

Shifts in Testimony Focus depending on Medium and Temporal Context: On Ruth Glasberg Gold's Holocaust Experiences in Transnistria

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In their introduction to the edited collection *Mediation, Remediation, and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory*, Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney powerfully note how “‘media’ of all sorts—spoken language, letters, books, photos, films—[...] provide frameworks for shaping both experiences and memory” (1). Erll and Rigney particularly emphasize how the various media through which we express our experiences and memories are “complex and dynamic systems” which record information, make sense and send specific messages by “drawing on available media technologies, on existent media products, on patterns of representation and medial aesthetics” (3, 4). Following in the lines of their relevant insights, the aim of my paper is to compare four testimonies with different medial (written and oral) content given in 1944, 1983 and 1996 by Ruth Gold (née Glasberg), a Romanian-born Jewish child survivor, who in November 1941, at eleven years old, was deported with her parents and only brother from Czernowitz to Bershada ghetto in Transnistria, coming out of the war an orphan and the only surviving member of her family. Before the analysis proper, I will offer a brief overview of the types of Holocaust survivor testimonies developed over time, from written testimonies to oral audio testimonies and oral video testimonies.

Overview of the Development of Holocaust Survivors' Testimonies: From Written to Oral Audio and Video Testimonies

The early forms of testimonies by Holocaust survivors usually comprised written autobiographical accounts given at the bequest of various institutions or literary autobiographies written by survivors and published at an earlier or later time. In the immediate postwar context, oral audio testimonies were rather scarce, as well indicated by Jeffrey Shandler who notes that “The most extensive effort to make audio recordings of Holocaust survivors’ recollections of their wartime experiences was the work of psychologist David Boder, who traveled from the

United States to interview 119 survivors, most of them Jews, in displaced persons camps in 1946” (8). Still Boder’s audio recordings were deemed as a singular case and Holocaust survivors’ written testimonies were the rule during the 1940s and 1950s. As far as written autobiographies are concerned, Philippe Lejeune has offered its classic definition, that of being “a retrospective prose narrative produced by a real person concerning his own existence, focusing on his individual life, in particular on the development of his personality” (182).

In relation to history, written autobiographies merely represent a piece of the truth rather than facts or straightforward historical records, since even when they chronicle an event they are centered on one’s own experience rather than collective issues. Given these differences, in their seminal work *Reading Autobiography*, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson define “autobiographical truth” as beyond the claims of history following which any given information or statement should be verified or falsified by recourse to documentation or archival facts outside the text. Seen in this light, autobiographies are pieces that selectively engage with one’s life experiences through personal storytelling and in dialogue with personal processes and archives of memory. In this process, practices and techniques of remembering are historically and contextually specific, therefore “[a] particular culture’s understanding of memory at a particular moment of its history makes remembering possible for a life narrator” but one can also contest ways in which the ideological grain of a country has dictated that members of the state remember a part of history, by remembering differently (Smith and Watson 17). Additionally, life narrators often rely on embodied memory in their texts, and are multiply embodied for that matter by using “the body as a neurochemical system” or referencing the “anatomical body” or the “sociopolitical body, a set of cultural attitudes and discourses encoding the public meanings of bodies that underwrite relationships of power” (Smith and Watson 38) and exposing and negotiating cultural norms about the proper uses of such bodies.

In the wake of Holocaust events, especially in the case of survivors starting to write their recollections, Shoshana Felman has posited the affinity of written autobiography to oral testimony in court which, in legal parlance, refers to a speech one is asked to give in a situation of a “crisis of truth,” when the truth is not clear (Felman 5). Felman therefore proposes that, especially in the case of individuals with traumatic recollections, autobiography can be a form of

testifying or witnessing which matters to others, one in which one should not look for moments of revealing one's self but for moments of resistance or hesitation that bring to us the other's stories which cannot be openly integrated but are accessed indirectly through people's gestures. In *Narrating the Holocaust*, Andrea Reiter posits that the genre of the concentration camp or ghetto report should be placed among autobiographical forms (50), and notes that this encompasses: letter writing (specific for the early war years); diaries or journals (usually kept in hiding by camp inmates during the war to hopefully inform posterity of their own and other inmates' existence); and memoirs, mostly published after the end of the war and defined by Reiter as a specific form of an autobiography that does not correspond to a traditional autobiographic narrative's main focus on the genesis and social or public role of the individual-author-narrator. Instead, Reiter explains that Holocaust survivors' memoirs concern themselves with "an identity which, precisely because of what is described, has lost its self-assuredness," not objectifying the self as in traditional autobiographies but presenting the concrete experience of an extreme situation in a camp, in a ghetto or in hiding, one's failure or success to come to terms with it during and after the war (57-58). Reiter notes that most survivors try to tell their experience chronologically, even following a thematic structure, in the spirit of a family chronicle for future generations, trying to put emphasis on factual accuracy over their personal existence, unlike traditional autobiographies. Smith and Watson similarly state that "In such narratives, the problem of recalling and recreating a past life involves organizing the inescapable but often disabling force of memory and negotiating its fragmentary intrusions with increasing, if partial, understanding" (22), including forms of self-critique (157), these narratives often serving as platforms for authors' involvement in campaigns for human rights (158).

The shift from written to oral testimonies given by Holocaust survivors was largely a result of the gradual institutionalization of Holocaust research and documentation which started to rely more and more heavily on new media of documentation beyond the written form, first including audio recordings and then videos. Jeffrey Shandler exemplifies this transformation with the case of Yad Vashem which began collecting written testimonies from Holocaust survivors in the late 1940s, then went on to record audio testimonies in 1954 and to videotape them in 1989 (Shandler 8); similarly, the Center for Holocaust Studies, Documentation and

Research in Brooklyn, New York, one of the earliest institutions in the U.S. dedicated to Holocaust research, collected almost only audio recordings with Holocaust survivors and witnesses between 1974 and 1989 (Shandler 9). Also in New York, psychoanalyst Judith Kestenberg and a team of other specialists conducted a series of audio interviews between the 1980s and 1990s for the “International Study of Organized Persecution of Children,” an organization founded by Judith Kestenberg in 1981 and sponsored by Child Development Research in view of fostering recognition to child survivors, an emergent category that was just beginning to be recognized by specialists, as I have shown elsewhere (Mihăilescu 107-109). The rationale for Kestenberg’s taped interviews was the lack of any “written history devoted to the persecution of children” at those times, as indicated in the Instructions for Interviewers they used (1). Ruth Gold participated in this project with two interviews she gave in 1983 and which I will consider later on. If by the 1970s audio testimonies were the rule for most Holocaust-related institutions, the end of the decade saw another shift towards video testimonies. This was fructified in the United States first of all by the Fortunoff Archive at Yale University which started to take video testimonies in 1979 in riposte to the highly-successful 1978 NBC series *Holocaust* that was seen by many survivors as a trivialization of their experiences because of its “kitsch-sentimental representation” (Rothe 36). Then, the year the United States Holocaust Memorial opened in Washington D.C., Steven Spielberg gained Americans’ attention with his film *Schindler’s List* which he used for starting the largest archive of collected video testimonies with Holocaust survivors, the USC Shoah Foundation.

In her 2006 essay “History, Memory, and the Genre of Testimony,” Aleida Assmann singles out the specifics of the two already-identified and closely related genres of Holocaust testimony: oral video testimony and written autobiography. Starting from the Fortunoff Video Testimony Archive for Holocaust Testimonies established at Yale University in 1978 as the pioneering archive which set up video testimony as a new genre for “registering and archiving individual incidents of the traumatic experience of the Holocaust,” Assmann particularly identifies the various directions of the genre of autobiography in its written and video forms given their different strategies of framing the traumatic events. According to Assman, “[i]n the genre of nonliterary and nonformal autobiography, memories are collected and selected in such a

way as to promote the coherent construct of a biography; while in the case of these video testimonies, memories do the very opposite: they shatter the biographical frame” (264). Put differently, the genre of written autobiography “creates meaning and relevance through the construction of narrative” that is based on the patterns of cultural codes and symbols (Assmann 264-5); by comparison, the video testimony expresses the impact of the historical trauma of the Holocaust, representing events and experiences that are meaningless and defy all patterns of understanding by reflecting the destructive force of an “alien agent” in putting forth a structure that “reflects the structure of the Holocaust itself in its murderous teleology through the stages of exclusion, persecution, imprisonment, and extermination” (Assmann 265). She adds that, while focusing on the Holocaust as a shattering collective event, video testimonies offer a mediated view on those events by the specific personality of the individual experiences of the narrating survivor best expressed in this one’s tone of voice and facial expressions (267). Most importantly, Assmann identifies the specific role of video testimonies as being based upon the fact that the genre inscribes in itself the purpose of preserving and storing a survivor’s narrative as retrievable information over the passage of time, answering the double function of an archive, “to *store* testimonies as virtual information and to *restore* them as communicated and re-embodied knowledge” (271), as most recently developed by the Shoah Foundation at the University of Southern California, which is currently piloting an interactive, controversial project called New Dimensions in Technology (NDT), “which creates holographic images of Holocaust survivors that can converse with viewers and answer questions about their experiences” (Lokting). Given this inherent function of the genre, at a time when the Holocaust has moved from the category of contemporary history to that of remote history, Assmann sees Holocaust video testimonies as conduits that can defer this process; they can do it by the “transgenerational contract” inscribed within the setting of the video testimony—that via which “each viewer of a testimony steps not only into the position of the interviewer but also into that of a belated ‘daughter’ or ‘grandson’ in sharing the memory,” thereby maintaining valid intergenerational memory that would normally fade away within three generations in a family (271).

Assmann's observations are particularly relevant for my paper since my intention is to compare four testimonies with different medial (written and oral) content given in 1944, 1983 and 1996. Gold wrote the earliest testimony about her Holocaust experiences on 11 December 1944 at the bequest of a teacher from the Bucharest orphanage where she was placed at the time; the teacher asked Ruth to record her experience in Bershad, and then had a shortened version of it published in the February 19, 1945 issue of newspaper *România liberă*; this was later broadcast on the Romanian state radio with a Communist ideological agenda in mind. Then, in 1983 Ruth Gold took part in the Kestenberg project for the persecution of children and gave two interviews to Judith Kestenberg. Later, in 1996, Gold, who had become a registered nurse in Israel and then continued to work in the U.S., wrote and published a memoir including her Holocaust experiences, *Ruth's Journey*, launched by University Press of Florida. Towards the end of the same year, on 10 December 1996 she gave a video testimony to the Holocaust Documentation and Education Center from Florida. My major interest is to examine how the change of medium, location, language and temporal context might have brought different or similar emphases in Gold's written and oral testimonies of the Holocaust.

In that endeavor, I am especially indebted to the fact that, of late, scholars have emphasized how Holocaust testimonies of various genres as identified by Assmann are not simplistically straightforward accounts but multifaceted narratives that emerge from individually and institutionally embedded practices framed by a diverse range of aims. Many scholars have become particularly interested in the knowledge one can get from the retellings of a testimony over time and the various media used for this. For instance, in *The End of the Holocaust* (2011), Alvin Rosenfeld underscores how the nature and form of various forms of mediation of the Holocaust in literary works, films, art works has become an important part of the study of the Holocaust (2-3). Most recently, in his 2015 book, *Reframing Holocaust Testimony*, Noah Shenker considers the archives of video testimonies from the Fortunoff Archive at Yale University (some 4,400 testimonies collected since 1978), the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C. (over 9,000 interviews taken from 1980 onwards) and the USC Shoah Foundation (over 52,000 testimonies collected since 1994) in order to primarily emphasize the influence of institutional and media practices and agendas on the content of

survivors' testimonies and the manner in which they record them therein. Shenker eloquently claims that these testimonies are "constantly mediated, contested, and fragile acts of remembering" not only "molded by institutional and technical interventions at the moment of their recording, but [...] also shaped as they migrate across various media platforms and as archivists develop new forms of digital preservation" (1). They are therefore "fragmented collections of frequently conflicting personal accounts" (Shenker 10). Rather than being interested in the foregrounding of institutional protocols contained within these video testimonies as identified by Shenker in chapters 1 to 3, my interest is closer to that of Shenker in chapter 4 of his book, one concentrating on fourteen Holocaust survivors who gave testimonies to all three archives, thereby allowing one to compare and contrast not only how these witnessing survivors are positioned in the context of different institutional practices at various moments in time but also how they position themselves through the input of their developing personality that opens up conversations and conflicts with the particular institutional cultures and media practices in which they were meant to be inscribed. Instead of focusing on video testimonies only, I consider the case of Ruth Gold who gave written, audio and video testimonies throughout time.

Gold's 1944 Written Testimony

Born in June 1930 in Vizhnitza, Bukovina, 11-year-old Ruth Glasberg Gold was deported in November 1941 with her parents and seven years older brother, Manasse (Bubi), from Czernowitz to Bershadt ghetto in Transnistria. In the winter of 1941 to 1942 she lost all her family within three weeks, father, brother and, finally, mother. She was then taken to a makeshift orphanage, and repatriated to Romania in March 1944. After the war's end, she left for Palestine in 1946, helped create a new kibbutz in the Judean Hills near Jerusalem, studied and became a nurse working at Haifa hospitals, got married and left for Colombia, South America in 1958, and finally settled in the United States in 1972. Ruth Gold was also a participant in Judith Kestenberg's pioneering project for recognizing the category of Holocaust child survivors, *The International Study of Organized Persecution of Children*, and a founder of the first support group for child survivors of the Holocaust in Florida. Thanks to her efforts from 1996 onwards to bring the largely ignored story of Transnistria to the foreground for institutions dedicated to

Holocaust remembrance, in April 1999 the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum added Transnistria among the black marble panels engraved with the names of major concentration camps during World War II on the six walls of the Hall of Remembrance thanks to the petition signed by over 300 Holocaust survivors Ruth Gold had managed to compile.¹

Ruth Gold's earliest testimony was written on 11 December 1944, at 14 years old, soon after her return from Transnistria to Romania, and represents a first, fresh account of the Holocaust experiences that had marked her. In her later memoir and at the end of the testimony proper, Gold explains that she wrote the 1944 account at the bequest of a teacher from the Bucharest orphanage where she was placed at the time, who asked her to record her experience in Bershad (Gold 1944, 12). Later, a shortened version of it was published in the February 19, 1945 issue of newspaper *România liberă* under the banner "Awaiting the trial of war criminals. For years Transnistrian children have lived in misery, hunger and terror" (Gold, *Ruth's Journey* 193-194). In her later memoir, Gold importantly explains that "[i]t was important to have such testimony documented soon after the experience because many adults doubted children's recollections of events" (Gold, *Ruth's Journey* 194). She also adds her reasons for taking some copies of that early published article, "I wanted to have documented proof that children *do* remember their experiences and that their stories are not a product of imagination or fantasies" (Gold, *Ruth's Journey* 312). Put differently, looking back on this early testimony fifty-five years later, Gold particularly decries the strained situation of child survivors like herself in the immediate postwar period because during the first decades their memories were discarded as non-existent or imagined. In that, she sanctions the claims of another child survivor, psychologist Paul Valent, who in 2006 underlined how recognition of child survivors' traumatization during the Holocaust only came in the 1980s, after at first people were drawn to believe that only parents had been survivors while children had been mere "appendages" who could not remember anything or could not do it properly, hence, they were not affected (Valent, "Ripples of the

¹ Parts of Ruth Gold's earliest 1944 testimony and of her 1996 memoir, *Ruth's Journey*, have been published over time in collections in English, Romanian and French, such as: Mariu Mircu, *Ce s-a întâmplat cu evreii în România* (Bat Yam: Editura Glob, 1996. 329-332); Catherine Coquio and Aurélie Kalisky. *L'enfant et le génocide. Témoignages sur l'enfance pendant la Shoah* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2007. 627-635); Pierre Pachet. "Comme un conte de Grimm." *Conversations à Jassy* (Paris: DeNoël/Maurice Nadeau, 2010. 116 – 124); Jean Ancel, *History of the Holocaust in Romania* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011); Gregory J. Wallance, *America's Soul in the Balance* (Austin, TX: Greenleaf Book Group Press, 2012).

Holocaust” 3-4). Gold’s initial testimony and later memoir can thus be read as correctives to such views, showing how children’s Shoah experiences and memories could be as pressing and self-consuming as those of adolescents and grown-ups, adding concerns about the Holocaust that would have otherwise largely remained unaddressed.

In comparison to the later full-length memoir, this initial testimony focuses on a succinct enumeration of the sequences of events that marked the end of quiet life for the Jewish community of Czernowitz starting with the summer of 1941 since Gold recounts all that happened to them by using the plural subject “we.” The main coordinates of their existence that she repeatedly brings forth, both for their initial existence in the Czernowitz ghetto, then in the Mărculești ghetto, on crossing the Dniester River to Transnistria, in the town of Jampol and in Bershad ghetto, are the ever-presence and increased accumulations of deaths by violent beatings and killings (in Czernowitz), dispossessions and humiliations (in Mărculești), random shootings of the line of Jewish people summoned to cross the river while two opposite cars had their headlights on them and Nazi soldiers started aiming at them. The 14-year-old Ruth records that only chance made it that some survived when other dead bodies fell on them, protecting their own beings from being annihilated.

Even if this initial autobiographic account given immediately after the end of the war corresponds to the early postwar general practice of survivors’ foregrounding collective experiences and technical aspects of their deportation and encampment, Gold already puts forth a personal climax of her shock in the face of these occurrences which will be at the heart of her 1996 memoir—the death of all her immediate family members in Bershad because of typhus, lack of nourishment and exhaustion. In her initial testimony from December 11, 1944, Ruth calls ‘the “dear” town of Bershad’ the location “where I have suffered the most” since in one house from there “my dearest ones have abandoned me forever” (Gold 1944, 4), making her single out January 27, 1942 when, at 11 years old, “I remained alone among strangers.” As Gold later noted in her speech to the U.N. on the International Day of Holocaust Commemoration, 27 January 2009, “I still cannot fathom the mysterious coincidence of January 27th being proclaimed by the UN as the International Day of Holocaust Commemoration, and how amazing it was to receive an invitation to testify on this very date. Because it was on January 27th 1942—exactly 67 years

ago—that I was left an orphan alone in the world” (Gold 2009). In her 1944 testimony, she first bemoans the loss of her father when “one morning, [...] I found him cold with open mouth and eyes, as if he would like to tell me something” (Gold 1944, 4; Gold 1945, 242), causing Ruth to lose consciousness and realize on coming round that he was dead. She then goes on to state how her 18-year-old multi-talented brother died almost two weeks later, particularly decrying his loss by noting, “Why do I describe all of these details? Out of pain, that such a young branch has to lie buried under the soil together with thousands of others and I don’t even know where” (Gold 1944, 5). Here, apart from the brother’s young age, Gold also introduces the problem of the lack of knowledge about a burial place that tampered with the possibility of proper mourning. Finally, her mother perished of struggle and paralysis almost two weeks later. The mother’s ending was even more impressive for the daughter since “She [the mother] knew that she was dying and wished it upon herself [...] And she left me alone among strangers alone in the whole world” (Gold 1944, 5; Gold 1945, 243). This last death becomes particularly problematic for Ruth, on at least two accounts: one is mentioned above, namely the fact that the mother’s death inaugurates the girl’s new extremely vulnerable status as an orphan in the midst of a terrible situation; the other reason is given in the following sentences, and it refers to the mother’s lying dead outside for two whole weeks before being taken to the cemetery, parts of her body being daily bitten off and eaten by dogs, an act of deferred burial. This delay of burial happens because each day “I was running after the cart that collected the cadavers, it was too full to accommodate another cadaver,” while “the grave digger always told me that he had no time” and only after two weeks did he show up (Gold 1944, 5).

Gold’s above-presented account of her family’s death from her December 1944 testimony is included almost in its entirety in the shortened version of the testimony published in *România liberă* in 1945, the newspaper entry ending with the dry statement: “The day of January 27, 1942 I remained alone among strangers” (Gold 1945, 243, my translation). The status of orphan as a result of losing all the family is the core painful experience of Gold suggested by this brief version of her testimony; the title under which it was run in the newspaper is basically the above sentence chosen as ending point. Meanwhile, the reference to the perpetrators of the Jews is toned down in this shortened version from *România liberă*; it is relegated to the beginning of the

testimony which merely states, “In the year 1941 our until-then quiet life came to an abrupt end. Days followed in which thousands of people were killed on the streets and in their homes by Germans and legionaries” (Gold 1945, 241, my translation). Then, only mention of “soldiers” that abuse the Jews on their way towards Transnistria is kept in this published article. That happened because, as Ștefan Ionescu explains, from the very beginning, Romania’s communist leaders put forth a view according to which “the numerous victims of fascist atrocities were peaceful Soviet (and Romanian) citizens and anti-fascist militants,” encouraging “silence about the Jewishness of main victims of Nazism/Fascism” that might have undermined their efforts to gain monopoly over anti-fascist resistance and martyrdom (261). Therefore, as Alexandru Florian further notes, in 1944-1945, official discussions about World War II in Romania were only centered on the evil of fascism and far-right political regimes, while the Jewish question were almost absent from mass media, or considered of secondary importance (25-26). Therefore, historians and journalists in the early communist era ignored the Jewish question during the Holocaust and transformed it into a class and political fight between Communism and Fascism (Florian 29) as also suggested in the cuts and alterations operated to Gold’s testimony from *România liberă*.

The full-length 1944 testimony given by Ruth Gold is more complex, though. Firstly, it is much more straightforward in identifying the perpetrators. This happens from the very beginning of the testimony which commences by specifying the losses inculcated upon Jewish victims from Czernowitz by both Romanian legionaries and Germans: “In the year 1941 our until-then quiet life came to an abrupt end. As the *legionaries* entered Cernauti, there were a lot of *Jewish victims*. Whomever they encountered in the streets they shot; they invaded homes and looted *Jewish belongings*; *Jewish blood* ran in the streets. The *Germans* did alike. They recruited young and old men into forced labor, tortured and beat them until they gave their soul” (Gold 1944, 1, my emphases). In Gold’s actual testimony, therefore, instead of referring to the indeterminate case of “thousands of people” as victims of Romanian and German fascists, she clearly specifies the ethnicity of the discriminated group by repeating four times at the start of her testimony that these were “Jewish victims,” their “Jewish blood” was spilled everywhere and “Jewish belongings” and “Jewish homes” were savagely looted (Gold 1944, 1). Gold goes on to record

that, as long as they were kept in the barbed-wire-surrounded Czernowitz ghetto, the Jews lived in insecurity and permanent fear since “anyone who tried to escape was shot instantly” while “gendarme patrols were seen in the ghetto streets, carrying out the orders of Antonescu and the German commander” (Gold 1944, 1). Therefore, Gold’s testimony straightforwardly identifies marshal Ion Antonescu as the mastermind that orchestrated the destruction of Jews from Romania. Instead of the “*thousands of people* [...] killed on the streets and in their homes by Germans and legionaries” from the *România liberă* article (Gold 1945, 241), in the actual testimony given by Gold in 1944, she writes that “There were columns of some *thousands of Jews* consisting of children, elderly, and sick, all chased out of their homes by the hitlerist hordes. On the way to the station the Rumanian soldiers made fun of us by saying: ‘A year ago you received the Russians with flowers and songs—Transnistria will be the best reward for you’” (Gold 1944, 1). Apart from the already-mentioned clear identification of the ethnicity of victims, here Gold actually emphasized that the most vulnerable members of the group were an important part of those deported, thereby exacerbating the guilt of their detractors. The latter are again clearly pinpointed as “Rumanian soldiers” rather than the indeterminate “soldiers” from the *România liberă* shortened testimony while Gold also includes the explanation they gave for their violent attitude against the Jews on the basis of ideological considerations, i.e. accusing Jews of having sided with the Soviets when the latter got the Czernowitz region, an attitude they continued to put forth as Jews were moving towards Transnistria, when Gold notes how soldiers asked the Jewish deportees “if we missed Stalin very much and saying we would meet him soon, but with our heads cut off” (Gold 1944, 3). Such deeply ideologically-layered military responses to which Jews became certain victims happened because of the complicated history of Czernowitz during World War II as excellently identified in Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer’s 2010 article, “The Russian Year.” Hirsch and Spitzer therein offer an overview of Czernowitz and Northern Bukovina’s complex political history: the region belonged to Romania from the end of World War I in 1918 until June 1940, the Soviet Union from June 1940 to June 1941, Romania from late June 1941 until the end of World War II as a result of the Hitler-Stalin Pact for non-aggression signed by Hitler’s Foreign Minister, Joachim von Ribbentrop, and his Soviet counterpart, V.M. Molotov on August 23, 1939, a pact that paved the way for the Soviets’

takeover of the region of Czernowitz in June 1940 but which was followed by their demise following Hitler's Operation Barbarossa meant to re-occupy Soviet territories with its allies, including the German-Romanian invasion of North Bukovina, Herța and Bessarabia and the re-imposition of the Romanian authority in these regions in late June 1941. Both the Hitler-Stalin Pact and the Barbarossa campaign had devastating results on the Jewish inhabitants of Czernowitz as each one of the authorities that took over from the other accused Jews of having sided with the other and kept deporting and marginalizing them. Hirsch and Spitzer especially highlight how "the Hitler-Stalin Pact [...] marked the moment when all hopes of 'belonging,' 'citizenship,' 'permanence,' and 'home' that Cernăuți/Czernowitz Jews might still have held were even more drastically disappointed if not shattered. Within months of its announcement, Jews here realized they would be marginalized, excluded, displaced, and persecuted equally on either side of this new and ultimately unstable political divide" (64). When North Bukovina, Czernowitz included, fell under Soviet rule, some of the retreating Romanian soldiers "stirred up by anti-Semitic hatemongers" sought vengeance against the civilians, especially Jews, accusing them of "assaulting retreating Romanians and of facilitating and supporting the Soviets in their takeover" (Hirsch and Spitzer 67). Romanian soldiers continued to inflict this accusation on the Jews they deported to Transnistria after regaining power in the region as part of the Nazis' Barbarossa campaign from the summer of 1941. Their leader, Marshal Antonescu, actually gave this same reason to Dr. Wilhelm Filderman, President of the Union of Jewish Religious Communities, who had asked for a motivation of the Jews' deportations from Bessarabia and Bukovina. Included in the 1946 monumental historical work about the Holocaust in Romania by Matias Carp, Antonescu's response from October 19, 1941, presented the deportation of Jews "as a deserved action for all that the citizens had committed there in 1940, during the withdrawal of the Romanian army, and under Soviet rule," especially in response to "the atrocities committed by Soviet-Jewish commissars at the front" (Carp 192). This situation corresponds to Gold's above-mentioned presentation of the politically-strained discourse of the Romanian soldiers who deported her family and other Jews to Transnistria in the fall of 1941. Her inclusion of children, the elderly and the sick among the deported Jews especially pinpoints the mishaps within such political agendas.

Additionally, Gold's full-length 1944 testimony comprises two parts: the first part, which ends with her announcing how she became an orphan on January 27, 1942, after the gradual death of her father, brother and mother, is the one included in *România liberă* and already discussed. The second part, however, continues with her strains as an orphan first in Bershad and Transnistrian orphanages and then on the return to Romania towards the end of World War II, no longer centering on the burden of death but on the struggles and difficulties awaiting children who remained orphans during the war. Even if Gold commends the care initially bestowed on her by Marcus and Rebecca Sattinger who had promised her dying mother to take care of her to the best of their abilities, she notes how soon she had to be placed in an orphanage and life there implied little food (usually just liquid polenta) and sleeping on "bare wooden planks without covers at all" and in a terrible cold (Gold 1944, 8). On return to Romania, after praising how they were initially treated in Iași, the closeness of the battlefield made the repatriated orphans be relocated to Buzău where they were badly treated, at first having to sleep on "straw mats," some 30 children in one room, having to eat only polenta and spoiled cheese while "the gentlemen of the community" liked to make fun of the kids, telling them they would get clothes to wear "la paștele cailor" (at the horses' Easter) and they would be taken to Palestine when Purim comes (Gold 1944, 11). Only their new relocation to Bucharest because of the frontline ended these worries, and the 14-year-old Ruth Gold concluded her testimony in hopeful tones about the Soviet occupier seen as a protector in clear-cut internalized pro-Communist ideological tones for a survivor of the fascist rule, namely: "With this, the memories of the horrible nightmare lived under the boots of the hitlerists and Russian fascists comes to an end. Now my heart is filled with great happiness and hope in our future which we will be able to live under the protection of the army and Soviet State" (Gold 1944, 12). It is clear that at this early stage, Gold fully embraced the direction of the fascists' enemies that were naively discerned as the opposite of discrimination and persecution to the eyes of a child that had come out of the war deprived of all the members of her immediate family. Simultaneously, the difference between her actual written testimony from 1944 and the curtailed version published in 1945 openly serving Communists' agenda to gain monopoly over anti-fascist resistance and martyrdom pinpoints the socio-political

norms of Communist Romania as those of a country that dictated that members of the state remember only a sanitized version of history.

Gold's 1983 Audio Testimonies

In her first interview to Judith and Milton Kestenberg from 12 April 1983, Gold explains that her indoctrination with Communism obviously rendered at the end of her 1944 testimony was the result of the Soviet government that placed these Holocaust child survivors in two orphanages in Bucharest and considered them as Soviet citizens because they came from Bessarabia and Bukovina, regions over which the Soviets claimed ownership in 1944-1945. Gold explains on this margin in 1983: "They sent us teachers and they indoctrinated us in Communism as much as possible," especially as children with a lower level of education because of the war, the 14-year-old Gold only having a three year elementary education and knowing in hindsight that the Romanian teacher who asked her to write her testimony caused her to become an agnostic (Gold, Testimony from April 12, 1983, 3). Even if Gold admits that some indoctrination with Communism had first occurred in 1940, after the Soviets took over Czernowitz, when she still had her parents to protect her, she explains that it was in December 1944 that she was fully exposed to the propaganda of orphanage teachers who "told us they would take good care of us, Stalin and all. [...] Come to think of it, Stalin was like our father figure. And to me, yes, he was like a father" (Gold, Testimony from April 12, 1983, 3). Based on this, some forty years after the events, Gold is very self-conscious about her beliefs and calls herself "really a child communist" in the immediate post-war context, believing in "equality, liberty, things like that" (Gold, Testimony from April 12, 1983, 6).

This oral interview with Judith and Milton Kestenberg is different from the early 1944 testimony of Gold in that it does not only consist of her controlled enumeration of the important dates marking her life during the Holocaust and at the end of the war. This time, by entering into conversation with psychologists Judith and Milton Kestenberg and having to address their questions, she more clearly betrays the emotional traumas that still linger in her present life and whose sign posts are represented by her reluctance or even impossibility to speak about certain episodes from her past. Gold first refuses to give details when as an undernourished and

underdeveloped 14-year-old looking like a 9-year-old, she is taken to an orphanage in Odessa alongside Ukrainian and other Soviet children who were anti-Semitic and hostile, while the Jewish kids were called “The Wayward Children,” and she just exclaims, “I don’t want to go into details here” (Gold, Testimony from April 12, 1983, 4). The other children’s making fun of the Jewish orphans merely makes Gold call this situation “a concentration camp experience” from which she found some protection from a German teacher (sic!). What is most hard for Gold to express to the Kestenbergs is the nature of her feelings when one of her aunts (her mother’s sister) started to search for her, paid money for adopting her and bringing her back to Romania. This aunt held her in her care for a year, just like a mother, until poverty prevented her from keeping young Ruth any further. This hardship on Gold’s part is triggered by Milton Kestenberg’s question, “When you came there, did you have the feeling that your parents would be there?” to which Gold answers, “I think so,” followed by moments of silence. The transcript of the audio interview adds a parenthetical comment that clearly identifies Gold’s emotional, structural discomfort: “(Distraction on tape, on and off)” (Gold, Testimony from April 12, 1983, 5). Gold goes on to little by little describe her difficult time on getting to her aunt after living in an orphanage that very much looked like a concentration camp for her. She does that by stating, “When I went to my aunt, it’s difficult to describe. I probably did feel, like you said, that I hoped the whole thing was like a dream and my parents would be there. Or my brother. Even though I witnessed their death. And that was one of my thoughts when I came here. I said to my son, Michael not to laugh at me. I knew I had reoccurring dreams. And for a split moment, I thought it would come true, that my parents would come back” (Gold, Testimony from April 12, 1983, 5). Here Gold indirectly underscores the lingering trauma characterizing her life especially by acknowledging her discomfort to admit her wishful thinking for still-living parents though she had seen them dying. Even more importantly, as she continues her conversation, she basically adds that her desire for a family that was still alive actually rested “Especially with my brother” (Gold, Testimony from April 12, 1983, 5). As she gives more details about her life in 1945, we also understand why the brother is singled out; that happens because she lived in a house where the aunt’s daughter, her cousin Lucy, who “was already a student at the university,” was of an age with her dead brother and hence a strong reminder of a denied future-as-a-matter-

of-fact in point of normal family frames becomes a permanent haunting fixture in Gold's life after the war (Gold, Testimony from April 12, 1983, 6). Moreover, the inclusion of Ruth Gold's son, Michael, in describing these 1945 events, though he was to be born much later, shows how intergenerational transmission has become an important stake for the child survivor turned mother and for her own relation to her Holocaust experiences.

In the testimony to Judith Kestenberg from September 24, 1983, Gold complements her previous discussion emphasizing her emotional traumas and confesses she has blamed another aunt, her father's sister, and this one's rich husband, for the death of her family. Her first reason is reluctantly given and based on what she learned from her parents: "the first reason was... and that I picked from my parents and from my mother before she died; they could have helped. If you had enough money you could have bought an authorization to stay, and they had money... they were very rich, and they never offered to do it. He didn't, and she was very... you know... whatever. [...] Subdued" (Gold, Testimony from September 24, 1983, 4). Gold's second reason is related to the end of the war; prior to being deported, her family had taken all their belongings for safekeeping to this aunt, Cilly, and her husband, to be recuperated after the war. But when only the girl is alive and returns, she finds out everything has been sold by her uncle after they had just sent her some money to the Transnistrian ghetto in the last year she spent there. Gold explains, "Yes, he sold this... yeah because they assumed I would never come back because they heard that my brother and my parents died so why would they think that me... that was the weakest and smallest and always the illest would survive, so they probably... I also assume that there was a tremendous shock to see me back" (Gold, Testimony from September 24, 1983, 4-5). Gold is particularly upset for not having told them her feelings, as she had been educated to be modest and respectful. This honest belated rendering of her accumulated pains reads, "I never dared asking and demanding those things for which I am very sorry until this day. And I'm very sorry I never really was able to tell him what I think of him but this is besides the point" (Gold, Testimony from September 24, 1983, 5).

Another emotional trauma, this time in the early postwar period, that Ruth Gold signals to Judith Kestenberg refers to her leaving Romania on November 26th 1946, on board a Greek vessel named Rafiah, which should have supposedly gone to Palestine but, on December 5th, was

wrecked on the Greek island of Syrna. Gold especially decries how she then lost the few family mementos she had succeeded to accumulate after the war, including a picture of her mother and her father, a picture of her brother, some of her mother's dresses transformed into blouses she would wear, "a set of silverware of my brother" which was a reminder "of having been somebody" as well as a copy of her 1944 testimony published in *România liberă* (Gold, Testimony from September 24, 1983, 18). Gold felt the loss of these artefacts which were partial stand-ins for her lost family members as a new erasure of her identity, noting: "So the little bit of memorabilia that I had again... have nothing... again I was naked... again no belongings" (Gold, Testimony from September 24, 1983, 18). The accumulation of traumas in the aftermath of the Holocaust is thus what gets highlighted in this interview.

Additionally, in the September 1983 exchange we also witness a change of roles between Judith Kestenberg – the interviewer as directing guide of recollections and Ruth Gold as follower of a prescribed route when the conversation starts to center on Gold's postwar experiences. Thus, when Judith Kestenberg exclaims, "You know I cannot place when you were in Bucharest in an orphanage," Gold responds in completely different terms than her previous rather confused and stumbling narrative of her life events centered on Holocaust times. This time, Gold takes up complete control in explaining the repatriation of Jewish orphans in Romania, by first summoning the psychoanalyst to focus: "Dr. Kestenberg, it is very simple if you concentrate on that track of time" (Gold, Testimony from September 24, 1983, 25). She basically explains that the Jewish community from Romania had organized themselves and in 1944 signed an agreement with the Romanian authorities who, realizing Germany was losing the war, wanted to wash their hands of possible involvement in the committing of crimes and show their good conduct. Thus, they allowed orphans under age 15 who lost both parents to return to Romania, and brought a first transport of some 2000 children, Ruth Gold included, in Iași, and then they were taken to Buzău and Bucharest, facts that sanction historical records (see Matathias Carp's books and the memoirs of Wilhelm Filderman). Gold also notes how after the return to Romania, the Soviet Union claimed these children as Soviet citizens because they were native from Bukovina and Bessarabia, two territories they claimed as theirs by right. These orphans were then taken to the Soviet Union (Gold, Testimony from September 24, 1983, 26). After this

detailed presentation of the historical situation, Kestenberg answers as a dutiful student: “I got it now” (27). Henceforth, Gold is over-confident in presenting the rest of her postwar experiences and, in their cases, straightforwardly clarifies any query Judith Kestenberg brings up.

Apart from the more straightforward assumption of long-lasting war-inflicted traumas, this April 1983 testimony also proves how Transnistria was still a largely unknown Holocaust-related location even by well-documented Holocaust scholars like Judith Kestenberg who innocently asks Gold if she was taken to an “extermination camp” and Gold explains this was “a concentration camp in the Soviet Union” (Gold, Testimony from April 12, 1983, 2) but neither of the two is exactly correct by not naming in their conversation the fact that this was actually territory of present-day Ukraine that had been disputed by the Romanians and Soviets around World War II. Additionally, in the September 1983 testimony, Gold tells Judith Kestenberg of having started “writing my book,” i.e. the memoir of her life experiences which was finally finished and published a decade later, in 1996 (Gold, Testimony from September 24, 1983, 14). Most importantly, Gold links this to starting talking about her experiences to her children; she explains that when she was 45 (her mother’s age on dying) and her daughter Liana was 11, she “had an eerie feeling that something is going to happen” and first sought professional help in Florida with a psychologist (Gold, Testimony from September 24, 1983, 41). Yet, she also explains that until 1983, “my story per se I never told my children. They knew tid bits... they knew I had been in a concentration camp, they knew that I’ve lost my parents that I’ve lost my brother that I suffered from hunger but I never told them the details” (Gold, Testimony from September 24, 1983, 42). The conundrum of intergenerational transmission of trauma to one’s children touched upon alongside the interview is the one which ends Gold’s 1983 testimony and gives a sense of an added burden for child survivors turned parents, one absent from her previous early testimonies when her family situation was different. Not having finished writing her memoir, though, Gold hopes that the detachment from direct exchange of the written word as mediating factor might make it a means of passing this information to her children too, something she cannot directly do. The input of details from her 1996 memoir is the one I will go on to focus upon, conjoined with the video testimony she gave later the same year.

Gold's 1996 Written and Video Testimonies

Gold's 1996 memoir includes a detailed remembrance of the events that marked her during and after the war that were only briefly mentioned in her 1983 audio testimonies. This is particularly the case of chapter 8, "Many Loyalties, Many Homelands," explaining the orphans' indoctrination to Communism on repatriation to Romania, chapters 10 and 11 "Shipwrecked" and "Cyprus" about her experience on wanting to get to the land of Israel. In this memoir, she also includes maps that clarify the routes she took on deportation and repatriation and which were followed by many Jews deported by Romanian authorities to Transnistria.

Equally relevant, the acknowledgments to the memoir include Gold's gratitude to renowned author Aharon Appelfeld, another child survivor from Czernowitz, who is thanked for believing in the importance of her writing this book and for his suggestions, and Gold's thanks to Judith Kestenberg, the expert psychologist on children surviving trauma, who offered her positive feedback and recommendation. In this sense, in addition to discussing in detail her experiences during and after the Holocaust that she first started to bring in full focus in her 1983 audio testimonies, just like Aharon Appelfeld's autobiographical works, Gold's 1996 memoir records the importance of her early pre-war pleasurable memories in Chapter 1, which highlights her carefree life at her maternal grandfather's village farm of Milie, thanks to her family's protective presence. However, unlike Appelfeld's more circular and confusing life narratives, Gold's text is a coming-of-age autobiography that uses straightforward titles suggesting the author's attempt to offer a chronological presentation of the experiences undertaken by her and her family, also relying on historical documents for giving accurate information about the situation, documents which are included at the end of the book as "sources" (341-342) and comprising unearthed documents on Transnistria and its children during the Holocaust by Jean Ancel, Julius S. Fisher, I.C. Butnaru, Hugo Gold, Shmuel Ben-Zion, Dora Litani. Moreover, Gold's memoir includes her return to Czernowitz, Milie, and Bershad in 1988, a characteristic feature of post-1980s survivors' autobiographies, whereby she deplores Communists' ideological omission of Jewish victims from the monuments related to World War II to the detriment of monuments "honoring the Soviet victims of fascism" (339).

The author primarily suggests the precious nature of her early happy recollections by the title she chooses for Chapter 1, “My Paradise,” one which comes in stark contrast with the title for Chapter 3 of her book, “Hell,” the one documenting her experience in Bershad ghetto, when she witnessed the death of her family and deferred mourning became the orphan’s acquired burden. The use of dichotomous religious terminology as an explicit means at the very heart of the memoir’s construction is a highly efficient means for Gold to straightforwardly divide her life experience into two completely opposite directions and place her memoir on a similar path with autobiographic accounts by adult survivors who use a chronological, fact-based structure that could allow readers to disentangle some of the aspects of their Holocaust ordeals as singled out by Smith and Watson (157-158) and Reiter (57-58) and presented above. In like manner, in Gold’s memoir, the pre-war times represent the moments when the girl’s personality was formed by pleasurable memories in which she enjoyed “the fairyland of Milie” (Gold, *Ruth’s Journey* 2), when she was looking forward to train rides to the area which “evoked an air of mystery and adventure that carried with them a sense of magic I feel to this day” (Gold, *Ruth’s Journey* 3) and when she read, thanks to her father’s efforts, “fairy tales that embellished my own pixie world and created in my imagination visions of princes, princesses, and kingdoms” (Gold, *Ruth’s Journey* 19). Every memory in the chapter speaks of the child’s everyday-life reality felt as a secure magic fairytale world made possible by the love, care and protection permanently bestowed upon her and her brother by parents and grandfather.

In contrast, the author explicitly locates Holocaust experiences at the level of evil and immorality, noting how loss and the ever-presence of death become the predominant coordinates for those interned in Bershad ghetto. Significantly, Gold speaks about the loss of her paradise and the prefiguration of further suffering prior to deportation, in July 1941, when the family learns that all the Jews of Milie have been murdered, so that she painfully explains, “my ‘paradise’ [...] had now vanished forever” (Gold, *Ruth’s Journey* 48) and with it any sense of childhood security. In light of this, instead of the hoped-for expectations for adventure and magic, death becomes the only possible certainty and expectation for children of the Holocaust for whom “the dead became an integral part of our environment” (Gold, *Ruth’s Journey* 68). In that, for the first time in her testimonies Gold focuses on the double role of children’s pre-

Holocaust pleasurable memories during the Holocaust. On one hand, in Proustian fashion, like other child survivors like Norman Manea and Aharon Appelfeld, she suggests the importance of these memories as precious weapons to temporarily forget the terrible reality surrounding one, especially in times of terrible dejection. Thus, as her brother Bubi is consumed by typhus, and gives his last breath, his last word is “Ruzena-a-a-!!!,” the name of their cow from Milie (Gold, *Ruth’s Journey* 87). The author significantly comments on this margin, “Many years later, I came to understand that in his tortured moments, and in a nearly comatose state, he had chosen to return to Milie and relive the joy of his earlier life” with its “happy memories” (Gold, *Ruth’s Journey* 87). Similarly, whenever Ruth herself falls ill with typhus and death becomes an imminent reality, we learn that “[t]o block out this unspeakable eventuality, I closed my eyes for short periods of time and imagined myself back in the tranquil surroundings of Milie” (Gold, *Ruth’s Journey* 87). Thanks to all these recollections, the author powerfully underscores the importance of pleasant memories as survival tools during the Holocaust which she explicitly relates to having been brought up in a happy family in which relations of love bonded everyone. This is in keeping with the goal of many adult survivors’ memoirs of the Holocaust.

In addition to this shared concern with adults, however, Gold simultaneously shows the highly precarious and fleeting character of such memories for her as a child, since they are associated with the rest of her family on the brink of death, among whom she is the only one to survive. That being the case, her narrative complements the confession about her pain at becoming an orphan as a defining aspect for her future life singled out in her earliest 1944 testimony. In her memoir, she shows the strong imprint left by death on children in more graphic and telling terms than in her early 1944 testimony, a first effect of which she herself feels when the first member of her family dies, i.e. her father. She can only describe that occasion by means of embodied memories of which Ruth is fully conscious in hindsight: “My heart stopped beating for a moment and a choking sensation followed” (Gold, *Ruth’s Journey* 82). We then learn of the girl’s hysterical screams, “until a numbness of emotion took over. An icy sensation crept into my whole being, and I could not cry. I stared at the lifeless body of my beloved father. I could survive only by pretending it was but an awful nightmare, all the while dissociating myself from reality” (Gold, *Ruth’s Journey* 82-83). All these enumerations of sensations suggest the

high impact of deferred mourning on child survivors of the Holocaust, as identified by psychologist Bruno Bettelheim, another Holocaust survivor who escaped to the United States in 1939 after being briefly interred at Dachau and Buchenwald. Bettelheim explained that, unlike children who lost their parents in catastrophes represented by periods of starvation or war devastations and who could then mourn them in public, also benefiting from the help of mass media, part of the tragedy of Holocaust child survivors who lost their parents after an initial separation was their deferred act of mourning. These children were at first completely unaware of their parents' situation, and they did not benefit from communal support. Later on, they had no "tangible, physical evidence of the parents' death: no corpse to be buried, no grave to be visited" (Bettelheim, Afterword in Vegh 171), so they were left only with grief and pain. Not surprisingly, it was only after three decades of an averted gaze because of deferred mourning that most child survivors who were orphaned during the Holocaust could start the process of mourning in front of persons willing to listen and help, as it happens with Ruth Gold after her audio interview with Judith Kestenberg from 1983. Deferred mourning becomes obvious in Gold's memoir from later passages about the death of the girl's brother and mother who are kept in the house for several days before being taken away to a mass grave area, hence the girl's sense of separation cannot become final, and it keeps haunting her. Ruth is among the children affected by deferred mourning because, even if she saw her family die in the house in which they lived, she also learnt that their bodies were not buried according to any mourning rituals, but formed a mass grave outside the ghetto, where "there wasn't a single sign to indicate the resting place for the thousands of victims who had perished during the devastating winter of 1941-42" while "entire, unburied skeletons and individual bones—human bones covered the soil like shells on a beach" (Gold, *Ruth's Journey* 126). Getting to this place in the spring of 1943 because of the "burning need to find my family's graves" (Gold, *Ruth's Journey* 125) and thereby perform the necessary mourning rituals, the girl actually fails to do that and starts to imagine how those unburied bones belonged to members of her family, once again being turned away. The non-performance of mourning and burial rituals is cognizantly presented in this 1996 memoir as the reason that keeps orphaned Ruth in a state of unending pain and suffering, making loss and separation particularly strong for somebody who became an orphan during the Shoah and

interrupting her narrative attempt to move forward with her story in Chapter 6. This becomes even more problematic because of a suddenly changed condition for such a child, so that when Ruth once again miraculously recovers from typhus without medication or nutrition, she particularly decries the sore point that now “nobody was happy to see me recover” because she has remained with no one to really care for her (Gold, *Ruth's Journey* 97).

The last two chapters of the book, Chapter 16 “Back to My Roots” and the epilogue, “Bershad Revisited,” refer to an event happening after all the other testimonies given by Gold till then, her revisiting in June 1988 the places where she grew up, Czernowitz, Milie (where her grandparents had lived), Vizhnitza (the place of her birth), and the Bershad ghetto. This return was difficult to make because of the difficulty to get visas to the Soviet Union during the Cold War, finally granted to Gold under the perestroika. Her return brings to the foreground two coordinates. One is the lack of mentioning what happened to the Jews of the region in Soviet times, monuments being erected only in memory of Soviet soldiers against fascism, without any reference to Jews or to the massacre of Milie in which over 140 Jewish inhabitants were killed with some complicity on the part of locals (Gold, *Ruth's Journey* 323, 339). It is in Milie too that she finds out that her grandparents' house has been brought down and another one has been erected in its place and the Bread Museum fails to mention that the first mill of the village was constructed by her grandfather Katz. The signs of erasure from memory of the not so distant past of the Jewish community by people living in constant fear of what the Soviet authorities might do to them if they do not follow their agendas are the dominant images of Communist Eastern Europe presented by Gold from this perspective. Gold thereby contests ways in which the ideological grain of the Soviet Union dictated that members of the state remember a part of history, by remembering differently. She adds a second coordinate of the return, though, one which is made up of still existent places and artefacts associated with the pre-World War II pleasurable memories that still remind her of her dead family: these are the smell of the acacia flowers in the region; the image of ducks and haystacks; the old Czetiner apple tree in bloom near a new house rebuilt on the same location of the grandfather's farm from Milie (Gold, *Ruth's Journey* 331); “the same two old, wooden benches, ravaged by time” of the unchanged Milie train station where she used to wait for the train alongside her brother and parents to return home

at the end of vacations (Gold, *Ruth's Journey* 334); the iron bar for dusting out rugs which children used for exercising “acrobatic prowess” and the tile stove from her parents’ apartment in Czernowitz (Gold, *Ruth's Journey* 319). Gold in particular singles out the tile stove as a powerful emotional object to her pre-war life within a protective family, by exclaiming “My emotions peaked when I approached the tile stove, next to which my divan once stood. It was a kind of upright floor-to-ceiling ceramic tile stove, the same one where Papa used to warm the eiderdown to cover me on cold winter nights” (Gold, *Ruth's Journey* 319). On opening its iron door, Gold discovers it no longer functions on coal or wooden logs but a gas burner is used instead. This difference notwithstanding, she goes to record the relevance of this physical object from the past, one which contains her happy infancy before the war: “Still caressing the cold tile stove, as if by merely touching it I could reproduce the feelings of a pampered and sheltered infancy, I collapsed into a nearby chair. The river of tears would not stop flowing for several minutes, overwhelmed as I was by this physical contact with my past” (Gold, *Ruth's Journey* 319). At the same time, by the end of her visit, Gold includes the realization that this is a lost “childhood paradise” that no longer exists, and “the immortal tile stove” she photographs is itself an item of the past, “the hearth of the Glasberg family, whose light went out in November 1941” (Gold, *Ruth's Journey* 334). Gold’s recollections here are very similar to the case of Marianne Hirsch’s mother, Lotte, another Holocaust survivor from Czernowitz who was an adult at the time of the war. In *Ghosts of Home. The Afterlife of Czernowitz in Jewish Memory* (2010), Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer recount their 1998 return to Czernowitz together with Marianne Hirsch’s parents, first-generation adult survivors, in the attempt to gain insight into the latter’s life before the time of persecutions and deportations. Back to the house where Marianne’s mother, Lotte, spent her first twenty-seven years of life, the authors observe this one’s ambiguous reactions and feelings to the enduring objects she still finds in her apartment which are represented, just as in the case of Gold, by tile stoves. These are due to the dual symbolism the tile stoves elicit in the mother, just as in the case of Ruth Gold. On one hand, they are a symbol of positive pre-war everyday life, standing for a “childhood sense world of familial warmth and safety, of privacy and interiority” (Hirsch and Spitzer 2010, 295). On the other hand, they represent a powerful reminder of negative war experiences given the stoves’ changed functionality once abnormal

times started—from that moment on, they were no longer used for heating, but for cooking and baking. We thereby see how the first-generation adult survivor and older child survivor still remembering pre-war times recover their own personal sense of the past as a contradictory mixture of nostalgia and pain in which small pleasures ensure survival.

Based on the above considerations, Ruth Gold's memoir adds new dimensions of her Holocaust-related experiences to her previous written and audio testimonies on two levels. First of all, the memoir expresses the importance of pre-Holocaust pleasurable memories for the survival and reintegration in normal life situations of older child survivors. At the same time, however, the book underscores the extremely complicated, nuanced situation of those among them who became orphans and had to deal with the death of family members without the performance of burial and mourning rituals. For a child survivor like Ruth Gold, embodied memories are only associated with moments of experiencing the most painful form of direct personal trauma represented by the parents' death and the act of deferred mourning. Finally, the construction of Gold's memoir sanctions Assman's already-mentioned point that written memoirs are centered on a coherent construct of the survivor's biography, in which Gold encompasses the contrastive coordinates of her pre-war life, her existence in Eastern Europe during World War II and in its immediate aftermath, her immigration to Palestine, then Colombia and the U.S. and her return after some 50 years back to the region.

Ruth Gold's video testimony given in December 1996 to the Holocaust Education and Documentation Center from Miami, Florida, deepens the input of embodied Holocaust memories from her written memoir because of the added visual dimension to her testimony as well as following the gained hindsight perspective on the part of the testifying survivor. In this sense, Geoffrey Hartman eloquently observes that Holocaust video testimonies are "mediated by frame conditions," especially the fact that the recording of most of these interviews was delayed to the post-1970s, making these people's experiences of the aftermath of World War II become a significant part of the testimonial event (250). This also holds for Gold's testimony given over fifty years from the end of World War II, while Florida's Holocaust Education and Documentation Center was established in 1980, started collecting interviews in 1981, having a collection of over 2,500 interviews from South Florida witnesses to the Holocaust, its primary

mission as indicated on its website being to “document and present an enduring, historically accurate record of the Holocaust through eyewitness accounts by Survivors, Liberators, Rescuers, and others who survived terrifying experiences, overcame fear and grief, and triumphed to live meaningful and productive lives” (<http://hdec.org/hdec/mission/>). The location of the center was particularly important, since, by 1997, especially in winter time, South Florida hosted the largest number of Holocaust survivors in the United States, and the Holocaust center, based at Florida International University’s North Miami campus, became an easily-accessible place for giving their testimonies (Lade). Gold was interviewed by Bernice Weiner, a retired teacher who volunteered to become an interviewer and was part of the first interviewing class that graduated in 1981, later training others by advising them to “always go from the global to the personal” in point of questions, to accommodate both collective situations and specific first-hand experiences (Davis). According to Hartman, the entanglement of personal and collective memories at the heart of these testimonies calls for scholars’ interdisciplinary approaches that intersperse socio-historical, psychological and poetical investigations. Ruth Gold’s testimony follows this interweaving technique, with her emphasizing not just her own personal experiences but offering insight into the importance of those who continued to help the Jews in need, usually those who had known suffering and poverty themselves, becoming volunteers aiding orphaned children (14 to 15 minutes on DVD 2) and, especially, the specifics of the Romanian implication in World War II as directly lived by her, one which was characterized by primitive and barbaric methods, no less lethal than those of Nazi Germans and which she straightforwardly condenses in her January 27, 2009 speech to the United Nations by noting “The Romanians’ most efficient system was to abandon the people [deported to Transnistria] without providing shelter, food, or any of the essential necessities for survival, and to let them die an agonizing, slow death caused by illness, exposure, starvation and despair” (15-20 minutes on DVD 2, Gold 2009). Then, after explaining her complicated experiences at the orphanage, she shows the German language document by Eichman which forbade the Romanians to take Jewish orphan children to the Mandate of Palestine (end of tape 2, 1:15:00 on DVD 2), one she translated into English and included in her memoir, and a copy of the article from *România liberă* in which a brief version of her 1944 testimony appeared, an article whose presentation makes more visible the Communist

framework in which it was published, since Gold herself notes that, ironically, this was published at the side of a picture of young Nicolae Ceaușescu, who would become the tyrannous president of Romania from 1963 until the chute of Communism in 1989 (beginning of tape 3, 1:21:00-1:22:00 on DVD 2). At the end of the interview she shows the photos she managed to collect after her immigration to Israel. These comprise pictures of her deceased father, mother, brother as well as of herself at various ages and in various locations. A picture of her two children, when they were small, is also included and there are also several pictures she took on returning to Bershad and Czernowitz in 1988, mostly describing the silence about the fate of Jews at the time. All of these photos had been included in her recently published book, *Ruth's Journey*, which is the last thing Weiner shows before the two of them shake hands and the interview ends (end of tape 3, 1:51:00 to 2:00:00 on DVD 2). The succession of the artefacts shown, ranging from geographical documentation to socio-historical documents and personal family photos interweaving individual and socio-political aspects, bespeaks the imbrication of personal and collective implications of Holocaust survivors' memories and testimonies.

Alongside the productive issue of mediation at the heart of Holocaust survivors' video testimonies identified by Hartman, Anne Rothe explains the way in which the aesthetics of filming these interviews impacts how the survivors' story is understood in the larger culture. She explains this by comparing the different filmic techniques employed by the most famous such video testimony archives, the already-mentioned Fortunoff archive and the Shoah Visual History Foundation. Following its declared aim to give voice to Holocaust victims' "sense of being isolated forever from the world and from their relatives by an extreme experience," Rothe explains that the Fortunoff interviews "were generally conducted in a darkened and minimally furnished interview room, which reinforced the bleakness of the interviewees' atrocity narratives and the unbridgeable differences between the witness and the audience" (Rothe 36). In this way, they emphasized the traumas marking the lives of Holocaust survivors making them "occupy a time-space dislocated from contemporary American life" (Rothe 37). By comparison, the Shoah foundation interviews were "based on the desire to show 'ordinary people,' people who have returned to 'normal.'" These interviews were usually "set in the survivor's home," the ending scene usually consisting of survivors joined by their family "to evoke middle-class normalcy and

mundane life as well as suggest a continuity of Jewish generations” (37). Rothe particularly highlights how the Western comfort and presence of loving families gives these Holocaust stories “a happy-ending, redemptive ending” emphasizing how Holocaust survivors have become ordinary Americans by making the Holocaust an occasion of pride, not shame (Rothe 37).

In the case of Ruth Gold’s testimony to the Florida HDEC, the aesthetics of filming her interview occupies a position close to that of the Fortunoff interviews. This is not filmed in her home, alongside family members, but only features Ruth Gold in a room bearing the logo of Barry University from Miami, Florida which was the location used for taking the interview by the Holocaust Documentation and Education Center. Apart from the beginning and ending of each one of the three video tapes of the interview, when we get a medium two-shot image of both Gold and her interviewer, Bernice Weiner, each one sitting in a chair with a table between them, the interview proper is filmed by using a fixed camera medium waist-up shot of Ruth Gold which allows both her facial and hand gestures to become visible over the three hours and forty minutes of the interview. The only background view behind Gold is a *Dieffenbachia* type of flower, a simply furnished setting that permits the viewer to focus on the words and gestures of the interviewee. Additionally, the interviewer Bernice Weiner seldom interrupts Gold’s testimony, her questions being only meant to clarify things that might be unclear or to offer as much as possible a comprehensive overview of particular situations and names of people that might have also been there; nor does Weiner insist on Gold’s telling her of recollections she does not want to elaborate upon because of their extremely painful character. As such, the interview foregrounds the damaging character of Holocaust experiences in comparison to everyday U.S. life frames and particularly adds the painful traumatic layers of living through World War II as a child who became an orphan.

Given after Gold had undertaken serious research and collaborated with others for writing her just-published memoir, this video interview is the most articulate of her testimonies: throughout the interview, she largely functions as a teacher who patiently and clearly explains a personal and a collective history of World War II, one centered on the experience from Bershad, Transnistria, as lived and understood by an eleven-year-old child. The fundamentally pedagogical nature of Gold’s video testimony is strengthened by the fact that at various moments

she uses maps, documents and artefacts as concrete, palpable evidence for telling her story. Firstly, an hour and ten minutes into the testimony (tape 1, DVD 1), when her recollections reach the family's arrival in Bershada, the final destination point of their deportation, Gold shows the maps included in her memoir that indicate the situation of Romania during World War II and the ghettos of Transnistria to which the Jews from Northern Bukovina and Bessarabia were taken. These are filmed in close-up and function as visual props for understanding the complex geographical situation of these regions of Europe. The interview then ends with Ruth Gold's messages for those who will see her testimony: she first urges parents to educate their children that all people are equal and to regularly invite religious, racial, ethnic, sexual others in their homes in order to teach their children the importance of tolerance and respect; she secondly adds that education is very important and should be pursued no matter the circumstances as it has the potential to bring down nationalist, racist and other radical inclinations; finally, she hopes that her testimony can be a vocal plea so that no child in the world would go through a millionth of what she lived through as a child (Tape 3, 1:48:11 to 1:51:33 on DVD 2).

At the same time, Gold's video testimony very well functions as a companion to her then recently published memoir, since Gold's presentation of recollections is constructed in dialogue with what the book says. Thus, sometimes she references page numbers in which she offers the details of what she is speaking about, especially when she does not want to repeat them (e.g. the description of the second orphanage she was taken to in Bershada – tape 2, 00:27:00 to 00:30:00 on DVD 1 or being shipwrecked in Syrna – tape 3, 1:23:00 on DVD 2). At other times, she offers meta-narrative-like comments explaining the choice of chapter titles in view of recounting her Holocaust experiences. She particularly explains how she called chapter 1 "Paradise" since it dealt with her pre-war happy life in Czernowitz and at her grandparents', in the village of Millie (00:05:00 on DVD1). Meanwhile, she states that she called the chapter about Bershada "Hell" because it looked like a "different world" in complete contrast to her happy memories of an over-protected child, a place where her whole identity was shattered (01:10:00 on DVD 1).

Most importantly, the most forceful moments in the video testimony are the times when Gold starts crying while continuing to express what happened. These are the scenes concerning her initial encounter with dead corpses, life-threatening situations, and especially the death of her

family, first her father, then her brother, and finally her mother. These scenes prove Assman's point that unlike written memoirs that primarily function to construct a coherent biography, video testimonies shatter the biographical frame and foreground the structure of the Holocaust by pinpointing "the stages of exclusion, persecution, imprisonment, and extermination." Thus, the first scene Gold considers difficult to describe is the first time when her father was taken away from home, in Czernowitz, being incarcerated in July-August 1941, while they found out where he was taken only four days later. She says how it is "hard to describe" because it was an "incredulous" situation for an eleven-year-old girl who had been brought up in an intercultural place, her best friend being German while Ukrainians, Romanians and other ethnic groups played and lived together. Then she almost starts crying on recounting the deportation from November 1941, remembering the image of over-burdened people "crying, shouting, screaming, calling out for children, or children calling out for parents," a chaotic ruckus that leaves Gold "speechless," numb, in shock. Gold's serious emotional breakdown first clearly occurs in the interview when she starts recounting what happened after her family's arrival in Bershad. In fact, once arriving at this period of her recollection, Gold asks for a little break in the interview to collect herself for what she has to say; this assumed self-defense mechanism of a necessary break to control her emotions is an obvious indicator of the highly traumatic character of these events for Gold's life. She merely states that the father's humiliations and final death were particularly hard to understand for her because he functioned as a godlike figure of protection to her child's eyes, as she had first felt on their march to Transnistria when her father got beaten: "I had to see my hero—my father—my idol—my God—helplessly lying on the ground and bleeding and couldn't do anything about it. I think no child in the world should experience this" (00:53:00-00:54:00 on DVD 1). Her self-defense mechanism, in the wake of the father's death, is to consider that all this is part of a movie not concerning her, pretending to be a spectator in order to be able to go on (01:28:00-01:30:00 on DVD 1). Then it becomes even more difficult for Gold to revisit the death of the mother because by this time they were the only two living individuals in the so-called "morgue room" of the Bershad house they stayed in, the room where the dead cadavers were left until a cart could take them to be buried and also because, after the mother's death, Ruth learns that she finds the dead corpse of her mother in different

places of the room because of the stray dogs coming and eating the cadaver. This is the most painful breakdown for Gold in the video testimony, since by the death of her mother she becomes a lone orphan and given the mother's insistence to follow the Judaic rituals for burying her son, on this one's death, Gold herself explains, "As a child, I understood that it was important to bury the cadaver," trying to make sure the burial rituals are finally observed in her case too (00:00:01 to 00:10:00 on DVD 2). The video testimony therefore clarifies the memoir's suggested idea that deferred mourning for a child orphan became an important conduit influencing the rest of her life and the ever-presence of death in the ghetto inhabitants' lives skewed their sense of being to the core; this is done by being able to suggest the structure of the Holocaust itself through Gold's attitude on recounting these episodes. The moments which are particularly hurtful to recount are those when Gold's look is no longer directed towards the interviewer but she stares away in the opposite direction, her averted gaze becoming the cumulus point expressing the ever-haunting traumatic baggage inscribed within an orphaned child survivor's body and which cannot be reduced to words. These embodied emotions made accessible by the video medium are the ones that transmit the level of trauma and the Holocaust structures of life absent from written or audio testimonies. In particular Gold's forlorn stare, on trying to recount the most painful moments for her, adds a novel dimension to her previous testimonies. This stare becomes the most telling indicator that Holocaust experiences belong to a different frame of reference than that of our present times; they cannot be physically recreated but are an ever-reverberating presence that pricks one from time to time through one's senses.

Conclusion

All these things considered, Gold's written and oral testimonies wonderfully complement each other, especially exposing the specifics of child survivors' memories depending on their ages and the various structures of their respective families, offering precious insights into the toils of becoming an orphan in a Transnistrian ghetto during the Holocaust. Gold's testimonies from 1944, 1983 and 1996 prove how much the temporal context of giving them influences the elements highlighted in one or the other, proving the dynamics of cultural memory. What matters most in her case is: (1) her changed life situation, especially becoming a parent and starting to

include the issue of intergenerational tensions and transmission from the 1980s onwards; (2) the developments on understanding the Holocaust in which specifics of child survivors start to be highlighted from the 1980s onwards and ideological indoctrination and manipulation become highlighted from the 1990s onwards, ideas also reflected in her testimonies from 1983 and 1996. Most importantly, apart from the 1944 testimony which is a spot-on recording of experiences very close to the events and without having been processed through, in the rest of her oral and written testimonies Ruth Gold openly critically engages with the sore points of the previous testimonies she had given and shows how her own understanding of the Holocaust has gained new perspectives with the passage of time. In simple terms, the 1944 written testimony betrays the easy ideological indoctrination of Jewish children at the end of World War II and the fundamental trauma of becoming an orphan and witnessing the death of all members in one's immediate family; the modifications operated for the truncated version of this early testimony in *România liberă* from 1945 further demonstrate the growing ideological manipulative agenda of the new Communist leaders from Eastern Europe which presented World War II events to the people in highly selective terms. The 1983 audio testimony to Judith Kestenberg highlights the psychological burden of being a Holocaust child survivor, the accumulation of traumas after the war's end and the added problems of becoming a parent which brings forth the issue of intergenerational transmission. The 1996 written memoir spells out deferred mourning as especially traumatic for children remaining orphans during World War II and adds up the problems of Communist countries' politics of memory in regards to the Holocaust. The 1996 video testimony manages to suggest the structure of the Holocaust itself through Gold's embodied attitudes on recounting the most traumatic episodes of her experience captured by this visual medium. Following the above-suggested input, Gold's testimonies provide precious contextual information about the historical moments when they were given and the geographical spaces about and in which she writes or speaks. Her testimonies thus become powerful emotive and political vehicles exposing time- and region-specific norms about the proper uses of individual and socio-political bodies in relation to the Holocaust, norms that she negotiates in various directions depending on the medium in which her testimonies are given.

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