refugee child's past but also the play's intertextual memory. Graf's Eva is given by her mother "a gold and pearl Jewish star" (Graf 2006a, 16), sewn into the hem of her dress, whereas in Samuels's play, Evelyn is given a star of unadorned gold, hidden in the heel of her shoe. This detail sums up the difference between the plays: in *Leipzig*, it is Helen who is intrigued to find Eva's carefully preserved star in the present, while in *Kindertransport*, Evelyn remembers selling hers after the war, claiming to her adoptive mother that she would never wear it. While Graf's play represents the recuperation of lost memory and of the protagonist's Jewish faith, the mode of Samuels's is one of renewed suppression and failure. Following this difference, in Graf's *Leipzig*, the painful past of the Kindertransport experience is transformed into reclamation and heroism. Despite her dementia, Eva is able to reflect upon her own condition:

> EVA: I can't remember some things that just happened, or sometimes even what word to say, but then, out of nowhere, I remember something from so long ago. (39)

Eva's retrievals do not include her parents, since their having died in Treblinka leaves her freer than Samuels's Eva to mourn and indeed to venerate them. In this sense, the audience witnesses a conflict between the play's efforts to represent a traumatised subjectivity yet conclude with the "messages of hope and resilience" (Oulton 2017) fitting both to its North American context and to conventional dramatic form. Ironically, given its entailing debilitation and suffering as well as the return of distressing memories of historical violence and loss, it is the presence of dementia that resolves this thematic conflict by allowing the protagonist to forget some of the painful aspects of the past. It does so by cancelling out Eva's inability to love – her confession of having been unable to "reach" her daughter is overridden by her declaration that "I love you, Helen. I want to tell you that, while I still remember" (Graf 2006a, 44) – and by presenting a dramatic version of postmemory's intergenerational transfer of memory, similar to that in *Kindertransport* in being acted out by the refugee's daughter. Yet the affective outcome is once more symptomatically at odds in each case: while Faith, in Samuels's play, conducts her investigations and aims to find her

German roots against her mother's wishes, Helen in Graf's play does so to supplement Eva's failing memory and to plan a longed-for return visit to the city of her mother's birth.

Graf describes the genesis of her play in encountering the stories of former child refugees from Germany now living in the United States. She had initially planned to write a play simply about survivors but was unable to do so. When a relative developed Alzheimer's, the encounter with dementia meant that, as the playwright puts it, "A light went off in my head. The refugees, the Kindertransport children, the hidden survivors . . . What if someone had a secret they tried their whole life to forget, and now they were desperate to remember, before it was too late? Thus the birth of *Leipzig*" (Graf 2006b). This comment is significant in relation to all the examples mentioned here. It implies that dementia was welcomed by Graf as an apparently innovative pretext for showing the return of the suppressed past, in the case of her character Eva, as the result of a deliberate choice on her part as well as involuntary recall. Such a scenario is, as Graf's comment about the shift from survivor to refugee implies, more likely in the case of the former *Kind*, for developmental as well as historical reasons.

Eva is a subject with agency over her own memory throughout Graf's fictional version of dementia. Rather than the disruptive survival of a mother changed beyond recognition, as we encounter it in *Kindertransport*, in *Leipzig* the deaths of all Eva's family members are offset by the heroism of her brother Erich, who was killed as a member of the camp resistance at Sachsenhausen. In an image of memory retrieved, Helen's father, George, finds a letter sent to Eva in 1942 on the occasion of Erich's death, even preserving his voice so that it is heard in the present: "'I must do something. I must fight back!'" (Graf 2006a, 73). Thus, this play about a suppressed legacy of historical atrocity nonetheless ends on the triumphant image of Helen embracing her mother, "making sure she hears and understands," to declare that "[Erich] was a hero. A great hero. We come from this, Mom [. . .] This is who we come from!" (84).

3 Third-generation memory: Rose Lewenstein, *Now This Is Not the End* (2015)

The denouement of *Leipzig* offers a consolatory version of the bleak British story of Samuels's play, giving dementia a redemptive role and implying for good measure that armed resistance is the only valorised response in the Holocaust years (Epstein 2008, 286). The generic and structural pressures to resolve in positive terms even material of this comfortless kind are evident in another

British play about a former refugee, which likewise ends positively, suggesting that the explanation for the difference from *Kindertransport* lies in the symbolic weight given to the image of dementia in each case.

Rose Lewenstein's play *Now This Is Not the End* was first staged in London in 2015. Its action takes place in London and Berlin and, like the earlier plays, is set in an attic full of boxes and suitcases being packed for a journey. This is a visual correlative for both time frames, that is, the departure of a child, once more called Eva, from Germany to Britain in the past, set against her granddaughter Rosie's reluctance in the present to leave Berlin, where she is studying German. As the stage directions in Graf's *Leipzig* emphasise, such a scenario conveys "the jumble" (Graf 2006a) of the former refugee's mind, with its burden of remembrance and concealments.

However, in Lewenstein's play the realm of the past is not staged, by contrast to Samuels's and Graf's. The limiting of the visible action to the twenty-first-century present and making Eva's Berlin history and her lost family simply the subject of dialogue is motivated by the fact that in this case it is the millennial Rosie who is the play's central character. Eva's history gains significance through its features emerging in relation to her granddaughter's life, although it is not lived experience for Rosie. Rosie's "ear for German" (Lewenstein 2015, 9) implies the existence of a "genetic signature" (Sierz 2015), rather than a full historical knowledge, to link the younger woman with the country that she, in a version of her grandmother's history, does not want to leave. To convey their affinity, one absent from Eva's relationship with her daughter Susan, the play opens with the grandmother's disembodied voice calling from her nursing home to leave a garbled voicemail message for Rosie at her Berlin apartment:

> EVA: Rosie, are you there? . . . I want to know what it is you would like for your birthday. Is it Easter soon or Christmas? . . . There's a man who comes to dig up the flowers . . . I told him it's too late. They'll all be dead in ten years.
>
> Well. Why shouldn't I have Christmas if I want to? (Lewenstein 2015, 5)

We gain a sense here of Eva's memory loss and love for her granddaughter, as well as a hint, in her formal English and defensive remark about Christmas, at a particular refugee history. Even the apparently mysterious description of the gardener emerges from a subjectivity that perceives atrocity and death in the everyday. In a more complete utterance from three years earlier that occurs later in the play, we learn that it is not plants but Holocaust survivors of whom Eva claims, "Well, they say they'll all be dead in ten years" (25). In this way, the recorded message not only sets the scene for the action to follow but constitutes an auditory version of the legacy that Eva has passed on to Rosie.

In *Now This Is Not the End*, the occluded history of violence and expulsion is shown, as it is in the other plays, through its inherited effects, in particular Susan's feeling unloved by her mother and overprotectiveness in turn for her daughter. It is also a plot device in the form of the search on Susan's part for a lost cassette tape of her mother talking about her past. This tape is a counterpart to the voicemail message, revealing that even technology of this kind is an unreliable substitute for living survivor memory, as Eva says: "There'll come a point where nobody can remember" (Lewenstein 2015, 69). Her story can be heard only by means of a flashback to the moment of its recording in 2004, since in the play's present moment of 2015 the onstage destruction of the tape when it is eventually found conveys the equal fragility of Eva's memory.

In the context of Eva's dementia, its factual credentials bolstered by such details as our learning that she has been prescribed the experimental drug Reminyl, the recall of her German past is fragmentary or involuntary. These factors make the presence of the disease in Lewenstein's play less central and yet more compelling than in Graf's. Eva's refrain that she lived in Berlin's Essener Strasse, in "the house with the blue door . . . except that it isn't blue any more" (Lewenstein 2015, 20, 66), sounds like childhood nostalgia, by contrast to the "deep memory" (Friedlander 1992, 41) of unassimilable loss that suddenly irrupts into a conversation with Susan about moving house:

> SUSAN: Have you written down the new address? . . .
> EVA *shakes her head in bemusement.*
>
> EVA: I can't understand it.
>
> SUSAN: What?
>
> EVA: I can't understand why they killed my father. (Lewenstein 2015, 60)

It is not a coincidence that the intrusion of the genocidal past takes place when the apparently everyday topic of conversation is that of relocation, in this play where the characters question whether *Heimat*, or 'home,' exists as a location or in one's mind. Rosie's claim that her grandmother's German history is "in my blood" (80) contrasts with the sardonic observation by Eva's second husband, Arnold, himself a former *Kind*, that London is not home but simply "where we ended up" (55). Eva's dementia casts an ambivalent light even on what seems to be the fondly remembered address of her Berlin childhood. The "blue door" constitutes a spatial image of memory as a portal onto the past, yet its being repainted suggests that it is no longer recognisable as home and that she has been shut out.

The recital of Eva's history that we finally hear clarifies the details of her past, although it also undermines the impression of traumatically fragmented recall given by the isolated details of paternal death and childhood home as they emerge in the context of her dementia. Yet *Now This Is Not the End* is structured thus to cast retroactive light on the family relations we have already witnessed in the play's present, when Eva can no longer articulate her history as she did to Susan twelve years earlier. In this way, the play's form avoids either the heroic teleology of Graf's *Leipzig* or a dementia-led decline into silence and death. Eva's recounting her story also makes clear the play's intertextual debt to Diane Samuels's work, one again hinted at by her name. The influence of *Kindertransport* is further implied by the exaggeration of factual details that seems to be borrowed from the earlier play. Thus, we hear that, as in Samuels's play, Eva's Jewish father was killed but her mother survived the war, in this instance not by chance but through the protection afforded to a non-Jewish woman. In Lewenstein's play, Eva's being sent to Britain from Germany by her grandparents while her mother was in prison was experienced by the nine-year-old child as a rejection. However, her account of their words – "I did hear my grandfather say to [my grandmother], 'she won't be our responsibility any more,' and I wondered what that meant" – shows the accuracy of such an assessment in this case. In the scenario of failing to bond with a yearned-for mother after separation, it is not the child but the adult who instigates a final breach. While Evelyn in *Kindertransport* chooses not to join her mother on board a ship to the United States, in Lewenstein's play it is the child Eva who is abandoned, as she recounts to Susan:

> EVA: I thought we were leaving on the boat together. . . . But she decided to stay and by the time she came to find me it was
> well she was
> she seemed like a foreigner

The term "foreigner," used here rather than "stranger," suggests that, for Eva, even in one's country of birth it is possible to feel "cut off from everything you know," in emotional terms that prefigure and compound the cultural rupture to come (Lewenstein 2015, 67). These versions of the scenarios from *Kindertransport* make their equivalents in Lewenstein's play more fitting to its concern with "the survivor/descendant paradox" (Bosanquet 2015) and the passing of a history on to the third generation. Eva complains, "Everybody told us to forget about it. Now we're all dying and everybody wants us to remember," her dementia acting as a defence against such a demand, since, as Susan recognises, it allows her mother deliberately to avoid certain subjects: "And Mum can't remember [. . .]. Or won't remember" (Lewenstein 2015, 51). In this play, dementia's role is to both make Eva crucial to the plot yet place her in the background, since she is about to be superseded by later generations.

The play concludes with a return to an earlier discussion of the undefinable nature of the German term *Heimat*, with Rosie's verdict that it is "untranslatable, apparently" (Lewenstein 2015, 82) an acknowledgement of the legacy of loss. The play's title supports such a sense, in its ambivalent riposte to Eva's fear of the survivor generation's vanishing. It seems to reimagine the legacy of war in its title's citation of Winston Churchill's 1942 speech after the defeat of Rommel's forces in Alamein: "Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning" (quoted in Healey 2015). In this instance, it is the end of the first generation of survivors that is mourned and celebrated in these words.

4 Fictionalising the former *Kind* with dementia: Linda Newbery, *Sisterland* (2003)

Linda Newbery's 2003 novel *Sisterland* is the only text discussed here to acknowledge explicitly its origins in the earlier work whose influence hangs over all those mentioned in this essay, as we read in its prefatory material: "My thanks are due to Diane Samuels, whose play *Kindertransport* has stayed vividly in my mind since I saw it at the Palace Theatre in Watford seven years ago" (371). Thus, the transformation of suppression in Samuels's play to dementia in Newbery's novel stands out among the other details that have been altered or added for the sake of the novel's didactic focus on a range of other concerns in keeping with its appeal to a young adult readership, including present-day racism, homophobia, the Israel-Palestine conflict, parental infidelity and sibling rivalry. Indeed, in a review, Diane Samuels argues that the novel's dual time frame, divided between the refugee child Sarah in the past and the present-day setting, overloads the narrative so that the Kindertransport "journey of young Sarah increasingly becomes a distraction from the contemporary narrative" (Samuels 2003). The dementia plot itself has a dual role, as central to the need for the teenager Hilly to investigate the occluded past but also offering a general lesson for young readers about responding to that state in older relatives.

In *Sisterland*, the focus is, like that in Lewenstein's play, on the third generation, in the form of Hilly Craig, whose grandmother Heidi Richardson has been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. Hilly investigates the concealed history of her grandmother, who, as the granddaughter discovers, was born into a German Jewish family as Sarah Reubens, sent on a Kindertransport to Britain and, like Evelyn in Samuels's play, took on a different, "happy" name (Newbery 2003, 260) and date of birth to mark this new identity. Heidi's family, including her daughter Rose, have always believed the cover story of her being orphaned in the Allied bombing of Cologne and coming to Britain after the war, one that expunges the Jewish element of pre-war flight. Hilly's quest is encouraged by Heidi's dementia causing her to relive the details of her true past, as is evident when police visit the house and grandmother says to granddaughter:

> "Bad men came," Heidigran insisted.
>
> "What bad men? Did you have burglars, Gran? At home in Banbury?" . . .
>
> "They took my daddy away. . . . He didn't even come to the station. Never said goodbye! They smashed things and threw them out on the street!" (183)

Concealed openly in this dialogue, and later spelt out for good measure (172, 225), is the historical detail of the "bad men" of the SS and the so-called Kristallnacht pogroms, along with memories of the Kindertransport journey and its starting off at a "station." The crucial element of Samuels's *Kindertransport*, that being sent away as a child is still felt like an abandonment, is retained in Heidi's perception of her father's failure to "say goodbye."

In Newbery's novel, Hilly herself has a mnemonic function, since her physical resemblance to her grandmother's estranged sister Rachel prompts Heidi to let slip the details of a concealed past. Hilly's investigations include not only unearthing memorial objects, such as photographs and a tape-recorded interview with her grandmother, but even locating Heidi's sister in Israel. This is a literalised novelistic version of the spectral family figures who haunt the theatrical mise-en-scène in Samuels's and Graf's plays. In *Sisterland*, Rachel echoes Helga's words in *Kindertransport* to Evelyn about the death of her daughter's former self, in a letter to Hilly about Heidi: "Perhaps Sarah Reubens is still there inside her? Perhaps she remembers that once we were sisters?" (Newbery 2003, 333). The retrieval of long-lost relatives is a device in other fiction about Holocaust survivors with dementia (Vice 2019), conveying in bodily form a fantasy of what Hilly calls "reconciliation" with the past (Newbery 2003, 368). Heidi's memory loss gives urgency to these acts of reparation in *Sisterland*, allowing the atrocious past to become known in the last moments of the survivor's life. As Hilly marvels as she travels to meet Rachel in Israel, "I might never have known the truth" (2) had she not caught her grandmother in the nick of time. Indeed, in a letter she writes on the aeroplane to her boyfriend Rashid, Hilly claims that her grandmother is "slipping away from her self so fast now that I'm not sure how much of her will be left when I get back" (367). Psychological and narrative necessity coalesce here, as Heidi's dementia-related decline also signals the end of her role in the novel's plot. Having passed on her history, despite a resistance to do so that contrasts with that of Eva in Graf's *Leipzig*, Heidi can safely be succeeded by the next generations, as the image of Hilly mid-air en route to meet her long-lost family suggests.

5 Conclusion

In the works discussed here, the dementia that exists in a former child refugee's present is shown to be preceded by a lifetime of concealing that history. It is as if only memory loss can unlock the past in the face of such a suppression (Butler 2006, 185). What emerges in the context of the protagonists' dementia is not a generalised recall of earlier years but historical secrets. Thus, in Graf's *Leipzig*, we witness an exchange between Eva's daughter Helen and her husband George that highlights the irony of willed forgetting being followed by its counterpart of involuntary recollection. George accuses Helen of upsetting her mother by "open[ing] the door" to "all this old stuff":

> GEORGE: I've worked too long and hard to help her forget.
>
> HELEN: Yeah, well, funny thing. Now it's all she remembers. (Graf 2006a, 71)

As this dialogue suggests, the memory loss of dementia affects only the events of the present, offering by contrast a sudden return to the concealed past along with the abandonment of secrecy.

We might wonder why the trope of dementia has been introduced into these works, when each would have functioned, as indeed does Samuels's play *Kindertransport*, as striking returns to a disavowed past without it. The reason seems to be that dementia makes the retrieval of a traumatic history unintended and therefore less threatening for characters or readers than would be a reasoned reckoning with the past. By contrast, in W. G. Sebald's novel *Austerlitz*, the eponymous protagonist's belated summoning up of his "forgotten" Kindertransport history is not involuntary but just as deliberate as his earlier efforts "to recollect as little as possible, avoiding everything which related to my unknown past" (2002, 195, 197). This is no longer an option for the protagonists of the present examples. As we see in each case, events are viewed as if from the perspective of a child who is unable to understand, rather than an adult, like Samuels's Evelyn, who cannot give up her defence mechanisms, or Sebald's Austerlitz, who eventually tries to do so. Graf's and Lewenstein's plays and Newbery's novel represent reconciliation between the survivor and her history, as well as with second- and third-generation descendants. This is not the case in Samuels's *Kindertransport*, as shown by the play's concluding dialogue between mother and daughter about the high cost of returning to the past:

> EVELYN: I'd rather die than go back.
>
> FAITH: You might change your mind . . .
>
> EVELYN: I can't. (Samuels 1995, 88)

Evelyn's fear-filled repudiation, "I can't," suggests refusal as much as inability. If "Alzheimer's is the impetus for the resurgence of the traumatized self" (Plunka 2017, 92), that self has never been lost in Samuels's play.

Such absolutism is undercut by dementia, as we see in all the other cases. In *Leipzig,* Graf's Eva decides to cooperate with her daughter's research; the past of Lewenstein's Eva in *Now This Is Not the End* is acted out by her granddaughter Rosie; in Newbery's *Sisterland*, Heidi's return to the past prompts and enables her granddaughter Hilly's investigations. Repression and suppression are dissolved by dementia, making it an unexpected means of reparation for the characters and of reassurance for the reader or spectator. Such an effect suggests at once that the retrieval of a traumatic past need not be overwhelming for the subject, whose painful memories can be defused as they are passed on to the next generation, and that dementia itself can act as a means for accessing such memories before it is too late. In this way, historical atrocity and debilitating illness are both subject to a compensatory myth making.

This is suggested even at the level of the characters' names. In Samuels's play, the protagonist's changing her given name, Eva, to the more English-sounding Evelyn is designed to remove any clear link to its German, but also to its Hebrew, roots. The fitting duality of the biblical name Eve, with its etymological roots in the Hebrew for 'life,' yet its association with Eve as a figure who is at once a founding mother, scapegoat and exile, is implicitly recognised in its also being adopted as the protagonist's first name in Graf's and Lewenstein's plays. Newbery's *Sisterland* eschews such an obvious homage to the text that inspired its Kindertransport plot, using instead the even more Hebraic-sounding first name Sarah for the central character, which she has changed to the definitively Germanic Heidi. Indeed, the recurrence of 'Eva' and introduction of 'Sarah' enhances the mythic sense of these Kindertransport stories. The fact that they are all narratives of female lineage draws on the fact of matrilineal descent in Jewish law, enabling the irony that, apart from Lewenstein's Eva, whose mother was not Jewish, learning about their forebears' true past has implications for the descendants' own sense of self. As Helen in *Leipzig* puts it to an imagined interlocutor about her discoveries, "Oh, and by the way, did I happen to mention . . . I'm

Jewish" (Graf 2006a, 19), while Samuels describes Newbery's Hilly as "our everyday English heroine turned Jew" in the wake of her grandmother's revelations (Samuels 2003), in a reprise of Faith's declaration to her mother in *Kindertransport*, "I want to know what being Jewish means" (1995, 81). The use of such a textual device raises the stakes of uncovering the past, since the postmemorial subject in the present cannot remain untouched by what they learn.

However, these narratives about the Kindertransport and dementia differ in crucial ways from fiction and drama more generally about Holocaust survivors who are living with that condition (Harmel 2012; Wallenstein 2012). Although Samuels argues that her play is not specifically about the Holocaust but treats a "universal" theme, that of the difficulty of parent separating from child (quoted in King 2007, 5), the invocation of a Kindertransport context does offer dramatic possibilities on its own account. It means that the narrative focus is necessarily on a child and the significance of an abrupt deracination whose meaning is only barely acknowledged for the sake of survival. Such a backdrop makes possible the transplantation of a refugee or Holocaust history into an Anglophone setting. In doing so, it draws on a series of gulfs: those between child and adult, between national cultures, and within the individual in the throes of an "identity denial." All these divisions are full of representational potential, one that is increased by the inclusion of dementia and its "reveal[ing] as much about the past as it obscures the present" (Baker 2015).

Yet the Kindertransport experience and that of dementia are linked in even more fundamental ways than this. Each is conveyed in terms of deracination and travel. In Samuels's case, the journey concerned is one out of childhood, meaning that the play addresses, as she puts it in an interview, the archetypal "pain of separation that ultimately every mother and child will experience in life" (Marshall, 2014). In the other works analysed here, the traumatic separation of a young child from the known world of family and nation has its counterpart in the sensation of internal division and estrangement occasioned by dementia at the other end of life. As Heidi in *Sisterland* thinks of a period of mental confusion, "They're taking me away again. . . . I must have done something bad" (Newbery 2003, 44), conceiving of dementia as a second journey into the unknown. Equally, Heidi's outburst at the dinner-table – "I want to go home! [. . .] Where I used to live" (133) – is a plea not just to return to her childhood home in Cologne but also to be restored to an earlier state of mental capacity. The travelling into uncertainty of the Kindertransport experience is therefore used as a way of conceptualising dementia itself.

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Screen Memories in Literary and Graphic Dementia Narratives. Irene Dische's "The Doctor Needs a Home" and Stuart Campbell's *These Memories Won't Last*

1 Freud's concept of *Deckerinnerungen* and (un)covered memories in dementia

In 1899, Sigmund Freud introduced the concept of *Deckerinnerungen* to argue that recollections of early childhood memories which are vivid, seemingly benign and apparently of great importance to his patients may in fact cover, mask or replace other memories of more disturbing emotional significance (Freud 1969a).[1] James Strachey (Freud 1962, 301) translated the term as "screen memories" for *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. Similar to bodily symptoms or linguistic Freudian slips, these screen memories can be understood as coping mechanisms, compromise formations or even wish fulfilments that draw on condensation, displacement, defensive disguise and repression (Laplanche and Pontalis 1972; Berna-Glanz and Dreyfus 1984; Quindeau 2017). They enrich our understanding of the dynamics of remembrance because, as Samuel Weber (2010, 627) puts it, they "serve not so much to reveal as to conceal" and hence "operate to preserve forgetting at the heart of remembering." Although Freud was soon to discard this concept in favour of the more neutral notion of "psychic reality,"[2] the term remains central to psychoanalytic reflections concerning the extent to which memories originate in the past or are retroactively projected onto it (Sprengnether 2012; Reed and Levine 2015).

The idea that one memory can mask an earlier, perhaps more disturbing one, is well captured in Freud's term *Deckerinnerung* which would, more literally,

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[1] Freud (1969b) discussed the concept again in 1904 in *Zur Psychologie des Alltagslebens* (4, "Über Kindheits- und Deckerinnerungen").

[2] Freud's patients at that time were mostly young women who recalled being sexually abused by family members. The concept of psychic reality argues that for the psyche, imagined occurrences – for instance, sexual fantasies – can have the same repercussions as (memories of) real events. This birth of the psyche as an autonomous entity with its own logic helped Freud to avoid having to discuss child abuse as prevalent in bourgeois society.

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translate not as ‘screen memory’ but as ‘cover’ or ‘covering-up memory.’ The German word clearly has a spatial dimension to it and may prompt ideas of secret hide-aways, criminal activities and even detective stories. Drawing on antique metaphors of mnemotechnics, his own topological model of the psyche and the notion that psychoanalysis is a kind of archaeology of the unconscious, Freud in general conceptualised memories as if they were layered or even three-dimensional entities which could be brought to the fore by disclosing them in a horizontal move (unveiling, unravelling, laying open) or through vertical activities (uncovering, shedding, unearthing, excavating). Of course, exposing such memories would normally take place in psychotherapy, but the in-depth search for buried truths has always been a common plot element in cultural discourse and the arts. This is perhaps why the psychoanalytic concept of *Deckerinnerungen* / screen memories has proved stimulating in the arts and humanities and has been taken up in literary and film studies, gender, memory and trauma studies (Felman 1981; Jacobus 1987; Goldmann 1989; Jelača 2016). In these fields, the notion of screen memories sometimes has a more metaphorical sense that allows scholars to connect, for instance, psychic dynamics with cultural theory and media history. According to Weber, most memories are in fact memory images – they take a visual form; therefore, the translation of *Deckerinnerung* as ‘screen memory’ evokes the “double function of the image as screen: first to provide a *support* for representations and projections, and second, to *screen out* other images and elements that could disrupt the unity of self-consciousness and therefore fall prey to repression” (2013, 340, emphasis added). While Weber’s reading neglects Freud’s three-dimensional understanding of remembrance, it successfully joins psychoanalysis with media theory. On that condition, images may work as screens that blend different political events, for instance, when Holocaust photos are projected onto other historical situations to link slavery, civil war and ethnic cleansing to genocide. As Andreas Huyssen (2003, 14) puts it, in international memory politics, print and image media may function “as memory screens in radically opposing ways, either enabling strong memory discourse and bringing a traumatic past to light or blocking any such public reckoning by insisting on the absolute incommensurability of the Holocaust with any other historical case.” Against this background, recalling certain memories can be understood as a means to forget or evade others in a variety of contexts: some scholars argue that Auschwitz commemoration can work as a *Deckerinnerung* if it supplants other past (and present) wrongs, such as continued German antisemitism after the Holocaust or America’s involvement in slavery and Native American genocide (Diner 1987; Rothberg 2009). The multiple logics of unconscious compromise formation and wilful surrogate make screen memories a key concept at the crossroads of individual and cultural memories.

But how does this concept relate to dementia? In the context of critical gerontology, *Deckerinnerung* can help to develop a more nuanced understanding of the neurologic and psychic dynamics of remembering and forgetting over an individual's life span and, as a consequence, help guide social interaction and patient care. Common wisdom has it that in old age, short-term memories are prone to be lost much sooner than remote memories. This is especially true for people who live with dementia. The sociologist and psychoanalyst Ilka Quindeau argues that the same holds true for screen memories which seem to be more recent and hence more fragile than the long-term memories they are supposed to cover (Hinrichs 2016). Based on empirical research with German old-age pensioners, Quindeau and Einert (2013) explain that individual wartime stories often hide even more disturbing childhood memories of terror, flight and persecution, but, above all, long-suppressed experiences of emotional neglect within the nuclear family. Because of neural processes in the ageing brain, these previously covered memories ultimately "unfold their meaning anew," so that a "former traumatization may be reactivated" in the ageing mind of the present (Quindeau 2019).

This essay draws on the rich semantics of the German-language term *Deckerinnerungen* and the English term 'screen memories.' Putting approaches from psychoanalysis, literary studies, comics studies and dementia research into conversation, it offers a comparative analysis of two dementia narratives that originate from different cultures and use distinct media and genres: a fictional story by the American German author Irene Dische and an animated webcomic by the Australian comic-book artist, writer and interactive designer Stuart (Stu) Campbell. My reading argues that despite these obvious differences, both Dische's "The Doctor Needs a Home" and Campbell's *These Memories Won't Last* link individual experiences of dementia to larger historical developments by reflecting on the topographical and visual aspects of screen memories. By bringing to the fore personal recollections of Nazi persecution or Second World War battlefields, each of these two artworks negotiates the personal, political and ethical implications of hidden memories that are uncovered or recovered through dementia.

2 Uncovering screen memories in Irene Dische's short story "The Doctor Needs a Home"

Irene Dische's "The Doctor Needs a Home" was published first in a German translation in 1990 and, five years later, in the original English as part of the short-story collection *Strange Traffic* (Dische 1995).[3] The short story demonstrates how Alzheimer's disease can bring new knowledge to the fore, or, rather, knowledge that has hitherto been prey to disavowal or repression. As the screen memories and life-lies of an elderly New York doctor start to break down, long-cherished identity concepts – such as his understanding of having been a victim of Nazi persecution first and foremost – start to erode. As a consequence, Stach, a Jewish refugee with a German Yiddish linguistic background, has to face the "tainted memory" (Vice 2019, 117) of a more complex past than previously imagined.

By way of a first-person monologue, the reader learns that the main protagonist was born in Drohobycz in the Eastern European region of Galicia and had lived in Lviv and Vienna before fleeing to New York to escape the Nazi death camps. He earned a medical degree there, became an esteemed scholar and winner of a Nobel Prize, married, had a child and was later divorced.[4] Suffering from "ulcheimers" or "ulcer of the *Heimat*" – as Stach understands the term "Alzheimer's disease" (Dische 1995, 128) – in the narrative present, the old doctor daydreams of his mother and his sister Zesha, the remembrance of whom he seems to be devoted to with near-incestuous fervour. As the monologue unfolds and illness progresses, Stach gradually reverts to his first language: his English is increasingly shot through with German phrases such as "Kuss, Kuss, Schwesterchen" (Kiss, kiss, little sister; 133), words which are not translated because of the first-person perspective and may leave an English reader at a certain loss – a loss which might be understood as an (inverted) echo of the protagonist's feeling of disorientation in the United States. At the end of the story, his daughter admits him to a dementia care facility, the eponymous "home" that he takes for the longed-for "villa on the Danube where I belong" (135).

"The Doctor Needs a Home" could have become a sentimental account of family care, belated love, penitence and reconciliation, but the story turns into a dark account of an individual's involuntary self-exposure in illness against the backdrop of historical catastrophe, unmasking a deadly decision he took in the past. By drawing on the pivotal qualities of fiction's ability to tell stories "from within living with dementia" (Vedder 2012; Krüger-Fürhoff 2015; Hartung 2016), Dische's story lets the reader see the world through the old doctor's eyes. On the one hand, the reader shares Stach's Alzheimer's-related confusion as they try to piece together the various storylines and the contradictory information about the women who surround him in his everyday life, and whom the old man alternately

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[3] All page numbers given subsequently refer to the English-language version of the text.

[4] According to Orendi (2000) and Jaenicke (2009), the main protagonist has been endowed with details from Dische's own father's biography.

takes for his mother, sister, former lovers, divorced wife, neighbour and daughter. On the other hand, the reader is likely to be alienated when confronted with the doctor's neologisms and Freudian slips that blend past experiences of violence with present-day racism: the narrator mentions "tonight on television a good pogrom" (Dische 1995, 134) and muses that in his favourite coffeehouse, "The Negroes replace the Jews in this particular café. They are much quieter as guests, though" (127). While the reader might wonder both about the historical and ideological background of such observations and the reliability of the narrator, over the course of the story, they are presented with three differing versions of Stach's escape to the United States:

> That was before hoodlums overran the country and killed [my father]. My sister and my mother went east, back to Galicia, and I went west: a simple equation that equals separation. (121)
>
> I was impatient to leave Austria. I bought Zesha two train tickets back to Drohobyc [*sic*]. I said, Take Mama back, and wait for me to send for you from New York. [. . .] I haven't heard from them in a long time. I am beginning to lose hope that they are alive. (131–132)
>
> This woman – who is she, how does she know anything? – tells me, "Listen, your sister isn't around, get it through your head, you were a bastard to her, you sent her home to Drohobyc [*sic*], remember, when the Nazis came. You only looked out for yourself. [. . .] The Nazis shot her, and your mother, and threw them into a ditch." Hubbub with the hot blue light, what do you call it: gas. (133–134)

The doctor clearly is a victim of Nazi persecution, but at the same time he also seems to be at least partially responsible for his mother's and sister's deaths because he prioritised saving his own life over theirs. Revealingly, his first account – "My sister and my mother went east, back to Galicia, and I went west" – offers a harmless topographical juxtaposition, one that translates the vertical dimension contained in the concept of *Deckerinnerung* or screen memory into a horizontal difference: going east versus west covers extermination versus survival. The second memory is more explicit in pitching Drohobycz against New York: Drohobycz is not only the name of a town in Poland (today Ukraine) but also the name of a ghetto within the city, where the Nazis detained Jewish people before sending them on to concentration camps.

The third version of the story suggests that his former wife knows more about the past events than the narrator himself remembers – or pretends to remember. Since the truth is only gradually unveiled to the reader, and understood alongside Stach's worsening memory problems, this type of slow revelation seems to be linked to the progression of the protagonist's Alzheimer's disease. The family farewell story is presented as part of the doctor's remote memories and gets more detailed in the second narration, matching the decline of his short-term memories. In the third instance, he seems to repeat a third-party's version of the historical events. However, there is a connection between his role in his mother's and sister's death and his behaviour in the present, which betrays a certain carelessness, auto-aggression and suicidal thoughts. Following on from the third and possibly most truthful version of what has happened is this paragraph:

> Hubbub with the hot blue light, what do you call it: gas. I have left the gas stove on again. They smelled it. They burst into my apartment and danced around me like baboons shouting. Ovens are danes, they are ages, you must light them. With these things. They wave little sticks at me and strike them, and then there is fire everywhere. They are writing a long list of all the things I do wrong. [. . .] To teach everyone a lesson, I turn the gas stove on again without lighting it. Suddenly a woman walks in the door. [. . .] "Let us pack you a bag," she says. "We are taking you to a home. It's all arranged. My cab is waiting downstairs."
> (Dische 1995, 134–135)

Turning the gas stove on without lighting it certainly is a way to communicate with the persons around him, but it may also be understood as the doctor's implicit acknowledgement that his female family members were shot or gassed – and could be taken as a belated attempt to admit his role in this, share their fate and be reunited with them.

The doctor seems to forget what his brain had covered up with more acceptable memories for most of his adult life: dementia, paradoxically, reveals rather than conceals bitter insights, and his Alzheimer's is, as Elke Liebs (2003, 174) puts it, a "metaphor for the moment of truth." Stach turns out to be both victim and perpetrator, a broken old man who accepts his specific guilt as a Holocaust survivor not with words but through the way he tries to kill himself. Drawing on psychoanalytic concepts of screen memory, disavowal and repression, Dische's short story demonstrates that knowledge can come out of forgetting, and dementia might turn into an unexpected (albeit equally unpredictable) accomplice in the process of coming to terms with or unveiling the past.

3 Navigating memories in Stuart Campbell's webcomic *These Memories Won't Last*

Stuart Campbell's 2015 work *These Memories Won't Last* offers several aesthetic strategies – some of them specific to the medium of animated webcomics – to negotiate the personal continuity of somebody living with dementia, while at the same time conveying his disorientation and inner life to the comics reader. Created during an artist residency in Vienna, the comic was nominated in the Digital Comics category for an Eisner Award (arguably the most important comics industry awards in the United States) in 2016 and screened as an "interactive web animation" at the International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam (IDFA 2016). I will argue that *These Memories Won't Last* uses concepts of the screen and screen memories to represent the dynamics of forgetting and remembering in relation to wartime atrocities.

These Memories Won't Last tells the story of Campbell's 93-year-old grandfather Ladislav (Jim) Szoke, who was born in Hungary in 1922, raised by a Slovakian foster family, wounded by a landmine in the Second World War and treated by the British Red Cross. After the war, he immigrated to Australia where he married and raised a family. When his physical and mental health deteriorated after his wife had passed away, a referral to hospital "triggered a psychosis which thrust his mind back into the war," as the grandson narrates it. Jim is diagnosed with dementia, but the comic does not explain or explore how psychosis and dementia might relate to each other. Instead, it narrates how the grandfather whose mind seems to be "swimming in the past" sometimes fails to recognise his family, accuses his daughter and grandson of stealing his personal belongings (including his dentures), suspects the nurses for "poisoning the patients' food," but also enjoys relating memories from his childhood and youth.

Figure 1: Entering Ladislav "Jim" Szoke's story by scrolling down.

These Memories Won't Last uses the specific media qualities of animated webcomics (Reichert 2011; Wilde 2015) to translate the experience of dementia onto a formal level. The comic opens with words that explicitly address the reader: "When you look back on your life, what memories would you choose to share?" followed by the information "loading memories" – a reference to memory loss but also a nod to the language of computer games. Instead of presenting clear-cut panels on a single computer screen or on several successive screens, Campbell uses the "infinite canvas" (McCloud 2000, 222) of the website, here a white background; the reader has to scroll down to discover the floating single-panel or multiple-panel images that are delivered in constant movement (Figure 1, n.p.). The excerpted images included in this essay are merely an immobilised and hence a pale imitation of the original online reading experience that I will discuss in more detail below. In addition to the different panels that show Jim, his memories and present events, *These Memories Won't Last* displays two abstract features that are visible throughout: a vertical rope that – as a visual metaphor – may trigger ideas of safety as well as suicide, and a wavy red string which could be the embodiment of the story's narrative thread or, indeed, a tongue-in-cheek reference to the "unbroken reading line" (McCloud 2000, 218) as one of sequential art's – here, webcomics' – aesthetic features. *These Memories Won't Last* has a responsive soundtrack by Lhasa Mencur which combines words, sounds and music, and it offers a note from the author that explains some of the biographical background and aesthetic choices.

To convey both the past and the present-day situation, *These Memories Won't Last* alternates between the grandfather's accounts and his grandson's comments; because both are presented in textboxes in the same red font, they are given equal authority on the reader's screen. On the visual level, the comic combines the present and past while at the same time keeping both layers of time clearly separate: Jim looks like an old man throughout the comic, but when he talks about memories from his past, he is transferred to settings from earlier times, such as the snowy wood the young boy once had to pass through running errands for his grandmother or an officer's room during the war. Overall, Jim is portrayed as a strong character who deeply impresses his grandson. Indeed, as relatives, the men share facial features and in one panel face each other, mirroring each other. Despite his diagnosis of dementia, the old man's eventual death is presented as self-determined: at the end of the storyline, Jim lets go of the rope (of life) when he fears that Australian foreign politics might lead to military aggression and suffering. Hence, the comic stresses his agency and dignity up until the very end of his life.

I argue that the concept of screen memories may be helpful to better understand Campbell's comic and the protagonist's dementia: With the help of flash animation, the different visual elements slowly appear, continuously move down from the top of the computer screen and then either disappear at the bottom or simply fade away; at the same time, the red string that transports the comic's captions creeps up the screen so that text and image meet at some point. Some details in certain panels seem to be superimposed over others, referring to different temporal layers of the narrated life. But even if the reader points and clicks on the images – a standard technique with animated webcomics – they cannot get hold of them. In addition, the visual elements are not only ephemeral and in constant floating motion, but they are often barely visible through a kind of whitish fog, creating the rather frustrating sense that – notwithstanding the steady succession of images – one reads too slowly, has blurred vision and, as a result, cannot adequately fill the gaps between past and present story lines. Of course, this artistic strategy draws on Western cultural metaphors that equate clarity and visibility with insight and rationality, while darkness and obscurity are used to symbolise restricted cognitive faculties. As several scholars argue, these metaphors and visualisations have influenced the iconography of dementia in recent novels, films and patient information leaflets (Zeilig 2013; Schweda and Frebel 2015; Zimmermann 2017). In addition, once the reader scrolls down to see the next picture of *These Memories Won't Last*, they realise that – unlike in printed comics and most webcomics – they cannot turn or scroll back to refresh their memory: "The image and text will have faded away, unrecoverable" (Kunka 2018, 142). This means that although the reader has a certain control over the comic's pacing by scrolling at their individual speed, "panel delivery" (Goodbrey 2013, 190) is turned into a 'one-way experience.' This formal trait of *These Memories Won't Last* stresses the irreversible flow of time, deliberately (and contrary to expectations associated with digital comics) precludes the reader's agency (Wilde 2020) and prevents them from having an overview of the whole story. When the comic reader feels in desperate need of orientation, they gain emotional access and some insight into the experience of the old man with dementia.

In addition to these intentional erasures, an unintended technical one emerged (at least temporarily, as a more recent update remedied this): As stated in the webpage's note from the author, while working on his webcomic Campbell realised that "the latest HTML 5 code" he and programmer Vitaliy Shirokiy used might not work with newer internet browsers, restricting the temporal accessibility of the story and hence Jim's memories. This limited availability not only draws attention to the software support on which the webcomic relies, but it can also be associated with the biological deterioration of memory in people with dementia. This was exactly Campbell's intention, as he explains in his note about the format: "I had the idea that as the reader navigated through the story it would deteriorate, just like grandpa's memories." At the end of his introductory remarks, the artist pleads, "If you get the chance to read this, please do your best to remember." Hence, the technical problems one experiences when trying to read Campbell's webcomic may be understood as a comment on the evanescence of data, or knowledge, in the information age, as well as a metaphor for the frailty of both the human brain and cultural memory.

Because of his dementia, Jim revisits (and, in the comic, quite literally returns to) the past of cherished childhood recollections, but he inadvertently also finds himself in the grip of wartime experiences. These disturbing memories that were brought to the fore by psychosis and marked the outbreak – or facilitated the diagnosis – of dementia begin, as Andrew Kunka (2018, 144) describes it, "to scroll horizontally within a single panel border that appears on screen, instead of the vertical scrolling that has dominated so far." In this sequence of panels (Figures 2–5, n.p.), the reader can discern different visual and temporal layers that start to intermingle: the black-and-white drawings of Jim's recent medical condition in the foreground are juxtaposed to a grey-and-red war scene in the background, signalling that, as the two scenes overlie, a threatening past intrudes into the old man's present.[5] At the same time, the soft soundtrack is invaded by distant battle sounds of sirens, gunfire and explosions. Jim continues to be represented by the same elderly man in a hospital bed, first on his way to medical care, then pushed by a young soldier who is chased by enemy troops (wearing black boots instead of his white ones); Jim's landmine injury fuses with his present heart problems. Owing to recent distressing events – his wife's death and his poor health – the boundaries between past and present collapse, leading to an accumulation of traumatic experiences that the old man struggles to process. Displaying multiple protagonists and events that span more than 70 years, these panels superimpose the experience of distress in present-day Australia onto harrowing memories from European battlefields. The medium of comics might be an especially apt one to portray a psychic reality that does not or cannot reliably distinguish between fantasy and reality, past and present, or, to translate it into visual registers, foreground and background, or different layers of the screen. Campbell's hospital and war images (Figures 2–5) powerfully convey the fact that people with dementia – like all humans – do not simply 'lose' memories but that their brains distort, conflate and rework them. In his state of confusion, Jim seems to remember or re-enact things he had not mentioned to his family before; his changed mental state brings them to the fore.

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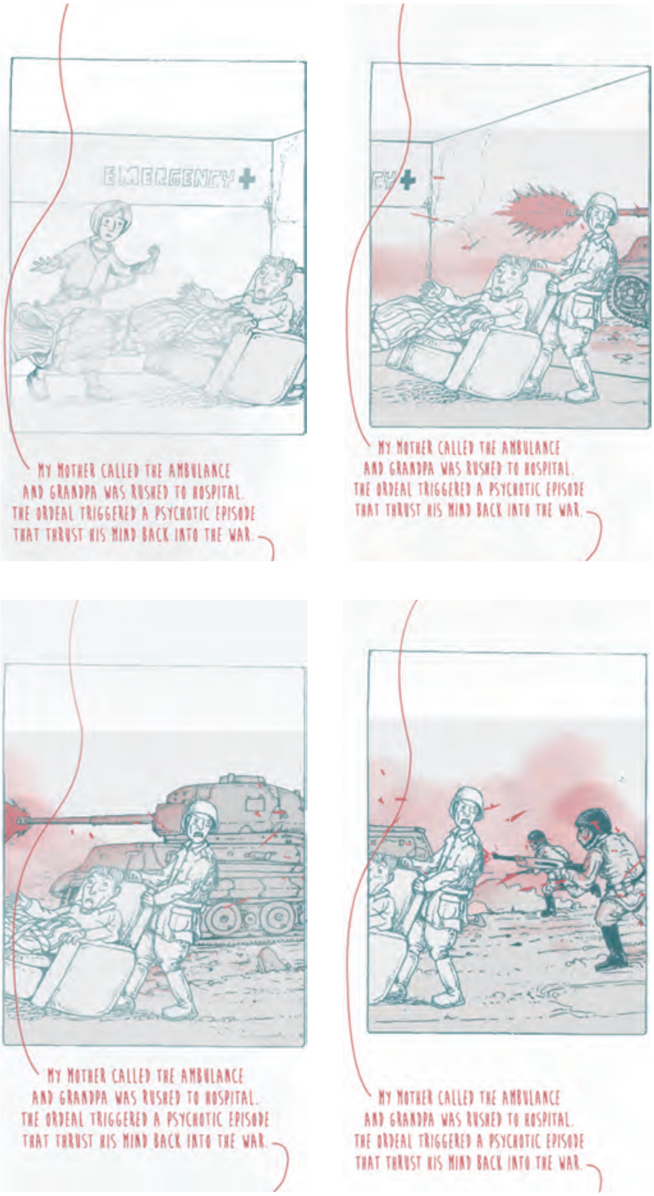
[5] Ehrhardt (2016) presents these sequences as a loop on the website 'Kill Screen' which is dedicated to the intersection of play and interactivity. Such a loop stresses that Jim cannot escape his distorted memories but it cannot convey the reader's experience of having to cope with blurred and dissolving panels.



Figures 2-5: Visual blending of disturbing experiences from the past and the present.

While comics in print often employ a specific frame-gutter architecture to collapse temporal distinctions (Chute 2016, 4, 21), Campbell's webcomic uses both the sequence of several panels slowly emerging on the screen and the staggered arrangement of multiple images within one single panel to make visual Jim's distress and temporal confusion. These flashbacks presume Jim to have a continuous sense of self but also assume him to be mentally fragile. In *These Memories Won't Last*, dementia seems to be a threat not because it evokes too few but rather too many memories, and violent and traumatic ones at that. The illness is not presented as defined by a sense of loss but rather by an abundance of haunting memories. And as the reader scrolls down the seemingly infinite canvas, the animation in which Jim's story is presented, the pace of which cannot be influenced by the reader, makes them empathise and feel at least some of the protagonist's despair. In addition to the means of printed comics to tell and show life stories dis/continued by dementia, for instance by working with the spaces in between panels, Campbell's webcomic plays with the aspects of time and movement to elucidate the frailty of human memory, the urgency of listening to loved ones and the ethical obligation to share stories of lost and regained memories.

4 Conclusion

Both the short story and the autobiographically based webcomic place their protagonists with dementia centre stage, granting them visibility (Campbell) and a personal worldview (Dische) in a way that honours their individuality and personhood. At the same time, what the old men remember does not go unchallenged by their respective audiences. From each narrative, the reader (who likely belongs to a younger generation) learns something that exceeds the (older) protagonist's grasp. Although Campbell's opening question to the reader, "When you look back on your life, what memories would you choose to share?" suggests a certain agency (in terms of choice) and acknowledges that individual memories are part of larger cultural frames (in terms of a shared understanding of which memories should be communicated and agreed upon), the animated webcomic in fact illustrates a rather limited power of control: very much like the short story, the comic involves the reader in the disturbing effects of remembering through forgetting. Drawing on multiple versions of (media) screen and (psychoanalytic) screen memories, "The Doctor Needs a Home" and *These Memories Won't Last* reflect how an individual's loss and return of memory can get intertwined with collective memories of mortal danger during the Nazi occupation and the Second World War. Both artworks seek to negotiate the personal, political and ethical implications of long-buried memories that are uncovered or recovered by dementia in the context of cultural representations of it: they make the case that the protagonists' illness paves an uncomfortable way to harrowing truths that had been forgotten, repressed or substituted by screen memories for quite some time but ultimately, for better or worse, are not lost or settled or overcome, but unfold on the minds' and the narrations' surfaces.

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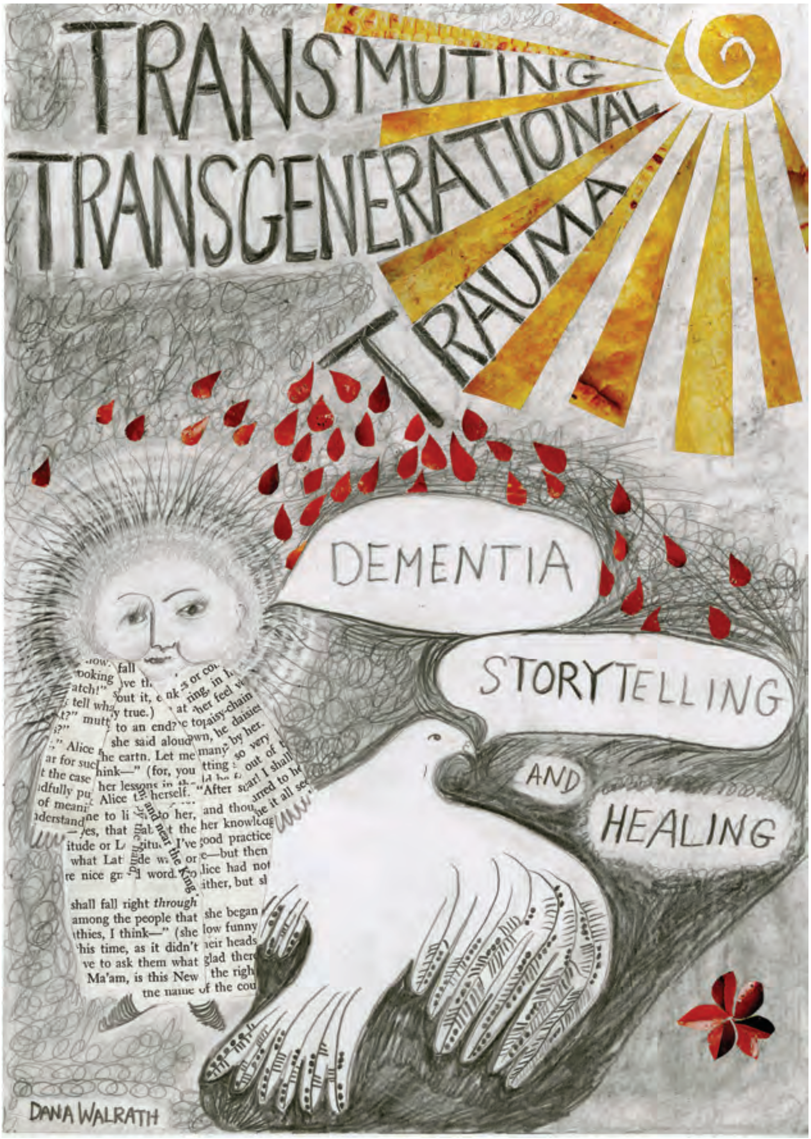
Dementia and Genocide: An Artist’s Approach

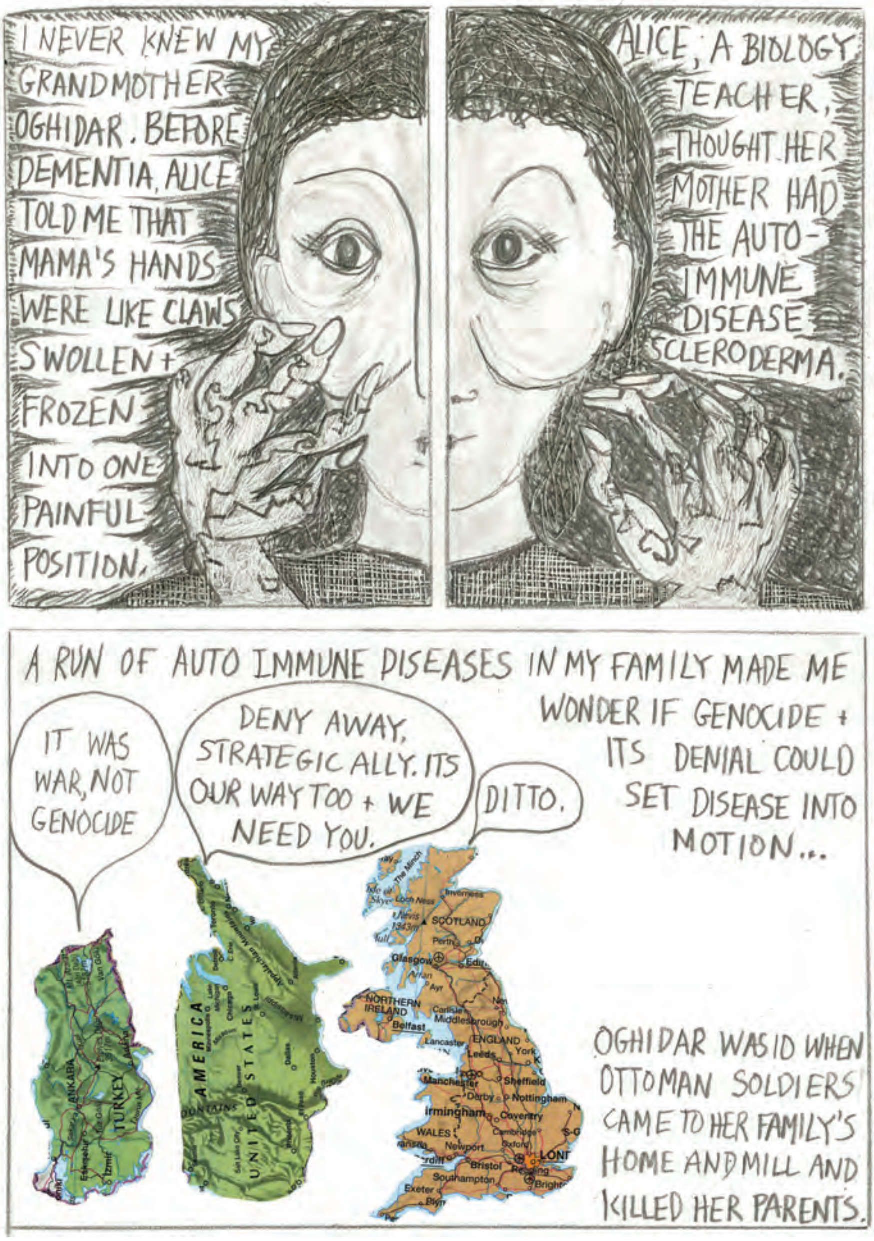
Dana Walrath

Transmuting Transgenerational Trauma: Dementia, Storytelling and Healing

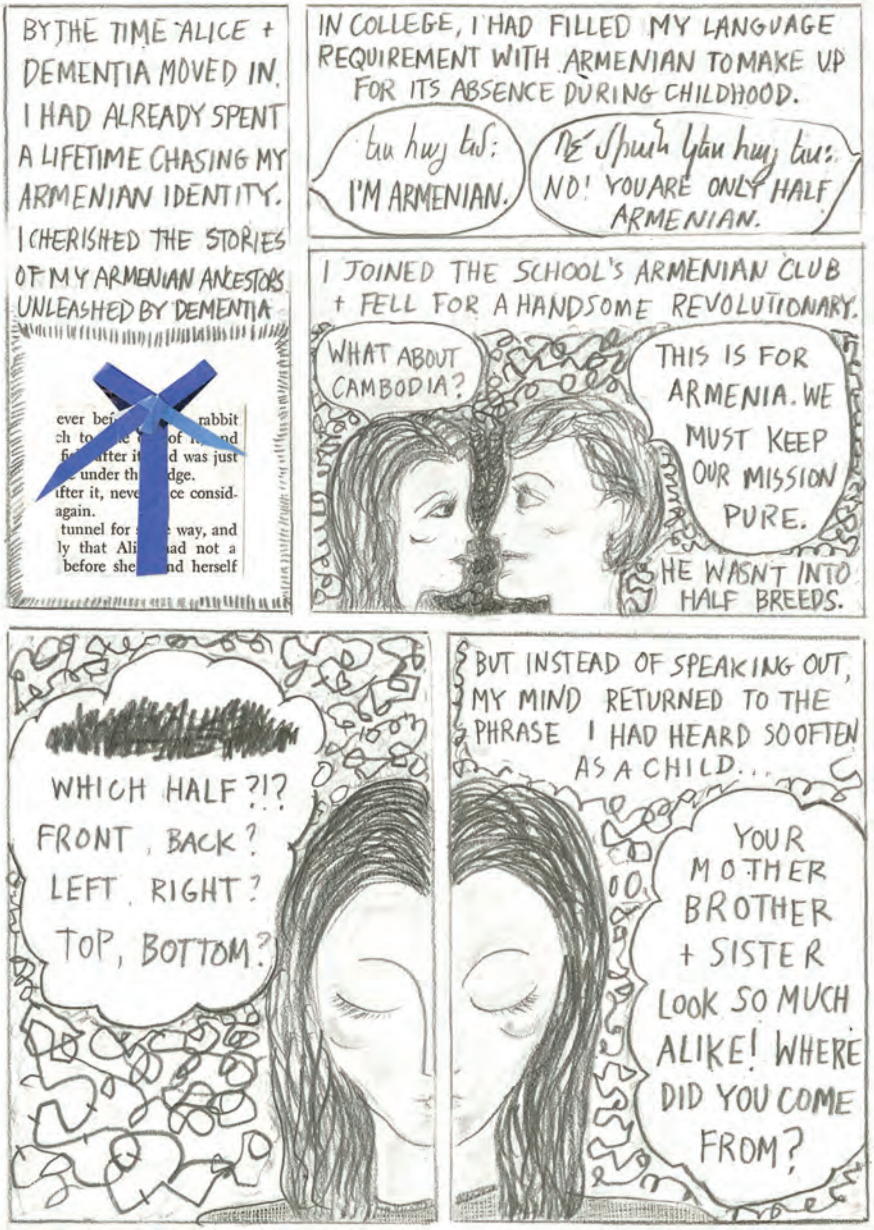


https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110713626-009

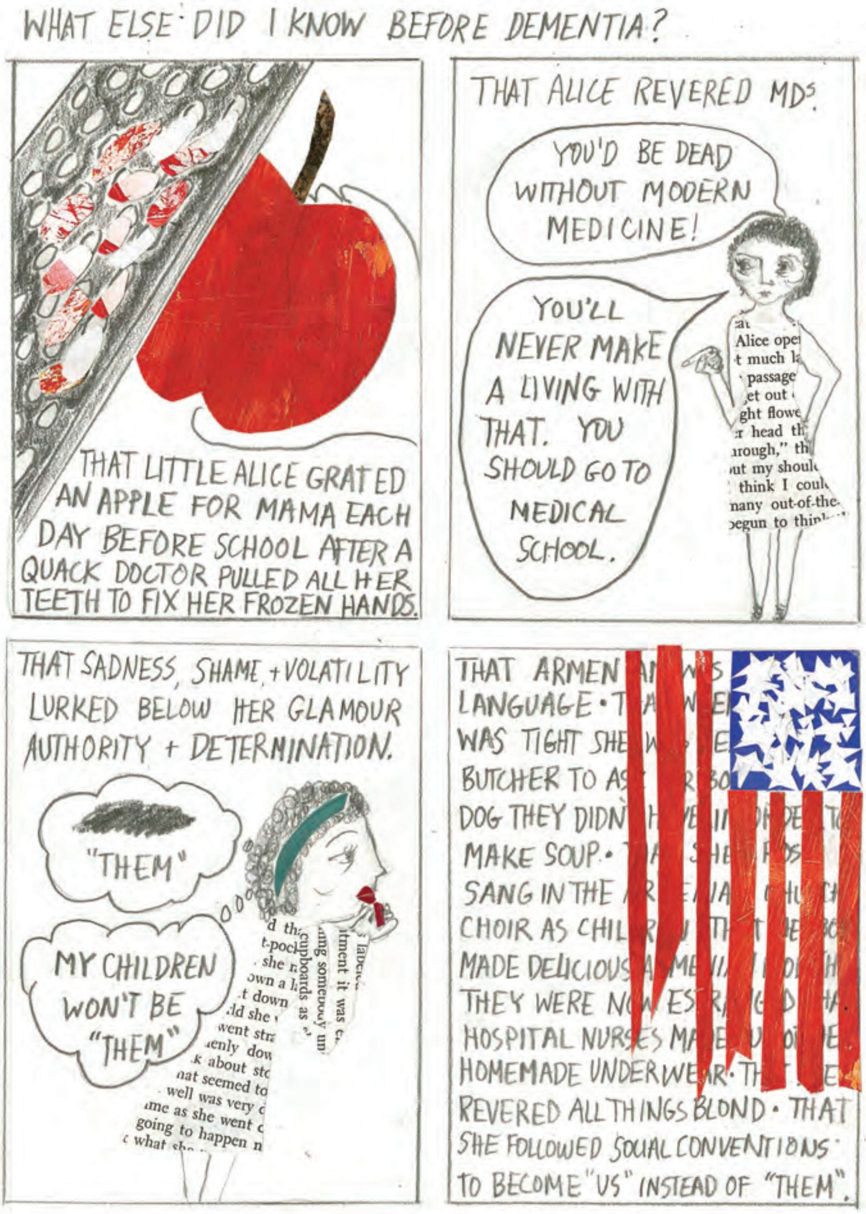

WHEN MY 75 YEAR OLD MOTHER, ALICE, AND DEMENTIA MOVED IN...
WHY AM I HERE?
YOU LIVE HERE WITH ME. YOU HAVE DEMENTIA AND IT ISN'T SAFE FOR YOU TO LIVE ALONE.
OH... I FORGOT. WHAT A LOUSY THING TO HAVE.
HER PARENTS + YOUNGER BROTHER MOVED IN TOO.
ALICE SPOKE TO THEM AT SUNSET
VAI, VAI, VAI. MAMA, PAPA, I'M SORRY. կներես, GNERES, I'M SORRY. մեղք եմ, MEGHK EM. I HAVE SINNED. I'M SORRY. մեղք եմ. կներես մեղք եմ մեղք եմ.
OTHER TIMES SHE SPOKE ABOUT THEM.
MAMA'S BROTHERS WERE WORRIED ABOUT HER HEALTH. SO THEY MADE HER + PAPA SEND ANTRANIG AWAY.


I NEVER KNEW MY GRANDMOTHER OGHIDAR. BEFORE DEMENTIA, ALICE TOLD ME THAT MAMA'S HANDS WERE LIKE CLAWS SWOLLEN + FROZEN INTO ONE PAINFUL POSITION.
ALICE, A BIOLOGY TEACHER, THOUGHT HER MOTHER HAD THE AUTO-IMMUNE DISEASE SCLERODERMA.
A RUN OF AUTO IMMUNE DISEASES IN MY FAMILY MADE ME WONDER IF GENOCIDE + ITS DENIAL COULD SET DISEASE INTO MOTION...
IT WAS WAR, NOT GENOCIDE
DENY AWAY, STRATEGIC ALLY. ITS OUR WAY TOO + WE NEED YOU.
DITTO.
TURKEY
ANKARA
Izmit
AMERICA
UNITED STATES
Chicago
Dallas
Houston
SCOTLAND
Inverness
Loch Ness
Skye
The Minch
Perth
Glasgow
Arran
Ayr
NORTHERN IRELAND
Belfast
Carlisle
Middlesbrough
ENGLAND
Lancaster
Leeds
York
Manchester
Sheffield
Derby
Nottingham
irmingham
Coventry
Cambridge
WALES
Newport
Oxford
Bristol
Reading
LONI
Southampton
Exeter
Bright
OGHIDAR WAS 10 WHEN OTTOMAN SOLDIERS CAME TO HER FAMILY'S HOME AND MILL AND KILLED HER PARENTS.

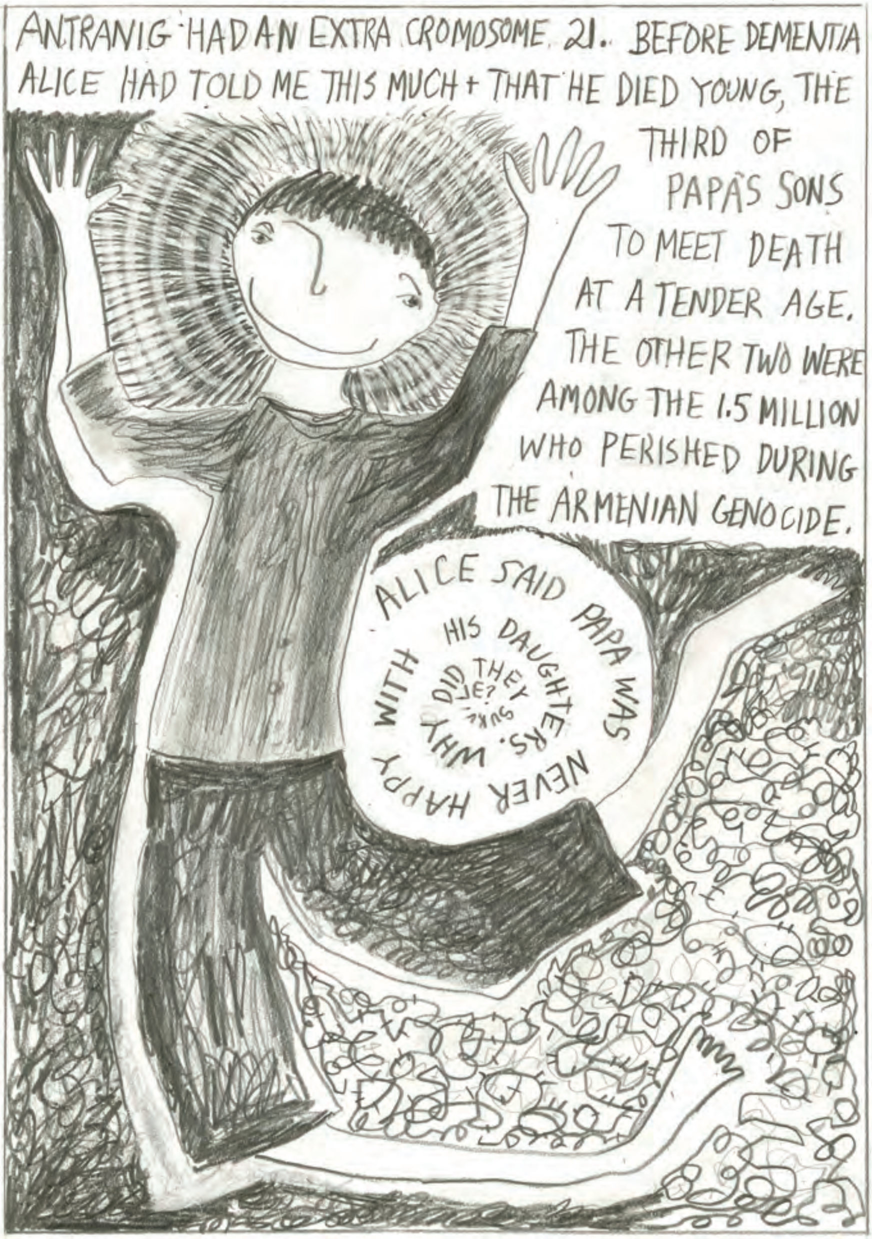

SHE, AND HER YOUNGER BROTHER AND SISTER HID DURING THE DAY
AND RAN AT NIGHT, HUNDREDS OF MILES FROM THEIR HOME NEAR PALU, IN TODAY'S EASTERN TURKEY, TO AN ORPHANAGE IN ALEPPO.
MY GRANDFATHER, YEGHISHE, A MARRIED MAN WITH TWO SONS AND SEVEN SISTERS LIVED HIS OWN BLOODY HISTORY THROUGH THE GENOCIDE WHICH, LIKE MY GRANDMOTHER'S, WAS REDUCED TO 1 STARK SENTENCE.
VAN GÖLU
YEGHISHE WAS FROM VAN IN THE EASTERN REACHES OF THE COLLAPSING OTTOMAN EMPIRE.

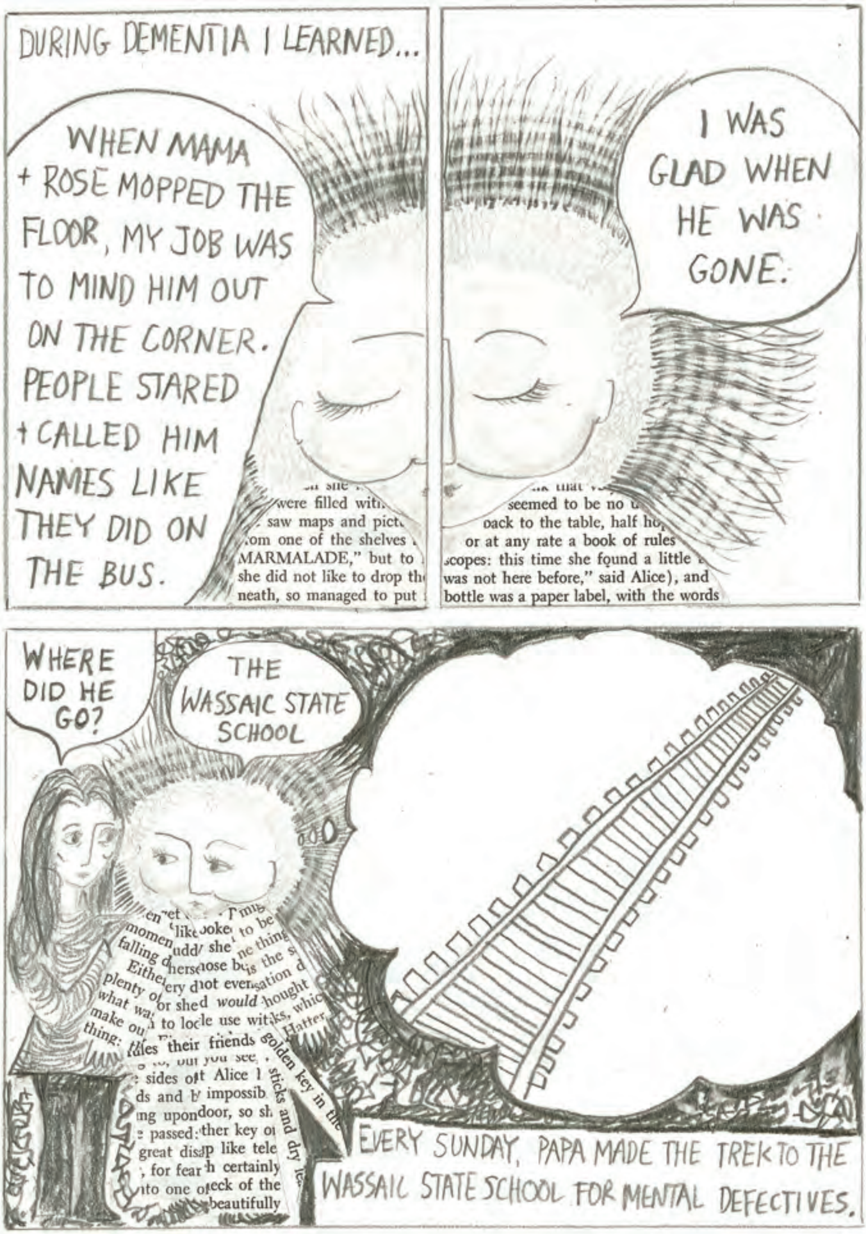

BY THE TIME ALICE + DEMENTIA MOVED IN, I HAD ALREADY SPENT A LIFETIME CHASING MY ARMENIAN IDENTITY. I CHERISHED THE STORIES OF MY ARMENIAN ANCESTORS UNLEASHED BY DEMENTIA
ever bef rabbit
ch to of nd
fi after it d was just
under th dge.
ifter it, neve ce consid-
again.
tunnel for way, and
ly that Ali ad not a
before she nd herself
IN COLLEGE, I HAD FILLED MY LANGUAGE REQUIREMENT WITH ARMENIAN TO MAKE UP FOR ITS ABSENCE DURING CHILDHOOD.
Ես հայ եմ: I'M ARMENIAN.
Ոչ՛ միայն կէս հայ ես: NO! YOU ARE ONLY HALF ARMENIAN.
I JOINED THE SCHOOL'S ARMENIAN CLUB + FELL FOR A HANDSOME REVOLUTIONARY.
WHAT ABOUT CAMBODIA?
THIS IS FOR ARMENIA. WE MUST KEEP OUR MISSION PURE.
HE WASN'T INTO HALF BREEDS.
[redacted]
WHICH HALF?!? FRONT, BACK? LEFT, RIGHT? TOP, BOTTOM?
BUT INSTEAD OF SPEAKING OUT, MY MIND RETURNED TO THE PHRASE I HAD HEARD SO OFTEN AS A CHILD...
YOUR MOTHER BROTHER + SISTER LOOK SO MUCH ALIKE! WHERE DID YOU COME FROM?

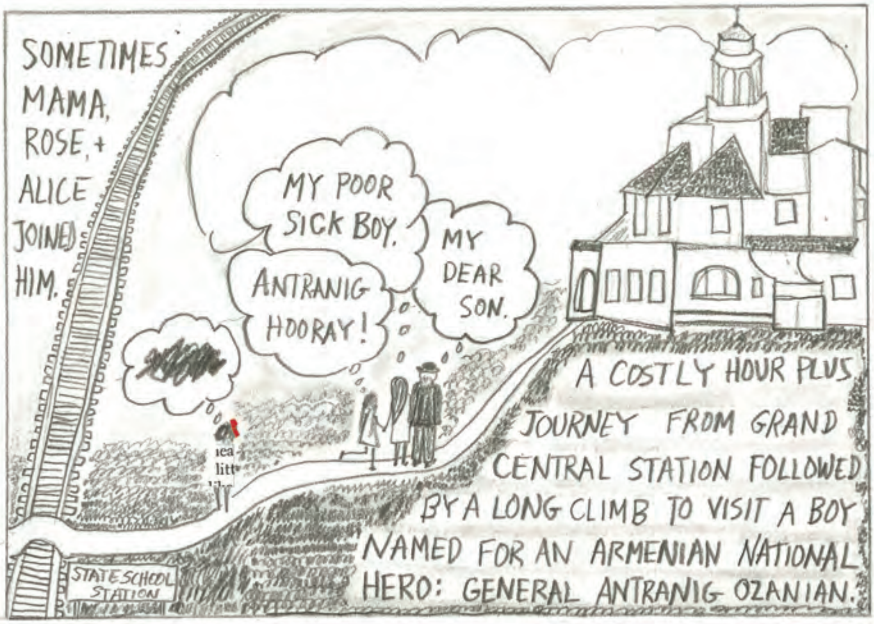

IN 1984 I TRAVELLED TO MY GRANDPARENT'S HOMELAND KEEPING MY ARMENIAN IDENTITY HIDDEN JUST LIKE THE ARMENIAN CHURCHES HOMES + MONUMENTS WHOSE HISTORY HAD BEEN ERASED. I REVEALED THE TRUTH ON THE ROOFTOP OF A MILL IN PALU AFTER THE WOMAN OF THE HOUSE TOLD ME THAT 60 YEARS BEFORE, THE MILL HAD BELONGED TO ARMENIANS.
PALU
YEGHISHE'S SENTENCE HAUNTED ME IN VAN: AFTER THE TURKS KILLED HIS WIFE + SONS, HE KILLED ONE OF THEM WITH HIS BARE HANDS THEN FLED WESTWARD TO PROVIDE COVER FOR HIS SISTERS TO MAKE IT TO SAFETY IN THE EAST.
WHEN I RETURNED TO NEW YORK I GOUGED COPPER PLATES WITH A DRYPOINT SCRIBE LETTING THESE HARDWROUGHT LINES SPEAK OF HOMELAND LOST AND OF GENOCIDE DENIED.

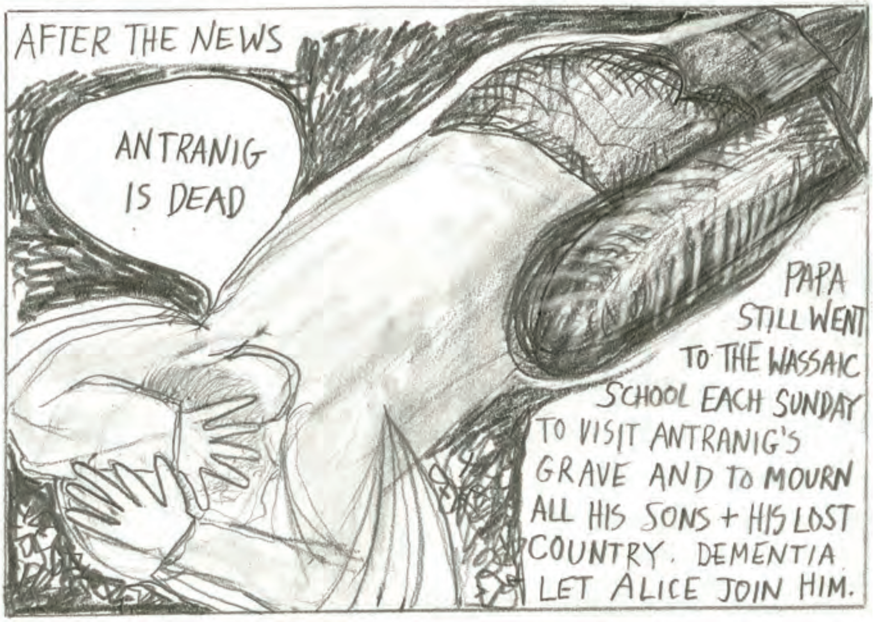

WHAT ELSE DID I KNOW BEFORE DEMENTIA?
THAT LITTLE ALICE GRATED AN APPLE FOR MAMA EACH DAY BEFORE SCHOOL AFTER A QUACK DOCTOR PULLED ALL HER TEETH TO FIX HER FROZEN HANDS.
THAT ALICE REVERED MDs.
YOU'D BE DEAD WITHOUT MODERN MEDICINE!
YOU'LL NEVER MAKE A LIVING WITH THAT. YOU SHOULD GO TO MEDICAL SCHOOL.
Alice ope
t much l
passage
et out
ght flowe
r head th
rough," th
ut my shoul
think I coul
nany out-of-the
begun to thin
THAT SADNESS, SHAME, + VOLATILITY LURKED BELOW HER GLAMOUR AUTHORITY + DETERMINATION.
"THEM"
MY CHILDREN WON'T BE "THEM"
k about st
hat seemed to
well was very
ime as she went
going to happen
THAT ARMEN A W S
LANGUAGE • T A W E
WAS TIGHT SHE W E
BUTCHER TO AS R BO
DOG THEY DIDN H VE I DE TO
MAKE SOUP • A SHE
SANG IN THE R E IA CHU
CHOIR AS CHIL R TH E BO
MADE DELICIOUS A ME IA OI TH
THEY WERE NOW ES R G D HA
HOSPITAL NURSES MA E D OIE
HOMEMADE UNDERWEAR • TH E
REVERED ALL THINGS BLOND • THAT SHE FOLLOWED SOCIAL CONVENTIONS TO BECOME "US" INSTEAD OF "THEM".

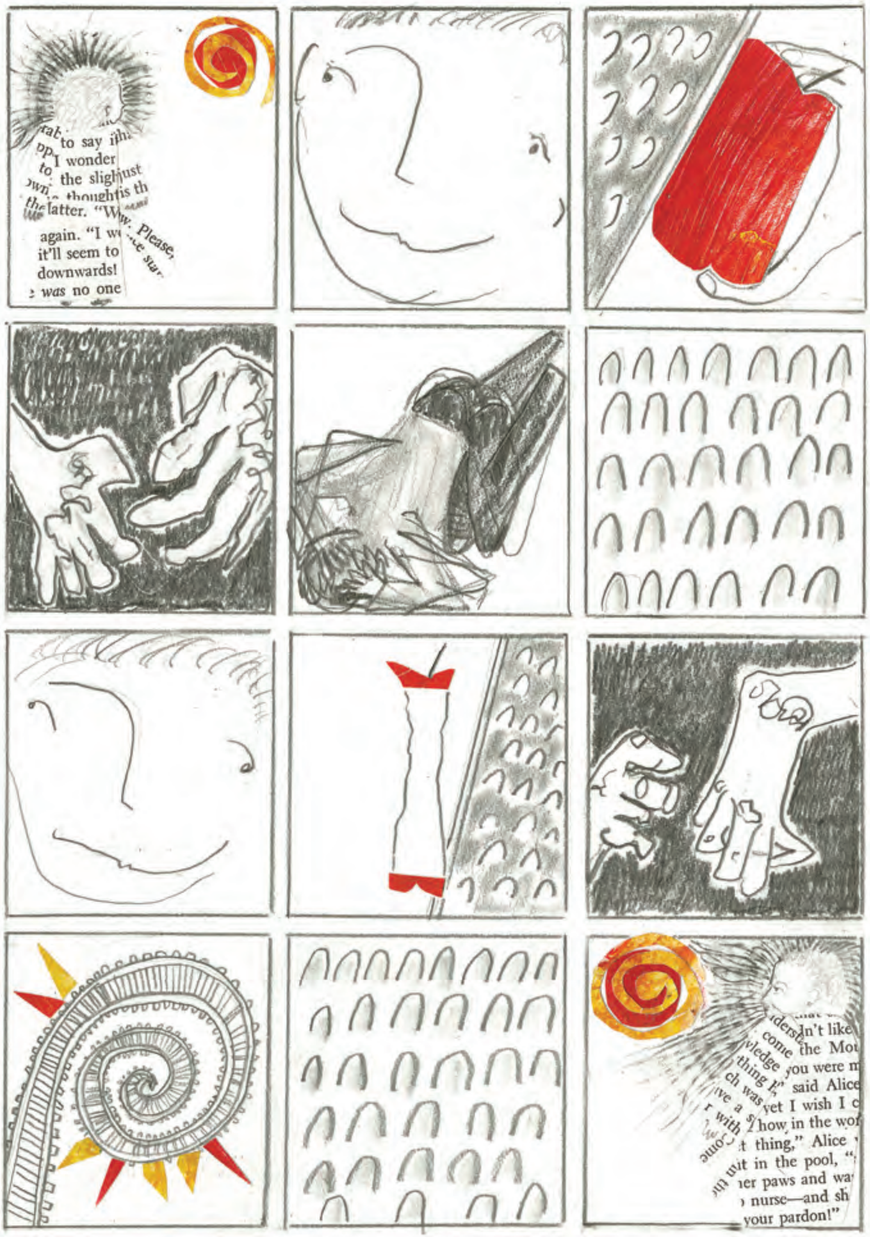

THAT YEGHISHE + OGHIDAR HAD AN ARRANGED MARRIAGE IN NEW YORK CITY IN 1929, IN BORROWED CLOTHES.
I CAN ALMOST REMEMBER YEGHISHE HOLDING MY NEW BABY SISTER IN 1965.
HE WAS A SHOEMAKER WITH A SHOP ON PARSONS BLVD. EACH NIGHT WITH SHOTS OF COGNAC HE DELIVERED TWO CURSES: THE 1st TO THE ENVER PASHA FOR WHAT HE DID TO THE ARMENIANS, THE SECOND TO CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS FOR DISCOVERING AMERICA.
WHEN YEGHISHE DIED A FEW MONTHS LATER, WE LIVED THOUSANDS OF MILES AWAY.
NEW YORK
SAO PAULO
PAPA. NO.
t-hole: she
est garden
, and wan
ool fountai
orway; "and
Alice, "it wo
ow I wish I c
aly knew how
hings had hap
ery few things
ALICE DIDN'T GO BACK FOR THE FUNERAL.
AS FOR ALICE'S BROTHER, BEFORE DEMENTIA, I KNEW HIM BY DIAGNOSIS NOT BY NAME.
FETAL CELLS IN THE AMNIOTIC FLUID LET US TEST FOR GENETIC ANOMALIES.


ANTRANIG HAD AN EXTRA CROMOSOME 21. BEFORE DEMENTIA ALICE HAD TOLD ME THIS MUCH + THAT HE DIED YOUNG, THE THIRD OF PAPA'S SONS TO MEET DEATH AT A TENDER AGE. THE OTHER TWO WERE AMONG THE 1.5 MILLION WHO PERISHED DURING THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE.
ALICE SAID PAPA WAS NEVER HAPPY WITH HIS DAUGHTERS. WHY DID THEY SURVIVE?


DURING DEMENTIA I LEARNED...
WHEN MAMA + ROSE MOPPED THE FLOOR, MY JOB WAS TO MIND HIM OUT ON THE CORNER. PEOPLE STARED + CALLED HIM NAMES LIKE THEY DID ON THE BUS.
were filled with
saw maps and pict
om one of the shelves
MARMALADE," but to
she did not like to drop th
neath, so managed to put
I WAS GLAD WHEN HE WAS GONE.
seemed to be no
back to the table, half ho
or at any rate a book of rules
scopes: this time she found a little
was not here before," said Alice), and
bottle was a paper label, with the words
WHERE DID HE GO?
THE WASSAIC STATE SCHOOL
golden key in the
sticks and dry
EVERY SUNDAY, PAPA MADE THE TREK TO THE WASSAIC STATE SCHOOL FOR MENTAL DEFECTIVES.

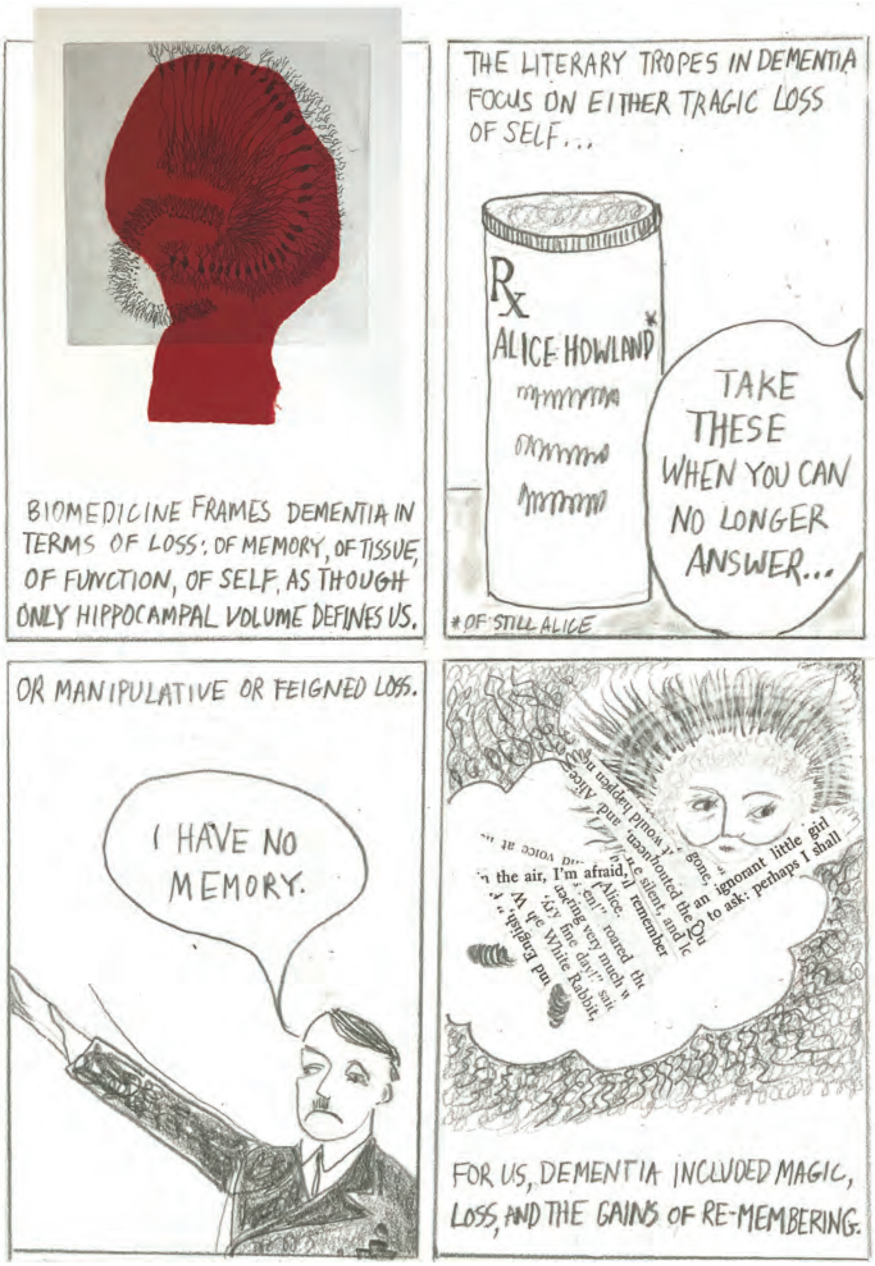

SOMETIMES MAMA, ROSE, + ALICE JOINED HIM.
MY POOR SICK BOY.
MY DEAR SON.
ANTRANIG HOORAY!
A COSTLY HOUR PLUS JOURNEY FROM GRAND CENTRAL STATION FOLLOWED BY A LONG CLIMB TO VISIT A BOY NAMED FOR AN ARMENIAN NATIONAL HERO: GENERAL ANTRANIG OZANIAN.
STATE SCHOOL STATION


AFTER THE NEWS
ANTRANIG IS DEAD
PAPA STILL WENT TO THE WASSAIC SCHOOL EACH SUNDAY TO VISIT ANTRANIG'S GRAVE AND TO MOURN ALL HIS SONS + HIS LOST COUNTRY. DEMENTIA LET ALICE JOIN HIM.

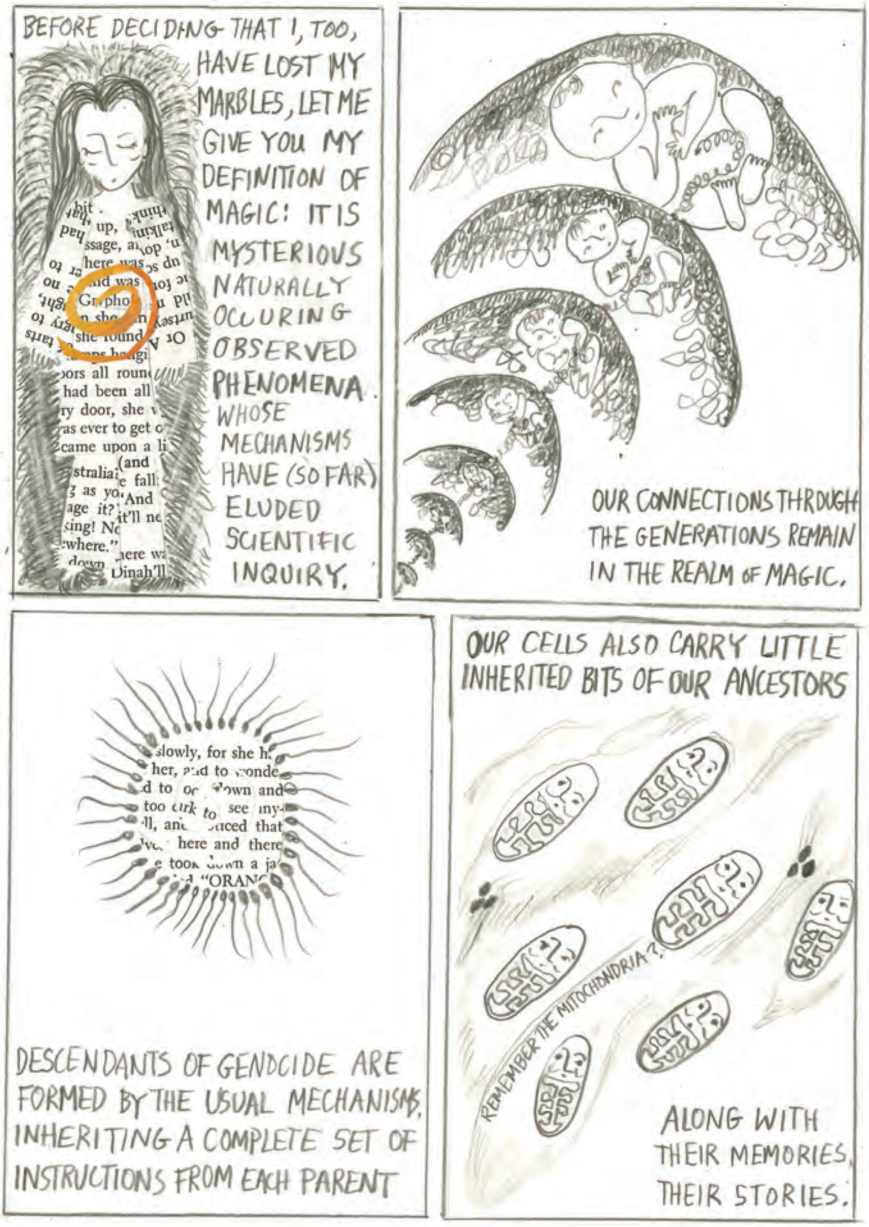

to say
I wonder
the sligh just
thought is th
latter. "Wh
again. "I w
it'll seem to
downwards!
was no one
Please,
n't like
the Mo
you were m
said Alice
yet I wish I c
how in the wo
thing," Alice
it in the pool,
her paws and wa
nurse—and sh
your pardon!"

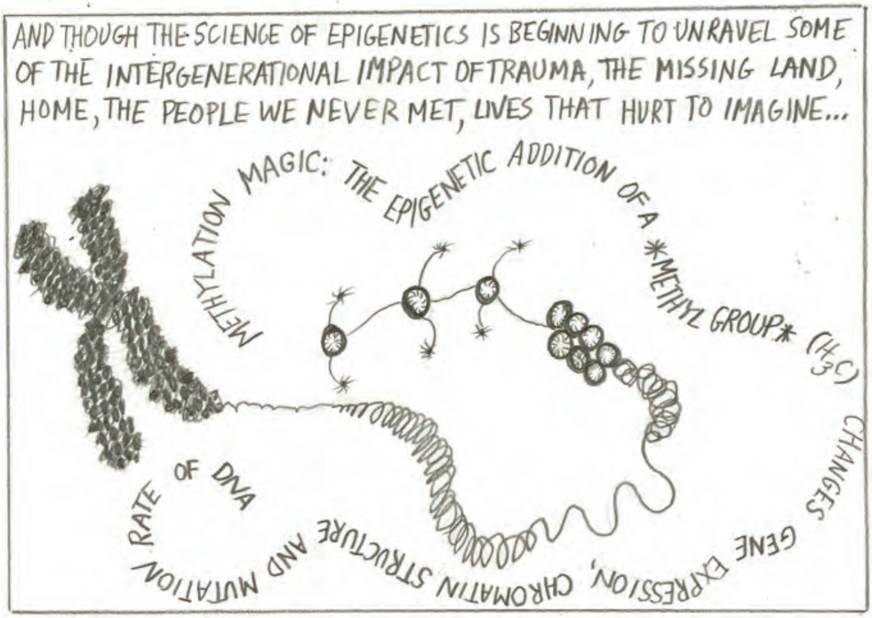

DEMENTIA WAS BECOMING A MATTER OF RE-MEMBERING
MY CALLS + LETTERS TO THE WASSAIC STATE SCHOOL CAME UP EMPTY SO WE WENT TO THE CORNER
MAMA!


PEACE WITH PAPA CAME NEXT
THIS IS HEMPSTEAD! YOU'RE NOT TAKING ME TO SEE MY SISTER ARE YOU?!
NO. WE ARE GOING TO VISIT YOUR PARENTS' GRAVE.
e put it. dream that s saying to her, you ever eat a b that she was walking ry earnestly, at?" when sudd
THAT'S A TERRIBLE IDEA.
Alice bega cats eat bats n a dreamy so and sometimes , as she couldn't answer either ques
ALICE HADN'T BEEN BACK SINCE MAMA DIED.
IT'S A GOOD PLACE TO REST.
rememb miss : cat.3) Dinah, no mice t's very li nd h sel Hatter,
HEMPSTEAD'S GREENFIELD CEMETERY SPANS 158 ACRES. WE HAD NO PLOT NUMBER AND YET WE FOUND THEIR GRAVE IN UNDER 20 MINUTES.
DID THE ANCESTORS HELP US FIND THEM? ALL I KNOW IS FROM THAT DAY FORWARD, ALICE NO LONGER MET THEM WITH AGITATION AT SUNSET.
THE MONTHS THAT FOLLOWED WERE RICH WITH RE-MEMBERING. I LEARNED AS MUCH ABOUT ALICE AS PAPA WHEN SHE REVEALED THAT HE HAD WORKED THE FORD MOTOR LINE IN DETROIT BEFORE HE CAME TO NEW YORK TO MARRY MAMA

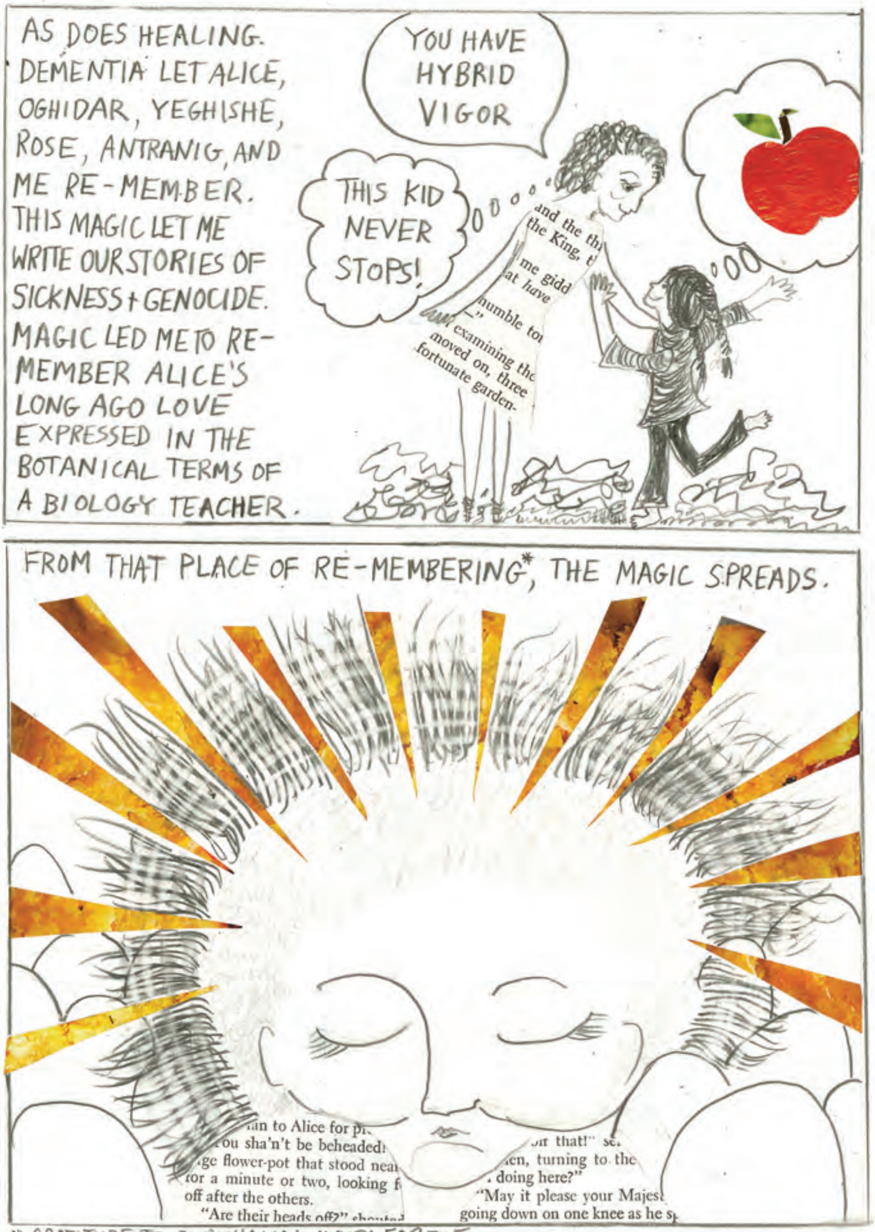

BIOMEDICINE FRAMES DEMENTIA IN TERMS OF LOSS: OF MEMORY, OF TISSUE, OF FUNCTION, OF SELF, AS THOUGH ONLY HIPPOCAMPAL VOLUME DEFINES US.
THE LITERARY TROPES IN DEMENTIA FOCUS ON EITHER TRAGIC LOSS OF SELF...
Rx
ALICE HOWLAND*
TAKE THESE WHEN YOU CAN NO LONGER ANSWER...
*OF STILL ALICE
OR MANIPULATIVE OR FEIGNED LOSS.
I HAVE NO MEMORY.
gone, an ignorant little girl
to ask: perhaps I shall
the air, I'm afraid,
shouted the Qu
be silent, and
remember
Alice.
roared the
the White Rabbit,
FOR US, DEMENTIA INCLUDED MAGIC, LOSS, AND THE GAINS OF RE-MEMBERING.


ALL THIS LET MAGIC ENTER MY NOVEL, LIKE WATER ON STONE, IN THE FORM OF ARDZIV, A GUARDIAN SPIRIT WHO WATCHES OVER THE THREE SIBLINGS AS THEY RUN FROM PALU TO ALEPPO. ARDZIV OPENS THE STORY...
THREE YOUNG ONES, ONE BLACK POT, A SINGLE QUILL, AND A TUFT OF RED WOOL, ARE ENOUGH TO START A NEW LIFE IN A NEW LAND. I KNOW THIS IS TRUE BECAUSE I SAW IT.
AS THE YOUNG ONES RAN ARDZIV HIMSELF JOURNEYED FROM ANGUISH AND ANGER TO PEACE. SO DID I. THIS IS THE MAGIC OF STORY.


BEFORE DECIDING THAT I, TOO, HAVE LOST MY MARBLES, LET ME GIVE YOU MY DEFINITION OF MAGIC: IT IS MYSTERIOUS NATURALLY OCCURING OBSERVED PHENOMENA WHOSE MECHANISMS HAVE (SO FAR) ELUDED SCIENTIFIC INQUIRY.
OUR CONNECTIONS THROUGH THE GENERATIONS REMAIN IN THE REALM OF MAGIC.
DESCENDANTS OF GENOCIDE ARE FORMED BY THE USUAL MECHANISMS, INHERITING A COMPLETE SET OF INSTRUCTIONS FROM EACH PARENT
OUR CELLS ALSO CARRY LITTLE INHERITED BITS OF OUR ANCESTORS
REMEMBER THE MITOCHONDRIA?
ALONG WITH THEIR MEMORIES, THEIR STORIES.


AND THOUGH THE SCIENCE OF EPIGENETICS IS BEGINNING TO UNRAVEL SOME OF THE INTERGENERATIONAL IMPACT OF TRAUMA, THE MISSING LAND, HOME, THE PEOPLE WE NEVER MET, LIVES THAT HURT TO IMAGINE...
METHYLATION MAGIC: THE EPIGENETIC ADDITION OF A *METHYL GROUP* (H_3C) CHANGES GENE EXPRESSION, CHROMATIN STRUCTURE AND MUTATION RATE OF DNA


SCIENTISTS HAVE DEVELOPED SOME OF
...E A LIFETIME OF BURIED HURTS SETS THE BIOCHEMICAL PATHWAYS INTO MOTION
...E DO.
SCIENTISTS DON'T KNOW
OTHERS SAY THAT THE TANGLES SECRETE A PROTEIN CALLED TAU THAT MAKES NEURONS SHRINK AND DIE
...AD NEIGHBORHOODS THAT KILL THE NEURONS
FOR ALICE IT'S TOO LATE TO MAKE THE TANGLES GO AWAY
BUT AS HER NEURONS DIE SHE USES WHAT'S LEFT TO REFLECT, TO PROCESS, AT LONG LAST FINDING HER WAY TO
WHAT IF REFL...
MECHANISMS ON A CELLULAR LEVEL REMAIN IN THE REALM OF MAGIC.



*GRATITUDE TO DURKHANAI AYUBI FOR THE CONCEPT OF RE-MEMBERING AFTER TRAUMA.

Dementia as Ethical Challenge

Emily Thew

Strange Bodies. Dementia and Legacies of Colonialism in Fiona McFarlane's *The Night Guest*

Fiona McFarlane's novel *The Night Guest* (2010) tells the story of Ruth Field, an older woman living alone in an isolated house by the sea who believes that a mysterious tiger is visiting her home at night. Although the novel takes place in contemporary Australia, Ruth spent her childhood in colonial Fiji as the daughter of white missionaries, and her memories of this time begin increasingly to infiltrate her daily life. Ruth starts to become unwell and confused as the novel unfolds, and although the text never names dementia specifically, it is evident that she is experiencing many of the symptoms commonly associated with this cognitive disorder, for example, difficulties with memory and recall, losing her way in familiar places and becoming easily distracted.[1] By keeping this condition latent in the text, however, McFarlane's novel asks us to reflect on the ways that as readers we might bring certain kinds of assumptions to bear on older bodies when we encounter them in texts. This incentive to reflect on our own biases is made compelling by the novel's depiction of two key relationships: the one between Ruth and the visiting tiger of the title, and also Ruth's connection to her live-in carer, Frida, whose presence is alternately comforting and abusive.

In this essay I will argue that *The Night Guest* is a novel particularly concerned with examining the ways in which bodies are 'read,' specifically how such a process might take place on the level of encounter. Sara Ahmed's work on strange encounters – with the terms 'reading' and 'encounter' crucial to her thoughtful and nuanced study of the ways that histories of colonialism intervene in contemporary discourse around the figure of the 'stranger' – informs my analysis here. I use Ahmed's work to theorise Ruth's relationships to two strangers that arrive in her life, Frida and the tiger, and argue that Ruth's apparent dementia is the textual device that makes visible the production of strangeness and familiarity that would normally remain tacit in these encounters. In particular, I consider how the novel's abnegation of the gap between colonial past and present (achieved through the merging of Ruth's childhood memories

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[1] For a useful overview of the symptoms commonly used to diagnose dementia see Hugo and Ganguli (2014).

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with her contemporary moment) suggests that violence is able to enter relationships when encounters are premised on the (colonial) desire to produce certain bodies as knowable.

1 Encountering strangers

In *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-coloniality,* Sara Ahmed sets out to critically examine the figure of the stranger across a number of political and theoretical contexts. She argues that the stranger, by being constituted as the outside of Western bodies, communities and nation-states, allows these entities to come into sovereign being. She further insists that attention be paid to the specific ways that notions of the stranger are mobilised at different times and in different places, pointing out that contemporary discourses of globalisation and multiculturalism produce and reproduce not only the figure of the stranger but the figure of the "stranger stranger" in order "to differentiate between some others and stranger others" (Ahmed 2000, 16). Such discourses rely, she explains, not only on the policing of borders but also on selective processes of welcoming.

Proceeding from this point, Ahmed's text examines the "strange encounters" through which the figure of the stranger is produced, "not as that which we fail to recognise, but as that which we have already recognised as 'a stranger'" (Ahmed 2000, 3). For Ahmed, this act of recognition takes place through a visual process of "reading the bodies of others," which means "*seeing the difference* between familiar and strange others as they are (re)presented to the subject" (21–24). Specifically, she is concerned with embodiment in this context and with the way that "in the gesture of recognising the one that we do not know, the one that is different from 'us,' we flesh out the beyond, and give it a face and form" (3). She argues that it is through this act of reading, this fleshing out of the other, that bodies then come to be produced as either strange or familiar.

Ahmed's task is to examine this process of "fleshing out" the stranger, the ways in which a subject seeks to recognise the body of another, "not only by re-reading the body of *this* other who is faced, but by telling the difference between this other, and other others" (2000, 8). This process of reading the other becomes necessary because of the defining characteristic of the encounter as Ahmed theorises it: the element of "surprise" that is introduced when the encounter is "premised on the absence of a knowledge that would allow one to control the encounter, or to predict its outcome" (8). The surprising encounter contains within it the threatening possibility that "*we may not be able to read the bodies of others*," and this instigates the "fleshing out" process in which the strange body comes to be defined by "*prior histories of encounter that violate and fix others in regimes of difference*" (8).

Ahmed argues for the introduction of "particularity" when approaching these potentially pernicious histories of prior encounter that are called upon to make strangers "readable." Particularity in this sense involves a move outward to think of the "*modes of encounter* through which others are faced" (2000, 144). For this to happen, Ahmed (145) argues that the encounter needs to be located in time and space by asking "*what are the conditions of possibility for us meeting here and now?*" with this question allowing difference between bodies to be understood as "determined at the level of the encounter" by social processes that are not only at work in the present but that have been and will be active in other times and places. For Ahmed (145), there is an ethical possibility at stake in the idea that to focus on the particularity of an encounter in this way is also "to open the encounter up, *to fail to grasp it*." That is, surprise would be understood as sustaining rather than frustrating the relationship of the bodies involved. Her preferred terminology for this kind of opening up is the "close encounter," which she argues is "always a strange encounter, where something fails to be revealed" (181).

In this sense, her theory suggests that it is possible to take an interpretative approach to strangeness that is critical in nature, recognising strange bodies as produced (and seeking to contextualise this) while also remaining open to the possibility that these same bodies can still surprise. It seems to me that McFarlane's novel, focalised through Ruth's perspective, is similarly transparent about the ways Ruth's past experiences are brought to bear on the bodies of the figures she meets so that she might read them. However, the extent to which exposing the structures governing these encounters means opening up space for surprise varies. In the novel, this variation (the extent to which an encounter is able to remain surprising) is closed down when the conditions of possibility for the meetings are premised on legacies of colonialism, and it is opened up when space is made for the challenging experience of dementia to also include feelings of desire and joy. I will examine the differing modes of encounter that are shown in the novel through a close reading of Ruth's first meetings with the tiger and with Frida, and then I will show how Ruth's initial production of these two bodies shapes the remainder of the narrative.

2 'Remembering' hospitality

Ruth's initial meeting with the tiger takes place at the start of the novel and is narrated in the same style as the rest of the text (excluding a final coda):

indirect discourse focalised through Ruth. The old woman is living alone and has not yet met Frida, who will soon move into her house, as we eventually discover, to gain closer control over Ruth's life and finances. Ruth's encounter with the tiger is distinctive in the text in that it is characterised by a sense of curiosity and joy that Ruth soon loses when she tells Frida about it, after which point the tiger begins to be purely a source of fear and anxiety for her. To put this first meeting in the context of Ahmed's theories in *Strange Encounters*, this textual moment works to expose the particular kinds of affective work that Ruth does to produce (and read) the strangeness of the tiger. However, at this point the novel also places an emphasis on Ruth's willingness to remain confused by, or fail to 'grasp,' the tiger's body, situating her encounter with the tiger in the context of an openness and curiosity that is interested, in Ahmed's terms, in the particularity of a body that nonetheless remains surprising.

Her first impressions of the tiger are auditory rather than visual; she does not see it (and will not until the close of the novel) but instead forms an impression of its activities from various distinctive sounds:

> Something large was rubbing against Ruth's couch and television and, she suspected, the wheat-coloured recliner disguised as a wingback chair. Other sounds followed: the panting of a large animal; a vibrancy of breath that suggested enormity and intent; definite mammalian noises, definitely feline, as if her cats had grown in size and were sniffing for food with huge noses. But the sleeping cats were weighing down the sheets at the end of Ruth's bed, and this was something else. (McFarlane 2014, 1–2)

After comparing the tiger's breathing and sniffing to that of her own cats, Ruth then goes on to liken the noises it makes to those of another tiger she once saw eating at a German zoo, which had "sounded just like this: loud and wet, with a low, guttural breathing hum punctuated by little cautionary yelps, as if it might roar at any moment except that it was occupied by food." However, this visiting tiger differs in some important sense from that other, remembered tiger, in that as it busies itself with whatever "large bloody thing" it is intent on eating, the noise it makes is "empty and meatless." When Ruth calls her son Jeffrey in New Zealand, he wearily responds, "It's either a cat, or a dream," and, indeed, when she goes to investigate, the lounge room is "benign" despite "a vegetable smell in the long hallway, and an inland feel to the air" (2–3).

From the first moment of its arrival, then, the tiger presents an interpretative problem for the reader. Ruth makes sense of the tiger's body by recalling other bodies that remind her of this new strange one, each one replaced by another that does not quite fit. Domestic cat, echo of a long-ago zoo visit, "meatless" ghost and dream all at once, the tiger's body is both elusive and recognisable; it exceeds the known but holds out the promise of becoming knowable. Ruth brings the tiger into being by acknowledging the bodies that it is not, in order to grasp for the body-that-it-might-be. As such, the text offers us a tiger composed of fragments that come from and are rooted in Ruth's lived experience. In Ahmed's terms, Ruth tries to read the tiger's body by "telling the difference between this other, and other others," laying bare the mechanisms by which strange bodies come to be produced (2000, 8).

At the same time, Ruth's call to Jeffrey (and his dismissive response), alongside her recollection that on his last visit she had noticed a "watchful patience" in him, as well as "a tendency to purse his lips whenever she said something he considered unusual," simultaneously introduces into the text an element of doubt by giving us the first evidence that Ruth's family are beginning to be concerned about her mental wellbeing. The indirect discourse used by the narrator, and the fact that this implies Ruth's focalisation of events is subjective, gives us our first opportunity here to remain open (or not) both to Ruth as an experiencing subject and to the tiger as a body to be taken seriously. However, in Ahmed's terms, despite the fact that Ruth's reflections on her son's concerns introduce doubts about her cognizance, Ruth's response to the tiger provides an example of extending a 'remembering' rather than a 'forgetting' hospitality to the stranger's body.

Ahmed introduces the notion of a hospitality that 'remembers' through a critical reading of the figure of the *arrivant*, which Jacques Derrida first introduces in his book *Aporias* (1993) and which she argues prioritises a politics of 'forgetting.' For Derrida (33–34), *arrivant* can refer both to "the neutrality of *that which* arrives" and to "the singularity of *who* arrives" and this *arrivant* "surprises the host – who is not yet a host or an inviting power – enough to call into question, to the point of annihilating or rendering indeterminate, all the distinctive signs of a prior identity." For Ahmed (2000, 151):

> Such a hospitality is based on the *forgetting* of the names that are used, however inadequately, to locate subjects in a topography of time and place. In contrast, what is required is a hospitality that *remembers* the encounters that are already implicated in such names (including the name of "the stranger"), and how they affect the movement and "arrival" of others, in a way which opens out the possibility of these names being moved *from*. This hospitality, premised on the surprise of an opening or gift, would begin by admitting to how the assimilation of others, and the differentiation between others, might already affect who or what may arrive, then or now, here or there.

In Ruth's encounter with the tiger, we find an example of what this kind of 'remembering' hospitality might look like in practice. Ruth remembers the 'other' bodies (cat, zoo tiger, uncanny ghost) that she has already assimilated into categories of knowledge and then differentiates between these in order to make her visiting tiger knowable (that is to say, in order to allow the tiger to arrive). McFarlane makes visible this process of remembering and the production of strangeness that accompanies it. As Ahmed might put it, she ‘admits’ that such a process is operative in the encounter between Ruth and tiger. At the same time, however, the novel holds open the possibility that Ruth’s encounter with the tiger might be premised on “the surprise of an opening or gift” (151). This is achieved primarily by figuring Ruth’s relationship to the tiger in terms of desire. When Ruth ventures out into her hallway to try to lay eyes on the tiger, who is nowhere to be found, she is aware of

> Another sensation, a new one, to which she attended with greater care: a sense of extravagant consequence. Something important, Ruth felt, was happening to her, and she couldn’t be sure what it was: the tiger, or the feeling of importance. [. . .] She felt something coming to meet her – something large, and not a real thing of course, she wasn’t that far gone – but a shape, or anyway a temperature. It produced a funny bubble in her chest.
>
> (McFarlane 2014, 4)

The text makes it clear that the tiger has an important meaning for Ruth, the sense of “extravagant consequence” that she understands in terms of an encounter (“something coming to meet her”) that is also a movement forward or an opening out. The feeling reminds Ruth “of something vital – not of youth exactly, but of the urgency of youth,” and she is “reluctant to give it up” (6). This attachment performs important work in the text by positioning Ruth in a dynamic relation to the tiger, one that is desiring and open to surprise.

Therefore, while Ruth does try to read the tiger’s body by bringing it into dialogue with other bodies, she also does not react to its strangeness by using these “prior histories of encounter” to close down the animal’s meaning. Instead, the encounter with the tiger proceeds on Ruth’s part with a kind of openness to *missing* his body. In this case, the desire – the “extravagant consequence” she feels in relation to his presence – is not fixed to a definite subject but is instead experienced affectively as a shape, a temperature, a sense of largeness. This openness extends even further to a willingness to entertain the notion of her own subjectivity being subsumed by the tiger’s. She is “delighted” to imagine newspaper headlines reading “‘Australian Woman Eaten by Tiger in Own House,’” or, “more likely, ‘Tiger Puts Pensioner on the Menu’” (McFarlane 2014, 4). As such, Ruth’s encounter with the tiger can be understood as one of Ahmed’s “close encounters” in the sense that the material and psychical slipperiness of the tiger’s body, the fact that it does not reveal itself in any fixed way, enriches and opens up the relationship between their two bodies, even to the extent that her desire to consume is reversed.

By situating the unknowability of the tiger in terms of desire and excitement, then, the text shows that the openness at work in Ruth’s encounter with the tiger is not simply an ethical practice of responding to otherness; it also holds out the possibility that there might be joy or pleasure to be found in such a “close” encounter with strangeness. I would argue that on a larger textual level, McFarlane’s novel positions the pleasure and joy to be found in surprise as one of the potential rewards awaiting a reader both hospitable to strangeness within a text and attentive to their own implication in the reading, or production of, that strangeness. Crucially, however, such rewards are dependent on a reader remaining open to Ruth’s narrative perspective and resisting a focus which would prioritise establishing the ‘reality’ of her experiences over and above her agency as a desiring subject. Such an approach is complicated, however, by the second important encounter in the novel: that between Ruth and Frida. Here, while the ‘remembering’ hospitality that Ruth enacts still usefully exposes the ways that Frida is produced as a visiting stranger, the prior encounters that Ruth engages with in order to make sense of Frida’s arrival are anchored in her colonial childhood and depend upon a process of racialisation that ‘fixes’ Frida’s identity.

3 ‘Knowing’ the stranger

Frida arrives the morning after Ruth hears the tiger, telling Ruth she has been sent by the government to be her carer because a spot has opened up on a state programme. Just as with the tiger, the element of ‘surprise’ at work in Frida’s arrival introduces a stranger whose presence is threatening because it is “premised on the absence of a knowledge that would allow one to control the encounter, or to predict its outcome.” This threat triggers what Ahmed calls the “fleshing out” process, whereby Ruth seeks to read the stranger’s body by drawing on prior histories of encounter. However, in this incidence the histories that Ruth engages with to understand her encounter with Frida are specifically those of her missionary childhood in Fiji, and as such they directly draw on colonial dynamics that work (and indeed are designed to) “*fix others in regimes of difference*” (Ahmed 2000, 8).

This is made explicit in the text in that Ruth’s affective response to her meeting with Frida is directly grounded in a racialisation of her body. The narrator reports that Frida’s “breadth and the warmth of her skin and the dark sheen of her obviously straightened hair looked Fijian to Ruth”[2] and that this is enough to make her feel “optimistic about the encounter” (McFarlane 2014, 8). Just as with the tiger, the text clearly signals that Ruth’s attempts to read and

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[2] Ruth’s racialisation of Frida has her hair as its main focus, with Ruth continually noticing the care Frida takes over it and the way it changes colour and style.

define Frida's body (in this racialised sense) are to be understood as *producing* Frida's body, rather than as factual reportage of Frida's physical appearance. This is primarily an effect of the indirect discourse used in the novel, focalised through Ruth. The text informs the reader not that Frida is Fijian but that she "looks" Fijian, and, importantly, that she looks this way "to Ruth." As such, the possibility of Frida's being Fijian is both opened up and obscured; the authority of third-person narration leads us to assume that the idea that she looks Fijian is factual, while the insistence that this view is focal (Ruth's interior voice) reveals that it is in fact perspectival. In this sense, the text shows how supposedly visible categories of strange(r)ness (in this case the ways that bodies are racialised) can in fact be produced discursively in order to "*violate and fix others in regimes of difference*" (Ahmed 2000, 8). The nature of Ruth and Frida's relationship for the rest of the novel is dictated by the way this first encounter 'fixes' Frida in Ruth's mind; in contrast to her surprising meeting with the tiger, this relationship is characterised by a narrow focus on Frida's supposed Fijian identity that leaves no room for such surprise, with violent consequences.

I believe that this initial fixing of Frida's identity goes some way to answering one of the key questions in *The Night Guest*: How does Frida manage to insert herself into Ruth's life so easily and, in doing so, cause so much damage? As the novel progresses, Ruth becomes increasingly dependent on Frida, who moves (uninvited) into Ruth's home, encourages Ruth to sell her car (without which she is isolated in her remote house) and begins to make requests for money; all of this happens without interference or protest from family and friends and without the reader being sure whether Ruth has in fact invited or agreed to them. It seems to me that these events are enabled because Ruth's initial reading of Frida's body is taken up by her son Jeffrey in a way that assumes that to racialise Frida is to render her knowable – or, in Ahmed's terms, to produce her as familiar. When Jeffrey calls to check on Ruth moments after Frida's arrival, he insists on speaking with her and after a brief conversation seems satisfied that all is well. Ruth tries to override her uncertainty about the situation by telling him that Frida is Fijian, "mainly for her own reassurance." His reply is brief, and dismissive: "There you are, some familiarity" (McFarlane 2014, 12). If Ruth's reading of Frida, and her communication of this to Jeffrey emerges in part from a need to make Frida readable, then Jeffrey's unquestioningly positive response vindicates Ruth's decision to fix Frida's identity in this way. Not only this, he chooses to refer to Frida specifically as an opportunity for "familiarity" in a speech act that *produces* her as familiar rather than strange, while also hinting at the legacy of colonial appropriation of native peoples for labour. That is, Jeffrey assumes in his reaction to Ruth on the telephone that the identity 'Fijian' is knowable to the point that 'Fijian' means 'familiar.'

Crucially, McFarlane's novel suggests here (and will continue to do so throughout the text) that the conditions of possibility for Frida entering Ruth's life in the way she does are dependent on legacies of colonialism that understand the 'stranger' as, in Ahmed's words, "*knowable, seeable, and hence be-able*" (Ahmed 2000, 133). The conversation between Ruth and Jeffrey works as a kind of nodal point in the text in that it presents one of the first moments at which the reader is able to see, if not understand, some of the lines of convergence whereby the strange(r) is both produced and read as familiar. Furthermore, the movements of desire at work in the tripartite encounter that takes place when Ruth tells Jeffrey about Frida's arrival can be understood as colonial in the sense that they flow backward (nostalgically) via the act of racialisation towards a reduction in meaning, a closing down of the possibilities Frida's body has to surprise. Therefore, although Ruth's encounter with Frida is the inverse of the open one that takes place between Ruth and the tiger, it similarly exposes the workings of this meeting, demanding that attention be paid to the ways that strangers are read and produced.

Furthermore, if we choose to see Ruth's identification of Frida as Fijian as dependent on another condition of possibility – Ruth's dementia – then we can also begin to notice the way that dementia's fusing of past and present experience becomes the means of exposing the workings of the encounters that take place in the text. If recognising the stranger involves recognising them as familiar in their strangeness (and thus distinct from and generative of the stranger stranger), it also relies on the fact that the categories of recognition being used to produce these different kinds of stranger are working for the host (the one who names the stranger) in the way that they are supposed to, or at least that the host has some kind of agency over these categories. In *The Night Guest*, then, Ruth's dementia becomes a key means of exploring what happens when such processes fail and of asking us to consider our own relationship to these ways of 'fixing' difference.

4 Dementia and narrative voice

Ruth's illness is first introduced in small and unremarkable ways, perhaps signalling only a benign self-neglect. For example, when Frida arrives for the first time, Ruth is having pumpkin seeds for breakfast and is accustomed to dressing in her sons' old T-shirts, although later she is horrified to realise that she has forgotten to wash her hair – perhaps for weeks. However, as Frida becomes more omnipresent, Ruth grows confused and begins to doubt herself. This comes to an initial climax when Ruth discovers Frida is staying in the house in one of the spare bedrooms. When confronted, Frida insists that she and Ruth have discussed the arrangement, and although Ruth begins to argue ("that isn't true Frida, what you're saying to me now, it's not true. I'd remember"), she nevertheless experiences "a feeling of unravelling, all the same; an unwound thread" (McFarlane 2014, 8). Ruth's health then begins to deteriorate after a physically abusive incident during which Frida locks her out of the house. After this point her confusion increases and although her narrative voice is still strong and lively, in conversation with other characters her responses are erratic and often childlike. Throughout this series of events, the tiger remains a constant presence, mainly making himself known to Ruth through changes in the night-time atmosphere of the house.

In part, the introduction of dementia into the text is straightforwardly disruptive, acting as a device for McFarlane's text to explore what it might mean for the 'proper' recognition of strangers and strangeness to stop working or go wrong. However, although the novel is clearly attentive to and interested in the potential that the act of recognising (and so producing) strangeness has to break down, or glitch, in interesting and productive ways, to see dementia as the device that illuminates or gives order to this idea in the text would be to miss the truth of its emergence. The question the text asks is not whether Ruth does or does not have dementia (whether what she sees or experiences is or is not 'real' in any sense); instead, the novel asks us to focus on our own drive to establish the 'realness' of events and the ways that doing this might at the very least be unpleasurable for Ruth, if not actively harmful, because it denies her any agency. In raising the possibility but not determining that Ruth has dementia, the text puts us in a position where we must continuously pay attention to and become aware of the limits of our own generosity – to the ways, that is, that we might want to 'fix' Ruth in order to make sense of her difference.

Primarily, this means that we need to reckon with the extent to which, in deciding whether to make space for Ruth and her tiger or not, we are allied with Frida. For a large part of the novel, Frida's manipulations of Ruth are subtle, and the indirect discourse produces an effect whereby the reader is both within and outside Ruth's consciousness; we see the world through her eyes but are able to maintain a critical distance from her narrative voice. As such, although the text cultivates suspicion towards Frida and alertness to her potential motives for exploiting Ruth (for example, she talks to Ruth at length about money troubles caused by her unreliable 'brother' George, who is later revealed to be her husband), definite proof of Frida's ill intentions largely remains absent from the text. However, there comes a point of rupture in the novel when Frida flat out refutes Ruth's (correct) assertion that Suva is the capital of Fiji, telling her "'you *don't* know [. . .] you only *think* you do'" (McFarlane 2014, 173). At this point Frida's gaslighting of Ruth becomes violently explicit, directing our attention to the ways that we may have made similar judgements in relation to Ruth's narrative perspective. By explaining to Ruth that she does not know, she only 'thinks' she knows, Frida's words draw attention to the threat that lurks within the pages of this text; namely, reading strategies that aim to identify and fix certain kinds of knowledge within both texts *and* bodies, enact violence on these texts and these bodies. Who are you, we might want to demand of Frida, to decide what is and is not true? Who are *you*, the text reminds us, to do the same?[3] The main locus of these questions is of course the tiger, and in the final part of the novel, Frida's project is to undo the productive and essentially open set of relations Ruth holds towards him in order to claim full ownership of her imaginative world.

5 The "stranger stranger"

When Ruth tells Frida that she has heard a tiger visiting the house at night, she is at first met with "jovial scorn" and told that there are "no tigers in Australia" (McFarlane 2014, 144–145). Soon, however, it is Frida who has "settled into the possibility of the tiger," which she insists is probably "man-eating" or, indeed, "woman-eating" (145). This turnaround unsettles Ruth. Faced with this new version of the tiger, which is frightening not because he might be interested in eating her (she has of course entertained and enjoyed that possibility before) but because he is *Frida's* version – she feels compelled to refute his existence, again and again. Indeed, this happens four times on one page alone (144). Despite Ruth's insistence that she must have made a mistake, Frida spends the night on the sofa in the living room. Although Ruth is partly annoyed by the idea that Frida is teasing her, she sees "without wanting to, evidence of Frida's seriousness: her crushed hair, the displaced sofa cushions, the cups of tea" (153). Frida's interest in the tiger then culminates in two violent incidents where she supposedly confronts him while Ruth remains locked in her bedroom. After the first of these, Frida is left with three scratches on her arm, and, although she insists she has "scared him right off," she commences building "tiger traps" around the outside of the house, the largest being a big hole halfway down the dune below Ruth's garden. The second time Frida fights the tiger, she tells Ruth

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[3] In her book *Forget Memory*, Anne Davis Basting (2009, 27) examines a number of studies that suggest an amount of cognitive loss may in fact "be triggered by the way people treat you."

he is dead. She has killed him by cutting open his stomach and slitting his throat, dumping his body out to sea in a wheelbarrow.

Frida's decision to take the possibility of the tiger seriously completely changes his meaning for Ruth, because Frida now gets to decide who and what he is. Ruth realises "the tiger was Frida's now; and not just this tiger, but the entire species" (McFarlane 2014, 163). 'Frida's tiger' is generic rather than individual, standing in for all other tigers rather than existing as the singular and complex creaturely (non)being that Ruth met in their first encounter. I argued earlier in this essay that her reading of his body against other, different bodies constituted an example of the kind of 'remembering' hospitality that Ahmed suggests would be honest about the ways that a host subject is always already implicated in the recognition, or non-recognition, of whichever visitor might arrive. Instead, Frida embarks on a project of reducing the meaning of the tiger; she cements her own status as a safe, or *knowable*, stranger, by actively producing the tiger as the "stranger stranger," the one who must be expelled in order for her to be "taken in" (Ahmed 2000, 133).

While Frida achieves this expulsion in a staged sense through her battles with the tiger, she also seeks to fix the tiger's meaning more discursively by drawing upon aspects of Fijian colonial history. In presenting this, the text once again suggests that when colonialism is one of the conditions of possibility for encounters between bodies, these bodies become restricted in their capacity to *mean*. In this specific case Frida works to associate the tiger with India, which in the light of Ruth's racialisation of Frida, calls to mind the historical conflict in Fiji between so-called indigenous Fijians and the Indo-Fijian population originally brought to the island as indentured labourers. In foregrounding Ruth's affection for Fiji and its inhabitants, McFarlane's text seems to be drawing on histories of Fiji's colonisation that stress the occupying British officials' regard for the Fijians as a supposedly "exemplary colonial people" (Denoon et al. 2000, 323). Along these lines, Frida's opposition of herself (as 'Fijian') to the tiger draws on a prejudicial dynamic whereby she is the "exemplary" stranger that produces the tiger as the 'stranger stranger.'

For example, immediately when Ruth mentions the tiger, Frida draws a connection between the animal's arrival and Ruth's childhood in Fiji, which she calls "that jungle you grew up in." Ruth protests ("I didn't grow up in a jungle. [. . .] And there are no tigers in Fiji"), instead insisting that tigers are accustomed to cold weather and "live in India and China. Maybe Russia." In response, Frida cryptically asserts that there are "Indians in Fiji [. . .] everyone knows that, from the news." Despite Ruth's dismissal of this – "just because there are Indians in Fiji doesn't mean there are Indian tigers. I thought everyone knew *that*"(McFarlane 2014, 144) – Frida and Ruth's conversation draws a link between tigers, India and Fiji. Specifically, Frida connects India and Fiji in the context of "the news," that is, the recurrent coups that have dogged Fijian politics since 1987 and have been presented in the media as the result of ongoing conflict between 'indigenous' Fijians and the Indo-Fijian population (Tran 2017). Frida is also insistent on characterising the tiger as a "man-eater" ("you're lucky you haven't been gobbled up in your bed"; "Tiger on the loose, chances are it's a man-eater") and again perseveres in suggesting this aspect of the tiger's nature is related to its particular Indianness. She tells Ruth, with apparent relish, "I saw a TV show once [. . .] yeah, a documentary about man-eating tigers in India. You know what they say, once a tiger gets a taste of human flesh, that's all it wants to eat" (McFarlane 2014, 147).

In exorcising the tiger from Ruth's house, Frida successfully cements herself as protector, and after taking Ruth to the bank and getting her to sign over a large cheque, Frida prepares to leave with her 'brother' George. As it turns out, George has absconded with Ruth's money, and the novel ends with a strange coda that relates the fates of Ruth and Frida: both are dead, Ruth outside in the garden, and Frida it seems by suicide, her body found in the sea.

6 The affect of resolution

The coda also uses indirect discourse, but this time it is focalised through the voice of Ellen Gibson, a neighbour of Ruth's who has agreed to adopt her two cats. Ellen visits the house, and through a discussion with Ruth's sons we learn about the deaths of the two women, as well as a little about Frida's origins (she is English with Maori heritage and worked as a cleaner in a nearby nursing home). It is something of a flat conclusion to the novel, and after many pages of such interpretative complexity it feels strange to have the mysteries of the text resolved. It seems to me, however, that this is in fact the project of the coda; to show the removal of pleasure that takes place when everything becomes readable and to drive home the emptiness that comes with such a tidy resolution of the plot – a resolution bought at the expense of the lives of Ruth and Frida. The coda allows us to experience the loss of Ruth and her rich narrative perspective affectively, and it is this closing drabness that points to the text's continuing investment in the unreadable, the excess that allows for the preservation of surprise.

This is further demonstrated by the resurrection of the tiger in the final chapter before the coda. Ruth, carefully placed outside in the garden by Frida (an act of tenderness the purpose of which remains uncertain), sees him walking towards her, "the colour of the gone sun" (McFarlane 2014, 266). In writing this moment between Ruth and the tiger, an encounter that clearly tells the story of Ruth's death, the novel opens up the tiger's body to new kinds of meaning in introducing a spiritual dimension to his presence, allowing him to remain a knot of interpretative difficulty. In this sense, then, the text maintains a useful tension that stages the pleasure of the close encounter, "where something fails to be revealed," at the same time as owning up to the ways that prior histories of encounter might be used as tools to "fix others in regimes of difference" (Ahmed 2000,181, 8). If dementia is one of the narrative devices that works to make these prior histories of encounter visible, it is also the tool that allows us as readers to experience a narrative perspective that, once taken from us in the coda, we can recognise as a voice that has allowed for surprise and complexity. Recognising this, however, brings little in the way of joy – the cost (Ruth and Frida's deaths) is too great. As such, the text avoids romanticising the experience of dementia or reducing it to a cultural formation, while also asking us to consider what 'care' might actually mean, and how it might be unevenly distributed between different bodies.

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MaoHui Deng

The Temporality and Politics of Language Lost and Found. Cinema, Dementia and the Entangled Histories of Singapore

This essay looks at *3688* (R. Tan, 2015), a Singaporean film which tells the story of a daughter's struggle with caring for her father, Uncle Radio, who is living with dementia.[1] In the film, Uncle Radio spends most of his time wandering around his housing estate attempting to get his radio receiver fixed so that he can listen to some Cantonese and Hokkien programmes, forgetting that these shows have been off the airwaves for more than three decades.[2] I will argue that through Uncle Radio's dementia, the film explores issues of the nation(al) and its relation to Singapore's fraught and violently forged language landscape. Beyond that, the film also gestures towards larger transnational cultures and histories by invoking spectres of (post)colonial negotiations and imaginaries. In this essay, I suggest that *3688* uses dementia and the language mixing the illness entails for the film's central character to develop what David Martin-Jones (2019, 3) describes as "a hesitant ethics," where an array of transnational histories – "histories which pre-exist, or impact across, national borders" – surfaces. They challenge the audience to apprehend the inability to know (hence the hesitation) the multiple histories across the world.

In analysing *3688*, this essay examines the temporality of language lost and found as suggested by the image of a narrative about dementia. In general, a person living with dementia has a complex relationship with language, often experiencing a form of aphasia (Sabat 2001; Kindell et al. 2017), using "the wrong language for the setting or interlocutor" or producing what appears to be

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[1] This essay has benefitted from conversations with David Butler and Felicia Chan.

[2] *3688* is directed by Royston Tan, a Singapore director who found notoriety and success both internationally and locally through his films that work to aestheticise Singapore's disappearing past. The title continues a tradition of Tan's to play with numbers in naming his films. The film is set in the housing estates of Dakota Crescent, which is one of Singapore's oldest, built in 1958. In July 2014, the Singapore government earmarked 15 out of the 17 blocks of flats in Dakota Crescent for redevelopment and the residents were given until the end of 2016 to move out of the area. *3688*, then, can be seen as a film that attempts to capture the present before it is relegated to the past while also bringing forgotten elements of the past back into the present. The film did very well locally and became the most successful local film released outside of the Chinese New Year period in 2015. It was also distributed and exhibited across parts of East and Southeast Asia.

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an inappropriate blend of their languages in the case of bi- or multilingualism (Paradis 2008, 219), and having to find different ways to communicate verbally and non-verbally (Örulv and Hydén 2006; Hamilton 2019). Much of this research is couched in a form of melancholia that, according to Helene Moglen (2008, 302), corresponds with "Freud's vertical model of mind, to which repression is fundamental," where much of the work is focused on "the retrieval and working through of material that has been forgotten or disavowed," and where research into language and dementia is primarily focused on finding better ways to communicate with people living with the condition.

As I will elaborate, this approach towards language and dementia presupposes an attitude towards time that is heavily predicated on linearity where the past is relegated to a separate temporal realm from the present and where the person living with dementia, because of the 'loss' of language, is increasingly seen as out of sync with the homogeneity of clock time. Through a discussion of *3688*, I propose a different viewpoint: I will argue that the person living in a multifarious relationship with language due to dementia offers an epistemological way to think through the discontinuous and heterogeneous ways multiple pasts and presents might come together and negotiate, and I articulate this concern with language and time in relation to notions of nationhood, exploring Benedict Anderson's proposal that language has the capacity to build "particular solidarities" (2006, 133).

Unlike the work of scholars such as Raquel Medina (2018), Amir Cohen-Shalev and Esther-Lee Marcus (2012), dementia in/and cinema is not understood here through the framework of representation and cultural metaphor, where dementia in film is comprehended as mediated by form. Such approaches to cinema as a representational medium tend to "assume that films are secondary and that the truly important stuff of life happens outside films and without them" (Rushton 2011, 8). Instead, I come from a Deleuzian viewpoint that – according to Patricia Pisters (2015, 125) – thinks of cinematic audio-visual images as "part of the fabric of the world that is woven between screens, bodies, brains and nonhuman phenomena." What is on screen is what is part of the world and, in turn, the temporalities negotiated by the person living with dementia (on and off screen) are also entangled with the temporalities negotiated by the nation and beyond. Put differently, films about dementia, through their particular relationship with language, become a way to bring the nation and the world together as the pasts and presents of multiple worlds coalesce.

1 Dementia as 'mistranslation'

From the beginning, *3688* indicates that, for Uncle Radio, the line between the past and present is not as clear cut as it appears. In the opening sequence, a young Uncle Radio walks down the corridors of housing blocks asking the residents whether they want to place a subscription for the commercial radio Rediffusion. Uncle Radio's hair is jet black, he is wearing a peach-coloured shirt and he is carrying a radio receiver. As he walks, "Qiao qiao men," an extremely popular Mandarin song from the late 1970s and 1980s by Taiwan singer Feng Fei Fei plays – apparently as source music from the radio – and Uncle Radio whistles along to bits of the tune. In addition to these features, the mise-en-scène is tinted with a hint of sepia, all in all strongly suggesting that this moment is set in a nostalgic past.

As Uncle Radio carries out his door-to-door routine, the film cuts to a shot of two children at a table with their mother. Uncle Radio's voice enters the frame as he asks them whether they want to subscribe to the radio station. The film cuts to a reverse shot of Uncle Radio asking the question and then cuts back to the shot of the family. The boy says to his mother – in a heavily American-accented Mandarin – that he does not want the radio but a smart TV, and the mother looks back at Uncle Radio with a confused expression on her face. The sequence is still sepia tinted, which would typically suggest that this moment is in the same timeline – in the past – but this appears not to be the case. The boy's heavy American accent is not similar to any of the Mandarin accents heard in the film thus far, and he is asking for a Smart TV, a technological advance from the radio receiver that Uncle Radio is carrying. In other words, at this instant, there is a hint of temporal collision between Uncle Radio in the past and the family in the present. While the sepia tone that colours the mise-en-scène at this moment does not indicate a shift in temporality, it does, however, suggest that the sequence is seen through the eyes of Uncle Radio, a notion furthered by placing Uncle Radio and the family in separate frames through shot / reverse shot editing.

The film then cuts to Uncle Radio speaking to another woman. Here, the camera is placed behind his back looking through the window grilles into a woman's flat. Uncle Radio's hair is grey, and he is wearing a white T-shirt. The sepia tint is gone, and the colour scheme returns to the same one that is used throughout the majority of the film. This is to say, the film is now back in the present as Uncle Radio and the woman share the same frame. The woman rejects Uncle Radio's query and claims that she only listens to radio on the internet nowadays. The film cuts back to Uncle Radio looking confused and, as this happens, the music slowly fades out, and the diegetic sounds of Uncle Radio's surroundings fade in, implying that the song has been (perhaps) playing in his head all this time and did not come from the radio at all. Very quickly, then, the film establishes the multiple temporalities as experienced by Uncle Radio. As filtered through his viewpoint visually and aurally, Uncle Radio's past and present bleed into each other – he is both in modern-day Singapore *and* he is in the Singapore of the 1970s and 1980s.

Here, the coincidence of the past in the present in the person living with dementia might signal that character as being out of time. As Bliss Cua Lim (2009, 14) observes, this attitude towards the anachronistic presence or survival of the past "is often translated as a relic or vestige of a prior developmental stage, something that has been superseded but stubbornly returns," and, as such, "the survival of the past tends only to shore up the cachet of progress rather than to critique it." In other words, the presence of the past as anachronistic permeates the notion that the present – the here and now – has developed into a more advanced version, and this understanding of linearity has significant ramifications, not least because it tends to position people living with dementia as out of tune with the rest of society.

Reconsidering this approach towards time, Lim (2009, 14) proposes that we think of a world that resists the universalising of homogeneous clock time, a world where apparently immiscible times, times that "never quite dissolve into the code of modern time consciousness," coalesce. For Lim (31), these immiscible times come together and are surfaced through a mode of mistranslation that operates "between two asymmetrically ranked codes," between, on the one hand, the linearity of clock time and, on the other, the heterogeneous times where pasts and presents are coeval. According to Lim, all attempts to articulate the multiplicity of times and temporalities will be "betrayed by language," for "language naturalizes the misconstrual of time as space." Clock time, Lim suggests, "is a language" whose "hegemony is naturalized as universality" (18). As such, to think about history and time as a continual progression of past to future is to translate heterogeneity into homogeneity because the different ways of conceiving time that do not dissolve into modern time consciousness are relegated to the past and to a separate temporal realm. In turn, to acknowledge a world where multiple times and temporalities coalesce is to mistranslate the language of time. According to Lim (32), the act of mistranslation alludes to "the violence of this translation," where different cultures and stories are subsumed under the Western-centricity of clock time, and to gesture towards that uncanny "trace of containment and excess" where past and present can, and do, coexist.

Seen from this perspective, the person living with dementia, with their multifaceted relationship to language and time, can be understood through the framework of 'mistranslation.' As the sequence from *3688* analysed above shows, the past and the present are never quite as neatly separated in Uncle Radio's lived time(s); rather, the past is *always* in the present, in one form or another, and these seemingly immiscible temporalities come together to negotiate, in turn bringing to the surface – making the audience know (or become aware of their lack of knowledge about) – an array of transnational histories and pasts. Take, for example, the radio company Rediffusion that Uncle Radio represents as he walks around the housing blocks at the beginning of the film. On one level, because of Uncle Radio's dementia, the song that plays cannot be quite attributed to the radio, to his psyche or to the film's score, summoning up, to borrow a concept from Michel Chion (1994, 129), an acousmatic quality that renders the song "neither inside nor outside the image." The music's indeterminacy, Rey Chow (2014, 114) argues, has "a phantom existence," reinscribing, producing, extending and proliferating the traces of voice, consequently highlighting the multiplicity of different temporalities that are present.

On another level, the radio company Rediffusion opens the audience up not just to Singapore's local history but also to wider transnational histories connected with the radio receiver that Uncle Radio carries with him. The past that surfaces (or is hinted at) through the person living with dementia in *3688* is not just his but is also part of a wider network of entangled pasts. Founded in 1949, Rediffusion Singapore, a subsidiary of a London-based broadcasting company, was Singapore's first commercial cable radio station. From its inception, Rediffusion gained huge success and popularity with the people living in Singapore, in part due to its effective subscription model. Paying five dollars a month, the subscribers were given a radio receiver to tune in to the programmes. This was significantly cheaper than buying a radio, and communities could pool money for the monthly subscription fees. Rediffusion was popular for its programmes in various Chinese languages and, as Chan Kwo-bu and Yung Sai-shing (2005) observe, these programmes helped bring the many disparate Chinese communities in Singapore together. In other words, the radio station, because of its linguistic plurality, played a significant role in the nation's formative years; however, Rediffusion's eventual decline and neglect from about 1982 onwards, again because of its multilingualism, *also* contributed to an aspect of the nation's search for a postcolonial identification that was accompanied by a desire for linguistic homogeneity. To portray Uncle Radio as so entwined with Rediffusion, not least because of his insistence that the radio company is still broadcasting in the film's present day (and despite our knowledge otherwise), is thus to gesture towards an important aspect of local history and a specific period of Singaporean nation building. Beyond that, the radio receiver also points to a larger network of transnational histories: in Britain, Rediffusion was closely linked with the rise of the television network Independent Television (ITV); in Hong Kong, Rediffusion was not only an important wired radio station but also became the first television station of a British colony; and Rediffusion was, for almost 30 years, the only radio station in Barbados. In other words, the temporalities of Singapore as evinced by the person living with dementia are deeply entangled with the temporalities across a world of cultures and a range of (post)colonial histories.

2 Singapore's language landscape and the (post)colonial world

In *3688*, not only does Uncle Radio's dementia regularly catalyse a stroll around his housing estate trying to convince people to subscribe to Rediffusion; it also results in his relentlessly repairing his radio receivers in the hopes of listening to the popular Cantonese and Hokkien programmes, not realising that these shows have been off air for decades. In one scene, Uncle Radio, while working on a radio receiver, has a quick exchange in Mandarin with his daughter. She asks him to stop repairing the receivers because Rediffusion is no longer broadcasting. Immediately, Uncle Radio gets angry and tells her off for forgetting her roots and disrespecting him.

Throughout their exchange, Uncle Radio's angry speech is peppered with various temporal markers. Uncle Radio refers to all the hard work that he had done in the past bringing up his daughter. When responding to the idea that he stopped working, he suggests that if he stopped, they will not be able to put food on the table in the here and now. When ranting about the radio not working, he refers to the radio programme as if it is ongoing. Thus, like the opening scene of the film, the temporalities that Uncle Radio experiences here are presented as contemporaneous. To this end, despite his use of Mandarin to communicate, the multilingual past associated with Rediffusion is brought to the fore by Uncle Radio's dementia, and his layered relationship with language and time offers an entry point into Singapore's buried/inaccessible transnational history and historiography.

Below, I will provide an impressionistic narrative of modern Singapore's language landscape to contextually ground my argument. For my purposes, I limit my discussion of modern Singapore to the period from 1819 onwards, when Stamford Raffles arrived and began turning Singapore into a British Crown colony. In the process of colonisation, Singapore was positioned as a free port, a status that brought about huge waves of (in some instances, forced) migration from the rest of the world – from China, the Malay Archipelago, the Indian subcontinent, Europe, Armenia and the Afro-Caribbean regions, to just name a few areas – reifying the island's status as a cosmopolitan polity where multiple languages and approaches towards languages come together. The Chinese diaspora comprised the largest portion of this diverse group of migrants in Singapore.[3] For the longest time, this diaspora, from all parts of China, spoke a variety of vernaculars like Cantonese, Hokkien, Teochew, Hainanese and Hakka. Mandarin, the vernacular most associated with the Chinese language today, was not commonly spoken by the Chinese diaspora in Singapore. When the Republic of China made Mandarin the official language of education in 1956, only about 0.1 percent of Singapore's population spoke it (Tan and Goh 2011, 615).

In 1959, Singapore gained full internal self-governance from the British (in large part due to Singapore being captured by Japan during World War II) and, in 1963, Singapore merged with Malaya, Sabah and Sarawak to form the Federation of Malaysia. This merger was short lived and tumultuous: the Konfrontasi, where Indonesia, in protest at the inclusion of North Borneo (now Sabah) and Sarawak as part of the federation, violently clashed with Malaysia; both the United Malays National Organisation and the People's Action Party, the respective ruling parties of Malaysia and Singapore, held different attitudes towards governance and vigorously campaigned to kick the other out of office; and there were significant racial tensions between Malaysia and Singapore, with one of the worst race riots experienced by Singapore in 1964 killing 22 people and injuring 454 more (Low 2001, 431).

In 1965, Singapore was expelled from the federation and gained independence. Today, despite Malay being the official language of Singapore, it is not spoken by the majority of the people living there. Instead, English is the lingua franca of the nation, and the ethnic Chinese population predominantly speaks Mandarin (and English).[4] In 1979, the Singapore government launched the Speak Mandarin Campaign in the hopes of stamping out the other Chinese vernaculars. For Ying-Ying Tan and Irving Goh, Mandarin was chosen not only to align the nation closer to the People's Republic of China, but, as it was a "relatively neutral linguistic idiom" in Singapore, for so few in the Chinese diaspora spoke it, the vernacular became a useful political tool to homogenise "the linguistically heterogeneous Chinese population" (Tan and Goh 2011, 615).

The Speak Mandarin Campaign forcefully and derogatorily labelled the other Chinese languages as dialects and, in 1982, only Mandarin was allowed on television and radio while the other non-Mandarin vernaculars were banned. As a

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[3] In 1824, for instance, there were 3,317 Chinese migrants living in Singapore, a number which increased exponentially to 86,800 in 1881. Today, the ethnic Chinese make up about three-quarters of the nation's population (Lai 2011, 153).

[4] The local patois, Singlish – Singapore English – is an interesting amalgamation of the different cultures, languages and histories of Singapore.

result, the subscription revenue of Rediffusion nosedived, and the station closed in 2012. This ban of the non-Mandarin vernaculars on television and radio, alongside the teaching of Mandarin Chinese as a subject in schools, resulted in a linguistic gulf between the older and younger generations of Chinese Singaporeans, and this disconnect was acknowledged by the Singapore government when, in 2003, the country experienced a severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) outbreak. The government temporarily allowed all Chinese vernaculars back on television and radio so as to ensure as many people as possible – including people who had been violently left behind as the nation attempted to forge a new sense of postcolonial national identification – were exposed to the health advisories (Goh and Tan 2007).

Given this long history, the control of language played an important role in Singapore's colonial/postcolonial identifications. Pierre Bourdieu (1982, 45), discussing how French became the official language of France and its colonies, writes that the "official language is bound up with the state, both in its genesis and in its social use." For Eugene K. B. Tan (2007, 94), the language policies adopted by post-independence Singapore were "premised on particularistic ideas of culture vis-à-vis political governance and the economic imperative of achieving high economic growth rates." In other words, they fed into the national narrative of Singapore as a vulnerable state where its only resources are human beings – hence, people needed to be brought together through whatever means possible so that the nation could survive and thrive as an economic entity. To this end, the linguistic policies of Singapore, of which the Speak Mandarin Campaign is emblematic, left behind a large portion of Chinese Singaporeans as the nation was coerced to begin to imagine itself differently. The boy's American-accented Mandarin at the beginning of *3688* points towards another linguistic and cultural consequence of Singapore's deliberate positioning as a gateway between the West and the non-West in an increasingly globalised world.

In *3688*, Uncle Radio belongs to this early generation of post-independence Chinese Singaporeans who were encouraged (or forced) to take up Mandarin. Although he chiefly speaks in Mandarin throughout the film, as his dementia advances, he begins to speak other Chinese vernaculars too, forging a new kind of communication with the people around him and the radio culture he holds dear, in turn allowing the histories that were violently buried as the state attempted to forge a new postcolonial identity to come to the fore. In one of his wanderings around the housing estate, Uncle Radio enters the flat of a woman using a wheelchair, who is also coded as living with dementia, and they enter into a conversation about needing to fix their radio receivers so that they can listen to the Rediffusion programmes again (which, to both characters, are still on air). In this exchange, where both the past and present of Uncle Radio and the woman coexist, the two people who live with dementia converse in Malay, Mandarin, Hokkien and Teochew, easily moving from one language to another with no hint of the linguistic hierarchy associated with these languages today.

Figure 1: Uncle Radio and the woman conversing in multiple languages in *3688* (Tan, 2015).

Language, as understood by Bliss Cua Lim (2009, 17), always betrays the heterogeneity of time, where various "temporal rhythms, newness of becoming, and the experiences and emotions registered in the depths of the self, are all objectified and made equivalent by language." In other words, for Lim, language is a scene of times and temporalities lost, where to be in the symbolic world is to lose access to the heterogeneity and discontinuities of time. From a different viewpoint, Chow suggests that language as discourse can be thought of "as an assemblage of discontinuous, lived experiences" or as a network composed of "the resonances, connotations, associations, and memories (voluntary or involuntary) that, having been uttered and heard many times, cling to or hover around even the most simple individual speech acts" (2014, 53). As she puts it differently, language's "appearance at a particular moment in time – its condition of being found, so to speak – is often an index to a vast subterranean, even if as yet invisible and inaudible, agglomerate of discourse relation" (56). That is to say, unlike Lim's view that (the appearance of) language always amounts to a sense of loss of plurality, Chow's argument is that language is always discontinuous and always gesturing towards the multiplicity of times and temporalities.

For my purpose in this essay, I think there is much to be gained in using Chow's ideas to nuance Lim's notion of mistranslation in order to further my arguments about dementia and history. For Chow, language is always haunted by other temporalities, variously surfacing and highlighting the past(s) vis-à-vis the present, drawing parallels with Moglen's work on the horizontal model of psychoanalysis (as compared to Freud's vertical model of repression), where language can be understood as comprising "the discontinuous yet persistent threat of our identities, which are not integrated, which are not merely split, and which can neither be reduced to nor separated from the limitations and requirements of the body" (2008, 304). Seen from this angle, language, lost *and* found, is always a negotiation between homogeneity and heterogeneity. In the same way the blurred temporalities of the person living with dementia can be understood as a mistranslation that allows the past to surface in the present, language(s) used (or unused) by the person living with dementia becomes an index of the multiple temporalities that are coeval and is, too, a way in which multiple entangled transnational histories are brought to the fore. On the one hand, in *3688*, the two characters living with dementia conversing about Rediffusion in Malay, Mandarin, Hokkien and Teochew point towards Singapore's complicated colonial/postcolonial imaginations and policies and the ways the nation's linguistic transformation and legacy have been affected by the flows of other cultures into the island. On the other hand, the conversation also gestures towards how the ramifications of the island's cultural and linguistic landscape emanated to other nations and polities.

3 Dementia and the entangled spectres of Singapore's (cinematic) past

To elaborate on one way to understand the conversation between the two characters living with dementia as highlighting the historical flows of culture out of Singapore, I turn to an exploration of the history of Singapore and Singapore cinema in relation to world cinema. Singapore's local filmmaking culture is often separated into two seemingly separate periods: pre-1972 and post-1995 (Millet 2006; Uhde and Uhde 2010; E. Lim 2018). In the 1920s and 1930s, two major film companies, Shaw Brothers and Cathay, set up shop in Singapore, bringing in various film expertise from Shanghai and India, exhibiting and distributing films from across the world. In 1947, Shaw Brothers set up Malay Film Productions (MFP) and in 1953, the Cathay-Keris Film Organization was formed. The years between 1947 and 1972 are regularly described as Singapore cinema's 'golden age' since approximately 300 films were produced, of which about 280 were made by the MFP and Cathay-Keris (Millet 2006, 67). Most of the films made before 1972, as Jan Uhde and Yvonne Ng Uhde (2010, 3) note, were made in the Malay language and "focused on Malay subjects, reflecting Malay history, autochthonous values, traditions, customs, costumes, and a unique and robust cultural identity." These films were in turn distributed to the wider region and beyond, fostering a certain kind of Malay imagination in the transnational Malay Archipelago.

In 1957, Run Run Shaw moved to Hong Kong from Singapore and, using the knowledge gained from his film work in Singapore, re-established the struggling Tianyi Film Company into Shaw Brothers, which became the biggest film company in Hong Kong. Likewise, Cathay, which was also producing films in Hong Kong, played an important part in helping set up the Golden Harvest studio in Hong Kong in the early 1970s (Uhde and Uhde 2010, 11). In turn, both Shaw Brothers and Golden Harvest played an instrumental role in propelling the Hong Kong film industry to become one of the biggest in the world. Around the same period, Malay-language film production in Singapore started to decline from about 1963, when Singapore merged with Malaya. P. Ramlee, the period's most prolific actor and filmmaker, left Singapore for Kuala Lumpur in 1964, and the distribution and exhibition profits of both the MFP and Cathay-Keris took a huge hit during the Konfrontasi. In 1967, the MFP closed, and Cathay-Keris soon followed suit in 1972.

Filmmaking in Singapore underwent a notable lull from 1972 onwards, with only a few films made sporadically. It was with the production of *Mee Pok Man* (E. Khoo, 1995, Singapore) that the local filmmaking industry began to regain its momentum. Films made in Singapore after 1995, unlike during the golden age, were predominantly in Chinese languages (skewed towards Mandarin); in large part, this shift in linguistic focus is in tandem with Singapore's language policies as discussed, where the nation's official language, Malay, is not spoken by the majority of the people in the country. Consequently, the clear material differences between Singaporean cinema pre-1972 and post-1992 led to various critics (Berry and Farquhar 2006; O. Khoo 2006) thinking of these two periods as separate.

As I have maintained throughout, I do not view the past and the present on a linear temporal continuum but, rather, as constantly coalescing and colliding; the past is at times less visible and at times more visible, and this essay is concerned with the ways in which the relationship with language of the person living with dementia might make the past *more* visible, where language, haunted and discontinuous, becomes a charged area in which multiple transnational historical pasts *do* surface. In *3688*, the presence of Malay as articulated by the person living with dementia becomes an example in which the film raises the spectres of Singapore and Singaporean cinema's past, and the ways in which the past is entangled with the histories across a world of cinemas. The scene between Uncle Radio and the wheelchair user begins with Uncle Radio stopping outside the gates of her flat. He momentarily stares into the house in silence before asking, in Hokkien, whether the woman wants to subscribe to Rediffusion. The film cuts to the reverse shot to show the woman looking back at Uncle Radio, happily exclaiming in Hokkien that she has waited for him for an eternity and expressing how glad she is that he is finally here. Swiftly, she switches to Malay and asks her domestic helper to open the gate to let Uncle Radio in, and they then proceed to converse in various other Chinese languages.

From this quick exchange, before the film cuts to the reverse shot of the woman in the flat, Uncle Radio's facial expression lets out a tentative look of recognition – he knows her and he does not know her – and her response in Hokkien is equally ambiguously familiar. At that moment, through their dementia, a kind of hesitancy is engendered as their respective pasts are highlighted through their performances of un/familiarity with each other, and the woman's immediate instructions in Malay become layered with temporal negotiations where both characters' past experiences and linguistic competencies are brought to the fore: the use of Malay not by an ethnically Malay character but a Chinese character who lives with dementia begins to gesture towards a Singapore where the survival of Malay (and Malay-language Singaporean cinema in relation to world cinema) is acknowledged. The use of different national languages, through their haunted qualities, makes the uncanniness of temporal 'mistranslation' as manifest in dementia (and dementia narratives) even more pronounced.

As this analysis suggests, thinking more carefully about the multiple temporalities as experienced by the person living with dementia allows us to acknowledge the hesitancy and uncanniness of the coevality of past and present, as well as the multiple transnational histories of a postcolonial nation. Saër Maty Bâ and Will Higbee (2012, 8), in their essay on de-Westernising film studies, call for an approach that "is about an increasing connectivity within zones of contact always already threatening to overspill its contents (disruptions, displacements, de-homogenizations, muddy waters, and so on) into spaces beyond itself in an unpredictable fashion." In other words, to de-Westernise is to embrace and produce mess, and I have approached this essay's arguments about dementia with a similar affinity.

Dementia in/and cinema thus becomes not about issues of representation but, instead, about the ways different pasts might play a role and be made more prominent in the present. This, I suggest, requires an approach that is expansive rather than diminutive, an approach that sees the times and temporalities of the world as entangled, as affecting and affected by multiple intersecting identifications. Two-thirds of the way into *3688*, Uncle Radio sits at his desk fixing his radio as his daughter brings him a cup of water. As he fiddles with the equipment, she leans towards the radio and listens. She looks up at her father and exclaims that she can finally hear it, the Rediffusion programme that is no longer on air, and Uncle Radio leans towards the radio. Both father and daughter listen intently before he announces that he, too, can hear the transmission despite the extremely low volume of the broadcast. Satisfied, Uncle Radio announces that he has finally fixed the radio. Throughout the sequence, the radio is emphatically silent but, nonetheless, this silence – the seemingly absent – does not mean that Uncle Radio and his daughter cannot hear what is on air. In listening carefully and imaginatively, they perceive the presence of the past.

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Raquel Medina

Forgetting and Remembering in Post-dictatorial Argentina. *Tiempo suspendido* and the Ethics of Documentary Filmmaking Featuring People Living with Dementia

In countries in which dictatorial and repressive regimes were followed by democratic governments, what to remember and what to forget has been transformed into a master narrative with the conscious political aim of achieving the 'reconciliation' of the people. Spain and Argentina are two good examples of countries in which these questions have been actively debated regardless of the existence (Argentina) or absence (Spain) of a truth and reconciliation commission. Even when the atrocities of the repressive regimes were uncovered and acknowledged, exposing the erasure and silencing of those killed and missing remained and remains the focal point of the victims' families and supporters. Some victims' families perceived 'reconciliation' as a way of overlooking for a second time the terrible experiences of the missing persons (Lvovich and Bisquert 2008; Kriger and Guglielmo 2017). Therefore, voicing these experiences through the (re)construction and (re)telling of their (hi)stories before all traces of their past disappear is a common impulse for documentary filmmaking in these countries. The (re)telling and (re)construction of the past of the victims brings to the fore concepts such as, on the one hand, historical memory, remembering, collective and individual memory, and postmemory and, on the other hand, forgetting, memory loss and oblivion.

Alzheimer's disease, one of the most common forms of dementia, has been categorised as an epidemic by several international associations (e.g. Alzheimer's Disease International), and, as Lucy Burke (2015, 24) argues, it operates "as a form of cultural production in its own right." Forgetting and silence are two symptoms central to the experience of Alzheimer's, a disease whose name has been used in countries like Spain as metaphor to express collective historical forgetting (Medina 2013). Thus, forgetting the past in the era of Alzheimer's disease offers symbolic equivalence between collective/social memory and the experience of individual/personal memory, historical and subjective memory, and the need for postmemory. It is not surprising, then, that the trope of dementia as forgetting has increasingly emerged as a way to talk about both historical and subjective memories in cultural texts from countries in which repressive regimes

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were followed by democratic ones.[1] Many of these documentary films have as their focal point or main characters people living with dementia because their old age and the nature of the disease bring to the fore the impending disappearance of the last living memories of traumatic events. However, this may be perceived as problematic, as it might make them vulnerable by displaying their traumatic experience or by exposing them to potentially unempathetic gazes. They are already vulnerable in social settings due to the disease; their vulnerability can be further increased in situations in which the filmmaker exerts their narrative power with the purpose of reconstructing a past that it is no longer remembered by the person living with dementia. The protagonists with dementia in most of these documentaries are parents or grandparents of the filmmakers, and they all suffered violence and were exposed to traumatic experiences during wars and dictatorships. Therefore, investigating the ethical or moral boundaries of producing documentary films with people with dementia will shed light on the ethics of representing collective/ national and individual trauma.

This essay aims to analyse the ethics of representation in *Tiempo suspendido* by Natalia Bruschtein, a documentary film in which she interviews her grandmother Laura Bonaparte, famous for being one of the co-founders of the movement Madres de la Plaza de Mayo (Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo), who is living with dementia. First, it contextualises *Tiempo suspendido* within current discussions around documentary film and its subgenres. Second, it studies the position that the filmmaker, the subject and the viewer take up in relation to the specific story told and to the processes of representation and identity construction. Third, *Tiempo suspendido* is analysed to unveil the different ways the viewer is required to understand the life of Laura Bonaparte and her identity, a subject that is at once national and personal. The use of photographs, public speeches and TV footage is examined alongside the interviews with the filmmaker's grandmother to show the mechanisms employed to construct a chronological concept of time that is nevertheless fragmented and full of gaps. Therefore, issues linked to the function of the different gazes in the documentary film are at the centre of attention. Finally, the focus of the discussion is a specific sequence as well as the editing of the film as a whole, with the goal of addressing the following questions: Can the triggering of memories related to a traumatic experience in a person living with dementia be justified when it serves to preserve the past or recover our own sense of identity as descendants? To what extent is it ethical to employ people

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[1] This is the case in several Spanish documentary films: *Nedar*, by Subirana (2008); *Bucarest: La memoria perduda*, by Solé (2008); and *Cartas a María*, by García Ribot (2014).

living with dementia in film to illustrate ‘cultural forgetting’? In this regard, issues such as voyeurism, vulnerability and consent will be discussed.

1 Documentary film and the post-dictatorship generation in Argentina

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, artistic expressions of the children of those who ‘disappeared’ during Argentina’s military dictatorship (1976–1983) flourished. Even though these artists were not yet born or were too young to remember when their parents or family members disappeared, their work reveals the extent of the traumatic consequences of the atrocities committed by the military dictatorship on the present of personal and collective identity (Maguire 2017, 2). Autofictional narratives, testimonies, fictional and documentary films and plays are some of the forms these artistic expressions take in exploring intergenerational trauma. Since 2005, films and documentaries in which dementia is employed as a metaphor to explore either issues related to national identity, questions of gender in patriarchal societies or matters of historical memory have burgeoned across cultures (Medina 2018). In Argentina, Chile and Spain, to name just three countries, there have been many recent documentary films which attempt to recover the lost memories of people who were powerfully affected by traumatic events and the legacy of an oppressive regime and who today live with dementia. The concurrence between the increasing number of people living with dementia and the materialisation of a new type of documentary around the politics of memory seems to have influenced the manner in which dealing with the past and the obligation to remember it are understood. The horrors of the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) and the subsequent Franco dictatorship (1939–1975), the Holocaust (1941–1945), *la Dictadura Cívico-Eclesiástica-Militar* in Argentina (1976–1983) and Pinochet’s dictatorship in Chile (1973–1980) have been the subject of cultural texts and discussions linked, in one way or another, to ‘dementia.’ On the one hand, ‘dementia’ has been used as a medical excuse by defendants to avoid prosecution for crimes against humanity; on the other hand, it has been used to highlight the continuous and systematic forgetting of the historical past in the name of reconciliation. In many of these films the filmmaker is not only the narrator but also the child or grandchild of the person living with dementia who is at the centre of the film. Consequently, the journey charted in each is a journey of self-discovery and a quest for identity for the filmmaker.

These films belong to what has been termed "performative documentary" (Bruzzi 2006), a genre which has been greatly influenced by the performativity of reality television and cinematic documentaries. The spectator of such a film realises that it is a negotiation between reality on the one hand and image, interpretation and bias on the other (Bruzzi 2006, 5–7). Similarly, Villarmea Álvarez (2014) notes that these documentaries combine visual materials from different sources, such as private home movies, archival footage and imaginary re-enactments, to covey "a 'subjective truth' that reveals the filmmaker's perception of historical events." Lastly, Jordana Blejmar (2016) notes that some subjective documentary films produced by the second generation have in common what Dubois (1995) called "mise-en-film"; that is, they exploit the fact that the ultimate understanding of the nature of a photograph depends on its interplay/contrast with other visual language.[2] Overall, it is the performative and autobiographical dimensions of the new documentaries that make them function as allegories of the filmmakers' generational attitudes, country or time. This also applies to *Tiempo suspendido*.[3]

Laura Bonaparte was an Argentinian psychologist and human rights activist whose ex-husband as well as three of her children disappeared during the years 1976–1983. After having spent nine years exiled in Mexico, Bonaparte returned to Argentina in 1985 and, in 1986, co-founded the new strand of the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo, an organisation that fought to preserve the memory of the 30,000 *desaparecidos* – the disappeared – and aimed to bring the perpetrators to justice. In *Tiempo suspendido* (2015), Natalia Bruschtein presents a series of personal encounters with Laura Bonaparte, her grandmother, as well as Bonaparte's daily routine in the nursing home in which she resides. As Bruschtein has explained (Ranzan 2015), she started working on *Tiempo suspendido* in 2011, once her grandmother started experiencing memory loss. The filmmaker travelled to Argentina to learn more about Bonaparte's public and activist role by doing archival work and by interviewing her. According to Bruschtein, when the shooting of the documentary started, Bonaparte had already stopped recognising her, yet some kind of 'affective' connection remained, Bruschtein claimed, and therefore Bonaparte felt at ease with her during the filming.[4]

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[2] The 'second generation' is an expression used in countries such as Argentina to refer to the children of the *desaparecidos*.

[3] The generational distance between postmemory, memory and history shapes this type of documentary film. Hirsch's (1997) concept of postmemory and Landsberg's (2004) of prosthetic memory explain the kind of recollection of past events deployed in subjective documentaries.

[4] I sent an extensive questionnaire to Bruschtein, who kindly answered my questions at length. The translations of her responses are all mine.

Bruschtein did not deliberately intend to use dementia as a metaphor about remembering a national past, but the stress placed on Bonaparte's human rights activism clearly brings to the fore her important social and political role in representing the political claims of those tortured and killed during the 'Dirty War.' The image of the activist who fought against oblivion and her more personal role as a woman who lost four family members are then unified in *Tiempo suspendido*. The documentary's structure reinforces these two sides in the figure of Bonaparte, as well as the granddaughter's quest: according to Bruschtein, she was trying "to recover the last thing that remains of a woman I have always admired and I think that it is fair that she is the one who remains in the memory of the viewer" (Medina 2019). The structure, then, presents a conception of time and temporality that positions the past as something reduced to physical traces – photographs, interviews, speeches, home films, TV images, official documents – in a present in which time has ceased to be chronological because of dementia. It is thus suspended. The granddaughter/filmmaker performs a threefold role, that of the historian who undertakes archival work and oral interviews to commemorate the public past of Bonaparte; that of the biographer of her grandmother's private past; and finally, that of autobiographer, since ultimately the quest is that of her own identity through the unveiling of her grandmother's personal past. In other words, the documentary's construction of layers of interactions and meanings allows the materialisation of the overall allegory of the filmmaker's generation, country and time: recovering a personal and collective/national traumatic past which is being forgotten but which still greatly affects the identity of many. As Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz (2010, 3) have stressed, in "collectively experienced catastrophes [. . .] the medium of memory has seemed to offer the possibility not only that an element of selfhood can be reconstituted, but also that a public, political language can be fashioned in which these experiences, and others like them, can be communicated to others."

2 *Tiempo suspendido*'s layers of memory and the concept of time

Time in *Tiempo suspendido* is structured and constructed around three techniques which correspond to three chronological times: before the 'Dirty War,' after the 'Dirty War' and the time of filming and narrating. These three times are separated by many years, thus introducing not only the fragmentation of time but also the fragmented nature of the past and its effects on the physical and cognitive aspects of an individual. In addition, these three times are presented on screen in three different ways but always in the same diachronic sequence: the family pictures before the ‘Dirty War’; TV footage, speeches, interviews and writings by Bonaparte during her years of political activism against the atrocities committed; and the present time of the narration in which the granddaughter interviews her grandmother. Noticeably, by assigning a different narrative medium to each moment in time and by arranging and editing them with the same structure, Bruschtein offers to the viewer multiple dimensions of time and memory.

The film itself is, as the title implies, a clear manifestation of the suspension of time as both interrupted/frozen and removed. In addition, the constant use of still images / photographs reminds us of Sontag’s (1977, 5) thought that a “photograph passes for incontrovertible proof that a given thing happened. The picture may distort; but there is always a presumption that something exists, or did exist, which is what’s in the picture.” Photographs are ghostly presences of a past that no longer exists (Barthes 2000). For instance, the film encapsulates four notions of time which all depend on the character they are linked to, the person forgetting it or the person who wants to recover it: chronological time, the nostalgic notion of a former time, contrast between past and present, and time as a narrative construction. These four dimensions of time use images to reconstruct the common past. The still images of the time before the traumatic experience are followed by the moving images of Bonaparte’s activist period, but both are contained within the overarching framework of the interviews and readings at the library in the present time of the narration. Still and moving images gain full personal meaning only if looked at by Bonaparte and the filmmaker; while public meaning is reached only by the viewer’s gaze. In regard to the four dimensions of time, first, chronology is still present but it is full of gaps; for instance, most of those depicted in the photographs have been dead for many years and are also now disappearing from Bonaparte’s memory; the present is full of absences, and absences shape the present. Second, the sequential use of photographs in storytelling develops a nostalgic notion of time which brings the impossibility of recuperation to the fore. Third, the contrast between Bonaparte’s past and present is accentuated by the director’s focus on her grandmother’s declining cognitive and physical abilities. Finally, whereas the photographs, documents, speeches and TV footage serve the purpose of writing up the personal and public biography of Bonaparte as a counterpart to her memory loss, the interviews in which the granddaughter constantly corrects her grandmother’s memories become the vehicle for forming Bruschtein’s own identity/autobiography.

3 Gazing at Laura Bonaparte

The film starts and ends at the National Library in Buenos Aires, thus emphasising the circularity of the story and the archives as the location in which memory is safely stored. This circularity highlights the fragility of human memory, that of the ill and ageing Laura Bonaparte in the present case, in contrast to the lasting memories archived in the library. Through the camera lens, the viewer is prompted to look at the past and present represented by the historical and personal figure of Bonaparte. However, the gaze of the viewer is always filtered through that of Bruschtein: the filmmaker reads documents, looks at pictures, interviews relatives and her grandmother; that is, she owns the authority of visual, oral and written discourse with which to present the fragility of human memory. Even though Bruschtein claims that this is not a film about her own identity, the filmmaker points out that in the case of *Tiempo suspendido* there were situations and issues that moved her emotionally. Therefore, it is important to stress that this emotional involvement at the autobiographical level influences both Bruschtein's and the audience's gazes. All the visual and written texts presented are mediated by the camera in the first instance, and then by Bruschtein's gaze at the camera, thus prompting the viewer to watch the film and assess the facts through her eyes.

Tiempo suspendido is shot over the span of three years in which Bonaparte and Bruschtein meet in different locations: the nursing home and family spaces. Bonaparte's dementia progression is reinforced not only by the time constrictions of the film but also by structuring the documentary as a sequence of the constant chronological contrasts of Bonaparte's life: the before of the disappearance of her family members; the time of her human rights activism against the atrocities committed in Argentina; and the Bonaparte at the time of the narration. The diachronicity of the film results from putting together synchronic moments that always follow the same pattern: before, after and now. The constant repetition of this pattern generates a strong contrast between the before and the now of Bonaparte that accentuates the void of her present. The focus of the camera on her memory loss and her bodily decay bolsters the notion of ageing and dementia as decline and loss of selfhood, and it also presents a nostalgic perception of the past (Swinnen 2013). The paradox created by bringing together in just one sequence conflicting meanings/conditions between the present of the filmmaker and Bonaparte, the photographic documents viewed by the filmmaker and audience, and the past writings of Bonaparte read by her granddaughter through voice-over, reinforces Bonaparte's experience of loss and grief in the past and Bruschtein's feelings of loss and grief in the present: "As we parents grow old, our children blossom" (00.02.44), the voice-over claims, while a picture of Bonaparte, her husband

and their four young children on a beach occupies the totality of the frame for several seconds. The viewer is already aware of both the tragic events surrounding Bonaparte's life and her active role in demanding the truth about those disappeared; thus, it is the contrast offered on screen between Bonaparte as a public figure in the past and Bonaparte in the present of the nursing home that is accentuated. The opening shots that introduce Bonaparte at the time of the narration focus on her grey hair, wrinkled face and shaky, thin hands as well as on her inability to mark a number on her bingo card, using extreme close-up shots. The length of the shots gives the viewer the opportunity to look at this old woman for quite some time, with the camera concentrating on her aged body and vacant expression.

The space in which Bonaparte lives is presented in this introductory sequence as highly medicalised by opening the close-up and extreme close-up shots to a long shot in which a nurse and other older women in wheelchairs surround Bonaparte. This medicalisation is further strengthened in the following sequence which shows Bonaparte in her bed at the nursing home being woken up and served breakfast by a nurse. In contrast to a later scene, this scene shows in a sequence of close-ups of her face and wrinkled hands a joyful Bonaparte talking about her happy childhood. The viewer is placed in the position of the camera, thus not only bringing them into the room as if they were there with Bonaparte, but also as voyeurs who will watch the daily routine of this woman, her encounters with family members, her exchanges with her granddaughter and the progression of her disease. The viewer is constantly prompted to emotionally respond to what is shown. For example, in several instances there is a time discrepancy between pictures and memories recalled which underscores the disordered chronology of time in Bonaparte's memory. In some of these instances, Bonaparte remains cheerful and jokes about her poor memory. Her sense of humour serves as an empathic magnet for the viewer, who is this way predisposed to an emotional connection with the subject of their gaze.

It is precisely this empathy towards the subject that makes the scene that I will move on to analyse so shocking. It is the first time that grandmother and granddaughter are shown together on screen. The sequence alternates frames in which photographs occupy the full screen with close-up shots of Bonaparte and Bruschtein looking at photographs and talking about them, as well as medium shots that frame both women sitting at a table full of photographs. Each type of shot has a specific communicative function: photographs filling the screen function as both a means to talk about a past which no longer exists (Barthes 2000) and a way of making the viewer feel that they are in fact looking at the pictures as if they were inside the film; close-up shots that alternate photographs and the two people looking at them communicate to the viewer at the emotional level, immersing them in the action taking place and bringing them closer to both characters; and finally the medium shots push the viewer back out of the scene to emotionally distance them from what is about to happen with the intention of assigning them the role of witness. This movement from emotional involvement to distance ultimately transforms the viewer into a voyeur, gazing at the moment in which a traumatic event is recalled and in which they cannot intervene (Sontag 1977). The subject has become the object of knowledge in this precise moment, thus erasing the emotional bond between the filmmaker and her object of knowledge as previously established. This encounter between the subject and the filmmaker does not give access to subjectivity or to an ethical relation (Levinas 1993).

It is made clear in this sequence that Bonaparte is unable to put together names and faces in the photographs. Despite this, she keeps her sense of humour and remains cheerful until Bruschtein shows her a picture with three people and tells her grandmother that she "had kept this one for a long time because it is of your three missing children" (00.11:00–00.11:05). Bonaparte (Figure 1) suddenly remembers, and her face shows clear signs of surprise and distress. Bruschtein admits that she struggled emotionally with Bonaparte's reaction: "The moment that remained in the film is a moment that for me was also very strong, because at that moment I wasn't the director, but the granddaughter feeling a lot of pain because she did not remember her own children, my father" (Medina 2019). Notwithstanding Bruschtein's emotional involvement, the sequence withholds her reaction from the viewer. This is precisely the moment in which Bonaparte in fact remembers her traumatic experience. As a result, the viewer, who already is aware of Bonaparte's memory loss, is positioned to watch her traumatised reaction. The whole sequence focuses on Bonaparte's private life, not on her public profile, thus making the viewer empathise with her at the personal/emotional level. Likewise, once the identification with Bonaparte is established and her vulnerability is brought to the fore, the scene becomes difficult to watch. Immediately after, the viewer is forced to move away from the scene to the position of the voyeur, which does not allow them to protect the vulnerable subject but just to observe.

Figure 1: The viewer as voyeur: Watching Bonaparte's reaction to the photograph.

Time after time viewers are impelled to witness this painful recollection of the past. Moreover, what the film makes visible as well through this insistence on making Bonaparte remember is that memory loss is presented as a loss of selfhood. The constant questioning by Bruschtein that Bonaparte has to undergo throughout the documentary makes memory the key factor in personhood, thus reinforcing the idea commonly found in hegemonic social and cultural discourses that the mind constitutes the base of personhood. Bruschtein, in her attempt to document the paradoxical nature of memory personified in the private and public figure of Bonaparte, places memory as the key factor of being, thus dispossessing her grandmother of personhood. For instance, just after this sequence the film moves from the shot of Bruschtein's hand holding the same photograph to footage in slow motion of her during her years as a human rights activist. If taken together, these two mirroring scenes present what is absent: individual memory. Hence, memory is charged from this point onwards as a marker for personhood and identity.

The Cartesian body/mind dualism has linked identity to the mind. Dementia's cognitive impairment would then mean that an individual with dementia is no longer a person (Brody 2003). From this perspective, the loss of memory implies a loss of reasoning and of the ability to communicate through language, which would reduce the subject's capacity to have meaningful social interactions (Cohen and Eisdorfer 1986).[5] *Tiempo suspendido* presents a person living with dementia who interacts with family members and caregivers inside and outside the nursing home. However, these interactions always seek to make Bonaparte remember the past by questioning her or emphasise her memory loss. Not surprisingly then, memory loss and questions about her missing children are presented in an almost identical manner throughout the film. For example, in 00.33.10 she is asked by Bruschtein if she remembers why she left Argentina to live in Mexico, to which Bonaparte responds: "No, I don't remember." A close-up shot then emphasises Bonaparte's vacant expression, confirming her answer as truthful (Figure 2).

One hour into the film, Bonaparte asks Bruschtein, "Victor did not go missing, did he?," thus accentuating once more Bonaparte's memory loss and suffering. Yet again, and with a close-up shot, the viewer witnesses shock (Figure 3) and pain on Bonaparte's face. This is followed by Bonaparte's words, "Well, memory, after all, is not a bad thing to lose" and her evaluation of life as an adventure. The

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[5] A radically different perspective is offered by those who consider the important role social interactions have in preserving a sense of selfhood in people with dementia (Kitwood 1993; Sabat and Harré 1992).

Figure 2: A close-up shot confirming Bonaparte's gaps in memory.

Figure 3: "Well, memory, after all, is not a bad thing to lose".

words of the 86-year-old Bonaparte are immediately eclipsed by an excerpt from her earlier writings, read by Bruschtein: "When I die, my missing children will die with me, as will the memory of their birth and their upbringing; and that is a great sorrow" (1:02:31–1:02:39).

The audience is confronted by the paradoxical nature of memory when dementia meets history and politics. As much as Bruschtein could be searching for personal memories of her father[6] or aiming to preserve the experience of her grandmother as a public and private figure, the way in which these truths are presented on screen is solely linked to Bonaparte as a public figure. That is, since personal memories are absent, the memories presented correspond to her public profile as a human rights activist. This constant conflict offered on screen between the past active and coherent public figure and the present cognitively impaired private subject makes the viewer focus on memory loss as the loss of communicative memory (Assmann 2008): autobiographical memories which can

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[6] Recovering memories about her father was the main purpose of Bruschtein's film *Encontrando a Víctor* (2005).

no longer be communicated and their transformation, in the case of a public figure, into cultural memories.

4 Working on screen with people living with dementia – a question of ethics

The sequences just analysed bring out some crucial issues in working with people with dementia. Recovering the past from people living with dementia can make them even more vulnerable as they relive their traumatic experience. There have been plenty of scholarly discussions around the ethics of documentary film and ethical responsibilities of filmmakers (Katz and Katz 1988; Aibel 2003; Butchard 2006; Maccarone 2010; Nash 2011). Among the most important are issues, consent, disclosure and motive. When dealing with autobiographical documentary films, the intimacy permeating these films makes it difficult to ponder whether in certain circumstances the filmmaker is pushing ethical boundaries (Katz and Katz 1988; Swinnen 2013). Bruschtein, in this sense, recognises in her interview with me that intimacy and familiarity made things easier. Likewise, she acknowledges that she sought permission from her uncle, the only surviving son, and cousins before she started filming. Bruschtein explains that shooting with her grandmother was simple, and Bonaparte was very happy (Medina 2019).

Regardless of whether consent was obtained or the motive disclosed to Bonaparte before or during the filmmaking process, Bonaparte is pressed to involuntarily reexperience a traumatic event, thus causing her harm, even if only momentarily. The structure of all the sequences in which she is shown photographs of her missing children stresses Bonaparte's memory loss. However, instead of stopping her push to remember, Bruschtein not only corrects her in all instances by naming those in the picture but also tells her that they all went missing. Consequently, there is clear evidence of harm that is repetitious in nature and is indeed enabled by the intimacy between them. That is, one would expect intimacy to prevent harm instead of facilitating it and to emphasise the positive elements of both dementia and ageing instead of its deficits. However, in the film, Bonaparte's vulnerability is openly displayed and results in charging her, as I see it, with the weight of forgetting both the individual and collective past. The viewer's admiration for the public figure evolves to compassion and sadness but additionally evacuates the private Bonaparte of personhood. Early in the film the focus turns out to be the present decline of the public figure of Bonaparte. Even if Bruschtein never intended this to be the case, the continuous contrasts displayed on screen between her past and the present realities inevitably foreground her physical and cognitive impairment.

Ageing and dementia are presented unquestionably as decline. On the one hand, Bonaparte's memory loss means that Bruschtein's quest is still incomplete at the end of the film as her efforts to recover memories about her father fail. On the other hand, the absence of memory forces the camera to shift to presenting Bonaparte's body, mainly hands and face, in close-up shots that capture in detail her aged body (Figure 4) in persistent contrast to her younger one. Bonaparte's aged body converts her into a 'living' photograph, present but unable to provide information beyond her own image. The reification of the body is stressed by the similarity between the wrinkled and veined hands and the patterns of the bed cover, whereas the shaking hands hidden under the table function as signs of ageing as illness and decline towards death. Like photographs, Bonaparte's body is presented as the site where time is suspended, or in Barthes's (2000) terms, the space in which to gaze at the return of the dead.[7]

Figure 4: The camera's focus on Bonaparte's aged body.

5 Conclusion

The three layers of memory illustrate its fragmented and synchronic quality and thus reinforce the suspension of time. If time is understood as movement from the past to the present towards a future, in the film time is suspended in two ways: first, time is static; and second, time has ceased to be time. In both cases what results is the absence of a future. The contrast between past and present creates a nostalgic perception of the past and accentuates the present as painful and full of silences. However, in *Tiempo suspendido* the person living with dementia is not someone whose past needs to be recovered because it is unknown. We know everything there is to know about Laura Bonaparte as a public and

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[7] Derrida's (2006) notion of spectre could be employed here as analytical tool as well.

activist figure, and recovering the past of Víctor Bruschtein was already the focus of *Encontrando a Víctor*. Additionally, in *Tiempo suspendido* the person living with dementia is placed on screen as a site of memory, and on her rests all the weight of family and national memory.

The viewer is positioned to gaze at Bonaparte from different angles and spaces with the intention of emotionally communicating the paradoxical nature of memory. However, the viewer's intended voyeurism when situated outside the story is in fact reversed by the distress that Bruschtein causes to both her grandmother and the viewer when revealing the death of Bonaparte's children. It is not an act of forgetting that the viewer witnesses but the pain of a particularly vulnerable person remembering a traumatic event. Even if completely unintentionally, the centrality of this vulnerability and harm dominates the documentary film and unquestionably raises issues around pushing ethical boundaries when people living with dementia are placed in front of the camera. Finally, the conception of selfhood as the dualism of body/mind and the suspension of time associated with Bonaparte's aged body transforms Bonaparte into a 'living' photograph unable to provide information beyond her own image.

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