‘Tearing the Silence’ : A Study of Inter-Generational Trauma and Memory of the Holocaust in the works of Ursula Hegi

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by

Isha Singh

Centre for English Studies
School of Language, Literature & Culture Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi-110067, India

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JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
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CERTIFICATE

This thesis titled "***Tearing the Silence: A Study of Inter-Generational Trauma and Memory of the Holocaust in the Works of Ursula Hegi***" submitted by **Ms Isha Singh,** Centre for English Studies, School of Language, Literature and Culture Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, for the award of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy**, is an original work and has not been submitted so far in part or in full, for any other degree or diploma of any University or Institution.

This may be placed before the examiners for evaluation for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

(PROF. DHANANJAY SINGH)
SUPERVISOR

Prof. Dhananjay Singh
Professor
Centre for English Studies
School of Language, Literatures & Culture Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi-110067

(PROF. DHANANJAY SINGH)
CHAIRPERSON

CHAIRPERSON
Centre for English Studies
School of Language, Literatures & Culture Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi-110067

Date: 28.06.2019

DECLARATION BY THE CANDIDATE

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(Isha Singh)
Ph.D. student
CES/SLL&CS
JNU

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Introduction

Ursula Hegi is a German-American who examines the questions of identity and Holocaust postmemory in her novels, primarily the Burgdorf cycle of novels. Set in the imaginary town of Burgdorf, these novels take up the lacunae of representation of the experiences of the Holocaust and bring to fore the trauma and stigma associated with the event. This transmitted trauma that is passed through generations is marked by "contradictory forces of vulnerability and resilience." (Kellerman n.p.) NP Kellerman posits that the trauma passed down from parents, Holocaust survivors to their children can both cause anxiety as well as a creative surge. The works of Ursula Hegi deal with the internalised trauma of the Holocaust which has been passed down from one generation to another. In a sense, this 'Blood Memory'[i] is what defines the landscape of her novels.

This research will offer a close analysis of her novels, mainly all the novels from the Burgdof cycle and two other novels to understand the idea of intergenerational trauma presented in her works. In Hegi's works, a myriad of characters experience the Holocaust together. People who share identity often experience historical trauma together and the transmission of this trauma is difficult to understand because remembrance is often not cogent.

This research will try to place Hegi's work in the sphere of the 'trauma novel' by engaging with the multiple psychological modes of trauma theory and understand the various tropes she uses to portray the transmission of intergenerational trauma.

Hegi was born in 1946 in Dusseldorf, Germany, which was an infamous World War II site of intense bombing. It was also the point from where many Jews were transported to other places in Germany. In 1965, Ursula Hegi moved from Germany to the United Sates where she became a citizen of the country.[ii] The conflict of identity as both a German and an American has found its place in her work, in which she often grapples with the question of a split identity and the guilt that is fused with German identity. Hegi holds a Bachelor's and Master's degree in Literature and currently teaches Creative Writing at Stony Brook University at Southampton.

She set her first books in United States and it was her later books which explored her German heritage that propelled her to fame. The first instance of the use of the imaginary town of 'Burgdorf' was seen in *Floating in My Mother's Palm*, where the action took place in Burgdorf as protagonist Hanna Malter came to terms with her mother's death. Hegi's

subsequent novel *Stones from the River* was a best-seller that was featured on 'The Oprah Winfrey Show.' She has won several accolades and PEN Faulkner awards.

Ursula Hegi's own immigration to the United States at an impressionable age of eighteen has formed as backdrop to several of her novels. Her earlier life and times in postwar Germany made her question German complicity in World War II. She explores the themes of silence, guilt, shame and identity in her works. Hegi's own father Heinrich Koch was a soldier in World War II, where he battled for the Russian Front. Her mother Johanna, was a homemaker who stayed at home to take care of the family. Silence formed a part of her upbringing as questions about the Holocaust and her father's role in it were discouraged at her home. This disapproval only spurred her further to explore the guilt carried by innumerable German women in the town of Burgdorf, which she constructed in her works. Like Helene Blau, her literary creation, she became ashamed of her German heritage and wished strangers in the street "would mistake her to be Norweigan or Dutch."[iii] In her works, thus she asks the important question whether the agency and the complicity of German women in the World War can be negated altogether.

The main objectives of this research are to place Ursula Hegi's works in relation to 'trauma novels' and to understand how she uses trauma as an alternative approach to analyse the Holocaust. This study will look at the narrative strategies she adopts to talk about the reformulation of identity in a postwar scenario. Her own father struggled with trauma as a result of his participation in a heinous war and that led him to be afflicted with crippling alcoholism. Several of Hegi's characters deal with PTSD or anxieties due to their direct or indirect involvement with the Holocaust. This research examines six novels by Ursula Hegi and a short story called 'Trudi and Pia' in a broad textual analysis, followed by situating these texts in the discourse of trauma. This research will then engage with contemporaneous discourses after outlining the similarities in terms of their shared tropes, motifs and narrative strategies. The Burgdorf cycle intersects with many other discourses on gender, ethnographical research and memory studies as well. This research will also be undertaken to position the thematic focus on trauma and identity arising in these texts to arrive at a discourse of German identity in postmodern America.

Trauma in itself is also associated with an impossibility of representation because it is characterised by fright or speechlessness. Literary models of trauma theory exist which engage with the idea of the self and the place, or the idea of remembrance and memory to arrive at the reconfiguration of trauma, which is characterised by silence. Hence, a trauma novel is seen as disruptive and subversive as it attempts to give a voice to something which

is, by its very nature, characterised by lack of representation. This research highlights the problem of traumatic memory in the works of Ursula Hegi and tries to understand the transmission of trauma across generation. Hegi's work is important as it explores collective identity, postwar trauma and gender along with the memories and rituals of a guilty society. Thus, research on her work falls under the ambit of gender studies, anthropological research, identity and memory studies along with most importantly, trauma theory.

This research aims to investigate the following the accretion of Holocaust stories in Ursula Hegi's work.Writing fiction about the Holocaust is a struggle, as the author has to approach experiences that are linked with deep psychological trauma. The novels deal with the effect of vicarious trauma on the lives of the war and the postwar generation. The author has described the zeitgeist of the town and made it a microcosm of a divided Germany. This research aims to unearth the various stories of the Holocaust and the myriad experiences of the children and the women of Burgdorf. An examination of the tropes used by Ursula Hegi to approach the Holocaust and fill the lacunae of representation would yield interesting results.

In order to approach the Holocaust and its traumatic imagination, Hegi uses several strategies. This research will try to understand the various tropes used by the writer and how each affects the structure of the texts. The novels are set in a fictional town which in itself is a trope on part of the author. Another trope is the use of a disabled woman as a protagonist. Ursula Hegi rests the verisimilitude of the texts on the *zwerg* protagonist and somehow contradicts the idea of truth by placing the texts in a fictional setting. What is the purpose behind using such tropes on part of the author? Is the author trying to make a point about the impossibility of representation of the Holocaust or transgressing the boundaries of historical truth?

An event like the Holocaust undermines the notion of both history and civilisation, with its reality of systemic killing of millions of people. Yet, this reality is often represented through either magical realism or by fractured writing. This is largely due to the impossibility of fictive reconstruction of trauma. The writer uses tropes like trans-generational narratives, fictional setting and story-within-a-story to approach this problem. This research aims to understand how indirect memories serve to form a fictive landscape of trauma in Hegi's work. Is there any specific purpose behind the use of narrative strategies like incoherent narrative, interlinked memoirs and foreshadowing?

The research will also try to understand how Hegi has used the idea of traumatic imagination and intergenerational trauma to approach the lacunae in the representation of the Holocaust.

In a post-Holocaust world, intergenerational trauma has been passed down to the postwar generations, as she uncovers in her Burgdorf series, through jumps in time and non-linear narratives. This research will engage with trauma theory to understand what model of trauma theory Hegi follows, if she follows any at all. What are the symbolic expressions of trauma present in the text and how do they have a dialogic relation with post-Holocaust German identity?

Hegi writes about trauma in a post-Holocaust space and her works can offer us an insight into the relation between trauma, history and memory. Historical Trauma has been defined thus: "Historical trauma refers to a complex and collective trauma experienced over time and across generations by a group of people who share an identity, affiliation or circumstance." (Vincent 128)

In Hegi's work, historical trauma is approached in novel ways and the aim of this research is to unearth those ways. Hegi provides memory as a means of dialogue with the past for these postwar generations. Hence, memory becomes an important toolbar transformation and negotiation with history. Is there any dialogue between these interconnected issues of cultural and historical trauma and memory in these texts?

Hegi's work also examines women's experiences of the Holocaust, particularly the German women. When looking at a cultural construction of the memory of the Holocaust, gender plays a pivotal role. Women, who are seen as cultural others, occupy problematic spaces in Holocaust fiction, as perpetrators of violence are generally seen as male and women are seen as agents of transformation. This research aims to position gender with relation to trauma fiction to understand how it shapes the traumatic imagination. Particularly with reference to Hegi's works, we will analyse the use of female protagonists, especially a z*werg* woman as protagonist and the use of female experiences and memoirs.

Since both the Holocaust and the trauma caused by it are characterised by representational lack, this research will look at the register of language and narrative style used to attempt this representation. Since trauma in this scenario is a social construction, my aim is to examine the construction-within-a-construction by Ursula Hegi to react to the Holocaust. Michael Balaev in his book *Contemporary Approaches in Literary Trauma Theory* (2014) talks about how the inherent features of trauma "refuse representation and cause dissociation." (n.p.)This research will try to understand the intersection of gender and trauma in her works and how this problematises the act of representation itself.

In her works, Hegi is trying to understand the worst moment of her country's history through the use of multiple tropes. I will look at the register of language, narrative technique and

strategies employed by the author to depict a traumatic imagination, as Holocaust leaves the writers with a "creative dark." (Myant n.p.)

This research will offer a close analysis of Ursula Hegi's works, mainly the four novels from the Burgdorf cycle-

Floating in My Mother's Palm (1990)

Stones from the River (1994)

The Vision of Emma Blau (2000)

Children and Fire (2011)

I have chosen the Burgdorf cycle because I think that Hegi offers resilience strategies in her work. To address trauma, she offers dialogue and transformation. She tries to understand the precipitating reasons for the complicity of German women in the World War and the accumulation of trauma in their children. The narrative shifts between a traumatised past and a transformed present and this forms the framework of the Burgdorf cycle.

I would also be looking at two other novels by the same author, namely-

Tearing the Silence: On Being German in America (1998)

Salt Dancers (1995)

This research engages with trauma theory, with reference to historical and cultural trauma and memory studies with reference to cultural memory theory. This research will use for its primary source material the novels of Ursula Hegi. The mode of research will be qualitative.

To arrive at answers to the postulated research questions, I will be using the trauma theory model as enunciated by Cathy Caruth and will examine if Hegi's works adhere to it or negate it. I will also try to understand the various tropes employed by the author to engage with the Holocaust.This research will be divided into five following chapters, not inclusive of the introduction and conclusion. It will include the following:

Chapter 1-Narration of Trauma in Holocaust Literature: Aporia and Indeterminate Registers

This chapter will look at Holocaust literature and its dynamics and will examine how Hegi's works fit into it. I will examine genre theory as well as look at Holocaust literature by other writers to see if there are any characteristics of the 'survivor stories' in Hegi's work. I will look at the strategies of representation and analysis used by the writers and how that turns the readers into secondary witnesses of the trauma.

Chapter 2- The transmission of Transgenerational Trauma in Ursula Hegi's novels

This chapter will place Hegi's work with regard to the theoretical models of trauma theory. I will examine Cathy Caruth's psychoanalytic model of trauma and Jeffrey Alexander's work on trauma to examine what model of trauma Hegi accepts or negates. I will further explore if she uses novel ways of showcasing the traumatic imagination in her work.

Chapter 3-'But no one talks about it': The *Burgdorf Cycle*

This chapter will examine the four novels of the Burgdorf cycle to understand what tropes the author has used in her works and to what purpose. This chapter will look at the similarities between the works, to understand how trauma is being addressed by Hegi.

Chapter 4 –'Distorted Reflections' : *Salt Dancers* (1995) and *Tearing the Silence: On Being German in America* (1998)

This chapter will closely examine two other novels by Ursula hegi to understand the idea of the transmission of intergenerational trauma in her works. The chapter will bring out her strategies of representation of trauma and her narrative techniques as she addresses the issues of identity and social practices. The chapter will also look at *Trudi and Pia* (2003), a short story by Ursula Hegi to examine the trope of disability that the author uses, and how it is related to collective and personal identity.

Chapter 5- 'And so we embellish our stories. ..and take all of that for truth': Questions of Identity and memory in Ursula Hegi's 'storytelling'

This chapter will look at Hegi's work with respect to the question of German identity and the field of memory studies. this chapter will tie up her work with regard to trauma and memory and understand what language registers she employs to solve the problem of the 'creative dark' in Holocaust writing.

The aim of the research is to tie up all the analysis of Hegi's works to arrive at solutions to the previously mentioned research problems. This research will try to draw links between intergenerational trauma, memory, parahistory and identity. It will take into account the perspectives from previous research on Trauma theory, to draw parallels between it and Hegi's work. This research will also focus on the possibilities of how the narrative can be applied further.

The traumatized protagonist in her novels, be it Trudi Montag from *Stones from the River* or Hanna Malter from *Floating in my Mother's Palm* both suffer from a kind of post-traumatic stress disorder syndrome. This study will try to analyze the transmission of this trauma from

the war generation to the post-war generation in Germany as complicity and guilt play important factors in the formation of identity.

There are many structural models of trauma available, after the field of trauma studies gained importance after the publication of Cathy Caruth's work. Her work examines trauma from a literary and psychoanalytical point of view. According to Caruth, trauma cannot be normalized in literature or symbolized in any form.This research will examine which model of trauma studies Ursula Hegi's novels fit into; whether they come under the category of 'trauma novels' at all. To understand if the novels adhere or negate any model of trauma theory, I will look at the relation between experience, memory and trauma in her novels. I will try to understand how Ursula Hegi approaches intergenerational transmission of trauma and how she goes beyond trauma to arrive at a kind of reformulation and reparation of the self.

Trauma often ends up fragmenting remembrance and the process of memory and collective memory of a community. So the objective of this research is also to understand how memory is used in the making of meaning in these texts and how trauma and memory studies are closely linked.

This research also aims to understand the features of trauma presented in Ursula Hegi's novels, and to understand the process of reconciliation and coming to terms with this trauma. This research also has for its objective the theoretical frameworks of trauma theory and memory studies and how these form the tapestry of the novels.

Historical trauma like the Holocaust has served as a public narrative and has now become a clog in the machinery of popular culture. Research based on Holocaust literature takes into account the violent, grotesque descriptions in the narrative and often focus on the transmission of trauma. This research particularly focuses on the transmission of intergenerational trauma in Ursula Hegi's works, and how that serves to impact identity and memory. There has been little research done on Ursula Hegi as of yet, but there is a lot of research available to us on Trauma theory, notably Cathy Caruth's pioneering work on it. Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* and Kali Tal's *Worlds of Hurt Reading the Literatures of Trauma* shaped the field of trauma studies considerably.

These books used a psychoanalytic approach to study trauma, namely focusing on Lacanian theories. Cathy Caruth used deconstruction to look at the indeterminate registers of language in a particular text, to arrive at any kind of comprehension of trauma. Trauma theorists have looked at historical trauma as a void, which is contradictory, because it has shaped many survivor stories but has also silenced the victims into a speechless fright. Earlier Trauma theorists have used post-structural approach to study trauma but several other models came up, which tried to understand how writers try to make meaning out of trauma. While Caruth's work tried to "locate the truth of the past, it was quickly accompanied by alternative models and methodologies that revised this foundational claim to suggest determinate values in traumatic experience." (Balaev 1)

Dominick LaCapra[iv] has worked on the act of writing trauma in literature, wherein he talks about the need for an inter-disciplinary approach to trauma. Critics of Holocaust Literature have seen it as the 'creative dark', suggesting the impossibility of representation. In this context, it becomes imperative to examine Hegi's work to see what tropes she uses to voice trauma across generations.

Work on collective identity and trauma has also been done by Jeffrey Alexander, Clara Mucci and Yael Danieli. This work focuses on resilience and transformation through the act of writing down traumatic memories. Jeffrey Alexander has particularly focused on trauma narratives and how they shape identities, as they choose to label some events as traumatic and ignore some. In her work, Hegi talks about the collective guilt faced by Germans, and the trauma of coping with complicity in the Holocaust. Hence, we need to examine the notions of victim and survivor very closely in relation to her works.

By analysis of the text, I will try to determine whether the approach to trauma by Hegi is constructivist, and what theoretical model of trauma can be applied to her work. Her novels take up an event which is rife with cultural trauma. The main method of this research will be to examine her texts closely to see how she uses storytelling to depict trauma and memory.

I will also use look at her works through the lens of gender studies to understand how sexual offending and violence are depicted in her texts. I will try to examine her use of female protagonists to build up a fragmented, fictive space in her works.

Hegi uses parahistory as a trope rather than rely upon historicized narratives of the Holocaust. In my research, I will try to link history, trauma and memory together by placing

these texts in a postcolonial, postmodern environment, where ancestral family trauma has ossified. I have chosen to undertake a close textual analysis because there is no pre-existing research on Ursula Hegi's works, while there is a lot of material available on trauma theory. I want to examine Hegi's work because they have a novel way of approaching trauma. The core research question of this thesis is to understand how tropes of traumatic imagination have been used to engage with the experiences of the Holocaust.

Chapter I

Narration of Trauma in Holocaust Literature: Aporia and Indeterminate Registers

The Holocaust was a state-sponsored genocide of a massive Jewish population in Germany during the Second World War, orchestrated at the behest of Adolf Hitler. Its consequences and aftermath were so disastrous that it still haunts the popular imagination in the world. As the *Holocaust Encyclopaedia* by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum defines it - "The Holocaust was the systematic, bureaucratic and state-sponsored persecution and murder of six million Jews by the Nazi regime and its collaborators…as part of the 'final solution' to murder all the Jews in Europe." (n.p.) By 1945, people with Jewish identities, Slavic identities, people with disabilities, gypsies, homosexuals and basically all people with a different ideology from the state's were either killed or persecuted. The Nazi 'final solution'[v] involved the mass killing of Jews in concentration camps or ghettos.

In his book *Bloodlands* (2010), Yale historian Timothy Snyder writes about the origin of the term 'final solution' and its traumatic aftermath. He proposes seeing the Holocaust as a warning which can be realised in a contemporary world which is equally oppressive and full of split identities. He writes:

"It cannot be stressed enough that the Nazis did not know how to eradicate the Jews when they began the war against the Soviet Union [in the summer of 1941]… They could not be confident that SS men would shoot women and children in large numbers."[vi]

Hitler first conceptualised the complete eradication of Jews as the 'Final Solution' during Operation Barbossa, the mass killings during the Soviet invasion by Germany when he realised that his soldiers could commit mass murders. Historians have been divided over the exact conceptualisation of this 'solution' but all agree that the most extreme step was put into place following the ideological coming together of state organizations, local governments and even citizens. In this context, a novel like *Stones from the River* which tries to understand the collective guilt of German women becomes highly important. There was a schism between those who saved the Jews, hiding them in their basements (like Trudi Montag and her father Leo Montag in the novel) and those who outed the Jews and aligned themselves with the state ideology. The role of local citizens and their participation in Hitler's oppressive regime and the state-sponsored genocide of Jews cannot be negated altogether.

In her novel *Children and Fire*, Ursula Hegi sketches several characters who owe allegiance to the German ideology during World War II. Some of them include young boys who are

urged to participate in a mass-burning of books which are seen as blasphemous. The riot-mongering that is encouraged and the silence of most of the German adults, the parents and teachers speaks volumes about the ideological alignment during this dark period in German history. The events in this novel are set prior to the mass genocide during the Holocaust and act as a precursor to the dire consequences of such ideological alignment. In the coming chapters, I would dwell more on the symbolism of fire in the title 'Children and Fire.' Fire, which is all-consuming and ravenous and needs to burn everything in its path to satiate its hunger is an important motif in writing about the Holocaust.

The Greek origin of the word Holocaust is from *Holokauston* (*Holos*- whole and *Kaustos*- burnt). Thus, the Holocaust could easily refer to a massive fire, an inferno which destroyed everything in its path. This can be said true for the Nazi version of the Holocaust, which annihilated people's lives, entire races and community and left smouldering cinders in its wake, manifested in the guilt and trauma that was felt by those involved and even their subsequent generations. The earliest references to this word were in newspaper reports of the World War and then it was used in a heated debate in the House of Lords. The *News Chronicle* in 1942 used this word with reference to the Nazi atrocities-

"Holocaust . . . Nothing else in Hitler's record is comparable to his treatment of the Jews . . . The word has gone forth that . . . the Jewish peoples are to be exterminated . . . The conscience of humanity stands aghast." (*News Chronicle*, 5th December, 1942, UK)[vii]

Massive book-burnings, atrocities committed upon the Jews and other minority races, the coverage by newspapers all led to the usage of the word 'holocaust' for the genocide of sex million people. However, the credit for making the word 'holocaust' resonant with this state-sponsored killing went to Elie Wiesel, who spoke about this blunt instrument of German policy, in his major work *La Nuit* or *Night* (1960).

Like fire, night too is an important symbolic feature of Holocaust literature. It symbolises the end of everything; also a shroud that falls over an entire race. Elie Wiesel writes in *Night*(1960):

"Never shall I forget that night, the first night in camp, which has turned my life into one long night, seven times cursed and seven times sealed....Never shall I forget those moments which murdered my God and my soul and turned my dreams to dust. Never shall I forget these things, even if I am condemned to live as long as God Himself. Never." (ch.3 n.p.)

Night is an account by Wiesel of the time he spent along with his father in a concentration camp and the adversities he faced, including coming to perceive his own father as a weight and a burden. Critics have been divided over the veracity of this account, whether it is unvarnished or not but suffice it to say the atrocities described in the book happened in German concentration camps.

Night, Dawn, Day is a trilogy of books based on these experiences by Wiesel in which he raises the profound question of human suffering due to wanton actions by others. Wiesel's work is a defining part of Holocaust literature and recent efforts have tried to prove that Wiesel's work was a fraud account. Nevertheless, even if we cannot vouch for its historical accuracy, it provides us deep insight into survivor stories, which form a large section of Holocaust literature. As survivors appropriate the role of message-bearers about the horrors of the genocide, they carry forward the memories and trauma across generations.[viii]

Night is a narrative that is marked by fragmentation and has an inversion of values. This kind of fragmentation or split is a recurring feature of survivor stories as the survivors are unable to come to terms with their grief and trauma. When Wiesel's father was reduced to a vulnerable state in which he had to be provided for, Wiesel perceived of him as a burden and this caused immense guilt. He said:

> "If only I could get rid of this dead weight ... Immediately I felt ashamed of myself, ashamed forever." (ch. 8)

He had to resort to selfishly taking care of himself in such a fraught environment and this is what he refers to as an inversion of family values in his books. In Ursula Hegi's novel *Stones from the River*, Eva's husband Alexander fails to protect her and chooses to protect his own self over her. In the end, he is so consumed by guilt that he kills himself by jumping off a building. Questioning the limitations and boundaries of conscience is another characteristic of Holocaust literature.

Holocaust Literature consists of a substantial body of work on the Holocaust, defined by accounts of first-hand survivors like Wiesel himself. Its survivor stories are in first person singular and narratives that are autobiographical. Wiesel himself had no defining notion of Holocaust literature; according to him, it should accurately depict the horrors of the genocide. In his book *Day*, the last part of his 'Night' trilogy, he aptly wrote:

> "A novel about Auschwitz is not a novel-or else it is not about Auschwitz." (n.p.)

Holocaust literature is often marked by language that is termed indescribable and writers often find that words escape them when writing about the horrors, which as we earlier discussed, can also be termed as the 'creative dark.'. Along with firsthand accounts by Holocaust victims and survivors, there are varnished, dramatised and fictional memoirs by writers who write about the Holocaust from their own perspective. Dan Bar-On defines a Holocaust survivor as "anyone who lived under Nazi occupation during World War II and who was threatened by the policy of the final solution but managed to stay alive." (100)

Bar-On further raises the important question whether the decision to brand someone a Holocaust survivor is a "socially imposed or a self-determined process."[ix] (100)

Thus accounts and memoirs by the different kinds of survivors of the first generation come under the ambit of Holocaust literature along with fictionalised memoirs. Along with these Holocaust literature also consists of accounts by the perpetrators of these atrocities as well as survivor accounts written by other writers who lend their own perspective. Holocaust literature also includes poetry though Theodor Adorno in his essay in the book *Prisms,* a set of essays on German thought and culture wrote that "to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric." (n.p.)[x]

Holocaust literature also includes work by the second-generation of Jews, Germans and others who faced the trauma. Ursula Hegi belongs to the 'second generation'[xi] as her father was a soldier in World War II and the war had a devastating effect on her family. Unlike first-generation survivors, these writers do not have that much difficulty in verbalising their trauma as they integrate the shared memories in a creative experience. First generation survivors on the other hand tend to be unable to testify and verbalise their experiences.

While discussing the historicity of the Holocaust and its place in popular culture, we cannot forego the strange notion of Holocaust denial. This theory advocated that the mass genocide of Jews during Nazi Germany did not occur and even if it did, it occurred on a very small scale. Primo Levi, a known writer and critic of the Holocaust, said in the Italian newspaper *La Stampa*, on January 19, 1979, that "the very enormity of genocide urges us towards incredulity, toward denial and refusal." (as qtd in Lang 157)

Berel Lang in his article 'Six Questions on (or about) Holocaust Denial' talks about the binary between "holocaust denial and affirmation." (157)According to him, there is a "historiographic uniqueness" to this denial of the Holocaust. (157)In this article, Lang raises important questions about the nature of Holocaust denial and how it reeks of anti-semitism.

While advocates of Holocaust denial claim themselves to be historical revisionists, this denial only works to affirm the vast and long-reaching consequences of the genocide; that an entire machinery works to merely deny that the event took place. This claim of the holocaust being a hoax does not serve as historical revision, instead novels and critical works which seem to engage with the Holocaust add their own dimension to this piece of history. By bringing together the historical and the imaginary in her works, Ursula Hegi does not intend to rewrite history, instead she revisits it to gain a better understanding. Holocaust denial is now criminalised in several countries of Europe but the fact that this debate took place points towards a contortion and abuse of the traumatic memory of the Holocaust. it can only be seen as an attempt to silence and obliterate the voices of the survivors. In this context, Holocaust literature and its attempt to give a voice to the memory of the Holocaust becomes all the more important. Hegi's work focuses on examining the guilt of the German population and it has positive connotations in an environment where there seems to be an absolution of national and societal guilt by terming the Holocaust a hoax.

Journals, memoirs, fictional accounts inspired by the Holocaust are to some degree characterised by a helplessness or incomprehension since they are dealing with trauma. This begs the question -whether Holocaust literature can be viewed as a separate genre and what characteristics do all of these texts contain in common?

Alvin Rosenfield in his seminal work *A Double Dying: Reflections on Holocaust Literature* referred to the act of writing about the Holocaust as an act of 'double dying.' According to him, Holocaust literature is needed "to express our deaths, the characteristically violent, dehumanized deaths of the twentieth century." (Rosenfield 5) As we discussed earlier Elie Wiesel described a Holocaust novel as a novel concerned with Auschwitz only. Both Rosenfield and Wiesel talk about Holocaust literature as necessarily violent and concerned only with a specific story. The permanent, indelible nature of the Holocaust cannot be denied however we cannot universalise the form and structure of Holocaust literature but we can come up with certain characteristics that mark this body of work. Rosenfield's emphasis on authenticity of survivor stories can be seen as moralising.[xii] Holocaust Literature cannot ignore German representation in its realm, novels which deal with the aftermath of the Holocaust and engage in reflection upon the events. These novels, like Ursula Hegi's Burgdorf cycle are an example of resistance and trying to work through incomprehensible trauma. Ruth Franklin in her book *A Thousand Darknesses* offers the simple definition of Holocaust Literature as "literature about and inspired by the Holocaust."[xiii] Franklin talks

about the blurry line between memoir and history in her book and concedes that an "unfiltered memoir is a myth."(n.p.)

Ursula Hegi's works too navigate the fine line between history and memory, making ample use of parahistory, which can be seen as people's version of the official historical narrative.

To delineate characteristics to Holocaust literature would be to see it as a separate genre and that is a statement that has divided opinions from critics. However, if we consider literature written about the Holocaust as an entity on its own, we can learn that irrespective of the personalisation and fictionalisation, these novels are marked by incomprehension to a certain extent. German literature about the Holocaust often deals with coming to terms with the trauma and focuses on questions of identity.

Identity and marginality is a key theme in Holocaust literature which deals with responses to the Holocaust along with providing a historical account of the same. While authenticity cannot be a safeguard for Holocaust literature, there are critics who "mistrust the Holocaust novel", like Elie Wiesel. Ursula Hegi's novels on the other hand, deal with imaginary towns placed in very real, historical settings. (Boswell n.p.) This juxtaposition can be seen as "a knowingly provocative path between the sacred and the profane in order to engage with another set of equally disturbing truths, yielding illicit meanings, anxieties and forms of knowledge that are never straightforwardly empirical."[xiv] (Boswell n.p.) Similarly, the individual subjectivities that Ursula Hegi brings to her imaginary characters, whether from the point of view of perpetrator or victim serves to be a way of 'working through'[xv] the trauma and in a sense, taking responsibility for the Holocaust.

David G. Roskies and Naomi Diamant in their book *Holocaust Literature: A History and Guide* proffer a comprehensive, historical survey of this vast literature and divide it into different types. It begins from "the literature of mobilisation and mourning" written in Nazi-occupied Germany to the "memorial literature" [xvi]written even today.(Roskies and Diamant n.p.) Even despite the categorisation attempts, we can safely say that Holocaust literature is ever-changing. It can also be deduced that important characteristics of this literature include its historical settings, its key themes of trauma and memory and an air of incomprehensibility about the Holocaust.

In the following section, I would be looking at two seminal texts on the Holocaust which defined Holocaust literature, namely Primo Levi's *If This is a Man* and Elie Wiesel's *Night.*

Levi is an important thinker who is known as one of the foremost writers of Holocaust literature along with Elie Wiesel, Saul Bellow, Anna Langfus, Andre Schwarz Bart among others. Primo Levi's memoir *If This is a Man* (also titled *Survival in Auschwitz*) recounts the horrors faced at a concentration camp where he was incarcerated. Sandu Frunza calls this book a "central work in understanding the way in which subjective memory of the Holocaust receives a general meaning."[xvii] (36) In Levi's work, there is emphasis placed upon the absence of God and he uses subversion as a technique wherein he dismantles religious philosophy. He sees the world as a void where abject misery has taken place.

In the memoir, Levi recounts the firsthand experience of incarceration at the hands of the SS.[xviii] The narrative does not follow any chronological order; it is a rambling of thoughts about survival in a concentration camp. This particular narrative strategy aims to showcase how trauma has no set pattern of representation; chaos is part of coming to terms with trauma. Levi says in his work-

" Auschwitz is outside of us, but it is all around us, in the air. The plague has died away, but the infection still lingers and it would be foolish to deny it. Rejection of human solidarity, obtuse and cynical indifference to the suffering of others, abdication of the intellect and of moral sense to the principle of authority, and above all, at the root of everything, a sweeping tide of cowardice, a colossal cowardice which masks itself as warring virtue, love of country and faith in an idea." (The Truce n.p.)

In Levi's work, Auschwitz stands for the death of God or any religious structure which holds society together. At the end of the novel, despite the coming of Russian troops, the concentration camp prisoners live in filth and relegate themselves to the end of the human spectrum. This dehumanising aspect of the war finds place in Levi's work and Levi himself was able to retain a bit of his humanity through the support of other prisoners. While examining the Holocaust, this novel also investigates the human condition, wherein the 'chimney'[xix] in the novel signifies death and horror. Primo Levi's work is the work of a survivor of the first-generation and he paints the immutable memories of the Holocaust through a detailed account. He questions the absurdity of such an existence where to survive is more important than living and often the text is riddled with a breakdown of language to suggest the complete degradation of the prisoners as human beings.

Like Levi, Elie Wiesel too is a very well-known writer of Holocaust Literature. Both *Night* and *Survival in Auschwitz* are survivor stories albeit offering different kinds of optimism. *Night* is part of a trilogy as we have discussed earlier. The book is a mix of testimony and

memories and was first published in 1958, then in 1964 in the English version. Eliezer, the protagonist is merely a fictional representation modelled on Elie Wiesel himself. The novel describes the young boy Eliezer's stay at a concentration camp where he is subjected to unimaginable horrors. While both Levi and Wiesel are graphic in their accounts, there are perhaps more instances of silence in Levi's work. Eliezer grapples with the idea of benevolent God after he escapes while Levi, being a scientific and practical man, does not believe in the idea at all.

In *Night*, Wiesel offers moving images of the prisoners getting shaved, disinfected and being subjected to other cruelties at the hands of the SS. Eliezer says in the novel-

"Never shall I forget that nocturnal silence which deprived me, for all eternity, of the desire to live." (Wiesel 2)

Silence is a recurring theme in Levi and Wiesel's work, along with other Holocaust Literature as it signifies the silence of a once-benevolent God as well as the haunting silence in the concentration camps at night. While the 'chimney' stands as a symbol of Holocaust cruelty in Levi's novel, fire itself is an important allegory in Wiesel's *Night*. Fire represents the electric crematoriums and the destructive nature of war as well. Night is another motif in this novel, as we discussed earlier. Night also stands here for the total darkness before creation in the absence of any God. Levi "embraces secular humanist values" (Frunza 36) while raising existential questions. Wiesel, on the other hand, roots his work in the philosophy of Judaism and questions God's 'silence.' Naomi Seidman writes that the theme of "silence, in its theological, existential and linguistic dimensions, dominates the commentary on *Night.*" (1)[xx]

In both Levi and Wiesel's novels, silence is an integral part of the register of language. It suggests the incommensurability of the language used to write about the Holocaust, a problem that plagues critics and writers alike. There is no measure by which to judge Holocaust literature and the registers of language or the narrative strategies that it employs. However, we can easily say that while Wiesel's work is grounded in theological belief-systems and the questioning of it, Levi dialogue is with philosophical systems of belief.

Levi, in a groundbreaking theory of the 'gray zone' proposed an analysis of the human existence, wherein he says:

"We tend to simplify history, too, although we cannot always agree on the outline within which to organize facts, and consequently different historians may understand and

construct history in incompatible ways. But our need to divide the field between "us" and "them" is so strong – perhaps for reasons rooted in our origins as social animals – that this one scheme, the friend-enemy dichotomy, prevails over all others." (*Complete Works*, volume 3, p. 2430)

Levi's idea of history[xxi] as multi-dimensional is a more nuanced idea of history, which refutes binaries and dichotomies. Holocaust literature is often an attempt to understand the complexity of this history and the 'spaces' which are often in between the binaries of 'us' versus 'them.' David Sasha calls Elie Wiesel " a tortured believer" while he sees Levi as " a non-believer." (N.P.)

In his works, Levi focuses on the cultural, social and philosophical aspects of the Holocaust while Wiesel's viewpoint was most focused on ethnocentrism and Jewish religion. However, both these integral works of Holocaust literature attempt a negotiation with history and memory. In coming to terms with their trauma, both offer resilience to survivors and the next generation. With or without the Jewish inflection, both offer accounts of the degradation and dehumanisation during the Holocaust and an examination of Nazi depravity. This attempt to give a voice to marginalised voices is a resilience strategy, at the forefront of Holocaust literature.

As we have discussed earlier, Holocaust literature or any trauma for that matter resists representation and when something cannot be adequately represented, how can we aim to classify it? Genre is a system of classification by means of which the practice of literature is shaped. A standard definition of genre can be thus given:

> A collective grouping or general category of literary works; a large class or group that consists of individual works of literature that share common attributes (e.g., similar themes, characters, plots, or styles).[xxii] (n.p.)

If we follow this simplistic definition, we can group together all works which deal with the Holocaust and its shared trauma under a collective umbrella called Holocaust literature. As we have established earlier, there are certain shared attributes that are common to these works. However, if we limit ourselves by the conventions of genre and rigidly impose this on works about the Holocaust, where do the works which resist conventions and social practices fit in? For example, how will we classify Ursula Hegi's novel *Stones from the River,* as it is a novel that talks about both disability and the Holocaust in equal measure? Does it fall under disability literature or Holocaust literature? How can we place Holocaust works written by

people who did not experience the Holocaust firsthand under this umbrella? Where will fictional survivor stories fit into this?

To arrive at an understanding pertaining to such questions, we have to attempt to understand how current genre theory can be used to shape our knowledge of the Holocaust.

The way in which genre has been defined has changed over the years and current genre theory shapes our responses to a text and digs deeper into intertextuality. Amy J. Devitt in her essay 'Generalizing about Genre: New Conceptions of an Old Concept' does away with conventional and hallmark approaches to genre to delve deeper. She says:

> Recent conceptions of genre as a dynamic and semiotic construct illustrate how to unify form and content, place text within context, balance process and product, and acknowledge the role of both the individual and the social. This reconnection of genre may even lead to a unified theory of writing. (573)

Devitt talks about a reconception of genre which we can utilise to understand Holocaust literature. Devitt terms this reconception of genre as a "dynamic patterning of human experience."(573)

If we view genre not merely as a classification but as a dynamic concept then it can help us better to understand the meaning and form of Holocaust literature. Instead of labels and distinctions, we can see Holocaust literature as a continually evolving and changing genre in itself. This way we can liberate the texts from preconceived notions and shape our responses to them accordingly. However, the question arises whether we can use this new concept of genre as a dynamic, ever-changing, fluid idea on old texts of the Holocaust like Elie Wiesel's *Night* or Primo Levi's *Survival in Auschwitz*.

This way Holocaust literature can embrace texts which appear deviant, like Hegi's novel *Stones from the River*, which uses a woman *zwerg* protagonist and also talks about disability. Since the Holocaust was an attempt to curb difference in race and ideology, texts about it explore multiple agendas and questions. In this context, a multidisciplinary, new concept of genre becomes important because it helps us to conceive of Holocaust literature as an authentic expression and a cultural artefact which improves knowledge of the Holocaust. In this way, we can even accommodate experimental literature, example, fictionalised survivor stories or graphic, violent stories which deal with the mass genocide.

This way Holocaust literature can relate to contemporary readers as well whose sophistication has increased. We can bunch together the corpus of texts which deal with the

Holocaust to comprise this genre and conceive of it as a fluid and dynamic genre. This way, we can ascribe Carolyn Miller's idea of the genre as a "multi-dimensional," "multi-methodological" and "multi-disciplinary to Holocaust literature."[xxiii] (n.p.)

The tragic stories that mould this corpus of literature can be seen as sacred or commemorative but that does that mean they can be excluded from literary criticism. To understand Holocaust literature as a genre in itself which is ever-evolving, we need to analyse it with a little more depth. David J. Roskies and Naomi Diamant provide a historical survey of Holocaust literature which would be a good starting point for this study.

In this book, Roskies and Diamant start with the most important questions about how to define Holocaust literature and how to see it as a constantly changing genre. They ask whether it can be differentiated from other forms of writing that speak about the Jewish resistance. After examining literature about and surrounding the Holocaust, Roskies and Diamant propose the following definition of Holocaust literature:

> Holocaust literature comprises all forms of writing, both documentary and discursive, and in any language, that have shaped the public memory of the Holocaust and been shaped by it.[xxiv] (n.p.)

Roskies and Diamant have observed that if diaries about the Holocaust were studied in a linear manner according to when they were written, we can discover specificities in the types of diaries that were being written. They conclude that "a specific type of diary that came into being when the confinement and enslavement of the Jews gave way to their mass extermination. It happened in year four of the war." (n.p.)They recognise other characteristics of Holocaust literature as the "coming-of-age" narrative and the "collective voice." Other recurring works of this corpus include reportage and fantasy novels written post the war. According to Roskies and Diamant, the literature written during the war (which includes reportage) was a means of resistance and was used to "mobilize the public." (n.p.)However, this literature was produced outside the war-afflicted areas, possibly by individuals who wanted to bring attention to the horror.

They raise the important question which we might wonder that why do we need a separate genre for Holocaust literature when we can collect the gruesome facts for the Holocaust from other sources. To Roskies and Diamant, this literature represents the "distinct voice of the survivors" which has often been equated with heroism. (n.p.) To make an effort to put trauma

into words is a commendable act that requires the world to pay attention to these "alternative landscapes."[xxv] (n.p.)

In their survey, Roskies and Diamant divide wartime writing during the Holocaust into two categories. The first zone of Holocaust was the "free zone" and the second was the "Jew zone."[xxvi] (n.p.)This "spatial" demarcation is needed to "restore the division of the globe" into how it was during the holocaust. To be a Jew, live in the Jew zone and survive was a feat of heroism.

The Jew zone was a part of Europe which was occupied and everything else which was free from those shackles fell under the Free zone. Roskies and Diamant concur that in both zones, 1943 was a remarkable year as it created most of the corpus of Holocaust literature. They also posit that most of this literature was produced by non-jews in the free zone, people who wanted to reflect on this genocide. For any Jew in the Jew zone, to survive in 1943 was close to impossible and the literature presented in this period from this zone mainly contains responses to the Holocaust.

This geographical demarcation pointed out by David J. Roskies and Naomi Diamant, namely the use of the term "Jew zone" is "vulgar" as they themselves term it. Emil Kerenji points out that the "free zone" was not so free either as Roskies and Diamant perceive it to be.[xxvii] Jonathan Druker terms the Jew zone a "provocative term" and says that it is used by Roskies and Diamant to remind us of the difference in writing in the literature produced in the two wartime zones.[xxviii] (n.p.)

Roskies and Diamant a three-pronged view of memory in Holocaust literature, neatly compartmentalising in into "communal memory," "provisional memory" and "authorized memory." (n.p.) Communal memory stems from the term "collective memory" coined by sociologist Maurice Halbwachs.[xxix] (Coser 2) Roskies and Diamant proffer that communities hold on to their memories collectively; they "incubate memories." (n.p.) Hence, communal memory often becomes a "unifying force" which brings about "continuity."[xxx] (n.p.) The oral and written testimonies of survivors during the war falls under the category of communal memory. The people who chronicled these memories were often "liberated from death camps, death marches, and death trains, then quarantined into camps, they were known as displaced persons (dps for short), a catchall term for deserters, prisoners of war, foreign workers, collaborators." (Roskies and Diamant n.p.)

Communal memory is often also marked by silence. In Ursula Hegi's novel *Stones from the River*, the memories related to the unknown benefactor can be seen as communal or collective. The unknown benefactor used to leave desired gifts on the doorstep of people prior to and during the war. During the intensity of the Holocaust, people remembered these acts in their own separate ways; everyone had a distinct memory of the unknown benefactor's generosity. This was one instance of communal memory where the gifts provided by the unknown benefits (who was Emil Hesping in the text) provided a sanctuary and fostered the idea of a home.

Roskies and Diamant provide an exhaustive view of texts which integrated the idea of communal memory, particularly a handwritten newspaper called *Tkhiyes-hameysim*[xxxi] and other periodicals. The other category of Holocaust literature that they discuss is related to "provisional memory." The word provisional in itself relates to a temporal space. Roskies and Diamant mention that after the Holocaust, "in every respect, the catastrophe was only provisionally over." (n.p.)By this, they mean that the Holocaust endured on in public spaces even after the genocide had ended. Elie Wiesel has also stated that "a true response to the Holocaust would only come one generation later." (2)

The "generation after"[xxxii] became equally important as the first generation of the Holocaust. The texts which dealt with provisional memory were written postwar, that is from 1960-1985. As Roskies and Diamant point out, these texts gave a new dimension to Holocaust literature, for if it had to "speak anew, every generation of readers had to see itself as the first to bear witness and to feel profoundly scandalized by the presumed silence of those who came before."[xxxiii] (n.p.)Texts which deal with communal memory were proposed to have been written during 1945-60 while provisional memory defined the works of the next generation and added new perception to this growing genre.

Roskies and Diamant contend that all texts related to the Holocaust literature written after 1985 display the idea of "authorised memory." They conclude that the contemporary phase of Holocaust literature "is a search for personal identity in a vertiginous time and silenced space."[xxxiv] (n.p.) Authorized memory is marked by a search or a quest in survivors and the next generation for a sense of purpose and resolution; a way to work through the trauma. In her work, Helene Epstein has compared this transmitted trauma felt by the "generation after" and the subsequent generations as the "phantom pain of a hand they never had."[xxxv] (as qtd in Berger 23) Authorized memory also takes its intent from English becoming the "authorized language" of Holocaust literature, as was seen in a multitude of texts.

Roskies and Diamant have presented an important, comprehensive work which includes work by lesser-known, foreign writers as well. In their research, the lists of books which represent Holocaust literature deal with the immense violence of the genocide. The books deal with the ghettoization[xxxvi] and the lamentation of Jews during and post the war. Critics have widely debated the possibility of representation of Holocaust literature but there is a growing consensus to view the corpus of texts as a genre in itself. Roskies and Diamant's book aims to work towards a better understanding of this genre. Other critics have viewed the holocaust literature genre as a genre of 'rupture.' (Aarons 1)[xxxvii]

Thus, Holocaust literature not only forms a literary genre in itself that is dynamic and evolving with the needs of the times, but also a framework which includes several texts trying to voice immense trauma. It is a "landscape of rupture" and "discursive disequilibrium." (Aarons 1) nevertheless an important diverse literary landscape that needs new modes of engagement. Not only are these texts riddled with personal, individual trauma but also an overarching, historically accurate mass trauma. Hence, there is need for adequate representation as well as proper responses for this alternative genre. Holocaust literature "subverts traditional generic distinctions" (Aarons 1) and current genre theory is the best means to understand this literary expression of trauma. In order to understand the complexities of this genre further, I will be looking at a few texts which marked the category of 'survivor stories' in Holocaust literature and then analyse what characteristics of these do we find in Ursula Hegi's work.

The extent of Holocaust writing comprises public memory, personal, individual history and also a sense of forgetting.[xxxviii] Wartime writing written during and post the war comprises imdividual and public survival stories from the ghettos and bunkers. Victoria Aarons points out how Holocaust literature also sources heavily from the Jewish traditions of 'mid-rash' and 'lamentation.'[xxxix]Roskies has referred to Holocaust literature as a "paradigm of destruction and desecration" and this is potently visible in the most widely spread type of Holocaust literature, that is, the survivor stories. (n.p.)

Survival means a 'continuation after an event'[xl] and the phrase has been used in evolution studies as the 'survival of the fittest.' However, survival in the cataclysmic event of the Holocaust does not merely carry a sense of outliving but also carries with it a whole process. The process of survival is marked by a working through and a negotiation of trauma which is passed onto second and third generations as well. Survivor stories may stem from first

generation survivors themselves or from the second and third generations, who are inspired by a "creative interest in the traumatic histories of the previous generation."[xli] (De Greve 1)

Survivor stories need to be examined in terms of their sociological and ethnographical implications. There is also the question of verisimilitude that crops up when discussing survivor stories. How much credence can be given to survivor stories written by children of survivors? There is the issue of 'mediation' and 'received history' [xlii]that can be raised.Are they transmitted in the same manner as stories written by survivors of the first generation? Another question that arises is the act of embellishment. How do we differentiate between our responses to stories with embellishments and stories with historical accuracy? This is question fraught with many complexities as a literature cannot always be true to each lived experience. The most important barriers that hinder literal representation are the problems in voicing trauma adequately and reluctance to share personal history. So, often survivor stories can also be seen as interpretations and reconfigurations of the past.

This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen is an example of a collection of survivor stories by Tadeusz Borowski which gives an objective account of the atrocities at concentration camps. The barbarism that was inflicted as a result of the implementation of the 'final solution' is implied in the title as well. Borowski writes:

> Do you really think that, without the hope that such a world is possible, that the rights of man will be restored again, we could stand the concentration camp even for one day? It is that very hope that makes people go without a murmur to the gas chambers, keeps them from risking a revolt, paralyses them into numb inactivity. It is hope that breaks down family ties, makes mothers renounce their children, or wives sell their bodies for bread, or husbands kill.(n.p.)

Borowski was himself detained at Dachau concentration camp by the SS, from where he gleans the memories used to write this book. The text is rife with allusions to graphic violence, stench, vomit, blood and corpses. Other than providing instances of brutality like the scene where women refuse to take their infants to the gas chambers but have to acquiesce upon being forced, the text is also riddled with moral and philosophical reflections. When talking about the act of bare survival, Borowski talks about the 'wet earth' [xliii]that is marked by graves and forms the way towards home. For Jewish communities, this feeling of homelessness and a sense of displacement marks this act of survival. Borowski's survivor story, like many others, discusses the eyewitness accounts of poisoning, asphyxiation and the

'camp laws' that marked the atmosphere at gas chambers. He also questions the complicity of ordinary German citizens and the passive Jews who do not resist the SS when he asks -

> Why is it that nobody cries out, nobody spits in their faces, nobody jumps at their throats? (n.p.)

Borowski's work is based upon his own firsthand experiences but often survivor stories are presented to us in the form of interviews with first generation survivors. Sylvia Rothchild in her book *Voices from the Holocaust,*[xliv] attempts to give a voice to survivors currently residing in America. Published in 1981, this book was a means of recollection and reconfiguration for survivors so that they could reclaim their identities. In a similar attempt, Ursula Hegi tries to work through questions of identity and guilt by interviewing second and third generation descendants of Germans living in the United States in her book *Tearing the Silence: On Being German in America.*

What is common in both texts is that both attempt to articulate what Hegi terms as 'unspeakable.'[xlv] Rothchild interviews Jewish survivors and Hegi attempts to capture the fraught identity of German descendants of those who lived through the Holocaust. Hegi notices how the participants are marked by alienation and often compartmentalise their German identity from their other identities as they are wracked by guilt. Several of the second and third generation descendants ask the question repeatedly-

> What can you do so that this will never happen again?[xlvi] (Hegi 2)

What Hegi attempts in *Tearing the Silence* is to look at the Holocaust survival stories from the other side, the side of those non-participating but largely silent Germans who are struggling to come to terms with the past. Hegi's work is at attempt to reach an understanding and build a Holocaust consciousness, which has been spurred as a movement in recent times. As subsequent surviving generations feel impelled to tell the stories of their Jewish relatives, which we can also read as survivor stories, though they are not direct or first-hand, similarly subsequent German generations feel an obligation to talk about the Holocaust denial they have witnessed from their parents. Their identity becomes enmeshed with the traumatic histories of their families and Hegi provides a means of scrutiny through her work, which we will explore in detail in Chapter Four-Distorted Reflections.

Other survivor stories include Inge Auerbacher's *I Am a Star: Child of the Holocaust* (1986) which weaves together autobiographical elements along with historical facts on the Holocaust. Auerbacher details the cruelty faced at Nazi concentration camps and the ordeal

for surviving the Holocaust. Gerda Weissman Klein's *All But My Life* (1957) tells her moving and brutal experience as one of one hundred and twenty women who marched from a camp in Germany to free themselves. [xlvii]Arlene Stein, renowned sociologist terms the survivors 'reluctant witnesses.'[xlviii] In most survivor stories, the historical trauma was often brought to the fore by the subsequent generations as the first generation would often be hesitant to talk about their trauma or had fissures in their remembrance.

In Ursula Hegi's novel *Floating in my Mother's Palm* (1990), the tales of trauma are not told from the perspective of Jewish survivors but from the viewpoint of German Hanna Malter who deals with the trauma of her mother's death. In Hegi's S*tones from the River* (1994),there are gruesome survivor tales embedded within the fabric of the novel but accessible to the reader through the viewpoint of German librarian Trudi Montag. There is a destabilisation at work in either form of survival stories. Critics often raise the question whether we can see German attempts to talk about the Holocaust experience as legitimate but in order to deal with Holocaust 'distortion'[xlix] or its denial, there needs to be a conversation from both sides of the historical divide. Hegi attempts to engage with this destabilisation in identity and German guilt in her works.

This destabilisation can be seen in the language of Holocaust literature as well, due to the inability to represent trauma adequately, as we have discussed earlier.Ruptures and fissures generated by trauma cannot be represented or re-enacted suitably to document the pain and catastrophe that has occured. Victoria Aarons mentions how Holocaust literature "attempts to upend conventional constructs of language and experience, undoing some of language's palliative, antidotal and redemptive possibilities." (Aarons 2) However, here I do not completely agree with Aarons about this 'undoing' and we will discuss later how these disruptions in language and tropes like magic realism provide certain 'redemptive possibilities' to the writer and reader alike.

We will connect Holocaust literature to other histories of persecution in later chapters to understand the common registers of language and frameworks used to talk about trauma. However, as we examine the generic possibilities of Holocaust literature, we must discuss its narrative frameworks and registers of language as well. As we have previously discussed that this genre is not static, its dynamic features and the acuteness of its associated trauma, its language is often marked by disruption and dissociation. In the next section, I would like to look at strategies of representation by Holocaust writers and the concept of 'aporia' related to this field.

In Ursula Hegi's *Children and Fire* (2004), the town is divided and spurred onto a frenzy by the Reichstag fire. Hegi talks about the 'swirl of song and fire' and the emotions of a mass, a frenzied mob that throws books into a burning fire. This version of the mass burning of books in the novel is undoubtedly taken from the many destructive Nazi attempts to silence artists and writers. The burning of books was a desecration; an anomaly and it is ironical that Nazi regime's policies itself engendered so many books on the Holocaust.

Holocaust literature, as we have seen, is marked by internal contradictions and disjunctions due to various reasons. Survivors, as we discussed, are reluctant to speak about their trauma and often do not find the courage to voice it out. It is also not possible for a literary production to come close to the real trauma and language often serves as an incomplete medium for this transmission. Another reason that can contradict the purpose of this exercise is the transmission of stories by subsequent generations due to the notion of "empathetic unsettlement."[l] (LaCapra n.p.) More dramatisation and embellishment seeps in, in works of the next generations, who are only responding to the trauma of the previous generations. The unsettlement seen in these texts is a result of the subsequent generations working on unfamiliar grounds but all too familiar with the "phantom pain."[li] (Berger 24)

The texts often use violence, graphic imagery to convey the brutality of the actual events, however some have been accused of sensationalisation. Other texts often uses fantasy and allegory as tropes along with embedding the stories in historically accurate contexts. Even Ursula Hegi places her texts in the imaginary town of Burgdorf, where an imaginary river 'Rhein' marks the landscape. However, the events that unfold in the town are drawn from the Second World War. The trauma that we unearth even in the lives of German families during the war stands testimony to the cataclysmic nature of the event. There is a sense of haunting that is related to the lives of everyone who was however, briefly, a part of the Holocaust.

The problems of language in this genre crop up of because of the aspect of 'irrepresentability' of trauma which is an inter-related aspect in histories of all kinds of trauma. Victoria Aarons terms the act of reading the Holocaust an "ethical act of reading and bearing witness." (1) Critics like Elie Wiesel have lamented that language falls short of representing the Holocaust in a sort of death of language. George Steiner famously said-

> To speak of the *unspeakable* is to risk the survivance of language as creator and bearer of humane, rational truth. Words that are saturated with lies or atrocity do not easily resume life.[lii] (182)

Steiner also talks about the misuse of language[liii] for the purposes of Holocaust denial, going against its two functions of 'law' and 'grace'. Not only has language been misused for the purpose of Holocaust denial, it was also used by the Nazis for concealment of their genocide plans when they went about with their propaganda missions. Hence, critics who study semantics believe language has an added responsibility when it comes to delineating the trauma of the Holocaust. Considerations of language often surround philosophical and theological issues and in this case, the mass genocide has sparked a long debated issue of language. Juliet Mitchell in her work on trauma, writes that language is a means of affirmation and negotiation with past trauma and calls recognition and language "interactional social processes." (121)[liv]

When we define trauma from the viewpoint of the person who experienced it, how accurately can survivor stories written by subsequent generations capture the traumatic experience?Hence, we need to be aware of already existing disjunctions and loopholes in the use of language. Kathryn Harrison terms this language as a 'hidden' language; an 'unsayable' truth, evoking Lacan's theory about the unconscious and language.[lv] (n.p.)

According to Lacan, trauma is a void and the 'unassimilable'[lvi] which is exceedingly difficult to talk about in psychoanalysis.[lvii] (Chapman n.p.)To even try to assimilate it, language needs to have a radical, non-traditional role and has to work as a catalyst for negotiation with trauma. To understand the role of language in this complexity, I will be looking at the use of fantasy and magic realism in Holocaust literature as well as examine the use of graphicness and violence.

While magic realism and fantasy have a legacy of imagination, which seems an unsuitable fit to talk about traumatic experience, they serve as tropes to deal with the many contradictions in the representation of Holocaust trauma. Critics like Maria Takolander[lviii] find trauma central to magic realist fiction. Magic realism can be seen in contrast to Michael Rothberg's idea of 'traumatic realism.'[lix] According to Rothberg, Holocaust literature needs to be marked by realism which takes into account the extremity of the events. However, a magic realist narrative tries to fill in the lacunae of representation that a conventionally realist narrative may find itself falling short of. Karin Doerr, while talking about the fear induced by select words and terminology of the Holocaust writes that:

> For example, *Umsiedlung, Umschlagplatz, Selektion,* and *Son- derbehandlung* concealed the steps to the Nazi genocide. The seemingly enigmatic term *Muselman(n)* and the word *Jude (Jew)* spelled death. (Doerr 47)[lx]

If we not only restrict ourselves to select terminology, we can safely say that ordinary language often fails in its prerogative to delineate a traumatic experience and evokes frightful memories for survivors by its use of realist tendencies. In this context, does a magic realist narrative offer more sustenance, so to say? Do fantasy tropes provide a new framework vis-a-vis which we can challenge realist fiction? Dr. Axel Staehler's edited journal on *Symbolism* posits that magic realism has come to be an important watershed movement in post-Holocaust Jewish literature; "a significant mode of expression in Jewish cultural production.''[lxi] (n.p.)

Magic realist novels have become an integral part of Jewish negotiation with the past. A major trope in most of the texts is the aspect of time travel, in which a contemporary protagonist either travels to the site of concentration camps as in *The Devil's Arithmetic* by Jane Yolen or ones in which there is movement away from Holocaust sites. David Grossman's 1986 work, *See Under:Love* is a magnificent, important work of magic realist fiction that deals with the Holocaust. Grossman talks about the fallacy of language in representation in the text:

> The square was still trickling with whispers and the acoustic condensation of feeling-vapors, which I cannot convey here because of the lamentable impotence of language. (n.p.)

The novel has a child portagonist who wants to "tame the Nazi beast."[lxii] By coalescing the various facets of the Nazi regime into one Gorgon-like monster which needs to be slayed, Grossman evokes magic realist tropes. Another important motif that he uses in the text is that of dreams, which has been a staple of magic realist fiction since Franz Kafka's vision. The text is written in the form of a daydream-

> Utopias are gold-covered paper, he said, and flypaper is covered in everything man secretes from his body and his life. Especially the suffering. And our hope is that its measure is the measure of man, and forgiveness. (n.p.)

Grossman also has fantastical characters in the novel; the 'water-man,' someone impervious to death and adversity. Since death was a haunting feature of the Holocaust, Grossman grants his characters an invincibility against it. The novel talks about the 'age of Genius' which would happen if Bruno Schulz, the magic realist writer was not executed by the SS. *See Under:Love* is full of fantastical dreams, with what-ifs and wishful thinking that the Holocaust; "a laboratory gone mad, accelerating and intensifying human processes a hundredfold.." never really happened. (n.p.)

Magic realist Holocaust fiction thus can be seen as a mode of inquiry and cannot be merely dubbed as children's literature of the Holocaust, as some critics tend to see it. It appropriates fantasy tropes in an act of subversion; in a rather telling way, as an act of resistance against Nazi authority. This 'playing' with fantasy and the use of poetic, 'dream-like' language is a narrative mechanism which provides freedom and an attempted obliteration of past trauma. While language in this case provides a mediation between the violent past and the present, some Holocaust novelists choose the accusing, disenchanted framework of graphic violence to write about the genocide. Writer Yehiel De-Nur, known as Ka Tzetnik is known for his seminal work, *House of Dolls* (1955), which depicts intense sexual violence at concentration camps. It is seen as 'pulp' fiction which represents the grotesque reality of the Holocaust, with characters like pregnant women, maimed survivors and imaginary dogs. Tzetnik writes:

> Suddenly a battering at the house gate . . . In the ghetto, when there is a knocking at the gate at night, it reverberates in the heart as though a thousand alarm bells were heaving inside you. For it is death now knocking at the gate. And who knows whose soul he has come for this time? (Ka-Tzetnik 79)

The work is rife with allusions to sexual violence, evoking death and desecration which are used to put the readers through an extreme ordeal, akin to the one felt by victims and survivors. We can term it as a simulated experience where the reader feels the chilling account of the 'knocking at the gate' and experiences the same fear it has a direct bearing upon. In Ka Tzetnik's work, philosophy is replaced by luridness and by bringing violence to the frontline, such writers try to come up for air from under the "habitual blanket of silence and denial."[lxiii] (n.p.) In his other pivotal work, *Salamandra*, Tztenik not only paints a brutal account of concentration camps but talks about the dehumanisation of victims as he writes how the camps signal the ending of dreams. The "striped clusters" of the camps stand testimony to the hegemonization that was essential to the Nazi regime. The violence stands apart, as a monstrous perversity of human nature and these texts can be looked at as testimony; as a literature of violence. Dehumanization, depersonalisation and repulsion form the core of these texts often critiqued for their sadistic content, but the author's intention is not to eroticise the past, but to jostle global memory of the Holocaust by pinpointing the zealotry at its heart.

Thus, writing about the Holocaust highlights the failure of language, whether in a magic realist text or in a text which has violence at its core. Whether we talk about the constitution of this genre or the language inhabiting it, there is only failure, schism and disjunction that

comes to the fore. Explicative frameworks fall flat in the face of mass trauma, bringing to mind the idea of 'aporias' or 'unsolvable impasses.'[lxiv]Esther Marion uses the term in the context of Holocaust literature, as she writes that it is riddled with aporias with a "historical constitution" and documents the "failure of traditional interpretative schemes in the aftermath of the Holocaust." (1009) Language fails us in comprehending this trauma in both the writing and representation, as well as the response evoked by this language. How are we supposed to counter the metafictive and imaginative charge levelled at magic realist narratives? How should we read, for example, Grossman's water-man, a person who evades death, in the context of innumerable deaths? Is it merely wishful thinking or does he resort to fantasy because he is unable to fathom the waste that is these deaths? Thus, insoluble questions remain at the heart of Holocaust literature and the registers of its language cannot be defined or normalised in any sense.

Marion refers to Giorgio Agamben's work in which he writes that " I will consider myself content with my work if, in attempting to locate the place and theme of testimony, I have erected some signposts allowing future cartographers of the new ethical territory to orient themselves." (as qtd in Marion 13) If we look at aporias and these signposts side by side, we can conclude that Holocaust literature has been, and will always be riddled by aporias. However, we can come up with a few signposts that take further the idea of Holocaust consciousness, something that Ursula Hegi is approaching in her work. In a landscape filled with selective amnesia, we can ascribe Jacques Derrida's idea of the 'originary deferral of meaning' to this corpus of literature, in the sense that there is a disjunction in this writing. Meaning can be speculated upon however, one cannot be certain whether it is not full of 'blind spots.'

As we have discussed earlier, survivor stories are bound by similar characteristics, however, they are also different from each other due to amnesia and gaps in memories. Different people may remember things differently hence it is impossible to brand the entire literature together under one umbrella. Our response towards the Holocaust is shaped by these existing frameworks of memory and should lead us towards forgiveness and reconciliation. This is the kind of Holocaust consciousness that Ursula Hegi tries to achieve, as she uses first and second generation accounts of German descendants in her works. For example, in *The Vision of Emma Blau* (2000), the effect of German complicity in the Holocaust is seen through the eyes of Helene and then her granddaughter Emma, who feels the "phantom pain" that Epstein has talked about, as she feels a void inside her, not satiated by anything. The *Wasserburg* or

the definitive building built by her grandfather can be seen as representative of an entire nation, the German pride, before it falls into disrepair and crumbles in front of his grandchildren. Hegi's works are connective in the face of such disjunctions, an attempt to locate a cultural 'hybridity' of German descendants who now live in the United States of America. Such texts serve as a conduit for an empathetic understanding of what we try to excavate when we speak of Holocaust trauma, or any trauma for that matter.

We have discussed throughout the chapter why there is a need for a dynamic and fluid genre which serves as a liminal space for Holocaust Literature. This space should ideally provide a means of creative pursuit to come to terms with the ghosts of the past which still haunt survivors and their children. We have seen how Holocaust literature was denied its space by anti-semitic people, how it was distorted and its graphically violent texts accused of lurid sensationalism. However, one cannot deny the subversive aspects of this literature and its redemptive strategies. If we need a Holocaust consciousness to fully exist, we need a comprehensive body of work that can add to the knowledge of the event. As we have seen, a historical survey by Naomi Diamant and David J. Roskies has worked upon the historiography of the Holocaust and provided us an idea of the different kinds of memory approaches to it, namely 'communal memory,' 'provisional memory,' and 'authorized memory.' We have also analysed texts by Elie Wiesel, Primo Levi to understand the ethical implications of Holocaust representation.

Holocaust literature is an alternative, liminal space and oscillates between Rothberg's idea of 'traumatic realism' and magic realist narratives. What then should we deduce Holocaust literature to be or should we deduce it to anything? By labelling and categorising, are we falling prey to the same traditional formats in a literature that is so marked by juxtapositions and disjunctions? We need a literature of empowerment, which is marked by understanding and fulfilment. Representing such trauma can be as frustrating as excavating the unconscious, hence we can equate the language of this literature with the unconscious; a Lacanian motif. We can safely assume that meaning is lost several times in this sort of representation. Meaning is lost when memory is filled with amnesia, splits and gaps and subsequent generations experience the 'phantom pain' as well but cannot account for the 'absent memory.'[lxv] Meaning is also lost in the reception of the reader, that is, in the interaction between the text and the reader. The absence, talked about here in terms of memory, is also apt for the field of Holocaust literature, a literature marked by absence of identity and displacement.

How do we thus define Holocaust literature, a body of work that is ever-expanding and inherently paradoxical? It resists definition as that would mean labelling it into neat categories. However, I agree with the simple definition put forward by David J. Roskies and Naomi Diamant which we have discussed earlier. If we classify it as a genre, what is the aim behind this body of literature ? Does it serve a purpose?

As a literature about war, Holocaust literature has an uneasy relationship with language but unlike other war literature, merely archival is not its purpose. We have seen how despite the extrapolation and displacement which abounds in its narrative, Holocaust literature serves as a means of self-empowerment for anyone dealing with the trauma of the Holocaust. It provides commemorialization and provides a space for articulation of unsaid trauma. We can agree on the aspect of the limits of its representation and its importance as a literary discourse. It serves to confront the publicly secret nature of mass murder but this makes us question whether it becomes an instrument for politics? How do we see it as a recollection of personal history as well as part of a larger, political narrative? Does that dilute its meaning? This literature employs language that is different from 'normal' registers of language. As we discussed earlier, certain German words have negative connotations for survivors of trauma as they carried double and deceitful meanings. So the question arises how can we trust the language of this genre if it deploys the same violence as seen in Ka Tzetnik's work? If we do so, are we negating survivor testimony, casting doubt or merely admitting to the incommensurate nature of language here?

Elie Wiesel has talked about this immeasurable failure of language as he famously remarked how Auschwitz "defeated art and culture."[lxvi] (n.p.) So does an attempt to narrativise testimony means we are trivialising memory? These ethical questions remain at the centre of Holocaust literature. It is a telling comment upon this act of representation that Ursula Hegi's protagonist in the novel *Stones from the River*- Trudi Montag is a story-teller. She is known to embellish stories and people fear telling her secrets as she spreads them around till the entire town is aware of the darkness that defines people. Trudi only brings to the fore the individual darknesses that haunt each German she knows and the burden of guilt carried by the townspeople of Burgdorf. By making her a storyteller and resting the verisimilitude, a word thrown around a lot in Holocaust criticism, upon Trudi, Hegi is layering the novel and responding to the metafictive aspect of storytelling. She is also building an alternative narrative in which traditional storytellers are replaced by ones who rupture the discourse.

So the simplistic definition of Holocaust literature would be that we see it as a literature about or related to the Holocaust. Not limiting by conventional generic structures, we can ascribe fluidity to it and keep in mind the ethical limitations to its representation. However, a narrative discourse is essential to the building of a Holocaust consciousness as dialogue and mediation is the way towards healing of trauma. We have also argued how Ursula Hegi's works straddle the divide between traumatic realism and magic realism. We have also discussed how works by writers like Ka Tzetnik turn readers into witnesses of the trauma and gruesome violence. Thus, the overarching role that we can come up for Holocaust literature is that of a conduit to negotiate trauma. It can be argued that certain texts like those written by Ka Tzetnik are perceived on the margins of Holocaust literature by critics and accused of trivialization. For a literature that has exclusion and marginalisation as its key themes, can it take a partisan stand against such fictional representation? On the other hand, including each and every artist as some might be exploiting traumatic memory for artistic ambition.

It can be safely assumed that the ethical implications of Holocaust literature are far-reaching and it is fraught with many complexities. However, I strongly feel that to call it a hoax reeks of anti-semitism and denying the rights of Jewish people to even articulate their trauma. Holocaust literature is a multi-disciplinary, multi-faceted body of work whose narratives mirror the fragmentation faced by several of PTSD survivors. It comprises a variety of writing that intersect with several writings as in the case of Ursula Hegi's *Stones from the River* which deals with disability as well as the Holocaust. The Holocaust cannot be completely portrayed as Wiesel, Levi and Saul Friedlander have contested and perhaps to call any text an adequate representation would be a disservice to Jewish memory. Nevertheless, we need this discourse however haunted by shadows and ghosts this literature may be. These stories need to be told in order to deal with past trauma and also to live with the present 'phantom pain.'

Chapter II

The Transmission of Transgenerational Trauma in Ursula Hegi's novels

Trauma theory has been defined by James Berger as a "discourse of the unrepresentable." (573)Trauma has been around as a psychoanalytic conception for a long time and our responses to it shape literature. The Oxford English Dictionary defines 'trauma' as a "deeply distressing or disturbing experience."[lxvii] (n.p.)When we revisit certain memories, we are flooded by nostalgia and the same goes for traumatic memories. We are forever walking a tightrope of forgetting and remembrance and trauma often shows up as symptomatic manifestations much later. That PTSD(post traumatic stress disorder) was seen in soldiers of the First and Second World Wars is a known fact. Yet, whenever we talk of the literature surrounding war, we seem to be unable to reconceptualize and renegotiate this trauma. The representation of trauma is dubious at best, for no framework has yet been unearthed which can translate trauma into words directly. We would be looking at something like a stream of consciousness at best to represent trauma.

As we have discussed earlier, dreams, fantasy, allegories all are used as tropes to manifest trauma in literature and language falls short in this exercise; becoming riddled with impasses known as 'aporias.' Hence, to understand the use of trauma in literary works and for a critical engagement with literary models, trauma theory was a primary need. Trauma theory has, in recent times, been a conceptualisation by Cathy Caruth, Dominick La Capra and Kali Tal amongst others like Jeffrey Alexander. Trauma theory, like the genre of Holocaust Literature has ethical limits of representation and is straddled by a "traumatic-sacred-sublime-alterity." (Berger 574) So the question arises about the need and importance of trauma theory and how does it shape other critical discourse on writing about catastrophe. Can we talk about all works related to trauma under one umbrella and why all of a sudden has there been such a focus on trauma in literary works? Such questions need to be answered for us to posit any critical definition of trauma theory.

The concept of trauma has changed a lot since its Freudian and Lacanian analysis and now it is also seen in terms of a socio-cultural perspective. Current trauma theory focuses on working through trauma, which is also done by the approach to it of subsequent generations. In this context, transgenerational trauma becomes a pivotal concept. Transgenerational trauma refers to trauma that has been passed from one generation to another and in this study we will use it in the context of the Holocaust. Holocaust trauma is a visible force in Ursula Hegi's work as well and she shifts the burden of negotiation with trauma onto the subsequent

generations, which is why we have a Hanna Malter questioning and assimilating the traumatic memories left behind by her mother Jutta Malter. In *Floating in my Mother's Palm* (1990), Hanna grows up in a postwar Germany but like others of her generation, she can feel the guilt seeping through the town like the 'phantom pain' that Helene Epstein has talked about.

It can be questioned how transgenerational trauma is passed on from one generation to another since it is not a contagion. How then does the axis of transgenerational trauma work? Memories are not discrete, physical presences rather masses of vague inputs. The inadequacy of memory forms the basis of inadequacy of survivor stories. How can we thus be sure of the effect of trauma on the next generations?

Critics have talked about the transmission of trauma in subsequent generations as an "emotional handoff." (Fromm 91) It is labelled as a collective process that also is marked by loss of memories and addition of mythology related to the collective trauma. Howard Stein has examined this transmission as existing in a 'vertical' and 'horizontal' manner whereas trauma becomes a legacy passed down from one generation to another. It is a complex process by which trauma which cannot be gauged is consciously and unconsciously connected to the next generations in the form of emotional manifestations such as 'phantom pain' or active post traumatic stress disorders.

Critics agree over the fact that the occurrence of post-traumatic stress disorders signals the transmission of trauma and can be seen as a manifestation of transgenerational trauma. There has also been a lot of contention on the usage of terms like intergenerational and transgenerational trauma, with critics divided on the difference between the two. Some critics prefer to use the phrase historical trauma to specify trauma that has been passed to subsequent generations after a historical catastrophe. However, I think multigenerational trauma becomes a much wider term which uses trauma across generations and milieus to look at it as a legacy.

Current research has also shown us that trauma can be passed to next generations due to genetic modifications known as epigenetics. So, a variety of terms have been associated with this kind of traumatic transmission but for the purposes of this study, I would use transgenerational trauma and intergenerational trauma to discuss the use of cultural and historical trauma in Ursula Hegi's novels. In Hegi's novel *The Vision of Emma Blau* (2000), the trauma of war is passed down from her grandparents Stefan and Helene to Emma and her brother and another kind of trauma is passed down from Emma's mother and father to her.

So, we see transmission of trauma both from the generations of parents to children as well as across generations.

The *Wasserburg* in the book symbolises a fortress that succumbs to decay later on in the text despite Emma trying to stop its downfall. The *Wasserburg* was built by Stefan Blau when he had a dream-vision of his grand-daughter Emma before she was even born. It turned out to be an opulent building for tenants that brought Stefan prosperity initially but later became a family curse. In the text, trauma is manifested in the form of personality defects like Stefan's son's penchant for over-eating and Emma's own obsession with the *Wasserburg.* We can see the fortress-like building as a symbol for the German state which also fell into ruin due to fanatical and obsessive policies. However, we will be examining this closely in Chapter Three when we discuss Ursula Hegi's Burgdorf cycle.

In Hegi's works, trauma shapes personal and collective history as in the history of the Blau family in *The Vision of Emma Blau* (2000) or the Malter family in *Floating in my Mother's Palm* (1990). Both vertical and horizontal transmission of trauma is visible as trauma changes the socio-cultural dynamic of the community. Trauma has shaped social discourse, visibly so after the Holocaust. We can easily say that the subject became haunted in Holocaust literature and this has engendered the need for a distinctive framework for studying trauma related to it.

After the Holocaust, historical and cultural trauma became a discourse which has shaped and changed literary models of trauma studies. Dominick LaCapra has argued for two kinds of "symptomatic possibilities" for this discourse, namely a "redemptive, fetishistic narrative" and then the "construction of all history as trauma." (as qtd in Berger 575) A revised trauma theory has brought more focus onto Holocaust literature and can offer more intervention and approaches. However, we need to see what questions can be asked of trauma theory and how illuminating it can be in understanding the cultural trauma of the Holocaust. Trauma theory also offers us a deeper understanding of the historiography of the Holocaust.

In her narratives, Hegi attempts to subvert the construction of history offered to both Germans and Jews alike when she fuses an imaginary landscape with the historically verified events of the Holocaust. The imaginary river Rhein and the town Burgdorf are participants in a very real, active war. Similarly the *Wasserburg* marks a shift in the history of the Blau family; it becomes the framework through which their collective memory is shaped. The experience of trauma has been linked to architecture, with the construction of several war memorials around the world as homages to victims and survivors. The *Wasserburg* can be seen as monument in that context; as a monument which prefaces the tragedy that befalls the

Blau family. Stefan Blau comes to realise upon his death bed how the building has 'seduced' and 'corrupted' his family. The cracks and fissures in the building can also signify the disruptions that trauma causes.

Furthermore, Hegi comments on the act of repression through the repressed homosexuality of the elder son in the Blau family.The building becomes the discrete reality through which the family negotiates the abyss of trauma and its gaping holes; like the obesity of the Blau son or the obsession of the Blau grand-daughter Emma. On the other hand, the river Rhein in *Stones from the River* stands as a silent testimony and its massive rocks and stones that impede the flow of the water can be seen as symbols of the gaps and holes in memory that obstruct the representation of memory and trauma. The experience of trauma has been mapped into an imaginary landscape in the Burgdorf cycle perhaps attesting to the intangibility and opaqueness of trauma. It also a comment on the totalisation of history and the imaginary town is a projection of several individual memories.

The new understanding of trauma focuses on "aporias, dispossession and deferred meaning" (as qtd in Berger 576) Dominick LaCapra has termed prior trauma theory and analysis of historical trauma as an "overly generalised discourse of absence." (698) There is a complex narrative that gets created when we apply normative theory to the actions of the past and judge them on the basis of a "balancing of accounts." (LaCapra 697) This often leads to a fragmented or diluted narrative which deals with the notions of trauma and loss in the same way; leading to the generalisation that LaCapra discusses. However, normativity as a means of evaluation needs to be an important part of Holocaust literature in order to understand how good, bad actions work along with guilt and complicity. For example, in Ursula Hegi's *Stones from the River,* characters often get redeemed for their 'good' possibilities when they help in saving Jewish neighbours from the SS. On the other hand, there are characters like Alexander Sturm, the dentist, is hitherto known as a 'good' man. But his courage fails him in front of the Gestapo and he saves himself before his Jewish wife Eva. Later, he ends up committing suicide.

What LaCapra seems to suggest then is that when we are faced with trauma of such magnitude, there is bound to be "endless melancholy and interminable aporia." (698) LaCapra terms these aporias as "compulsive repetitions" (698) and says that repetition often causes distinctions between victims and witnesses to get blurred. Furthermore he discusses the distinction between absence and loss when we speak of historical trauma, in the sense that absence, defined in terms of non-existent physical reality does not always go along with loss.

Here he digresses from previous works on trauma writing where absence and loss have often been conflated together. For LaCapra, to draw a distinction, not so much of a binary, between absence and loss serves to provide a better understanding of traumatic confusion as "a symptom of radical disorientation." (701) LaCapra seems to suggest that normative, simple narratives which fetishize absence and equate it with loss run the risk of forming a myth around trauma. He terms this narrative "reductive and even close to a myth." (701)

In Hegi's work, the conventional narrative which is absolute in terms of absence and loss is replaced by a subversive one. There is no traditional sense of closure that is sought. People are defined by the losses that have occurred to them as they shape their personalities but this does not necessarily mean that there is any lack or absence in their lives. However, their trauma does exist as absence and loss but absence is known and recognised as absence and there is mourning of loss such as the loss of Hanna Malter's mother Jutta. The two categories work independently of each other.

LaCapra has also talked about his theory of 'acting out' versus the traditional idea of working through trauma which he maps onto the difference between 'structural trauma and historical trauma.' Bringing together absence and loss does not work well, according to LaCapra for it leads to assertions like "all history is trauma" (712). It can also lead to the viewpoint that all culture basically belongs to a "wound culture." (as qtd 712) This vitiated public space then makes it even more difficult for us to understand specific trauma and loss related to the Holocaust. Hence, LaCapra finds it imperative to differentiate between the processes of negotiation and reconfiguration of trauma, namely, 'acting out' and 'working through.' He terms them as "inter-related modes of responding to …historical trauma." (713) However, I believe that acting out corresponds to one of the processes of working through trauma and we can see 'working through' as a larger umbrella term. 'Working through' should ideally provide a framework to transcend trauma and grief.

For Trudi Montag, in Ursula Hegi's *Stones from the River* 'acting out' through her stories paves the way for working through the trauma of her rape. Trudi starts embellishing stories, then spinning them as a way of acting out against the prejudice faced due to her dwarfism, in order to retaliate against the town which shuns her. Trudi is kissed while dancing by the dentist Klaus Malter, whose uncle later marries Trudi's friend Eva.

When his uncle Alexander Sturm, in a cowardly act, does not step up to save Eva, it is Trudi who spreads this piece of news to the town. She also takes revenge upon the perpetrators of the assault on her, by spreading gossip about them. The trauma and pain thus becomes

entrenched in her mind through a process of cathexis and the acting out is part of a process which leads to working through. For LaCapra however, 'melancholia' forms a part of acting out while 'mourning' can be seen in connection with acting-out. Along with the procedure of mourning, LaCapra also lists other processes for working through trauma, namely, the use of a "critical and nontotalizing narrative" along with "self-critical thought and practice." (714)

Based upon the experiences of trauma, LaCapra draws a binary between historical and structural trauma wherein historical trauma is formed or put in place by the occurrence of certain historical events. On the other hand, structural trauma is "ambivalent" (724) and almost affects everyone. When we talk of historical trauma like Holocaust trauma, there is a distinction between "victims, perpetrators and bystanders." (723) It is trauma that affects the bystanders; that is, the German population of Burgdorf that Ursula Hegi majorly explores in her works. For the German population of Burgdorf, the lines between victim and bystander become blurred. Thekla Jansen, the teacher in *Children and Fire* is not only a bystander to the metaphorical fire that consumes her students but also a victim herself, as she learns of her Jewish identity. For LaCapra, this notion of victimhood is not only psychological, victim, "in variable ways, (is) a social, political and ethical category." (723) The ethical ramifications of victimhood make it even more complex as several stories also centre around the trauma faced by the Gestapo and SS men, in the form of guilt. LaCapra agrees that the "possibility of perpetrator trauma must be acknowledged" (723) for us to achieve any rational understanding of this historical trauma.

In Hegi's works, we encounter structural trauma as well, mired as it is in historical trauma. Hegi's historical trauma, as we discussed earlier, is set in a play-world; an imaginary setting.

So, the writer who becomes a secondary witness according to current trauma theory, in this case also becomes an all-powerful creator of a play-world. Structural trauma too can have its foundation in the historical event, as in, the Holocaust can become a starting point for structural trauma.LaCapra sees structural trauma and historical trauma come together because of the "elusiveness of the traumatic experience in both cases." (724) So, if we posit the experiences around the Holocaust as historical trauma in Ursula Hegi's *Stones from the River*, Trudi's rape in the novel becomes a focal point for another kind of trauma. Both the kinds of trauma are characterised by an inability to be expressed and are acted out through various means, which for Trudi includes storytelling as an exercise in transcending her trauma.

When we talk about trauma, the terms ‘oppressed,’ ‘suppressed,’ and ‘repressed’ come to the fore, along with words like ‘victim,’ ‘perpetrator,’ ‘bystander,’ and ‘survivor’ which we have discussed earlier . Repression, however, is the one focused upon by LaCapra in his framework of trauma theory, where he talks about the idea of ‘transference.’ Berger defines transference as a “conscious summoning of the repressed.” (576) The idea of LaCapra’s transference is rooted in repression, which seems Freudian in its approach. LaCapra brings up transference so that the subject of the trauma (the victim) can identify the trauma as “active.” (as qtd in Berger 576)

Critical evaluation and understanding of trauma, both structural and historical, stems from an active acknowledgement of it. As we have analysed earlier, Ursula Hegi’s work also provides a “symptomatic acting-out” of the historical trauma of the Holocaust (Berger 577). However, I do not agree with the distinctions imposed upon the two processes as I feel one is a pivotal part of the other. LaCapra does call this distinction “non-binary” but he argues for different approaches to both. (713) However, I believe that working through as a means of reconciliation should serve as the bigger narrative.

LaCapra applies a postmodern approach to trauma theory and discusses important concepts that can be used for reconciliatory approaches as well as to understand the problems of ‘aporias’ and disjunctions in literature surrounding the same. In a post-Holocaust space, the ideas around trauma theory need to change with times, as the manifestations of trauma keep changing as well. Trauma manifests as psychiatric disorders like PTSD in survivors and subsequent generations but the current world culture has also become consumptive of trauma. Hence, trauma transmission needs to be examined with a new perspective, so as to not fall into the rigid axes of theories for purposes of redemption. Cathy Caruth focuses on the working through of trauma, as compared to Dominick LaCapra, as she writes about how “trauma becomes text” and “wound becomes voice.” (577)

LaCapra’s idea of “recathexis” (713) through the act of mourning does not take into account the narration of trauma. Caruth agrees with LaCapra in recognising the foundational structure of trauma as rooted in historical and political settings. However, her book *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (1996) posits a new understanding of history in the wake of a traumatic narrative. The idea of ‘testimony’ is crucial to Caruth’s work while LaCapra comes up with the term ‘transference' to deal with the problems of trauma. Cathy Caruth understands trauma in relation to its latency and belated aspect. She writes:

> Only after a period of latency, can trauma be placed in a narrative. (181)

The most important question raised here is the relation of trauma to narration and how is that achieved. Caruth acknowledges the problems of irrepresentability when it comes to traumatic experience. However, she sees trauma as an open 'wound' which may be forgotten but lies active and painful. Her theory is based upon "resituating history" (181) at the intersection of trauma and narrative.

It cannot be negated that in a post-Holocaust space, the idea of mass genocide has become inextricably linked with the word 'Holocaust.' Anna Burns, in her Booker prize winning novel *Milkman,* writes about the mass killing of a town's dogs by a group of mercenary and brutal soldiers and dubs it as a 'holocaust.' So, there is a sense of a sublime and sacred aspect not only to the term 'Holocaust' but also with its connotations. The writing of trauma of the Holocaust becomes all the more problematic because of the variety of experiences related to this event. Dehumanizing experiences related to the Holocaust include not only sexual trauma, but also mass killings, disappearances and burnings, to name a few. To write about a myriad of experiences, the problem of language crops up every now and then.

So, Caruth posits that there is a problem of "listening, knowing and representing" (n.p) that is acutely related to trauma and that literature actually acts as a "witness" to trauma. Hence, we have to rethink history and reference when there is a "confrontation with trauma." (182) Caruth refers to trauma as a 'wound' while LaCapra has earlier cautioned against perceiving of contemporary culture as "wound culture."[lxviii] However, the idea of trauma as a wound has proliferated culture especially in a post-war, post-Holocaust world. Not only does trauma become a festering wound as the victim progresses onward in life, at first instance it is characterised by numbness. Caruth talks about this suspension of action followed by "uncontrolled repetitive occurrence of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomenon." (181)

In *Stones from the River*, Trudi's rape by a group of boys leads to a numb and delayed reaction from her. She begins to criticise her body for evoking such a violent and brutal violation from the other sex. However, when she is able to come to terms with her trauma she gives it a voice through her storytelling, thus in a way, fulfilling Caruth's idea of the 'wound becoming voice.' When the dentist Klaus Malter kisses her and later denies it, she is able to understand that he too has violated her, by being silent. Hence, her trauma does bring about a sort of 'awakening,' or a means of coping with past and further trauma.

According to Caruth, history arises from this postponed reaction to trauma and the "construction of this history develops from this delayed response to trauma."(Berger 577) Thus, the notions of history, trauma and narrative become intertwined and dependent on each

other wherein reference and narrative shapes history. The idea of a memory culture and then a wound culture around trauma shapes its epistemology. Due to the delayed reaction or the physical numbness, memory has a way of becoming riddled with gaps and holes, as we discussed earlier. So, memory, while acting as a subversive tool, also becomes problematic due to the impasses that surround it as well. In whatever we have encountered around the writing of disaster and trauma, we can agree that a general air of incomprehensibility ails this field. Whether it be the aporias of language, transference in literature or repression and delay in trauma, transmission becomes a complex process. We need to question how this transmission to the subsequent generations works; whether it is uni-directional and repetitive and carries the same features of latency as first-generation trauma.

Trauma thus becomes layered and multi-dimensional, in the variety of its experiences, both physical and emotional. The 'delayed reaction' that Caruth talks about is not only a physical numbness but also an emotional setback. The 'stones' that Ursula Hegi writes about, which impede the flow of the river, can be seen as symptomatic of such blocks.

Caruth's work shows us how trauma has deep ties with history and also opens up the possibilities of writing a history from within its space. Caruth analyses Freud's work *Moses and Monotheism* to make the statement that "writing itself confronts historical events." (182) In Ursula Hegi's work, liminal and subversive possibilities of history open up as she deals with parahistory. Hegi also writes a new, imaginary history of the German town Burgdorf , situated at some distance from the actual city of Berlin. We need to ask whether this is an attempt at subterfuge; a kind of subversion where the construction of history during the Second World War is altered. Or is Hegi trying to make a political statement by altering a landscape while staying true to historical events? This entanglement with both a real and fictitious historical setting serves to use history as reference as well as show the relationship between trauma, history and memory.

The change in this narrative works because Hegi constructs a German town as a microcosm of the German world at the time of the Holocaust. Would it work if an attempt was made to re-write Jewish history? The reference to the past in wake of Jewish trauma, as LaCapra has also mentioned, is both sacred and sublime. Alterity does not function well here in order to re-write the grim aspect of this history. It would be like a sacrilege and bordering on Holocaust denial. However, as I have discussed before, some Jewish authors do use the trope of fantasy to re-examine the past. The pertinent question that arises then is that if re-

examination of history a denial or negation of actual history, a building up on that history through cumulative effect or merely a ‘re-situation’ of history.

While examining Freud’s work, Caruth is of the opinion that he links the history of the Jews with trauma and departure. It seems as if history has been replaced by the “curious dynamics of trauma.” (185) We need to thus ask, how actual history, the heterogeneous version of the past, differentiates itself from the history of trauma. By re-writing the history of a German town and by inventing a history complete with survivor guilt and testimony, is Hegi writing a history of trauma? Caruth makes a pivotal link between history and trauma when she writes that “traumatic repression makes the event available at best indirectly.” (185) Hence, history becomes rife with “distortion,” and can fall prey to fictionalisation. By building a story within a story, within an imaginary history laced with actual historical facts, Hegi too is providing a filter to the actual event of the Holocaust. The dynamics of trauma that come into play in the novels change the relationship between history, reference and trauma. In this context, the passing down of this history becomes a transmission of the history of trauma itself.

Transmission of trauma has several pathways, as David Becker points out, terming them “multiple pathways.” (n.p.) However, since the desired end result of the process of trauma is its alleviation, traumatic transmission must be a passive process. If trauma is perceived as a festering wound, then its transmission cannot be desired actively. Hence, by nature, transmission is an undesirable action which however, forms a link between past and subsequent generations. Traumatic neuroses can also be transferred from parents to children. For example, in Hegi’s *The Vision of Emma Blau*, Emma Blau and her grandfather are deeply linked through the building *Wasserburg,* wherein his idiosyncrasies about the building get passed on to Emma, who struggles to keep the building in one piece. Transmission of trauma from present to future generations also becomes a social and cultural pathological phenomenon when we talk of the ‘trauma industrial complex’ or ‘wound culture.’ Traumatic images of violence and dispossession are available as virtual experience, which further complicates the paradox of trauma.

For subsequent generations, who attempt to creatively re-capture a traumatic past, trauma becomes a means of engagement. Emma’s brother uses his trauma to translate his stories on celluloid and thus actively participates in the transmission process. So, engagement and disengagement are both present in the transmission process. ‘Latency’ is a term that Caruth has associated with trauma. She calls the time “that elapsed between the accident and the first

appearance of symptoms as the incubation period." (186) We need to question if the idea of latency exists in the transmission process as well. As children of Holocaust survivors grow up, do psychical symptoms get stored to manifest as neuroses later?

In this sense of transmission, trauma manifests as an infectious syndrome characterised by repression, latency and repetition. In Hegi's *Floating in my Mother's Palm,* Hanna Malter gets an inexplicable urge to keep revisiting the site of her mother's death; the jetty at river Rhein where her mother Jutta Malter drowned. Children brought up by survivors of the Holocaust may grow up in dysfunctional families, marked by absence of one or more family members. This in turn, engenders another kind of trauma; a legacy of absence. The stories of survivors and then of their subsequent generations have different characteristics and each subject forms a different relationship with trauma. Caruth says that finding a 'voice' is unique to each survivor and traumatic transmission carries a certain kind of truth. She writes:

The impossibility of a comprehensible story does not necessarily mean the denial of a transmissible truth." (154)

The 'truth' here represents the persecuted history of the Jewish family, which the subsequent generations find challenging. Often times, survivors' children try to unearth the history of their families, in order to re-imagine the past. The transmission process does not hold a continuity as it is rife with gaps and absences. The same absences and aporias also mark the process of representation of trauma as we have seen. Transmission also occupies the space of the subconscious. Caruth thus calls transmission of inter-generational trauma a "historical transmission." (156)

When we talk about the transmission of truth, the question of gaps and impasses comes up. If trauma is seen as a festering wound, how do we take care of these lacerations in the form of gaps? Caruth talks about the "unconscious, inevitable imprint of events on texts in the form of tropes."(n.p.) If we talk about aporias, do we see 'tropes' as empowering ways to solve these contradictions? The use of tropes when writing about trauma and its transmission can be positive. The unconscious impasses can atleast be acknowledged using these 'unconscious imprints.' However, tropes cannot be single-handedly used to solve 'aporias' in a trauma text. Neither can we successfully say that tropes manage to solve these contradictions. However, the use of tropes makes the writing of trauma and its transmission a more fluid process. Ursula Hegi uses disability as a trope; as a prosthesis in her novel *Stones from the River*, where the protagonist is a disabled woman. Further, she uses tropes like an imaginary town,

an imaginary river, story-telling amongst others to convey the psychological impact of trauma and its transmission.

Trauma as an event, has not been fully accepted as memory, as Caruth suggests in her work. It is not something which constitutes a "narrative memory" and its history has no place "neither in the past nor in the present." (153) Hence, the process of transmission must also be riddled with amnesia, to say the least. It is characterised by incomprehensibility and manifests itself as trauma. We need to ask whether the transmission process amplifies or dilutes the trauma already present in survivors. Is there even a way by which we can gauge the transmitted trauma vis-a-vis the survivor trauma to understand its depth? Transmitted trauma also presents itself as psychic symptoms, in the manner of post-traumatic stress disorder. The transmission process can thus be seen as testifying to the fact that there is survivor trauma. It forges intricate ties with the already present trauma and remoulds itself into another kind of trauma. So the transmission process may be seen as one-directional and emerging from the past which is not absolute but at some point it breaks away from the origin and becomes a unique process in itself.

Cathy Caruth posits a trauma model that offers an empowering, non-totalising narrative for the exploration of trauma in literature. She brings psychoanalysis and deconstruction into the ambit of trauma studies to come up with the assertion that trauma essentially produces a new kind of history. Traumatic transmission is thus a transmission of a historical past; the truth and reality of a past generation. The transmission process is not smooth and is marked by many contradictions. Trauma first represents its memories through psychical symptoms. Transmission can be seen as a re-enactment of traumatic memory or an imprint upon subsequent generations. Remembrance thus marks the transmission of trauma and the traumatic subject changes but the experience of trauma remains the same. Caruth's work points to the use of literature as a disemminative space for dealing with trauma so that positive, empowering narrative can emerge.

Caurth's critical formulation of trauma paved the way for further research on it and Kali Tal's work on the modalities of trauma was ground-breaking as well. Kali Tal raised the question that how did the voices of all survivors get coagulated into one; that of Elie Wiesel. Tal asked:

> How did Wiesel become the 'who' he is, the voice of 'the' survivor? (3)

Kali Tal makes the important assertion that the field of trauma studies is multi-dimensional and any model of trauma theory must be 'inter-disciplinary.' For our purposes, work on Ursula Hegi's *Stones from the River* intersects the fields of disability studies, gender studies and Holocaust studies. Tal's work makes use of the "cultural-political theory" (5) which looks at any criticism as a self-aware project. Ursula Hegi too writes her works on Holocaust trauma, as an exploration of her own questions on identity and trauma, following her family's participation in the second World War. Thus, the writer not only becomes a secondary witness as we discussed earlier; they are also a self-conscious critic of their own work.

In her cultural criticism of trauma, Tal posits that the Holocaust has become a "metonym…for the set of symbols that reflect the formal codification of that experience." (6) We have discussed the conventions and characteristics that mark the Holocaust genre earlier. These characteristics that make a "Holocaust text" are part of the process of "mythologization" (6) that Tal says is a coping mechanism of trauma. Tal talks about the "pattern" that is inherently seen in the Holocaust novel. While we can say that Ursula Hegi's *Stones from the River* (as an active Holocaust novel) falls prey to some of these conventions, the narrative is by and large subversive. So, there is "prewar normalcy and the coming of trouble" (6) when the first set of problems start brewing in Burgdorf, as citizens do not speak up against the travesty of justice happening around them. However, this narrative is also linked with Trudi's own trauma of rape. The "cultural" and the "political" are linked together in the text as the cultural trauma of the Holocaust gets enmeshed with traumas of personal pasts. In *Children and Fire*, and in *Stones from the River*, the personal is re-inscribed as the political and personal traumas are examined closely along with the overarching framework of Holocaust trauma.

In her work, Kali Tal points out that in the contemporary world, women and other minorities are at risk of more "systemic oppression" than other groups like Jews. (9) In this context, examining Hegi's Holocaust trauma in terms of gender studies is crucial as there is double victimisation faced by the character of say Eva in *Stones from the River.* For Trudi Montag, the *zwerg* protagonist, there is a triple layer of victimisation, as a disabled woman who lives through the Holocaust. The notion of 'survivor' according to Tal is then "temporary and conditional." (9) However, for the purposes of understanding the transmission of trauma, the notion of 'survivor' is crucial. By terming the very idea of survivor as 'conditional', what Tal means to say is that survivors often face repeated persecution and oppression.

For transmitted trauma, the idea of survivors becomes even more fraught with complexity. Since subsequent generations also display and deal with psychic and physical symptoms of trauma, do we term them 'survivors' of trauma as well? Will that be a sacrilege to the idea of the Holocaust survivor? Thus, we have to place different frameworks in place for examining 'survivor' trauma and transmitted trauma. In her work on trauma theory, Kali Tal deals with the intersection between gender and trauma, however, she does not refer much to the transmission of trauma.She criticises psychoanalysis as a "discipline that reinforces social practices of domination under the guise of therapy." (Berger 580) However, I agree with Jeffrey Berger who states that psychoanalysis, instead of a practice of 'codification' serves as a means of interpretation of the past. For the purposes of my study, I would like to use Tal's idea of the "cultural-political" theory of trauma and attempt a cultural analysis of trauma present in Ursula Hegi's work.

Theory on cultural trauma was presented by Jeffrey Alexander whose work *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (2004) was seminal in presenting the idea of a cultural critique of trauma. Ron Eyerman writes that cultural trauma is a collation of individual and collective trauma. Eyerman offers distinctions between individual and collective trauma, asserting that both complement each other and "reinforce each other" and "issue from shock." (43) However, in the case of collective trauma, it is the collective identity of a society that is fragmented along with personal identity. In her work on the Burgdorf cycle, Hegi talks about the shattering of this collective identity that is built upon a notion of 'Germanness,';which encapsulates the idea of difference.

Eyerman thus terms cultural traumas as productions which take place after a traumatic event; as "processes of meaning making and attribution." (43) Re-interpretation of identity becomes imperative when shattering of cultural identity takes place. Thus, Hegi's attempts to examine the notion of Germanness post the Holocaust is also an attempt at a critical discourse of cultural trauma. The schism in identity is felt not only by survivors of the Holocaust but also by the German population and their children. Hegi demonstrates in her work that subsequent generations of the German populations were faced with the idea of Germanness as a burden. The notion of pride associated with the collective identity vanished and guilt overtook its place. Hegi's work examines this guilt as a collective disturbance, which led to fissures in social integration.

Cultural trauma theory brings to the fore ideas on political and racial integration and group consciousness. Jeffrey Alexander's work delves into the construction of collective trauma

and brings to mind the notion of a trauma industrial complex which has been created by popular culture. The idea of personal, collective and cultural traumas differ from each other as Alexander mentions how "suffering collectivities-whether dyads, groups, societies and civilisations do not exist as material networks. They must be imagined into being." (intro n.p.) Ursula Hegi's portrayal of Trudi Montag as a skilled storyteller who embellishes her tales also delves into the idea of constructing a cultural trauma. The act of story-telling and mythologization creates a narrative space around cultural trauma, generating cultural identities.

Traumatic events like the Holocaust produce both individual and collective trauma. Alexander writes that with respect to cultural trauma, "rather than denial, repression and working through, it is a matter of symbolic construction and framing, of creating stories and characters and moving along from there." (n.p.) So, we need to ask the question whether the creation of an imaginary town and its population by Ursula Hegi is an attempt to show the figuration of a collective "we" as Alexander mentions.

An event like the Holocaust is made up of several individual traumas which cannot be simply collated together to form one history of trauma. Do we thus place any attempt at narration of cultural trauma under the schema of a "trauma-drama" ? (Alexander n.p.) Jeffrey Alexander posits a social theory of trauma in which he argues against the "lay theory" of trauma which assumes that traumas occur naturally. Alexander, however, contends that trauma has an "imagined dimension" when trauma is created as a "new master narrative." (n.p.) The creation of such cultural trauma should present answers to questions like "the nature of the pain" inflicted and the "nature of the victim." Alexander raises an important question here:

> Were communists, socialists, homosexuals and disabled persons also victims of the Nazi Holocaust? (intro n.p.)

When we examine Hegi's work, it forces us to ask this question in a new light. Can disabled persons of German descent also be seen as Holocaust victims? While talking about the delegation of responsibility during the production of a cultural trauma, Alexander also asks whether "Germany create(d) the Holocaust, or was it the Nazi regime?" (n.p.)Again we can raise similar questions in the context of Hegi's work which examines German complicity and guilt. Alexander also questions whether subsequent generations of Germans be held responsible for the Holocaust when we attribute the role of the "perpetrator?" The role of ordinary German citizens as "perpetrators" is examined in Ursula Hegi's work as well. Alexander finds this issue to be a "matter of symbolic and social construction?" (n.p.)

Trauma has been represented as a wound, affecting both the body and the mind as well as an event of a real nature. Alexander terms it a perception as well as a construction. How do we then see trauma firstly? Secondly how do we place transmitted trauma with this new understanding? If trauma is based on 'real' events, then can stressors which are passed on, even be seen as traumatic? Does cultural construction of trauma stay the same or does it change for subsequent generations?
If individual traumas are passed on in families from parents to children, are cultural traumas passed on from one generation to another, causing a paradigm shift in cultural trauma representation? The Holocaust still haunts popular culture and imagination, virtually churning out films and books about its trauma on a regular basis. So, does mass distortion of traumatic memory take place when we talk about cultural trauma of the Holocaust in the present day and age?

The transmission of trauma involves the intergenerational theory of trauma, which is different from the psychoanalytic model of trauma as we discussed earlier. However, it does make use of psychoanalysis as well to talk to talk about the 'unspoken' in trauma and its repression. Trauma theorists have drawn plenteously from Freud and Lacan and looked at trauma as a festering wound. While Kali Tal uses a 'cultural-political theory' to talk about trauma, Jeffrey Alexander's approach is constructivist. A single theory of trauma does not work for the purposes of analysing a trauma novel, or "trauma-dramas" as Alexander calls them. A work on trauma is multi-disciplinary and uses multiple modalities of engagement with trauma through figurative language. Current literary theory on trauma makes use of the abreactive model of trauma which says that "traumatic experience produces a temporal gap and a dissolution of the self." (Balaev 150) However, the belatedness and latency of trauma has been talked about by both Cathy Caruth and Dominick LaCapra, who even examined the idea of transference in traumatic theory.

Dominant literary theory of trauma focuses on its irrepresentability and its recreation through narrative construction, which some critics term as a mythologization of traumatic experience. However, the idea of codification is absent in the processing of trauma hence a codified framework of trauma does not work. Trauma is always recognised in terms of approximation, distance and latency in its manifestation. The instant reaction to a traumatic event is mostly shock or numbness. Lack of integration into the consciousness can be attributed to a traumatic event. The repetition of traumatic events can be passed on to subsequent generations in the form of a "contagion theory of an unidentifiable, yet infectious pathogen."

(152) This theory views trauma as a historical loss or lack which is passed on to groups sharing the same racial and social identities. However, this transhistorical transmission of trauma raises several questions. Like trauma, can guilt be passed on as well, for example, to German descendants post the Holocaust? Why do only some members of the subsequent biological/ racial groups display the characteristics of trauma and it does not affect some? If this transmission works as a pathogen, why is the measure in survivors' children not equal?

This is because if we see trauma as a pathogen capable of producing a contagion-like epidemic, it is also capable of mutation. This evolved traumatic transmission can then also occur through literature or mass media. How can we limit historical trauma to one medium then? These questions make us reflect on the gaps in intergenerational trauma theory which posits that trauma is "intergenerationally transmitted based on shared social characteristics, (like), ethnic, racial, gender, sexual or economic background." (152) The question thus arises if traumatic transmission is compounded on the sharing of more than one identity.

Physical trauma like lacerations, abrasions and deep cuts can be measured and recovery is possible. For trauma that is both bodily and emotional or only emotional, recovery is mediated through different mechanisms. For trauma theorists, literature's metaphoric and figurative power makes it an ideal tool for recovery and remediation. Literature gives narrative voice to pain, even though it may not recreate the traumatic event completely and thus it opens up the possibilities for redemption.

Intergenerational trauma theory which looks at trauma as a pathology seems unable to provide answers to many haunting questions, except that it marks out literature as a recall mechanism. Michelle Balaev writes that this theory "limits the meaning of trauma in literature because it conflates the distinction between personal loss actually experienced by an individual and a historical loss found in one's ancestral lineage." (152) If trauma can be passed onto generations, then healing can also be passed from one generation to another. Subsequent generations can provide a means of re-narration of their ancestral stories and provide recovery. In Hegi's *The Vision of Emma Blau*, it is only after Emma realises that the Wasserburg is holding her back, that she is able to fully live her life to its potential. Her brother's creative outlet for trauma in terms of films, also provides a means of engagement with their familial past.

So, if transgenerational trauma exists as shared features then transgenerational coping mechanisms must exist too. However, these do not have biological traits and can be seen as learned mechanisms. So, we need a transgenerational trauma theory that is not only dynamic

but it also takes into account recovery and redemption of trauma and also looks at shame and guilt as part of a cultural heritage. German descendants often experience guilt as part of their racial identity as Ursula Hegi and other writers have demonstrated in interviews with subsequent generations. A framework needs to be built which examines transgenerational Holocaust trauma through both ends of the spectrum; which takes into account ethnic, sexual, racial and other kinds of identities when talking about trauma. In this context, Ursula Hegi's Burgdorf cycle becomes a subversive text as it situates the idea of trauma in a disabled woman protagonist. Hegi seems to answer the question raised by Jeffrey Alexander in his work on cultural trauma whether disabled persons can be seen as victims of the Holocaust.

Another question that arises when we speak of transgenerational trauma of the Holocaust is how distinctive is it from other transgenerational trauma, for example, that of 'slavery'? Is the nature of Holocaust trauma the same as any other trauma or does it carry any more "symbolic capital?" (154) Balaev talks about the "learned cultural shame" that is associated with the institution of slavery. (as qtd in Balaev 154) The narrative of trauma that is applied to both novels about slavery and the Holocaust is abreactive. Trauma response has been linked to descendants of slaves who have faced racial persecution and oppression. The idea of epigenetic transmission of trauma of the Holocaust is still being debated with studies on it either getting debunked or in need of serious overhaul. However, it is widely accepted that trauma response of the Holocaust can be passed on from one generation to another in the manner of post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms.

For the second generation of Holocaust survivors, the term secondary traumatisation was used. Psychosocial studies use the secondary trauma scale to talk about the effects of PTSD on survivor offspring. These studies prove inconclusive because the sample size is often too small; it is probably not possible to conduct an exhaustive study on offsprings of Jewish survivors, both immigrants and non-immigrants. The Holocaust did not only affect Jews, but also Poles, Serbs and other ethnic groups which is why a study on Holocaust trauma needs to be all-inclusive. As compared to secondary traumatisation, transgenerational trauma refers to trauma that is passed on to the second generations and generations after it.

Current trauma theory that deals with transgenerational trauma and positions itself in the space of postcolonial and postmodern criticism has been criticised for creating a "postmodern crisis of signification." (Rothe 181) Trauma is treated as a history, as an infection and also as a venerable event which leads to a chaotic theory of trauma. Current trauma theory needs to

examine this idea of consumption and construction that has crept up in the narration of trauma. As Michelle Balaev writes:

> Moreover this model of trauma and memory asserts, on the one hand, that trauma is hermeneutically sealed or dissociated. On the other hand, it can be passed between generations, which therefore undoes its own referential basis because once trauma is "spoken" and passed to another, it no longer remains unspeakable, and thus no longer "traumatic," according to the model's own definition of the term. (154)

Trauma theory needs to be fluid and attempt to answer the many questions that the transmission of trauma in culture raises. As a theory about representation, trauma theory is in danger of ossification because it fails to provide adequate links with memory and identity. Blanket statements that racial identity is affected by historical trauma do not serve any purpose till they are examined in detail. Furthermore, some critics are of the opinion that a single theory would fail to be sufficient for the needs of trauma. A novel dealing with historical trauma, as Balaev and Alexander have demonstrated is an inter-disciplinary text which needs negotiation with different fields of study.

Trauma theory needs an alternative approach if it needs to find a balance between history, trauma and memory. Trauma has now become an umbrella term for any event that induces suffering and a kind of hysterical, social formulation has come up around it. Cultural and historical trauma also draws from the psychoanalytic concepts of trauma posited by Freud and later by Jean Laplanche. However, the psychology model of trauma and the cultural model of trauma fail to provide a re-conception of trauma. Trauma is also a personal experience based on suffering and is largely unconsciously formed. Hence, it is deeply linked to memories, specially the inaccessible part of our memories.

So trauma theory, particularly cultural trauma theory needs to come up with a re-conceptualization of trauma which examines the complexities of identities and memory and also looks at historical trauma as a legacy. Trauma theory also needs to be self-aware of the construction of trauma as a symbolic concept and as a consumerist product which is now culturally bound.

Trauma theory needs to examine its links with politics hence the use of a 'cultural-political' theory would serve well. That a hegemonic theory of trauma is not possible is something we can admit at the very outset because of the repetitive, irrepresentable and complex nature of the event itself. Trauma exists in terms of repressed personal loss as well as a discrete event

and this ambiguity in its conception informs the position of trauma theory. Trauma theory is largely a western concept that is also informed by place theory, social theory and postmodern complexities.

In Ursula Hegi's work, she attempts to draw links between trauma, identity and memory. The use of storytelling within the novel *Stones from the River* can be read as a comment on the constructivist approach to trauma. Holocaust trauma has come to occupy a significant space as a symbolic concept and has opened up the idea of a 'wound culture.' Hegi uses ideas like memory culture and Marianne Hirsch's concept of 'postmemory' in her works to arrive at a re-configuration of trauma by collating personal and cultural trauma. The notion of belatedness or latency as espoused by Cathy Caruth and Dominick Lacapra is also present as traumatic experiences in the texts give way to nightmares and PTSD symptoms in later lives of the protagonists. There is also foreshadowing which is used in *The Vision of Emma Blau*, as the vision seen by Stefan Blau is like an unconscious, repressed memory which keeps on cropping up in his life. He is only able to recognise this vision when his granddaughter Emma is born.

Traumatic transmission is linked with ideas of cultural identity as German descendants experience a split in identity and guilt over the occurrence of the Holocaust. The distinctions between perpetrators and bystanders become blurred in the text because the lack of action by citizens makes them complicit in the crimes. To understand trauma, it is imperative to understand notions of victim, survivor, perpetrator and bystander. These notions are explored in the works which present a myriad of characters who oscillate between survivors and bystanders. The bystanders, that is, the citizens of Burgdorf are also survivors of the war but are distinct from Jewish survivors. However, they carry the legacy of trauma as well and this legacy shapes the future of the town as its physical surroundings change. Storytelling by Trudi Montag in *Stones from the River* is a means of narration of her trauma; she also embellishes stories belonging to other people. Trudi takes her trauma of rape; of being left by her lover Max and turns it into stories for the townspeople's consumption. In a sense, this storytelling can be seen as a transmission which brings us back to the question whether trauma as stories causes traumatic transmission to its viewers or readers.

Chapter III

But No One Talks About it: The Burgdorf Cycle

Ursula Hegi's Burgdorf cycle is a set of novels set in the imaginary town of Burgdorf which is touted to be a few hundred miles away from the capital of Germany, Berlin. *Stones from the River* (1994) is the prequel to *Floating in my Mother's Palm* (1990) although written and published at a later date. *Stones from the River* can be read as a postmodernist, feminist bildungsroman which narrates the story of Trudi Montag, who suffers from dwarfism. This research will examine the novel from the five prisms of identity, memory, disability, gender and trauma. The aim is to place this text in relation to the larger theory of intergenerational trauma theory, place theory, disability and memory studies. This research will also examine how the Burgdorf cycle fits into ethnographic and gender studies.

Stones from the River is largely a Holocaust novel, replete with the characters of a trauma and Holocaust novel that we have discussed in chapter I. The author uses several tropes to situate the text in a subversive politics, making use of the 'cultural-political' theory which Kali Tal has talked about. One of the significant tropes is the use of an imaginary town and settings to situate the real historical events of the Holocaust. Michelle Balaev has examined the primacy of settings and place in trauma novels and he writes:

> Physical environment offers the opportunity to examine both the personal and cultural histories embedded in landscapes that define the character's identity and the meaning of the traumatic experience. (150)

The imaginary river Rhein that forms the backdrop of the events and the jetty that harbours a lot of secrets forms the basis of many of Trudi's stories. The jetty is the scene of Trudi's rape early on in the novel and the river assumes a life-force in her stories. The river becomes a monstrous entity which swallows people. In the sequel to the novel *Floating in my Mother's Palm*, Jutta Malter also loses her life while swimming near the jetty. Hegi writes in the novel:

> She wanted to crawl into the river with the shame of having been touched like that, singled out…The stones became the skin of the river and sank to the bottom. (151)

For Trudi, the stones in the river Rhein become synonymous with the boys who raped her and form a weighty burden. The idea of violation not only stems from the physical assault, but also the betrayal by her friend Georg who is complicit in the act. Trudi's rape thus becomes a larger comment on the brutalisation of the Jews and the disabled by the Nazis and the

complicit nature of the by-standers, represented by Georg Weiler here. The act of rape is extended outside the sexual dynamics to become an act of violence and violation against a population. It should be noted that the brutalities of the Holocaust included perverse sexual violence and assault as well.

Postmodern feminism has looked at the impact of sexual violence on survivor speech and the interiorization of trauma. Ursula Hegi uses the idea of survivor speech and implants it as Trudi's story-telling. While rape divests Trudi of 'normalized' behaviour patterns and imparts trauma to her, the trauma also manifests in the form of stories. Survivor speech thus becomes an empowering narrative for Trudi, who realises that the power to tell Georg's story is in her hands. Hegi also looks at the fetishization of the female body while examining the violence against Trudi. Even as she is being groped, Trudi is aware that her 'disabled' body does not match up to the standards of the 'ideal feminine' body. As Hegi writes:

> The worst thing was their curiosity, those hands that explored her difference, those voices that laughed…at the short span of her legs as they pulled her apart …even here, she inspired their curiosity, not their desire, and yet, through her rage, she felt a dreadful longing to be liked by them, to have them see beyond her body inside her where she knew she was like every other girl. (149)

Trudi's rage also stems from her 'difference' as she feels it puts her it in the 'category' of other "hideous" girls like the drooling Gerda Heidenreich. The idea of the 'body' becomes central to acts of sexual violence here. Hegi also remarks on the notion of corporeality and difference. Trudi, while getting discriminated against for her own dwarfism, demonstrates the same to girls like Gerda or the obese Bilder boy. The novel seems to point out that there are rungs of difference in society and a victim can even act as perpetrator according to how they are situated.

Gender essentialism serves to situate people on various axes of difference and Hegi points out that the essentialization of difference leads to larger violence in society. Hitler's 'final solution' was also based on the idea of ethnic and ideological difference. As a sort of metaphorical answer to Jeffrey Alexander's question on the nature of victims of the Holocaust, the text seems to suggest that the victims included those who were different in terms of ethnicity, able-bodiedness, gender and race amongst other affliliations. Hegi's stand is postmodernist and feminist as she takes up the critical idea of 'gendered subjectivity' to allow Trudi to voice her own story. History here, is looked at through the lived experience of

women in the texts. While power is taken away from Trudi, she snatches it back through her acts of 'self-improvement' as she calls it:

> When Frau Simon complimented her on her appearance and told her how important self-improvement was, Trudi went after self-improvement with an obsession that depleted her savings and crowded her dreams with visions of shoulder pads and lapels, tailored waists and high-heeled shoes. (137)

It is only later in the text that Trudi realises that her real agency is through her voice, which is her own and her story-telling which also serves to save her from imprisonment during the Nazi regime. The novel views pre-war Germany and Germany during the Holocaust through the prism of female experiences. Hegi shows us how female experience is rife with sexual violence as not only Trudi but a lot of women around her are violated in different measures. Ingrid Baum's father subjects her to unwanted sexual attention. After Ingrid's death, her daughter Karin is also raped by her grandfather (Ingrid's father) in the sequel *Floating in my Mother's Palm* and sent to a special convent for unwed girls. It is almost as if the brokenness in the family runs through generations and the women are subjected to sexual violence even within the 'safe' space of the family.

By bringing up 'taboo' subjects such as sexual assault within a familial space, Hegi is commenting on the 'ideal' nature of the German family[lxix] that was projected by Hitler. Hegi also points out to female complicity in the Holocaust, for we have characters like Hilde Eberhardt who remains devoted to her husband Helmut even when he turns antagonist to the Jews in Burgdorf. The appropriation of power by women during Nazi Germany was as problematic as their silence. Vandana Joshi writes how the female aspect of denunciation makes for a compelling study, as " it provides us with a magnifying lens to locate the apparently 'powerless,' 'subordinated' and 'weaker sex' playing the game of use and abuse of power in an uninhibited and fearless way." (xii)

By attempting a female historiography of German women in her novel, Hegi shows us both aspects of complicity and resistance. Women's history doesn't just remain one of disempowerment and disenfranchisement, it is also one of subterfuge and denial. Hegi points out that this history is as murky and complex as the history of trauma itself. While Trudi herself longs to be embraced by the townspeople for her size, she shuns other girls like Gerda for her physical disability. Trudi also reveals her best friend Eva's secrets, which points out how vicious female friendships can be at times. However, the narrative largely remains one

of empowerment because in the end, Eva is saved by Trudi before getting betrayed by her husband Alexander, who hands her over to the SS.

The Nazi ideal of the perfect mother is subverted through the characters of Gertrud, Trudi's mother who in a way suffers from postpartum depression and loses her sanity upon Trudi's birth. Hegi also links Gertrud's madness to adultery, as she cheats on her husband with his friend Emil Hesping. The guilt manifests in the form of a feeling of 'contamination' as she perceives stones to be embedded under her knees. The stones in the title also refers to all kinds of impediments, which obstruct the flow of the river Rhein. While I don't agree with the idea of manifesting the guilt of adultery as madness, I believe Gertrud's madness is used in the text as a political comment upon the ideal German woman. Gertrud is 'guilty' of many crimes which the Nazi regime would prohibit- neglect of her child, displaying provocative behaviour in public and nudity. What could have been an act of resistance is cloaked in the garb of insanity in the text.

Nazi policies aimed at regulating and controlling women's bodies and minds. Trudi's character stands out for its refusal to comply to said norms while Gertrud's character is representative of cultural ideas of female insanity. If we take up Elaine Showalter's analysis of madness as a 'female malady,' this novel marks out several women characters who are relegated to the periphery of society because of abuse. Ingrid, Eva, Trudi, Gertud all form a group of women who are no different from others like the obese Bilder boy Hans Jurgen. The novel presents insanity as a means of difference, which can also be constituted on the basis of ethnicity, race or gender. Hegi presents things which appear to be normalised in society, like Ingrid's sexual abuse and shows us how the burden of shame falls on the women. Perhaps Gertrud's imaginary stones that crop up in her knees are a product of her upbringing which views adultery as a sin.

Women's solidarity during the years of the war is also represented in the texts, where post the war, women find it hard to return to an "almost normal" state. (Hegi 474) Hegi shows the psyche of male characters who only perceive women in dualities, as a "whore" or a "good woman." (476) Alfred Meier, the bakery truck driver, feels reproached while "soiling a good woman like Monika (his fiance)." (476) Women are viewed in terms of sexual desire and this objectification is passed onto them, which leads Trudi to perceive herself as undesirable. Trudi's feminist awakening comes in the form of Jutta Malter, who chronicles her pain through her art and does not limit herself to the categorisation imposed upon her. Trudi realises that like Jutta, she too is able to realise the brokenness of a postwar Germany and she

uses her storytelling to address it. Carine Mardorossian writes that:

> Feminist postmodernists have argued that using women's experience as the source of explanation rather than as what requires analysis often entrenches the very categories (man/woman/sex/gender, etc) whose origin and effects we should be questioning. (745)

Ursula Hegi uses the experiential lives of women to examine the "workings of the ideological system" and "fixed immutable identities. (like homosexual/heterosexual, man/woman)" (as qtd in Mardorossian 745) Trudi's experience is not only shaped as a woman, she is a *zwerg* German woman in a war-ridden country. In the text, Hegi shows that it not only women who face assault in the town of Burgdorf; anyone who shows a semblance of 'difference' is subjected to ridicule and humiliation. Georg Weiler struggles with his sexuality and because of this he is taunted by the other boys in town and forced to participate in the assault on Trudi. As Hegi writes:

> Georg did not touch her. Hands jammed into his pockets like pieces of wood, he stood to the side, ready to flee, and once, when his eyes let themselves be trapped by Trudi's, they were wild with anger at her-for letting herself get caught. (149)

Here, Georg is no different from many who lay the blame of rape upon women. As Mardorossian points out, even feminist theory deals with rape by examining it in terms of interiorization. Hegi tries to turn the idea of 'victim' on its head by examining the male psyche as well in this novel. She tries to analyse the idea of power in a culture and how it flows, including the so-called 'powerlessness' of the by-standers. Trudi's attempt to seize power and change the narrative using her story-telling is a sort of political transformation. Mardorossian writes how even feminist theorists have shied away from coming up with a theory of rape and speak of it in "psychologizing terms, which have dominated hegemonic approaches to gendered violence in contemporary culture." (747)

Hegi overturns the idea of victim identification and insanity as a 'female malady' by looking at it terms of a cultural-political framework. She shifts the idea of celibacy and chastity from women to men like Leo, who is ardently worshipped by the women in town for he has renounced worldly pleasures. On the other hand, women in Hegi's texts take control of their own sexuality like Helene in *The Vision of Emma Blau* who surprises her husband with her sexual prowess. Both Jutta and Trudi embody the consciousness raised by the women's liberation movement. Trudi's story-telling is a resistance to the existing paradigms of gender and identity in her world. While her response to her assault is first informed by venegeance, specifically upon Georg, she is able to find the "final design" of forgiveness. (Hegi 525)

However, the idea of "psychologizing tendencies" that includes "*ressentiment*"[lxx] which Mardorossian accuses feminist theorists of, is missing from Hegi's novel. (761) Hegi does not merely interiorise Trudi's rape, she also talks about the construction of the 'ideal feminine' body and the idea of gender subjectivity in a hierarchical world.

The idea of gendered differences has been prominent in Holocaust studies, with women's experiences of the Holocaust being different from men. Hegi's work deals with these gendered dimensions but from the point of view of German women. This makes us ask whether trauma as an experience forms a shared territory between German and Jewish women alike. In attempting a historiography of German women during the Holocaust, Hegi shows us both resistance and the obeisance to Nazi ideals. The representation of suffering in Jewish women is also depicted in the novel. However, the question of credibility arises here; for do we trust a German author in a testimony of Jewish women's experiences. Should we even be raising the question of identity here as that would be falling prey to essentialization and the dichotomy between German and Jew.

The idea of identities as "fixed" and "immutable" as Mardorossian has pointed out is contested in Hegi's work, which examines the dualities of German/Jew, man/woman, victim/perpetrator etc. As a child, Trudi is shown unaware of the idea of difference and how it forms identities. It is almost as if the formulation of her identity is thrust upon her by the townspeople, who make her aware that she is different. For a childish Trudi, the Jewish "fabric star *Judernstern* that her friend, Eva Rosen, would have to wear on her coat" merely symbolises a fabric piece. (Hegi 11)As they grow up, the world around them splits into distinctions of German-ness and Jewish-ness. The Jewish star is an evocative image in Holocaust representation. In Marvin J. Chomsky's 1978 miniseries starring Meryl Streep, *Holocaust*, the Jewish star remains visible even as a house is burnt down in the opening credits. The use of this star was done as a mark of identity and a segregation of the Jewish community as per Nazi policies.

In the novel, as the town is fed on constant Nazi policies, the townspeople are made aware of the idea of *Rassenreinheit* or the "purity of the race." (207 It is this idea which enforces further schisms in identity between Germans and Jews. The compliance that Burgdorf shows stems from the belief in German-ness, as a 'pure' untainted racial quality. It is thrust upon the people but Hegi questions the acceptance of this idea by the townspeople, very few of whom protest upon its ludicrousness.

The novel *Stones from the River* can be seen as divided into three chronological parts-the pre-war period, the war period and the post-war period. What marks all these periods is the underlying idea of difference which forms identity. Pre-war Germany is also susceptible to the divisions and fragmentation of identity. It is only an exacerbation of this attitude which made possible an event like the Holocaust. Hegi shows us how post-war Germany tries to return to a state of normalcy but there is a 'brokenness' that remains at the crux of its identity. The sequel to this book builds upon this brokenness as a burden upon the subsequent generations of Burgdorf.

The novel shows the political context of the Holocaust and how the ideas of categories were shaped and built. This analysis of pre-war German lives to understand the Holocaust in depth is also a key aspect of Hegi's *Children and Fire.* In this novel, particularly Trudi is able to see how the amassing of little things like bad-mouthing Jews by the townspeople, denying them entries to restaurants is the precursor of something more sinister. Trudi and her father, Leo Montag never perceive their identity in terms of their German-ness. On the other hand, Trudi's aunt, Helene Montag who marries Stefan Blau in *The Vision of Emma Blau*, is disturbed by the attacks on Jews in Burgdorf but also retains this notion of German-ness. In America, Helene is concerned about her children losing touch with their German side and also guilty about being a German as she is looked down upon in the new country.

Identity is deeply linked with politics and culture and Hegi attempts a constructivist approach to identity formulation by dividing this work into distinct phases. It shows us that identity is always fluid, or as Dominick LaCapra writes, "history (is) in transit, never achieving fixity or uncontested identity." (1) Trudi's idea of her own identity changes over the course of the novel, hence it can be said to function as a bildungsroman. Her re-invention of her self forms the core of the story and her story-telling is an important aspect of the reformulation of identity. The only constant aspect of identity thus remains 'broken-ness' which manifests in different ways over the course of time. Hegi's work as a historiography can be thus seen as an interpretative attempt of identity and how it is shaped by cultural and social processes. For LaCapra, historiography as a process is also fluid and in transit, as he says:

> History, in the sense of historiography cannot escape transit unless it negates itself by denying its own historicity and becomes identified with transcendence or fixation. (2)

So, this novel serves to analyse the complex forces behind the notion of history and how it is linked with identity. The changes in the meaning of 'German-ness' over time cause the notion of identity to become fissured and contentious. What Hegi is trying to say is that

identity always exists as only an approximation, or as LaCapra contends, there is no fixity in it. Identity is denoted here also in cartographical terms as it is mapped onto an imaginary landscape. The town of Burgdorf may not exist in real space but the idea of German and Jewish identity exists as a real entity almost. As Helmut Eberhardt is transformed by this notion of nationalistic identity, he condemns his mother for identification with Jews as human beings-

> Couldn't she read the signs on the streets and in the windows of stores and restaurants? *Juden sind her unerwunscht*-Jews are not wanted here. *Juden haben keinen Zuttrit*-Jews are not allowed to enter. (Hegi 273)

Identity politics is deeply linked to memory as memory often informs the notion of personal identity. Memory is often represented in the novel as sets of images that flit across the mindscape. As Hegi writes:

> Trudi felt the secret shaping itself into images that passed through her skin, images filled with colour and movement and wind-yes, wind. She saw her mother on the back of a motorcycle, her arms spanning the middle of Herr Helping. Her mother was younger than Trudi had ever known her, and she wore a yellow summer dress with short sleeves. (30)

This incident represents a sort of transmission from Gertrud to Trudi, through the act of touch, as Trudi places her hand on her mother's knee. Hegi perhaps attempts to point to the nature of memory, which stays both temporal and full of infinite possibilities. The transmission of parental memories to subsequent generations is shown here as the passage of secrets. The idea of memory as part of alternative spaces and dreamscapes is also present in the text. Trudi finds that "she couldn't separate her memories of the mill from the dream images; the harder she tried, the more elusive the dream became…" (520) This is a comment upon the nature of memory process which includes dream incorporation as well and overall a comment on identity. Hegi seems to question the belief in a fixed nature of identity that made people commit atrocities during the Holocaust. If memory which forms identity is such an unusual, incomprehensible phenomenon, how can we even consider our identities to be never-changing? The idea of nationalistic identities is based upon such incontrovertible notions.

Memory also develops with respect to a cultural dynamic in the novel, as part of a collective memory of the Holocaust. It is the aspect of erasure of painful memories that Hegi wants to point out through this novel. The townspeople's insistence on return to normalcy, almost

forgetting the gruesome segregation and killings points to larger, amoral tendencies. It is in this respect that Hegi examines the role of the townspeople and their complicity in the events that transpired. People strive hard to 'erase' the memories of the Holocaust, with some of them pointing out that "Hitler was an Austrian, not a German." (473) The wrestle with the totalitarian regime of Nazism is evident in the post-war period, where the physical 'reconstruction' work is also used on a metaphorical level. People try to reconstruct their order of events, thus bringing about changes in collective memory of the town.

Memory is located thus in space and time and changes according to the period the town is residing in. It becomes difficult to retain the exact memory of what transpired hence there is an insistence on the processes of documentation and archival of the Holocaust. It is in relation to the art of photography as historical transmission that Marianne Hirsch talks about the concept of 'postmemory.' Hirsch talks about photographs as "ghostly revenants from an irretrievably lost past world." (n.p) Similar to photographs, other artefacts also function as part of the transmission process of memory. Memory also becomes riddled with gaps and holes, as we have discussed earlier.

The town of Burgdorf tries to live post the war as if things about Germany have remained the same. It is only people like Trudi and Jutta in the novel who can see "the ugliness, the twistedness, made even more evident by the tidiness, the surface beauty. All the town's energy went into this frenzy to rebuild, to restore orderer to pretty itself up as if nothing had changed in the war." (Hegi 473) Trudi's memories stand in contrast to the reconstruction of collective memories in the town.

In the novel, memory is shown in terms of a personal as well as a cultural aspect and enshrines the idea of a 'public memory.' Max Silverman uses the idea of cultural memory "not in terms of its singular attachment to a particular event or bound to specific ethno-cultural or national communities but as a dynamic process of transfer between different moments of racialized violence and between different cultural communities." (n.p.) In that respect, Hegi too is arguing for a more inclusive idea of cultural and public memory, which takes into account memories different from the 'normalized' narrative.

Holocaust memory has become part of a historical and cultural consciousness and Hegi's novel attempts to show the overlapping distinctions between personal, collective and public memory of the Holocaust. As a term, Holocaust memory is linked to cultural memory in this contemporary memorial culture. As a novel, *Stones from the River* deals not with Jewish memory, but German memory largely and yet, it is from the viewpoint of a so-called

'minority' within this community. As a '*zwerg*' woman, Trudi is discriminated against in the town, in subtle ways even prior to the war. The town perceives Trudi as a child because of her short stature and their expectations of her "solidified and engendered pity." (Hegi 429) Trudi is kissed by Klaus who chooses silence over telling people about the encounter. When Trudi has a lover Max, the town refuses to see her as a woman capable of negotiating her own sexuality. As Hegi writes:

> Had a young woman of normal size offered the kind of flimsy lie about watching a stranger's clothes on the jetty, no one would have believed her. At times it made Trudi furious that everyone in town was eager to embrace her fabrication, including Klaus Malter. (429)

The pre-occupation with size stems from a societal obsession with 'normalized,' 'ideal' versions of the feminine. Disability is projected here vis-a-vis corporeality as a kind of 'narrative prosthesis.' Narrative Prosthesis is a concept proposed by David T. Mitchell and Sharon Snyder about the use of disability as a metaphor, or as a "narrative supplement" (n.p.) to come up with a discourse of identity. According to Mitchell and Snyder, identity is mapped onto these "marked bodies." Trudi's identity is formed by the opinions of those around her on disability, as she prays for a "body with normal-length arms and legs and with a small, well-shaped head." (Hegi 9)

Disability is used in the text as a trope, as she rests the truth of the narrative upon a *zwerg* woman, thus subverting the traditional representations of disability in literature. The idea of 'marking' was central to Nazi 'Final Solution' in which Jews were marked, so that they could be sent to concentration camps. Marking was a means of segregation and discrimination and Hegi shows how marking of bodies different from the perceived 'normal' points to a flawed society. In school, Trudi is subject to the loathing of other children-"(she) could feel that they did want to touch her. But when they called her names- *Zwerg*- dwarf, and *Zwergenbein*- dwarf leg-names they knew would sting, she'd grab fistfuls of dirt to fling at their taunting faces." (91)

Trudi's short stature is seen as a deformity, a kind of grotesqueness which subjects her to a pariah status in society. Even well-meaning people of the town see her disability in terms of a lack as they advise her on how to maintain a good posture. The novel examines the various ways in which bodies are mapped and marked in culture and Hegi subverts the notion of mapping by charting out an imaginary landscape. Mitchell and Snyder point out how texts abound with "disability references, metaphors and implications yet disability has provided

little social commentary."(x) By making Trudi the protagonist of a text on the Holocaust, Hegi is making a politically charged comment on a culture obsessed with corporeality and embodiment. Bodies are physical, discrete presences yet also serve as symbolic capitals and are also constructed in cultures. Ugliness, grotesqueness becomes a monstrous creation that does not engender love. Trudi discovers that the town seeks to hide ugliness, as they try to escape from the memories of the Holocaust and do not understand why "Trudi Montag wanted to dig in the dirt." (Hegi 303)

Not only does the novel use disability as a prosthetic device for representing the 'irrepresentable' nature of the Holocaust, Hegi also shows how the world is "largely landscaped to the needs of able-bodied individuals." (Mitchell and Snyder xiii) Trudi's self-care routine makes her observant to this landscaping and she asks her father Leo to cut the legs of the chairs to her size. She also learns not to look up at people and realises that after a point, people would bend down to make eye-contact with her. Within the fabric of such a society, Trudi seeks out alternative modalities to find her way out. As Mitchell and Snyder point out:

> Disability is first thrust upon one from the outside as a deterministic identity rubric and then must be negotiated from the inside in order to create for oneself what Ross Chambers calls "room for manoeuvre." (xiii)

By attributing the attribute of story-telling to Trudi, Hegi seems to be subverting the use of disabled characters in literature, where stock characterisation has often marked disabled persons. Trudi is bestowed upon the power of narration so that she can write her own story, making disability thus a "symbolic vehicle for meaning-making and cultured critique." (1) The characterisation of Trudi goes against the traditional characterisation of disabled people in literature, where disability has been used to evoke emotions like pity, laughter or sadness. Trudi is a deviant character not because of her disability, she marks her own alternative space by going against oppressive norms. In a town showing hostility towards Jews, she provides them a sanctuary in her pay-library. She seeks out the ugliness in the town after it tries to return to a pre-war normalcy. In fact, she uses the treatment as a child meted out to her to her advantage and carves out an escape from SS imprisonment.

Hegi provides gendered and disabled subjectivity when writing about the Holocaust, bringing in 'forbidden' subjects like familial assault into the fold. The novel can also be seen as a reaction to popular cultural representation of disability that persists even to this day. James Berger in his work on disability and trauma argues for an inter-disciplinarity in the two fields,

given that they both resonate with societal politics. Hegi's novel can be seen as symptomatic of this inter-disciplinarity as she negotiates a space between trauma theory and disability studies. Berger points out how the "Nazi genocide of European Jews can be seen as the paradigmatic historical trauma of modernity." (565) *Stones from the River* is set during the Holocaust and shows its tremendous impact on the lives of German citizens of Burgdorf. Trudi realises before the actual years of war itself that "they lived in a country where believing had taken the place of knowing." (Hegi 167)

The novel not only deals with the cultural trauma of the Holocaust, it also deals with trauma on the personal level. Trudi's rape manifests itself in psychical symptoms of PTSD and it takes her years to get over the debilitating condition. Her life is moulded by a desire for vengeance which she uses in her story-telling till she realises that the real purpose of her stories is to find meaning. Hegi uses the idea of the reformulation of the self by looking inward to deal with personal trauma. Here, she follows the standard arguments of trauma theory where interiority is an integral part of selfhood and identity when it comes to trauma.

Hegi makes use of the cultural-political theory of trauma in which she consistently returns to Trudi's trauma to make a larger political statement on difference. Trudi realises that "as the weight of what had happened kept gathering within her-dark and turbulent, threatening to obliterate her-she knew she had to release it."(154) This release comes in the form of story-telling, a symbol for the reconciliatory power of literature in dealing with trauma. The stories that Trudi spreads about Fritz, Hans-Jurgen and Paul, the perpetrators of her rape, weaken their position in the community. This idea of 'revenge' as a direct response to assault crimes stems from a hierarchical power structure in which women are often powerless. Trudi's stories carry a sense of power and have healing, restorative properties for her.

Stories thus bring about catharsis, a needed response in the healing process of trauma. This act of revenge by Trudi does not obliterate her trauma completely as it raises its head in the form of insecurities over the years. When Trudi is unable to hear from her lover Max, she falls back to the same pattern of self-doubt. The much-needed closure with her friend Georg, who was a bystander, only occurs in a dreamscape. Hegi seems to be pointing out that the role of the bystander, even in the Holocaust, is an act of betrayal and there is greater complexity in the relation between victim and bystander than victim and perpetrator. The victim and the perpetrator stand in direct opposition and the perpetrator is the subject of blunt hatred of the victim. On the other hand, the victims of the Holocaust are marked by doubt

when it comes to acknowledging the role of the bystander; the kindly neighbours who did not offer help yet cannot be equated with the SS or the Gestapo.

The idea of trauma works in twofold ways in the text -the personal trauma is used as a means of transformative change; then there is also historical trauma as a direct consequence of the Holocaust which is marked by its transmission. The idea of story-telling as a transformative tool is a means of negotiation with history and an attempt to rewrite the past. It can also be seen as partly a fantasy fulfilment, as Slavoj Zizek points out-"a kind of fantasy in which all traumatic damage is repaired." (as qtd in Berger 565) Story-telling seems to be a way to solve the problems of representation of trauma as well. However, Hegi points out that "just because a story was a certain way didn't mean it would always be like that; stories took their old shape with them and fused it with the new shape." (524)

The idea of traumatic experiences as a 'tangle' is presented in the text as well, which is a comment upon the incomprehensible and irrepresentable nature of the traumatic experience. Trudi believes that the tangles would sort themselves out in a manner of "raking; not every bit of earth would be untangled at once." (524) The method of dealing with trauma as an overwhelming experience which takes time to heal stems from a psychoanalytic model of trauma. Trauma cannot be represented in empirical terms, rather it depends heavily on the use of metaphors in the text. Raking thus symbolises a process of re-invention which happens on its own and with time. Berger points out how trauma texts deal with the aftermath of trauma by positing that in the "posttraumatic, post-apocalyptic landscape of symptoms and signs, the catastrophe becomes revelation." (566)

The idea of trauma working again as a transformative experience is an integral part of the text, which points at the use of literature as a conduit by trauma theorists. The novel is also rife with allusions to historical trauma and the post-war period in the town shows us the shaping of the process of transmission. The town is marked by loss and absence of the victims, the missing and the maimed. Trudi realises how "great sorrows" could be felt everywhere in Burgdorf. (477) Hegi does not collate individual traumas into one collective traumatic experience; instead, she writes about the brokenness and the crippled state of the townspeople. Again, she edges towards a confrontational approach to trauma rather than a carrying over of the sorrows. As she writes:

> What you'd need to do was let those sorrows surge across you, stun you. (477)

However this approach may not seem a practical, one-step solution to traumatic experiences, given the belated, indirect nature of trauma. It suggests a kind of wishful, fantastical remedy as Zizek suggests. For Trudi to find peace through her story-telling is an act of restitution, but to assume that the only method to deal with trauma is to not flee from them signals the making of a discourse. Hegi seems to be suggesting a new mechanism of trauma recovery with the only means available at our disposal; the use of the creative process.

The creative process has long been seen as therapeutic in the realm of trauma. Trudi's story-telling is born out of a personal vision and her experiences. The text also examines the idea of creativity as Hegi posits a metaphoric language as a way of negotiation with aporias. However, there are gaps in understanding the role of the creative process as it marked by elision and distortion. Hegi offers an understanding of story-telling as a sublime process, for Trudi yearns to reach the "core of the story-a story that would hold the entire world." (525) The core of the story can refer here to the meaning and function of art and literature in trauma. Hegi seeks a deeper understanding of the role of literature in relation to trauma and narrative memory. She offers her own strategy to the elision implicit in the representation of traumatic experiences- "it had to do with what to enhance and what to relinquish. And what to embrace" (525)

Hegi seems to be saying that distortion and gaps in memory are going to be a fixed problem in the field of trauma and memory. Accurate representation of traumatic experience is not possible. Hence, the writer's should conjure up the 'story' in an assimilable form by choosing what to retain and what to exclude. The creative process can thus become integral to the owning of the traumatic experience, something which trauma theorists like Cathy Caruth have pointed out, is not possible. Hegi shows ways to move beyond the "singular possession of the past." (Caruth 151) Personal trauma thus is not presented as a pathology but as an experience that can be transformative. However, this turn towards interiority in the representation of sexual assault has been criticised by postmodern feminists, who contend that focus should be on the male psyche and not the female psyche.

The novel also provides a distinction between 'flashbacks' and 'willed memory' as part of the traumatic experience, as psychoanalysts have pointed out. The traumatic past is also marked by a "denial of active recollection." (152) Hegi tries to overturn this denial of access by granting autonomy and power to the storyteller. The integration and assimilation of an experience which is characterised by its "lack of integration into consciousness" (152) is attributed to the creative process. Trudi achieves this through lived experience; in a way by

keeping her moral compass on the side of truth, she is able to change her narrative from vengeance to meaning. Hegi seems to be inching towards a stable understanding of past traumatic memories and pointing that it is not merely fantasy fulfilment. Critics have pointed out how "the event cannot become a narrative memory, a completed story of the past." (153) However, Hegi tries to move beyond the impossibility of telling the story to the possibility of telling one, while acknowledging incomprehensibility of trauma as a given truth.

For Hegi, the idea of the "transmissible truth" becomes important as she shows how historical trauma is marked by both silence and truth. (153) As Trudi recognises in the novel that:

> It took courage for the few, who would preserve the texture of the truth, and not to let its fibers slip beneath the web of silence and collusion which people-often with the best of intentions-spun to sustain and protect one another. (Hegi 28)

Hegi attributes this moral courage and understanding to story-tellers, thus evoking the ideas about the social role of art as a mirror to the world. The notion of the sublime is not evoked with respect to traumatic experience here, but with respect to the story. The story thus becomes a tool for "catachresis," a term that James Berger has used in conjunction with trauma theory as a means of "saying the unsayable." (567) In its subversive negotiation with history and trauma, this novel moves beyond what Berger has called trauma symptomatic texts or LaCapra's trauma dramas. The novel provides a merger of ideas on trauma, disability, gender, history and memory, arguing for a space in which "rupture and continuity co-exist." (567)

The sequel to Hegi's *Stones from the River*, *Floating on my Mother's Palm* discusses the transmission of this historical trauma to the first and second generations of Germans after the Holocaust. This work was written in 1990, prior to its sequel. Hegi uses metaphors like 'raking' and 'floating' to analyse traumatic memories. The idea of floating in a state of tranquility or silence is in contrast with the upheaval caused by raking. Floating here signifies a sense of being marooned; however, it is distinct from other sea metaphors which evoke tempestuous weather. Floating could be on air or water however, in this text the floating is intrinsically linked to the river Rhein to whose waters Hanna also loses her mother Jutta Malter. The river Rhein forms a prominent part of the trauma landscape of these two novels, serving as the backdrop of Trudi's rape as well as the death of Jutta Malter.

The sense of floating on the palm of a mother also signifies the womb, which is represented as a secure, safe space in contrast to the violence of the world outside it. The novel begins

with a reference to Jutta Malter's womb and the movement of the child inside. Like Trudi, Hanna is a precocious child who can glean her mother's secrets through touch. As Hegi writes:

> When my mother entered her tenth month of carrying me, I stopped moving inside her womb. She awoke that morning to a sense of absolute silence that startled her out of dreams filled with flute music and colourful birds. (ch. 1)

The idea of transmission of transgenerational trauma is central to this novel as Hanna Malter forms the second generation of the postwar German populace. Elie Wiesel in his works on the Holocaust has referred to an 'echo' which has haunted Jewish survivors and called out to the subsequent generations alike. However, the notion of this echo with reference to German descendants in the postwar world is not talked about as much. German descendants are often faced with their own traumas, along with guilt as a legacy of the Holocaust. In his speech at the opening ceremony of the New Holocaust History Museum in 2005, Elie Wiesel said :

> If you suppress memories they will come back with fury. (n.p.)

Wiesel talks about the idea of remembrance when it comes to Holocaust memory; a deliberate act to retrieve long-forgotten memories in order to articulate them and deal with Holocaust trauma. This idea of remembrance is in conjunction with Hegi's attempt to show the possibility of telling stories on trauma. Both Trudi and Hanna's give voice to their mother's memories. Hanna has heard about her own childbirth possibly through her mother Jutta in childhood, as she mentions that her mother "often recall(s) the rage that sprang up within her at the nun's words." (Hegi ch.1)

In the novel, objects are also shown as representational totems of memory; lilacs are associated with the recollection of Jutta's memories by Hanna. There are two kinds of processes associated with memory in the text -one being postmemory or the transmission of Holocaust memory to subsequent generations and the other is the deliberate erasure of memory. The townspeople indulge in this act of whitewashing the narrative; almost trying to erase away the history of the Holocaust, in order to not let the guilt subsume them. Hanna remarks how Trudi "would not let the town forget any of its flaws." (ch. 2) Trudi's role as a story-teller also gets magnified to become the keeper of the town's memories and the collective memories of the Holocaust which are being tampered with. This is a strategic representation by Hegi to point out the processes of Holocaust denial, which involves altering collective memory. Hegi advocates for an inclusion of individual skeins of memory in that

collective memory and for retaining the truth, even as memory becomes riddled with gaps and holes.

Hanna describes Burgdorf as the "town of pretend" which seems ironical given that the town is part of an imaginary landscape. (ch. 2)The comment is a larger political one on the nature of German guilt. The town's "shallow veneer of respectability" merely exists as a fabrication.(ch. 2) Hamida Bosmajian writes that German literature about the Holocaust "reflects the categories of guilt as Karl Jaspers defined them in 1947: criminal guilt, political guilt, moral guilt and metaphysical guilt (the latter perhaps also ontological guilt.) (51) When we discuss trauma transmission in Holocaust literature by German writers, much of the trauma is shaped by guilt. So, essentially what Hegi describes in the Burgdorf cycle is a transmission of guilt to the second and third generations. The reference to this literature as German stems only from the non-Jewish German identity of Ursula Hegi, however, there is a lot of literature written by Jews as well using German language. That also falls under the umbrella of German literature.

Hegi writes in English but her subject matter probing the nature of German guilt of the Holocaust makes her work distinctly German literature about the Holocaust. The ideas about moral and political guilt have been addressed in *Stones from the River* where Alexander's guilt over Eva makes him jump from the attic window of his four-storey house. In *Floating in my Mother's Palm,* there is an attempt at whitewashing the family history where Alexander's act of cowardice in giving up his Jewish wife to the authorities is denied. The second generation of the family is told that "as a young man Alexander had lost his wife to tuberculosis." (ch. 2)

The historical guilt associated with the Holocaust seems to be an undercurrent in the town of Burgdorf which on the surface level does not acknowledge this guilt. The town instead chooses to focus on things like Klara Brocker's illegitimate child Rolf, which is seen as a 'transgression.' Hegi tries to showcase the hypocrisy of German society which considers sexual autonomy of women as transgression and tries to whitewash the genocide of six million people. On the other hand, Germans like Ursula Hegi specifically talk about the role of Germans as silent by-standers and perpetrators. This historical guilt then also transforms itself into "self-loathing, defiant contempt, and paranoid self-censorship." (Bosmajian n.p.)

The town thus gets divided into three kinds of people; story-tellers and preservers of memory like Trudi and Jutta, people trying to erase the Holocaust from the collective memory and people like Klara Brocker who are aware of the 'white-washers' yet say nothing. Klara

doesn't like the new modern design of the church whose original windows were destroyed by the bombs during the war. The modern design is not soft like the original design, as Klara feels and this replacement of the softer hues with harsher hues is a jarring note in the town. Yet townspeople like Klara are aware that the replacement is a necessity as is restoring normalcy after the war. Hegi shows us how there is a schism in the German population as they're identified in terms of by-standers and perpetrators. The third category of people like Trudi Montag are the ones who show moral courage in the face of adversity. However, it is these people who carry the burden of collective guilt more than the by-standers and the perpetrators.

A surface reading of the Burgdorf cycle may raise questions like the use of the Holocaust as a backdrop by Ursula Hegi. Since *Floating in my Mother's Palm* deals primarily with the relationship between Hanna Malter and Jutta Malter, there is not adequate representation of the postwar atmosphere of the town. In *The Vision of Emma Blau,* questions of identity persist and the Holocaust takes place miles away from America. *Stones from the River* deals with three phases as we mentioned- the pre-war, war and post-war phase. *Children and Fire,* on the other hand, deals mainly with pre-war Germany, at the cusp of the Holocaust. The Holocaust exists in these novels as an entity of its own; an event of such magnitude that it transforms every relationship in the town. While Hegi may not show the horrors of the concentration camps, there is discussion regarding that in *Stones from the River*. Trudi comes close to incarceration by the SS. A deeper analysis of the Burgdorf cycle points out Hegi's main motive, which is to analyse German society prior and post the war.

Hegi's work shows us the hypocrisy of societies which judge people like Trudi, Jutta and Klara Brocker for their alleged transgressions but fail to look inwards at their own actions during the Holocaust. Hegi condemns the silence of by-standers as well and attributes the notion of complicity to them. The Burgdorf cycle mainly examines gendered subjectivities in German society prior and post the Holocaust. It lays bare hollowed out lies of society like familial abuse and assault which is hidden under the garb of religion and values. Klara Brocker's dislike of the church's modern design post the war is also an indictment of the church. Hegi seems to subvert the idea of religion and show it as influenced by mass psychology. The question raised here is the same one raised by Primo Levi and Elie Wiesel about the absence of a God in the face of Holocaust horrors.

The use of the Holocaust should then not be seen as cultural appropriation with respect to the Burgdorf cycle. The Holocaust is used as a lens to probe German society's ethical limitations

and to recognise the idea of trauma transmission. However, the demonisation of German society that often occurs in works on the Holocaust is missing from the Burgdorf cycle. Hegi merely offers a critical examination of German society and while laying guilt and blame at its doorsteps, refrains from painting heroes and villains. Bosmajian in her analysis of German literature makes a distinction between Holocaust survivors and "child of perpetrators." (52) Basmajian is equating all Germans with perpetrators while Hegi's work shows the nuanced differences between by-standers and perpetrators and examines how silence creeps in a collective ethos.

The haunting of the Holocaust remains in the town of Burgdorf several years after the war, even though the townspeople try to hide it from plain view. When Klara Brocker examines the canned food jars prepared by her mother, she notices the absence of any jars from 1942-1945. It is almost as if those years have been erased from public memory and all objects associated with it have disappeared. This absence is due to the fact that during those years, "anyone lucky enough to have food had eaten it." (Hegi ch. 4) The "relentless hunger" from those years is still felt by Klara despite a full stomach. (ch. 4) This hunger can be seen as representative of a void which marks the identity of Germans and Jews alike. The feeling of hunger and lack has been well documented amongst Jewish survivors of the Holocaust. By placing this 'hunger' in a German's belly, Hegi is not appropriating Holocaust memory; she is merely pointing out that the vicissitudes of war go beyond nationalistic identity. War affects everyone alike in the lack of basic amenities like clothing and food.

The novel shows the myriad forms of representation of the war, whether it be the scarcity of food or the experience of women in the war. Yet, the savage aspect of war is not represented in the Burgdorf cycle. While *Children and Fire* presents the precursor to the savagery, it acts as a warning to the horrors of the Holocaust. The concentration camp universe and the violence of the war is missing from the texts as Hegi chooses to focus on postwar identity formation. Klara Brocker's father in the text serves on the Russian front and while reminiscing about his pictures, she thinks that "it seemed to be a different war, not the kind where you hid from bombs, but where you could sit on a goat and laugh into a camera." (ch. 4)

The smiling pictures of soldiers on the back of the goat of the regiment draw attention away from the vicissitudes of war. Hegi uses poetic language and metaphors to cloak the savagery of war, unlike writers like Ka Tzetnik, who presents the brutality in its rawest form. Trudi's stories are also presented often as dreamscapes in *Stones from the River.* The main motive of

the writer is to examine the nationalist consciousness that swept through Germany and gave rise to the war, often through the use of metaphors. The war is present in the text as nightmares, lack of food and basic necessities, change in the town architecture etc.

Like Trudi, Klara knows that "it was upto her to weave the story she would tell her son." (ch. 4) The little act of digressions from truth, represented here by Jutta, Klara and Trudi's stories are contrasted against the larger change in narrative by the townspeople. The people of Burgdorf view the embellishment of these stories by these women as transgression and deviation from the normative while they seek to obliterate the history of the Holocaust from Burgdorf. Hegi's history of Burgdorf, which stands here for German history is a history of deviance. In the novel, she integrates the history of groups like the gypsies into the 'normalized' version of history. Hegi points out how the ideological category of difference existed even prior to the 'final solution' and this is what led to the categorisation of Jews and Germans. While other German writers try to understand the transformation of German society, Hegi attempts to show that discrimination based on difference has been part of society.

Hanna is told that Trudi's short stature is a "warning"and that "gypsies were known to steal babies." (ch. 5) These misconceptions and generalisations point towards the larger malaise in society. Hegi seems to be denouncing the idea of a "monocausal explanation" behind the Holocaust, which Bartov writes about in his book on Holocaust historiography. (n.p.) Not only does the Burgdorf cycle serve as a Holocaust historiography which focuses on gendered subjectivities, it also rewrites the trauma narrative.

Trauma changes the landscape of the town and marks it with what the townspeople call 'imperfections.' The change in the church architecture is one such upheaval in the topographical space of Burgdorf. The pear tree in the Eberhardt's garden which stops producing its lush blossoms in the prequel, only yields "hard little pears with brown spots" in this novel. (ch. 5) In the lush lawns of the Eberhardts, the pear tree stands out as an anomaly. Hegi attempts to show nature reacts in the face of the force of blunt trauma.

In the context of transgenerational transmission of trauma, critics have come up with an attempted division of German subjectivity into the following positions: "the default German, the bad/ashamed German, the defensive German, and the good German." (Fuchs, O., Krüger, L.-M., & Gobodo-Madikizela, n.p.) The good Germans in the manner of Trudi, Jutta exist in Burgdorf as well along with 'ashamed' Germans like Georg Weiler. However, a neat division of subjectivities in the face of the Holocaust to explain perpetrator and by-stander action is

not sufficient. A more layered analysis is needed to understand the transformation of German society by Hitler's 'final solution.'

Hegi attempts to show how German history becomes riddled with amnesiac gaps and holes, similarly like memory. However, this collective amnesia is forced unlike in the case of memory. The town of Burgdorf attempts to eliminate the German participation in the Holocaust. Hanna muses that "the name Adolf Hitler was never mentioned in our history classes." (Hegi ch. 5) She further mentions:

> Our teachers dealt in detail with the old Greeks and Romans; we'd slowly wind our way up to Attila the Hun, to Henry the Eighth who had six wives, to Kaiser Wilhelm, to the First World War; from there we'd slide right back to the old Greeks and Romans. (ch. 5)

This marks an attempt at historical negationism or denialism by the townspeople of Burgdorf, which Hegi criticizes. The ghost of the Holocaust exists around Burgdorf as an inescapable past yet the German townspeople attempt to alter an unconscionable past. In certain postmodernist retellings, historical revisionism is seen in a positive light as it takes into account individual, lived histories. Here, the idea of gouging out major chunks of history from the main narrative is seen as negative revisionism. Hegi shows the divide between fiction and history as well, as the process of embellishment is showcased with reference to Trudi's storytelling. The version of the German past offered to Hanna's generation is shown both as illegitimate and non-credible.

The townspeople offer vague, abstract revisionist statements of history when asked about the war. The war exists in the town's memory as a period with no definite events like the Holocaust to mark it. It is almost as if it is an attempt to "remove the Nazi stain" from German history as Konrad Jarausch writes. (n.p.) Hanna mentions how the townspeople tell her that "nobody wants to relive those years." (ch. 5) Hanna's mother Jutta, Trudi and Klara become custodians of truth in Burgdorf as they answer some of the questions raised by Hanna's generations. However, the questions make sense only about the "terror of the air raids, the hunger cold everyone had suffered." (ch. 5) There is no mention to the subsequent generations about the concentration camps and the mass genocide of Jews. This 'version' of the past is deliberately evaded and an attempt is made to obliterate it from history textbooks as we discussed earlier.

In the face of historical revisionism, Hegi attempts a postmodern historiography of the Holocaust. The landscape she maps out is annually 'blessed' by holy water yet becomes the

site of the slaughter of Jews. In the face of the war, the aspect of religion almost seems laughable. The townspeople continue to believe in the church despite all that has happened and the only silent notes of dissent that creep in are Klara Brocker or Jutta's dislike of its new architecture. Hanna believes in the miracle-yielding power of holy water which she sprinkles on the legs of her friend Renate Eberhardt, in hopes that they grow stronger. However, the lack of a 'miracle' points to the hollowness of religion's promises in the face of human vulnerability. Renate Eberhardt's legs are seen as an aberration and like Trudi, she is seen as vulnerable and weak. Ironically, she is Helmut Eberhardt's daughter and he is shown as a fanatic proponent of the Nazi doctrine of 'perfect' bodies.

In the face of religious beliefs, Hegi proposes "acts of faith" which serve to bridge gaps between people and stub out ideological differences. (ch. 5) Hanna's sprinkling of holy water on Renate's legs serves to heal the fissures in their friendship. The act of sprinkling holy water thus becomes a sacral act for reasons differently expressed from the church. It almost acts an as exculpation ritual in which Renate is exorcised for her father Helmut' sins as a Nazi. The onus of dealing with the guilt and the crimes of the past generations thus falls on to the second and third generations.

Hanna finds the "cloth of silence" that enfolds her house and the town exciting at first but when she is alone the same silence gnaws at her in an "eerie" manner. (ch. 6) The novel delineates the divide that exists in society between people who are seen as "reckless" and people who are staid and adhere to societal norms. However, it is the reckless, creative souls in the Burgdorf universe like Trudi and Jutta who stand up against the atrocities committed during the war. The ones who follow societal norms are relegated to the realm of by-standers and Hegi means to question their silence as complicity. This refusal to engage with the past builds up, what Elisabeth Domansky terms a "wall of silence." (61) It signifies a lack of any kind of discourse regarding the mass genocide committed during the Second World War. In *Stones from the River*, Trudi is able to recognise this silence as a doctrine and understands her role as "an underground messenger, safeguarding her stories." (Hegi 362) In the sequel to the novel, Hanna becomes the guardian of these stories which are communicated to her by Trudi.

While the townspeople of Burgdorf want to hand over "*eine heile Welt,* an intact world they could offer to the next generation," Trudi hands over these stories to Hanna which symbolise the fissures in '*eine heile Welt.'* (362) Hanna and the other children of her generation become responsible for the process of exculpation, which Hanna engages with by sprinkling holy

water on Renate. Burgdorf is the antithesis of this intact world then where Germans are drilled to obey since their formative years. As Hegi writes in *Stones from the River:*

Patience and obedience—- they were almost inseparable and the training for them began with the first step you took…Acts of disobedience were punished efficiently, swiftly. (10)

This abeyance to obedience has been viewed by some historians as one of the primary reasons for the role of Germans as perpetrators and by-standers. However, Marla Morris in her brief examination of Trudi Montag's character, writes that "it was not obedience that made Germans do what they did." (182) However, Hegi examines the notion of obedience throughout the Burgdorf cycle and in *Floating in my Mother's Palm*, Hanna commits acts of disobedience as well. The notion of obedience is so deeply entrenched in even the subsequent generations of Germans that Hanna feels guilty for stealing holy water. She feels the "eyes of the apostles" upon her as she swallows the holy water along with Renate and also dons the role of a priest. (ch. 5)

The holy water is referred to in the novel as a 'prop' and a symbol of the hold held by religion over the masses. The category between miracle and treatment is clear in the text yet the mention of such props points out the hypocrisy of religion. Religion was used as a medium of obedience. It fostered normative roles like ascribing false ideas of dignity and chastity to women. Throughout the Burgdorf cycle, Hegi's protagonists are women who are what Morris terms "nasty girls." (182) Hanna borrows novels from the Montags' pay-library whose book jackets feature stereotypical representations of women. These women always had a "single tear that slid down the heroine's cheek without blemishing her complexion and dignity." (ch. 9)

The novel points out how identity is constituted in terms of these implanted values. Trudi, Jutta, Hanna are female protagonists who differ from the patriarchally constituted norms of the 'ideal feminine.' Trudi differs even in stature and physical conformity because of her dwarfism. Her sexuality is either denounced or mocked by the townspeople of Burgdorf. Morris also mentions how Trudi is different from another iconic dwarf protagonist by a German writer, namely Oskar Matzerath from Gunter Grass' *The Tin Drum* (1959). Dwarves in Holocaust-ridden Germany were seen as weak and vulnerable, also subject to ridicule. The case of the Otviz family, a family of Jewish entertainers who were dwarves as well, is pretty well known.[lxxi] Yehuda Koren and Eilat Negev write how "hunchbacks, hermaphrodites, giants, dwarves, obese men and corpulent women – in general, anyone suffering from a

growth disorder" were separated from the rows of prisoners at concentration camps and seen as unfit for labour. (n.p.)

Morris writes that "Trudi is very different from Oskar. Her dwarfedness gives her the power to resist Hitler's gaze." (181) Trudi escapes imprisonment by the SS by using her 'dwarfedness' to her advantage.The Burgdorf cycle situates the town of Burgdorf on the banks of the River Rhein while Gunter Grass evokes the actual German River Rhine with reference to the Rhine River Three Jazz band.[lxxii] The idea of deformity and disability marks the sequel *Floating in my Mother's Palm* as well, where Renate is affiliated with bony legs and cannot walk properly.

Disability is used as a narrative strategy to counter the notion of ideological difference which gave rise to the Holocaust. Narrative tropes like the use of metaphors and figurative language are employed to deal with the impossibility of representation of the Holocaust. Robert C. Holub points out to the differences between "silence of the Holocaust" and "silence about the Holocaust" which he terms one of "repression and avoidance." (107) Hegi attempts a historiography of Germany which takes eschews a monocausal approach for cultural and historical analysis.

Floating in my Mother's Palm attempts an examination of the 'official' narrative of the town, not only about the tainted past but also related to personal histories of Klara Brocker, Fraulein Beier, Karin Baum amongst others. Karin Baum, the daughter of Ingrid Baum is raped by her grandfather who had also assaulted her mother. She is sent to the 'baby mansion' where women with illegitimate children are sent to birth them. Hegi shows how the onus of proving legitimacy falls on women and social ostracisation affects only the women. Karin's grandfather is left to lead a normal life while Karin is sent to the baby mansion. The baby mansion is a space that is inclusive yet a symbol of social castigation born out of oppressive patriarchal norms. The mansion exists as inclusive because all the women in it express solidarity with one another, turning it into a safe space. However, the baby mansion was born out of the 'need' to send these women out of Burgdorf, to live on the margins of society.

Women's histories during the Holocaust have been subsumed by male retelling of their stories. German women's lives during the Holocaust have not been documented as much as they should have been. In this context, Hegi's Burgdorf cycle explores German women's observations during this turbulent period, drawing these subjectivities out of obscurity. Holub writes how German literature postwar is marked by many kinds of 'silences' which Hegi

attempts to work through, in order to reach an understanding both of her own past and her country's history.

In his review of work by Ernestine Schlant, Holub mentions how certain works by German authors "concentrated on the wartime and the postwar time travails of the non-Jewish German population rather than on the atrocities of the Holocaust." (108) However, Hegi writes about the vicissitudes of the war faced by the Jewish population but it is present through the eyes of Trudi Montag. As mentioned before, the concentration camp universe is missing from the texts except in passing reference. Perhaps an attempt to sketch out a story based on Jewish experience by a German writer would be seen as sacrilege. Hegi's work is an attempt to navigate her own past, in what Holub terms "mastering the past or *Vergangenheitsbewaltigung*." (108)

Ursula Hegi herself mentions how difficult it was for her "to come to terms with her homeland's history." (Lewis n.p.) The Burgdorf cycle was born out of this quest for identity as well. As an immigrant, Ursula Hegi had to understand and learn the English language and that was a challenging process. Yet, she mastered the language and the Burgdorf cycle was written in English instead of German. In the *Stones from the River* where Hegi writes in detail about German obedience, the German words used in the novel mostly have negative connotations. The 'intact world' or '*eine heile Welt'* is shattered by her metaphorical 'tearing' of the silence.

The question of identity and of Germanness and Jewishness that have been diametrical opposites are explored further in Hegi's *Children and Fire* (2004). Although it is the last book of the Burgdorf cycle, I will be examining it before *The Vision of Emma Blau*. This is because *Children and Fire* looks at the pre-war period of the Holocaust and the idea of immigration and identity in the latter novel is closely linked to Hegi's *Tearing the Silence*, which I will analyse in Chapter IV.

Children and Fire shifts between the present, past and the future and unlike *Stones from the River*, has no chronological order. This can be seen as a comment on the nature of memory, which often become hazy and diluted upon the passage of time. In both the earlier novels, Trudi and Hanna can access their respective mother's memories through the act of touch. Memories are not accessible in a linear fashion ad can be evoked by certain situations, touch and sound. Thekla Jansen, the Jewish teacher who is the protagonist of the novel, wants to let her students "experience learning through touch and memory." (ch. 3) Memory in Holocaust

novels is an integral part of the 'working through' process. Memory is also marked by an abyss as well as a representational conflict.

Memory and knowledge are shown to be inextricably linked in *Children and Fire,* the title of which suggests a dangerous kind of knowledge; the knowledge of children's heightened susceptibility to fire. Children should be kept safely away from fire and not be allowed to metaphorically consumed by it like Bruno Stosick. The novel also begins with a reference to "the first anniversary of the fire that destroyed the parliament building in Berlin." (ch. 1)

The 'fire' evoked in the title of the novel refers to several things, including the Holocaust. The word 'holocaust' comes from the greek words 'holos' and 'kaustos' which refer to fire and burning. The title also brings to mind the mass incineration of Jews in burning and gas chambers at concentration camps. Fire also symbolises the moral bankruptcy of a civilisation and also the historical incidents of book burning. The novel also describes the mass burning of books, no doubt inspired by the 1930's mass book burnings by the Nazi regime.

The novel is centred around the first anniversary of the Reichstag fire, on February 27, 1934. The Reichstag fire, was a case of arson which was used by Hitler in a manipulative attempt to further his Nazi doctrine. The Reichstag fire, on February 27, 1933, brought in the Reichstag fire decree. As the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum puts it, "(the act) abolished a number of constitutional protections and paved the way for a Nazi dictatorship." (n.p.) The novel points out how the Reichstag fire was used to promulgate ordinances and usher in rallies, thus bringing out jingoism in the name of nationalism. Thekla Jansen sees her students participate in these rallies and believes it to be merely "pageantry that appealed to small-town minds conditioned by religion." (Hegi ch.2)

However, it turns that what Thekla considers to be mere pageantry turns out to be even more sinister as an all-consuming fire. Thekla too has acceded to Nazi propaganda and taken up Sonja Siderova's position at the school. She tells herself that she will keep the position secure for Sonja till she returns however she is plagued by guilt for betraying her old teacher. Thekla's actions point out that human choices are often marked by moral ambivalence and the notion of by-stander becomes even more complex than we imagine it to be.

Thekla is forced to take up the job as a teacher because of her past ten years of unemployment. She has to provide decent food for herself and her family. Yet, in taking up the job she has acquiesced to Nazi oppression and put herself in a position of vulnerability. She attends the rally of the Hitler-Jugend, following Bruno to keep him safe. However,

Bruno's death makes her realise that the forebodings she had about the Nazi regime, have been proved real. When her student Markus' parents leave Germany on account of being Jewish, she terms "leaving the country" as "premature." (ch.3) However, when her own identity as a Jew is revealed to her, she is plagued by doubts and fears.

While the 'fire' in the title is an overt reference to the Jews burnt alive during the Holocaust, Caruth's reference to Freud's dream of the burning child also comes to mind. Caruth writes that the dream symbolises "a plea by an other who is asking to be seen and heard, this call by which the other commands us to awaken (to awaken, indeed, to a burning.) (9) Bruno Stosick's death can be seen as a call to awaken not only for Thekla, but also his own father and the entire German community. Thekla also has to 'awaken' to her Jewish heritage, which she has suspected all along yet buried deep inside. Thekla is born to a German mother and father, yet it turns out that she is the illegitimate child of Michel Abramowitz. She has to keep this Jewish identity hidden from the world in the wake of Nazism where being Jewish feels like a cross to bear. In the character of Thekla Jansen, Hegi has coalesced the German and Jew into one identity. Thekla's identity as a woman is irrespective of her German or Jewish heritage. Growing up in a German family, she's German but with Jewish antecedents, her lineage is Jewish.

In the context of Hitler's 'Lebensborn' program, which showed a fanatic obsession with racial purity, Thekla Jansen's status as an 'illegitimate' offspring puts her at risk. Thekla's wonders "how much do the Stosicks know" about her past. (ch. 30) Thekla believes in her German identity till she is cast aside with Sonja Siderova, her Jewish teacher whose position at the school had been given to Thekla. Hegi makes a reference to the *Ahnenpass*, a document which had to be submitted by all Germans as proof of their ancestry. Thekla realises that the revelation of her true identity would make her lineage Jewish, not 'Aryan' as the state would have liked. However, Sonja tells her that the "Ahnenpass is not an ethical document. It forces disclosure to an unethical government." (ch.38)

By turning teachers into vocal as well as discreet dissidents to the government, Hegi comments on the failure of the state in the field of education. It also brings to mind the vocal critiques of Hitler's education policies from 1935-37 by public intellectuals like IL Kandel and Frieda Wunderlich. IL Kandel trieD to point out towards the use of education to promote Nazi policies and he wrote :

> All distinctions between education as a coercive, controlling force (propaganda and indoctrination in every sense of the word) and education for enlightenment have been liquidated. (153)

Hegi attempts to show education was used as a tool by the totalitarian regime to begin military training at a young age. It is upon joining the Hitler *Jugend* that Bruno Stosick gets veered towards a warped path. Thekla, Sonja, Trudi are amongst the few who can make out the difference between the seemingly 'benevolent' policies and fascist diktats. A sense of heroism and false nationalism is instilled in children by making overt references to stories from the German past which suited the Nazi regime. Thekla, however, teaches her students Schiller's poem 'The Diver' in which the "quest for heroism leads to death." (ch. 38)

Thekla is able to recognise that Germans and Jews alike are hurtling towards literal and metaphorical deaths and Bruno's death signals towards a cruel fate. By using Schiller's poem, Hegi signals towards the tragedy that awaits the German nation; the "howling charybdis" and the "whirlpool" that the diver in the poem jumps into. (Schiller n.p.) Hegi equates Hitler to the 'mad king' whose ideas are going to consume Germany like a ravenous beast. Thekla knows that this "beast is a nebulous creature that takes on body to chase your souls." (ch.38) In the Burgdorf cycle, Hegi explores ideas that the mythology around the German nation was built on, like obedience and allegiance.

The beast that Hegi talks about is a reference to the primitive tendency for violence that is in opposition to the idea of civilisation. Hegi critiques Nazi obsession with purity by pointing out to the closeness between purity and sin. As she writes:

> Pure means without sins. But that can get tricky because of the near occasion of sin. (ch. 4)

The "near occasion" of sin occurs many times in the Burgdorf cycle, where sin also exists in the flesh, in the form of Trudi's rape or Karin Baum's child born out of assault. In *Children and Fire* as well, Hegi points to the indoctrination afforded by religion to the German masses. Purity is valued in Burgdorf not only in the body but also in thoughts and the church warns against "impure thoughts which can sneak inside your soul." (ch. 4) Obedience is so deeply entrenched in children's minds that upon reading about Icarus's flight, Thekla's student Andreas concludes that "Icarus died because he was disobedient to his father." (ch. 4)

Children and Fire is the story of one day in Thekla's life, February 27, 1934 but also details her childhood and family history from 1899 to 1914. The novel also examines a mass book

burning incident on May 10-12 in 1933, inspired by the mass burnings in May 1933 by the German Student Union. The book burning symbolises a destruction of knowledge and thus an alteration of the narrative of history. History is inextricably linked with knowledge and the repudiation of certain knowledge and insertion of a different kind changes the path of history. While describing the market square in Burgdorf, the location of the book burning, Hegi writes how the air "flickered like a stage curtain made from strips of gauze to keep people from seeing clearly." (ch. 32) The haze which envelops the square as a result of the smoke and prevents clear vision is also symbolic of the haze which descended over Germany prior to and during the Holocaust.

The lack of perception that caused people to become by-standers was also a creation of the Nazi indoctrination. Nazi policies depended upon invoking mass hysteria, like urging people to chant "fire recitations or *Feuerspruche*, as if part of a staged performance with a huge cast." (ch. 32) The books that are burnt at the market square include writings by Freud, Marx, Mann, Remarque amongst others. Freud's psychoanalytic theories are seen as "exaggeration of the sex life." (ch. 32) Ironically, the very foundation of Holocaust studies was later built on trauma and psychoanalysis, informed by Freud and Lacan.

The book-burning symbolises an act of drawing distinctions between what is German and what is 'un-German.' Thekla, who considers herself a part of the former is relegated to the latter, thus blurring the divide. Hegi points out how the flames to which the books are consigned are a portent of the flames which will singe the flesh of many human beings in the coming years. The book-burning is an attempt at cleansing or 'purification' and acts as precursor to the ethical cleansing that the 'final solution' was to bring out. Few people in Burgdorf like Thekla and Sonja can recognise it for the contamination it carries. Sonja thinks about Heine's words while at the square:

> Where they burn books, they will ultimately also burn people. (ch. 32)

In this context, the death of Bruno Stosick becomes integral to the story, as through his death, the child seems to offer a 'plea.' It is, what Caruth terms, "a plea by an other who is asking to be seen and heard." (9) Through Bruno's death, the town of Burgdorf is called to an 'awakening' which it doesn't heed. Hegi writes how the "charred remains" of the book-burning get inside homes and become part of people's smells, metaphorically laying claim to their souls. (ch. 33) The use of the fire metaphor and overt references to singeing, flames, "charred remains and wet ashes" invoke the concentration camps and the suffering of Jews. The indirect reference to the "black mud" that seeps into German homes is thus a bearing

witness to the concentration camp horrors. As a German writer, who is not a survivor of the concentration camp or a descendant of survivors, Hegi cannot directly describe the concentration camp universe without the use of appropriation.

However, the sogginess and the blackness of the ashes invokes the trauma of the 'other,' the Jew. Cathy Caruth mentions that in trauma narratives, "insistent recurring words of figures…(are) the figures of departure, falling, burning and awakening." (5) Essentially, the Burgdorf cycle is a trauma narrative, which describes the trauma of the 'other,' as well as collective and individual traumas. Two novels of the cycle examine the German past, prior to the Holocaust in a lot of detail. Both *Children and Fire* and *Stones from the River* paint a picture of pre-war Germany from 1910-1930. Does Ursula Hegi mean to point out that we must visit the past as a site to understand the origins of a traumatic event?

Caruth's work has demonstrated that trauma is marked by two aspects-referentiality and belatedness. Trauma novelists have a difficult task as trauma generates an air of incomprehensibility around it. The story of trauma does not contain "simple knowledge…but simultaneously defies and demands our witness." (5) Why, then must we even persist in conceptualising trauma if it is by nature unassimilable? The answer lies in the process of working through. The process of re-telling of a past or of a traumatic experience, even if it defies description is integral to the working through. In this respect, Hegi returns to the past again and again to mark it as a site of trauma and to understand it, even when it cannot be known. This is however different from 'mastering the past,' which involves a process of negationism, revisionism or denial on part of German historians and authors alike. Hegi's Burgdorf cycle marks the intersection of trauma and history, as well as a return to the past.

Another question that has often been raised in context of German writers is the legitimacy of their trauma novels. As Germans were removed from 'actual' traumatic sites like concentration camps, how do we legitimately include trauma works by them? Hegi, however both assumes the role of the listener and the storyteller when it comes to this historical trauma. As a listener, she has recognised the "crying wound…the trauma, of another" and by her historical re-telling, she returns to it. (8) She also points out to multiple individual traumas in this larger collective traumatic experience. The impossible act of historical re-telling thus all becomes imperative. Hegi's work opens up the "possibility and surprise of listening to another's wound." (8)

However this process is marked by its own set of limitations, as pointed out, namely that the trauma of another cannot be assumed or appropriated. So, while the Burgdorf cycle is about

the Holocaust, it can only refer to the concentration camp universe through the use of metaphors and figurative language. The act of witness thus extends to second generation writers like Ursula Hegi. In trying to understand the implications of the traumatic experience, the listener and the witness also become as equally involved as the victim/survivor. Caruth also points out that the conflicts in the communication of history, "the deeply ethical dilemma… of how not to betray the past." (27)

Is the history of the Holocaust then divided into a history of Germans and a history of Jews? By referring metaphorically to Jewish deaths through fire, is Hegi then impinging upon the 'right' to tell Jewish history? In her work on Alain Resnais and Marguerite Duras' film *Hiroshima mon amour,* Caruth points out the dilemmas in re-telling the history of another. The French woman in the film, in narrating the story of her dead lover to a Japanese man, now her lover, marks an act of betrayal of the past. Yet her story also builds a "faithful monument to a death." (31) Caruth's proposition is that historical re-telling is not only necessary and there is an "obvious necessity for memory." (34) Literature thus marks an 'enactment' of this memory; a replay of history which becomes imperative in the face of its denial.

What Thekla perceives to be another's history being unfolded in front of her eyes, turns out to be her own. It is an unraveling not only of her own past but the country's future that Thekla is able to witness like Cassandra from the Greek epics. However, like Cassandra, who was cursed for "no one to give credence to her prophesies," Thekla too is powerless against the sweeping changes. (ch.33) Thekla tells Sonja Siderova that she doesn't even think of her as Jewish, pointing out the connotations that are associated with the word 'Jew.' The feeling of not belonging is exacerbated due to events like the book burning and the hostility of the townspeople. Hegi shows how Thekla's identity becomes fraught with anxiety as initially it is undercut by notions of her legitimacy. Later, when Thekla confronts the reality of her birth as Michel Abramowitz's daughter, any fixed ideas of her identity get uprooted.

In her poem *Counting*, Hilary Tham confesses- "I did not feel Jewish those first years after my conversion/ I felt like I was wearing a new mask over old masks/ I was dancing a new dance, miming the moves." (Goldenberg 137) Tham conceives of identity in the form of masks or mimicry, where she can replace and substitute one mask for another. The notion of identity thus is not fixed or immutable, even if it is informed by certain social and cultural practices. In this context, the idea of identity as Jewish or German becomes questionable.

Thekla's identity is shaped by the cultural and historical processes around her which are not in her control. The question of legitimacy also crops up as she finds it challenging to live in a town constrained by normative ideas of identity. As a child at a bakery shop with her *Vati* (father), she is subjected to whispers of "*Kuckuck*— cuckoo." (ch. 25) To her child brain, a cuckoo is fascinating:

> *Kuckucks* stole shiny things from your windowsill, wedding rings or baby spoons. In school she'd learned a song about the *Kuckuck* in the forest. (ch.25)

However, her father takes offence at the use of the word and pulls her away from the bakery. The incident points out how a child is unaware of the ideas of legitimacy and illegitimacy , as well as complex questions of identity. The town of Burgdorf, where familial assault is overlooked yet illegitimacy is turned into a sin. This idea of illegitimacy wraps itself around Thekla's father's head and he has to scream that she belongs to him, just like her brothers.

Identity in Burgdorf is built upon the notion of ideological differences. There is an inherent class structure at work. Walter, one of Thekla's students, is treated differently by the other boys because his family works in the slaughterhouse. The young boys find their imagination drawn to the slaughterhouse and by association, Walter assumes the status of an outsider. From a young age, the idea of German language as a means of unification is drilled into the boys' minds, thus fostering a nationalistic identity. Thekla teaches her students about other German dialects, telling them that the language "is always changing, depending on the times we live in, the region we live in."

By pointing to the similarities between *Konigskinder*, the German poem and the Greek legend of Hero and Leander to her students, Thekla espouses the idea of cultural fluidity. Hegi points out how identities are in reality transcultural constructions. This is in strong opposition to the idea of identity based on nation, German culture and community that was propagated by the Nazi regime. The protagonists of the Burgdorf cycle carry an empathy beyond cultural and national identities that is born out of an identification with the 'other.'

Hegi's aim seems to be to point out how the history of communities are inter-connected and subject to a much bigger historical process. It has been argued by critics that "the Holocaust, slavery and colonial domination are in fact interconnected." (Craps and Rothberg 518) To analyse the interconnectedness of these events can give us a greater insight into the "dark underside of modernity" as well as enable "transcultural empathy." (518) Hegi's attempt to understand the primitive past and references to a beast that stalks society are seemingly born

out of this transcultural ethos. She seems to be arguing that as long as societies are marked by ideological underpinnings such as difference, they will continue to have dark beasts of prey.

The Burgdorf cycle also looks at the brokenness that informs identity and causes schisms in its rubric. In *Stones from the River*, Trudi and Jutta perceive the brokenness that informs the town's cultural identity after the war. In *Children and Fire*, the brokenness that seeps into the town as the First World War soldiers return. The soldiers are stripped of their identity as "war had decimated the threshold between them and the shadows." (ch. 29) The biggest warning against a second war can only be the state of soldiers from the first war. Thekla's father begins to suffer from an apparent case of post-traumatic stress disorder after the war. He shuts away from the world and has recurrent sadness bouts which Hegi terms "a sadness deeper than caves." (ch.29)

Wars not only change the historical narrative of the town, its identity but also imprint upon the minds of the soldiers. Children in Burgdorf, who have no idea about the grim realities of the battlefield ask for toy soldiers. However, Thekla's father realises that "the soldiers he carved…were not at all like soldiers in the real war where the only bright color was that of blood before it dulled." (ch. 29) Thekla's *Vati* or father, Wilhelm Jansen, though not her biological father, shares an unbroken bond with her and is closer to her than to his own biological sons. Jansen is an artist and one of the best toymakers but the war strips him of his creative potential and plunges him deep in the shadows

In his work on cultural identity, Jeffrey C. Alexander writes that an event of such magnitude like the Holocaust leaves an impression on group consciousness. Cultural trauma thus "(marks) their memories forever and (changes) their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways." (Alexander n.p.)This change in identity manifests as brokenness which Trudi can perceive in her surroundings. Thekla too dreads the future, knowing that a decline is inevitable. She looks around for answers to "drive out the beast" which has found a threshold in Burgdorf's homes. Hegi contrasts the flames which consume Bruno Stosick and the Jews to the flames around which people sat and listened to stories.

Fire, which was a symbol of civilisation turns into a means of power for the Nazis. Fire can be both comforting, a source of warmth as well as a consuming force which turns everything to tinder. Hegi shows the destructive use of one of the most important symbols of civilisation by the Nazis. Fire, smoke, ashes, hunger have been leitmotifs of Holocaust literature, particularly fire has been a symbol of ruination in Elie Wiesel's night, where Eliezer encounters it many times. In *Night,* Wiesel makes several references to fire and flames, when

the narrator comes across a pit where Nazis burnt Jewish babies. Fire becomes a symbol of Jewish suffering as Wiesel writes "fire—chimney: these words have intrinsic meaning, but in those times, they meant something else." (preface n.p.)

What Wiesel refers to as the "immense, terrifying madness that had erupted in history and in the conscience of mankind," Hegi refers to as the beast. (preface n.p.) The beast signifies a primitive tendency for violence, which is in direct contrast to civilised society and its ideals. Thekla tries to introduce doubt in her students' minds, to inculcate in them the art of questioning nationalistic narratives like the Hitler-Jugend. The Hitler-Jugend which forms its chapter in Burgdorf is drawn from an actual historical society known as HitlerJugend or the Hitler youth, whereby German youth were indoctrinated into Nazi policies. Thekla uses Schiller's poem 'The Diver' to teach her students about the mad king's quest which led to the diver's death. She believes that "she'll introduce doubt into the diver's eagerness, encourage her boys to talk about different endings to the poem." (ch.38)

Hegi battles for the possibility of more than one interpretation to a narrative whether it be of history or identity. In context of gender and identity, Hegi also raises questions of legitimacy and illegitimacy. The Burgdorf cycle is an attempt to delineate gendered subjectivities and all the protagonists in the four novels are women. While Trudi is a *zwerg* woman, Hanna is a girl on the cusp of womanhood who has lost her mother. Thekla deals with a dual identity as both a German and a Jew. Her identity as a woman is also informed by the questions of legitimacy that are raised by the townspeople of Burgdorf, who don't refrain from terming her a *Kuckuck* or cuckoo.

Women's narratives and stories are constantly being defined by men around them. The changes in a country's narrative as the men were sent to soldiers in war, often do not include women's experiences. Women's role during the Holocaust has been probed quite often, with critics pointing out to the loopholes in a gendered holocaust study. The "declarations on gender" are often "dismissive" and writers who adhere to them often opt for a narrative that goes "beyond gender." (Kremer n.p.) However, since events such as the Holocaust are born out of ideological constructs, an attempt to study social hierarchies, whether they be of gender, race or class is an imperative need. Trauma during the Holocaust was also gender specific as women faced traumatic sexual assaults. Hegi's work shows us how sexual assault as well as a women's experience of rape goes beyond nationalistic identities of Germanness and Jewishness. Assault and bullying is faced by women like Trudi, boys like Georg, homosexuals and anyone with ideological differences.

What links the victims of assault is that they are apparently seen as powerless in a society which works on power modalities. Women are situated at the extreme ends of this power axis and gender study specific to the Holocaust unearths their vulnerable position during the times. The argument that writers of gendered studies like Hegi make is not that women suffered more, but that gender is merely one of the lens used to analyse this event. Gender, race, disability, legitimacy all become lenses through which Hegi explores the Holocaust.

Thekla's identity is also defined by gender and how it is shaped by the town of Burgdorf around her, where she has to reject unwanted advances from men as a single woman. She offers that it is "so easy to ignore a man's interest by pretending it wasn't there." (ch. 4) As an illegitimate child, she is 'branded' as someone with questionable morals and men like Konrad Weskopp, Herr Stosick think it's easier to flirt with her. The eroticisation of women's bodies has also been pointed out in *Stones from the River*, where the book jackets of romance novels from the Montag library depicted women in either sensuous poses or as chaste, virginal heroines.

Female bodies were essential to the culmination of Nazi doctrine as Hitler's *Lebensborn* program was essentially based on a control of the female womb. As a woman with short stature and a large head, Trudi offers resistance to the notion of the ideal female, which she too found alluring. Trudi initially tries to fit into that ideal however she later this normative ideal by using her body to her advantage. Thekla also challenges the ideal feminine archetype and unlike many of her old classmates, does not get married. She also uses her power and agency as a schoolteacher to mould her students and warn them against the dangers of the Hitler-Jugend.

Hegi's Burgdorf cycle merely does not paint women as victims or perpetrators but points towards the construction of female identity and gender. She also points out ideas of normativity whether related to gender or identity lead to events like the Holocaust. The idea here is to not reduce the Holocaust to one basic assumption but to examine the construction of the 'other.' It was the desire to wipe out the 'other' that was the essence of the 'final solution,' a desire to efface even Jewish memory, as Elie Wiesel put it. The Burgdorf cycle also deals with the issue of female agency as women like Trudi, Jutta and Thekla become agents of change. Women are not merely shown as receptacles or victims however the patriarchal control of women's bodies and subjectivities is shown as prevalent in Burgdorf.

An important question that arises is about the inclusion of German female writers in gendered studies on the Holocaust. S. Lilian Kremer in her book *Women's Holocaust Writing: Memory*

and Imagination (1999) mentions how Holocaust fiction by Jewish women writers focused on female bonding, the mother-daughter relationship and sexual assault. These themes are equally insistent in the work of German women writers like Ursula Hegi. Hegi's work shows that a gendered study points out to similar elements in the fiction on Holocaust by Jewish and German female writers alike.

As Kremer points out in her work, "female gendered experience counterbalances the universalisation of male experience and interpretations while making significant artistic and conceptual contributions to Holocaust representations." (7) Hegi's work too shows how female bonding is used as a coping and resilience strategy by women. Thekla is able to grapple with the question of her identity while confiding in Sonja Siderova, whose teachings she emulates. Trudi forms a close bond with Eva, whom she hides in her cellar. Kremer makes it clear that "gender does not comprise the totality of women's Holocaust experience," as Hegi too demonstrates. (8) In the Burgdorf cycle, the notions of gender, identity, sexuality, memory all intersect to provide a myriad of lived experiences and histories. By evoking the metaphor of the pear tree in *Stones from the River* and *Floating in my Mother's Palm*, Hegi subverts the idea of female fecundity which was a prerequisite of Nazi policies.

The Burgdorf cycle shows how the attempt to shape and control women's bodies was perpetrated upon both German and Jewish women alike. Jewish women were seen as the carriers of Jewry hence treated as the enemy. As Kremer points out, Adolf Eichmann, one of the architects of the Holocaust, believed that "he could succeed in destroying the biological basis of Jewry in the East by complete extermination." (2) On the other hand, German women's wombs were seen as fertile and their bodies were mapped as the ideal feminine, a construction of which Hegi is critical. Hegi subverts this construction of the ideal feminine body by using disability as a trope.

Kremer also points out that "feminine resourcefulness" is detailed in novels by Jewish women writers, in which Jewish women of Aryan appearance tried to hide their Jewish identity. (16) Thekla has to conceal her Jewish identity as well as Sonja Siderova tells her to put down Wilhelm Jansen as her father. Jewish identity becomes a perilous subject and fraught with anxiety. What is even more disturbing that the snatching away of identity and imbuing it with negative connotations is a gradual process that is condoned by the townspeople. There is a slow acclimatisation to Nazi policies and a wall of silence builds around the town.

Hegi also examines the notion of silence in Germans who migrated and lived in America during the second World War in the third book on the Burgdorf cycle, *The Vision of Emma Blau.* The novel is not a sequel but part of the same universe; only the landscape shifts from imaginary Burgdorf to America. The book examines the notion of immigration and identity in German immigrants who had gone to America prior to the war. The moral conflicts felt by these Germans is one of the themes explored by this novel.

The story centres around Stefan Blau, who leaves his *Vaterland* Germany to work as a helper in a restaurant in America. He opens his own restaurant and builds a house, which is almost a veritable fortress known as the Wasserburg. The novel deals with the 'curse' that the Wasserburg carries, which is essentially the transmission of secrets and trauma in the family of the Blaus. Stefan marries Helene Montag, who was his sister's best friend in Germany and her letters "kept the texture of his hometown alive for him." (ch. 1) Helene, who has lived in Germany her whole life until she becomes Stefan's third wife, finds it hard to adjust in America.

Immigrant identity crisis is an integral part of the book, which explores the notion of a double identity and otherness. Helene Montag, on her arrival in America, yearns to have physical characteristics which would separate her from Americans, so that she could be labelled a foreigner. As she looks like an American, she finds it hard when people realise she is a foreigner based on her accent alone. 'Otherness' thus becomes a prism through the immigrant perceives of life in the adopted country. As a feature, it gets ascribed merely through the act of gaze. Physical characteristics thus become signs through which otherness is inscribed along with accent. Hegi points out to the process of 'absorption' that the town of Winnipesaukee demonstrates towards Stefan, yet not towards his third wife Helene.

Thus, the process of 'absorption' that is central to immigrant experience differs for each immigrant and is marked by various factors. Helene is different not only in terms of her accent but her outlook on life and the way she raises her children. Through the character of Helene Montag, Hegi shows how the process of immigration is complex and layered, as well as alienating for the immigrant.

Immigrants can experience feeling like a 'newcomer' as Helene realises that "living in America was a constant shifting between discovery and loss." (ch. 4) Helene likes certain characteristics of the town, like the separation of the houses and the vast expanses of land in America. However, she still prefers German shoes, which she terms as sturdy in the face of 'flimsy' American shoes. Helene tries to recreate her own version of Germany in Stefan's

Wasserburg by ordering furniture from Germany along with other household objects. The need for substitution and recreation that is felt by the immigrant signifies a deep sense of loss. The acts of substitution stem from a fear of losing touch with the native country.

As an immigrant, Helene often reconnects her experiences in the new country by comparing them with her previous experiences in Germany. She seeks her homeland in the landscape around her, in the vastness of the sky and the depths of the lake at Winnipesaukee. While America represents luxuries for her, yet the memory of her homeland stays strong and she evokes it through touch, sight and sound. As she walks along the lake next to the Wasserburg, "the trees and islands would remind her of the Rhein and the meadows along its banks and made her miss the Rhein somewhat less." (ch.4)

Hegi has earlier tried to imbue a transcultural ethos in her work, where Thekla Jansen points out to the differences and similarities in German dialect to her German students. In *The Vision of Emma Blau,* Hegi tries to explore the idea of transnationalism through the lens of immigrant experience. Immigrant identity often seems like a "seesaw existence of not belonging to either country" to Helene Montag. (ch. 4)

Immigrant identity can often be fragmented and riddled with schisms, as it happens with Helene. While she realises that "nothing has changed" in her life as she gets married to Stefan, whom she has desired for many years, she also learns that "everything has changed." (ch. 4) The homeland often occurs to her as a dreamscape, where everything remains unchanged. Helene's ideal world is one where Stefan marries her as his first wife in Germany itself. She continues to enjoy an intimate connection with her homeland through her brother Leo's letters, who writes to her about life in Burgdorf.

Central to immigrant experience is the problem of language, something that Ursula Hegi faced herself upon her immigration to the United States. Hegi calls her own immigration as the "line between my childhood and adulthood." (Lewis, n.p.)Upon arriving in America in 1965, at the age of roughly 18 years, Hegi "shunned German acquaintances, forced herself to speak English more often and set her first few books on American soil." (Lewis n.p.) By shunning her German heritage, Hegi found she could not completely blend in till she negotiated her way around her Germanness. The Burgdorf cycle was born as an important witness to Hegi's German past and identity and the complicated legacy of Germanness in the wake of the Holocaust.

Similar to Hegi herself, Helene finds that blending in, ‘absorption’ that come easily to her husband Stefan Blau, are difficult for her to acquire. In the process of absorption, the immigrant may often have to let one identity get completely subsumed by the other. Helene, though, wants to hang on to her Germanness, even by a thread, which leads her to experience a dual identity and a complex multiple belonging. She feels as if she belongs to two cultures at once; one in which she is slowly getting assimilated and one which she is afraid of losing and letting go. She also finds that due to the problem of language, she is unable to find work “as a teacher- at least not until the language would become as familiar as the one she’d grown up with.” (ch. 4)

The difficulty to grasp the English language makes Helene doubt her own intelligence and makes her feel a lack. The language of the adopted country thus becomes a ‘link’ through which the immigrant can explore the new world, as well as an alienating experience.The inability to think in another language causes embarrassment to Helene, who soon realises that her thick, heavy German accent is an impediment in the way of her ‘absorption’ process. As someone not well-versed with the language, Helene finds it difficult to translate her thoughts into the language. This process of translation puts a barrier between her and the country she has chosen to live in. This process “always meant one extra step between herself and the meaning.” (ch. 4) For Stefan, this process is gradual and easy, as he begins to slowly remove the translation barrier and learn to think in English. However, for Helene, the process of acclimatisation is a negotiation between her old identity as a German and her new identity as an American.

Helene finds that her oldest identity, that of being German, also becomes a persistent force that manifests itself through memory even in distant America. The novel spans a period from 1894 to 1990, during which Helene and Stefan live through the Holocaust, as German-Americans. Helene feels that the attitude of the townspeople changes towards the Blau family, blaming them for the atrocities in Europe, even though she reasons that her children are “innocent of what’s happening in Europe.” (ch. 4) Helene finds that she is assuaged with guilt as she watches her children play. She finds it deeply disturbing and disrespectful that as Germans, they are able to enjoy life in America when Europe is besieged with horrors during the First World War.

As the Holocaust takes place, the Blau family finds its Germanness being questioned, leading them to “offer reassurances that (we) are not dangerous to (them).” (ch. 7) The belief that Winnipesaukee people hold about Germans gets entrenched as a collectively held view.

While Hegi in no way seems to offer any vindication to German-Americans, she points out to the prejudices with which all Germans were seen. The Blau family finds their reputation tainted just because of their intrinsic association with Germany. There is a fostering of the same ideological divide that led to events like the Holocaust in the first place.

German-Americans were in no way exempt from the influence of the Holocaust and contested reports about German imprisonment in America also exist. A section of Germans in America had also pledged their allegiance to Hitler by forming the society Friends of New Germany in 1933. The society propagated Nazi policies and sympathised with the muscled nationalism shown by the SS and Gestapo. However, not all German-Americans were Nazi-sympathizers, which is the case that Hegi seems to be making. Helene finds her conscience challenged by the events in Germany and finds herself assailed by guilt.

Even German accents become symbols of oppression and atrocity and the Blau family feels marked by their accents. Greta, Stefan's daughter finds it a relief that years of living in America have made their accents 'smooth.' Yet, their accents "were still noticeable enough to remind others that they had come from Germany." (ch. 7) Hegi examines how the notion of German identity becomes a source of deep conflict. Helene finds herself being treated differently by the Jewish tenants of the Wasserburg, who feel 'uncomfortable' in her presence. German identity thus becomes a symbol of monstrosity, evilness and violence.

Helene realizes that "she could not take the newspapers' descriptions of Germans as evil and apply them to everyone over there." (ch. 7) However, as her own identity gets challenged, she realises that the awareness in the town regarding her Germannness has changed. From a source of pride, her Germanness is reduced to a source of hostility. In Hegi's Burdorf cycle, there are different kinds of Germans- those in the town of Burgdorf who begin to criticise Hitler for the Holocaust, blaming him for everything and those like Helene and Trudy who find they are themselves complicit. This complicity is engendered out of silence and the Burgdorf cycle examines the various attitudes towards the concept of guilt by Germans.

Whenever Helene feels the pain of being singled out by the American townspeople, she realises that her pain is nothing compared to the violence committed in the name of genocide. The origin of her guilt lies in her realisation that there must be "ordinary people" in Germany who were "making this happen." (ch. 7) The 'knowledge' that Hegi talks about in the Burgdorf cycle is linked with the dilemma of guilt. Through Helene, Hegi points out that attitudes taken for granted as Germanness, like obedience and superiority , turn into something as calamitous as the Holocaust.

The word ‘German’ becomes a term which causes one to flinch; Stefan’s son Tobias feels his lover Danny has cast aspersions on him by calling him ‘german.’ Helene also finds herself distanced from the new awareness of Germanness and thus she finds it harder to fit in into either country, Germany or America. Helene realises that she has spent more time in America, her adopted country, yet she feels more at home in Germany. However, she also feels that she doesn’t belong in Germany anymore due to the change in collective national consciousness, which she doesn’t align with. The advent of the Second World war also causes strain in the old friendship between Stefan and his tenant Nate Bloom, who uses the term “you people” for the Germans.

There is an ideological shift that the novel delineates post the Holocaust, in the perception of Jews, which adds to the German guilt complex. However, Hegi is in no way portraying Germans as victims during the Holocaust. She is merely examining German past, history and the postwar dilemmas faced by German who owe moral responsibility for the Holocaust. Helene and her family often feel like they have to apologise to strangers and friends for the Holocaust. Helene also wants to offer an unconditional apology to Jews, especially “to Jews who’d survived, an apology from her certainly would not make a difference.” (ch. 8)

Hegi does not offer a merely one-sided view of Germans during the Holocaust and explore their fate. She does not absolve anyone or idealise any behaviour in any manner. Hegi’s aim seems to be to probe the foundational origins of the Holocaust by analysing German society in three different phases. In *The Vision of Emma Blau*, Hegi offers a German-American perspective on the Holocaust in which she does not vindicate German-Americans as well. Helene Montag finds herself burdened with guilt, even though she’s miles away from Germany. She tells her friend Pearl, how she often thinks of how the Jews had “to leave behind everything that belonged to them.” (ch.8) While Helene often imagines the hardships that the Jews had to face, the apologist stand points out to the guilt that Germans carry with them for the Holocaust. All of Helene’s imagination cannot match up to the real horrors of the Holocaust, which she has only heard about or read about in American newspapers.

The Holocaust has been described as a “negative symbiosis between Germans and Jews,, a kind of opposing commonality.” (as qtd in Rabinbach 159) By referring to the Holocaust as a symbiotic relationship, there is no intent to paint the Germans as victims or to appropriate Jewish suffering. What Rabinbach means to say is that the Jewish question and the German question are interlinked to each other. Hegi examines German past, the emphasis on obedience, punctuality and the idea of difference, to revisit the origins of the Holocaust.

Thus, the totalitarian Nazi regime and its tyranny are not constituted as “outside forces” which merely fell upon the Germans but their roots go deeper into the fabric of German society. (Kattago 86)This seems to be a main contention of the Burgdorf cycle. Siobhan Kattago, in a look at the history of the German memorial Neue Wache, mentions how it became an important symbol of the normalisation process of Germany. In this normalisation process however, “German mourning would predicate German guilt over the Holocaust.” (91) Kattago writes how the statue of Pieta was installed in the Neue Wache to focus on the female aspect of suffering in the Second World War, to turn it into a symbol of mourning.

However, the idea of mourning does not efface German guilt as Hegi seems to point out. The Germans may mourn the Holocaust victims but there is imperative need to examine their roles as by-standers or perpetrators. Helene voices this concern in the novel as she is unable to understand how ordinary people could let this happen. It is a travesty that can be understood by looking at the past and revisiting it as a site of origin.

The collective trauma that is encompassed by the Holocaust shaped the identities of Germans and Jews alike, as well as subsequent generations. The process of transference of Holocaust trauma has been documented in Jewish survivors’ children. In the Burgdorf cycle, Hegi demonstrates that often trauma is passed down in families from parents to children. Emma, whose parents Robert and Yvonne have an acrimonious marriage, grows up into an unhappy adulthood which is marked by an obsession with the Wasserburg. The Wasserburg, which was conceived of as a vision, turns into a family curse.

Emma’s father Robert suffers from a food disorder and her mother too finds herself restricted in the marriage. Hence, she leaves the children with their father for many days and returns after indulging herself on little trips. The fissures in their parents’ marriage causes Emma and her brother Caleb to grow up in a traumatised environment. The German lineage of their family also impresses itself upon Caleb, who revisits the family past as a filmmaker when he grows up. Caleb learns through his grandmother Helene that there is more to being German than just the carefulness that had become a part of Germanness. Helene feels “afraid someone would call me a Nazi,” as it goes against “everything that (she) think of as German or human.” (ch.9)

The idea of Germanness thus becomes deeply embedded in identity and memory. Helene, whose memory of Burgdorf shapes her life in America as well, finds that there is a chasm in her memories of the town and its actual reality. She finds that “being German had shifted that winter day into something far more shameful.” (ch. 9) As part of the third generation of the

German family, Caleb finds that he is afraid of looking closely at his family history. Revisiting the past involves deep incisions and Caleb's jostling with the past moulds his identity as a filmmaker.

Ursula Hegi discovered upon her own immigration to America that she had to "excise the ghosts of silence" that filled her own past which she abhorred and shunned. (Lewis n.p.) The shift in identity after the Holocaust was marked by fissures and German immigrants often faced the feeling of belonging to neither country. The subsequent generations also feel the pain of a past laced with violence and horror and find it difficult to accept, thus integrating themselves into the adopted country. Often, second and third generation Germans try to understand the German past, not as a matter of revisionism but to understand their own guilt that stems from being remotely associated with Nazism. Such attempts use creative means to analyse the past, like Caleb's film-making or Hegi's own story-telling.

The need for self-reflection is important to ensure that an event like the Holocaust does not take place again. In the shaping of the historical and cultural consciousness of the Holocaust, there is an attempt to replace German guilt with its effacement. Dalia Ofer writes how there are "existing tensions between individual memory and the construction of collective memory." (137) Hegi's Burgdorf cycle offers a narrative where personal memories of characters like Trudi, Jutta, Hanna and Helene represent the various aspects of German guilt and consciousness regarding the Holocaust. The word 'German' also gets imbued with the idea of enemy, as the Blau family discovers. When Stefan suffers a stroke in his later years, he loses his grip on the English language and reverts back to German words, almost in a way re-seeking his homeland. However, the townspeople agree that he is too "frail to fit their notion of the enemy."(ch.9)

Towards their later years, Helene and Stefan isolate themselves within their native German language, thus giving up the adopted language altogether. For Helene, the adopted language has been informed by resistance and then, appropriation and finally a reversal back to her native language. In this act, the "lines of immigration shifted once again, a fluid border, spilling the two of them across distance and time to Burgdorf, which kept reasserting itself as home." (ch. 9)

Helene and Stefan return through their memories to a Burgdorf unchanged by historical horrors, which remains innocent and guilt-free of the Holocaust. The return is marked by vivid memories of the landscape of the town- "*the river. The dike. The church tower. The fairgrounds. The pay-library.*" (ch. 9) The Burgdorf of the past, symbolic here of Germany in

the past is not impervious to its own horrors, which Hegi has delineated well in the previous novels. The town is marked by familial assault, rape, discrimination on the basis of ideological differences. Hence, the return to an idyllic past does not include memories of the town prior to the Holocaust; it substitutes those for the memories of the landscape. The untainted landscape of the river, the jetty and the vast fairgrounds evoke for Helene, a pristine past. The church tower figures in the novel *Floating in my Mother's Palm* as well, where the changes to the architecture of the church become synonymous with the ugliness of the town post the war.

The change in the landscape brought on by the war is a gradual process which eclipses Helene and Stefan, for whom the town landscape remains a pure memory, filled with the nostalgia of their childhood. The novel also describes the process of acculturation and assimilation for immigrants, which is also informed by fragmentation of identity and the difficulty of language. In her memoir *Lost in Translation : A Life in a New Language* (1989), Jewish immigrant Eva Hoffman writes about the "residual nostalgia" and "the stable, less tenuous conditions of anchoring, of home." (as qtd in Horowitz 41) However, for Hoffman, this immigration was an exile from her home (as she was the daughter of survivors), unlike Helene who made the choice to marry Stefan and go to America. This aspect of choice was often missing from the lives of Jewish immigrants, as Helene herself admits to her friend Pearl, while discussing the horrors of the Holocaust.

For Helene, who has earlier tried the cultural reproduction of Germany in her new home through the use of food and artefacts, this period in her marriage is the most rewarding. She finds comfort, along with her husband Stefan, in the native language and customs after years of assimilation as an immigrant. Perhaps this signals to the fact that the adopted language is imbued with fears of estrangement from the homeland and the reversal to native language is a redressal of this conflict.

The transmission of these memories of the homeland becomes distorted as it reaches the second and third generations. Stefan's grandson Caleb finds out that the picture of Burgdorf that he carries in his head is "part true and part distorted, not unlike the way his grandfather, as a boy had believed all of America to be occupied by tall buildings and buffaloes." (ch. 9) This distorted picture also becomes entrenched as reality in the minds of the subsequent generations, leading them to explore the past. The 'vision' that Stefan sees of Emma in the beginning of the novel is thus also a comment on the 'envisioning' of the past by the subsequent generations.

The process of immigration is perceived mainly through Helene's viewpoint in the text, thus positioning the text on the axes of gender and identity. Throughout the Burgdorf cycle, Hegi has delineated gendered experiences and subjectivities. Through Helene's character, we see the different experience of immigration from a woman's perspective. Helene finds the process of integration more difficult as compared to her husband Stefan, who is welcomed by the American community as a hard-working man. For Helene, the process of language acquisition is even more difficult and she has to relinquish her job as a teacher to fit into the role of the wife in marriage.

The Burgdorf cycle is informed by hollow marriages, like Helene and Stefan Blau's marriage or Alexander and Eva Sturm's marriage. While Stefan does not love his wife dearly for fear of her death, Alexander gives Eva up to the SS, thus leading to their estrangement. Stefan's third marriage is imbued with fears of loss, as Stefan has lost two of his wives to childbirth so he fears impregnating Helene. Helene, on the other hand, has been in love with Stefan for a long time and finds their lovemaking inadequate, which leads her to taking charge and surprising Stefan with her display of sexuality. Hegi's women characters are women with strong sexual desires, whether it be Trudi, Jutta or Helene. Trudi does not shy away from recounting her sexual experiences with Max to Hanna and going against the town's perception of her.

The townspeople see Trudi as devoid of any sexual desires because of her disability. Women's bodies thus get mapped as per the public gaze, which is often largely male. Trudi, however, defies convention and proceeds to exercise her sexuality. Helene also defies traditional roles inscribed in marriage for women. Her husband Stefan, who has restrained himself in the act of sex for fear of making her pregnant, is surprised at her display of sexual prowess. He feels 'tricked' when he finds out that she is pregnant. Helene often finds herself at crossroads when it comes to her stepchildren and wants to have her own children. As a stepmother too, Helene is neither over-friendly nor the archetype of the evil stepmother. Helene resists categorisation into the ideal feminine or the ideal maternal figure, that was propagated by Nazi doctrines.

The decisions in their marriage are often made by Stefan and Helene has to make herself heard, even in the act of sex. Their marriage is built upon a hollow notion of love and after marriage, traditional marital roles are cast upon Helene. Their granddaughter Emma chances upon Helene's love-letters to Stefan, which were a form of fantasy and wish-fulfilment for Helene. Emma grows up believing that the love between her grandparents was real and

eternal. Hegi perhaps seems to be commenting on the nature of romantic love, which is projected in literature and is far removed from reality. The book jackets of romance novels, as mentioned earlier, also portray women in traditional roles as the nurturer or the seductress. Hegi's female characters subvert and defy conventional gender roles and question the inherently patriarchal nature of society.

Overall, the Burgdorf cycle can be seen as German women's responses to the Holocaust and in delineating these gendered experiences, Hegi comes up with a different historiography of the war. In their work on Jewish women's coping strategies, Lenore J. Weitzman and Dalia Ofer talk about the continuity that was expected in gender roles post the war. This narrative can be applied to German women's experiences prior to and post the war as well. There was a "continuity framework" which had a "perceived continuity" between women's roles prior to the war and post the war. (as qtd in Peto`, Hecht and Krasuska n.p.) Hegi shows how this framework gets disrupted post the war. The same gender roles do not apply anymore and this is implicit in the drying up of the pear tree in Burgdorf.

The men of Burgdorf return from the war, expecting the women to subscribe to the same patriarchal conditioning. The women of Burgdorf help in the restoration of normalcy after the war but there are cracks in the foundation of ascribed gender roles. The pear tree, which is a symbol of fecundity, dried up and this signals a challenge to the ideal feminine stereotype, where women's bodies were mapped by the society. Women like Trudi, Jutta, Hanna embody a threat to the virtues of a normative society which is built upon traditional gender roles.

Studies of gendered experiences of the Holocaust were frowned upon initially and seen as "appropriating the Holocaust to further feminist goals." (Waxman 1) However as women-centric approaches to the Holocaust were furthered, it was seen how marginalised women were during the Holocaust and also in its representation. Holocaust fiction tended to be written by men and its scholarship was also seen as largely male. Women's inclusion in this space was either perceived as trivialisation or appropriation. Yet, gendered studies on the Holocaust persisted because of the very fact that gender shapes experiences differently. The Burgdorf cycle takes gender into account and offers a link between German women and the Holocaust.

The novels use gender as a lens for analysis of the sexual objectification of women, sexual assault, patriarchal norms of marriage amongst other issues. However, gendered subjectivities offered in the Burgdorf cycle are of German women but Jewish women do not exist in the marginal spaces. Eva, Frau Abramovitz, Sonja Siderova are the prominent female Jewish

figures along with Thekla Jansen, the protagonist of *Children and Fire*. Writing about Jewish suffering by a German writer would have been considered a sacrilege or appropriation so Hegi writes about the women of Germany.

Hegi does not offer a homogenisation of women's experiences through the Burgdorf cycle. Instead, her approach is largely concentrated around the idea of guilt, exculpation and complicity. Looking at the problem of guilt through the category of gender shows us the social position of women in Germany prior to and post the war. The Burgdorf cycle demonstrates how "questions of gender lead us to a richer and more finely nuanced understanding of the Holocaust." (Waxman 4)

Hegi's approach is inter-disciplinary as she links gender with other categories of analysis, for example, disability. In Nazi Germany, gender worked as a "central political category" as did disability as both were based upon oppression and marginalisation of the 'other,' namely, women and disabled people. (Waxman 8) Hegi, through her work points out how the experiences of women and disabled people were distinct from men during the Holocaust. Also, as the 'Final Solution' was premised upon ideological categories of difference and exclusion, an expository study of such categories is beneficial. Hence, the Holocaust cannot be seen as an event averse to gender and we need to explore "the female voice as an antidote to what remains an overwhelmingly male narrative." (Waxman 8)

Work on gender and the Holocaust has centred around Jewish suffering and rightly so and Hegi's Burgdorf cycle must not be seen as an attempt to undermine those experiences. Through the Burgdorf cycle, we come across several disempowered voices, even if they belong to German women, who are burdened with notions like the ideal German women. Hegi offers a historiography of those German women who are misfits, deviants and feminists in their own right. Hence, there is a reconceptualisation of gender categories which enables us to see how these lived experiences were different from men. As Waxman mentions:

> The institutionalised and genocidal patriarchy of the Nazis regulated the lives of both nn-Aryan and German women…Aryan women were encouraged to aspire to be 'the mothers of the race' and therefore abortions, sterilisations and contraceptives were banned…Married women were told that their place was in the home. (9)

The Burgdorf cycle explores gender spaces to take a comprehensive view at German society. Hegi offers us female protagonists who subvert patriarchal norms and offer a mirror to the troubled society they live in, challenging its shackles which bind them. The Burgdorf cycle

gives us a glimpse into the daily lives of German women, ones who subscribe to the ideal 'German mother' stereotype and the ones who straddle liminal spaces. German women were limited to traditional roles of the mother and wife. Nazi policies deemed that women's ovaries were "the national resource and property of the German state." (Waxman 9) The womb was thus central to Nazi doctrine as these policies were often an exercise in control over women's bodies.

In this context, Trudi and Helene's reclamation of their bodies stands out for their subversion of this control. Trudi is aware of a certain loneliness that stems from her 'difference' and she finds peace only after she accepts the "solid shape" of her body and "rocked that body in her arms, claiming it as hers." (Hegi 220) Helene, on the other hand, is indirectly controlled by Stefan's fears of impregnating her and reclaims her own body by actively participating in the act of sex. The Burgdorf cycle delineates women's traditional, primary roles in pre-war Germany and presents little acts of resistance which triumphed over the patriarchal control of women's bodies.

In a control over women's ovaries, the Nazi policies veered towards control of the race and its 'purity.' Zoe Waxman mentions that racial purity and hygiene was the prime aim of Nazi policies as there were laws like the "*Gesetz zur Verhutungerbkranken Nachwuchses* (law for the prevention of genetically diseased offspring)" that was passed in 1933. (10) Hegi chooses to write from the viewpoint of a *zwerg* woman, who was highly likely not seen as the embodiment of the ideal German female. Trudi does not fit into Nazi policies, as she is genetically flawed and also not the bearer of a fertile womb. While the other German women fear fraternising with Jewish women, Trudi has no qualms in her associations with her Jewish friend Eva.

The Burgdorf cycle points out the specific gender roles that were attributed to women in pre-war Germany and how women worked to restore those roles to normalcy after the war. Hegi also deals with the question of guilt and of unrepentance, specifically in German women. Karl Jaspers had raised the question of complicity and guilt in his work *The Question of German Guilt* wherein he asked "how can we evaluate the moral guilt of outward compliance, of *running with the pack…*the inner indifference toward the witnessed evil?" (as qtd in Koonz Preface n.p.) The roles played by German women in the consolidation of Hitler's programs and policies cannot be negated. There are women like Sister Mauschen in Burgdorf, who try to "identify families that are not supportive of the Fuhrer." (Hegi ch. 2)

It is the "everyday brutality of the averted gaze" that Hegi writes about in the Burgdorf cycle as she examines how people's silence contributed to an inversion of moral values and led to an event like the Holocaust. (Koonz preface) While Trudi, Jutta, Helene, Hanna, Thekla stand out for their resistance, their subversion is limited to small spaces and does not assume a mass character. Perhaps it was not possible for women like Trudi and Jutta to rebel against the entire town. Trudi maintains a facade of being a good citizen of Burgdorf while sheltering Jews in her cellar. Hegi also paints a picture of German women who were more concerned with clean drawing rooms and kitchens rather than the discrimination meted out to Jews in society.

Claudia Koonz asks the most important question when it comes to gender and the Holocaust:

> Where… did the spirit of resistance live, if not among women? Somewhere within that society saturated with terror, someone must have preserved a humane tradition. German culture had, after all, produced Goethe, Schiller and Heine; Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert. (Preface)

Hegi's Burgdorf cycle attempts to showcase the small acts of resistance that took place in Nazi Germany through the characters of deviant women like Trudi, Jutta and Thekla. In this respect, we can term the Burgdorf cycle a historiography of German women, which is however a limited one as it merely gives a passing glimpse into women's work for the Nazi party. Women's involvement with Nazi doctrines as active agents is also a crucial part of the besmirched history of the Holocaust. In her research, Claudia Koonz has unearthed how Nazi women worked outside the world of men and did not actively seek participation into that world. As she mentions:

> Rather than competing in men's world, they expanded their own sphere beyond men's direct intervention, relying on men for protection against external enemies. (Introduction n.p.)

The German women, who are different from Nazi women are not grouped together into one homogenous entity by Hegi. Trudi is not shown as a messiah and she is herself guilty of discrimination against other disabled children like Gerda. Trudi does not wish to be associated with or grouped together with children like Gerda who drool. Thekla feels guilty after taking over her Jewish teacher, Sonja Siderova's place and not raising a voice in her support. While women like Trudi and Thekla are part of the underground culture of resistance, they also have complex layers and are informed by their own prejudices.

The Burgdorf cycle is an examination into the many things that turn people into outsiders, including race, religion, gender. Trudi reflects on how "brown shirts and uniforms were everywhere- you saw them in stores, in restaurants, in train stations- trim and crisp, marking them who didn't wear them as outsiders, part of a mismatched crowd that shrank with each day." (Hegi 221) The novels are an introspection into the process of marking which shapes identities as well. While Trudi is marked as an outsider for her size, Helene is marked as one for her Germanness, as an immigrant. The Burgdorf cycle thus exists as a seamless view of the history of German women, from pre-war Germany to Germans migrating to America and how the notion of Germanness changes over the course of time. Only a deep engagement with German society's fabric can effectively provide an understanding of the legacy of violence of the Holocaust.

Ursula Hegi too, is plagued by what Susanne C. Knittel terms the "*unheimliche Heimat* or the uncanny homeland" and the complex memory of the Holocaust in Germany. (n.p.)The Burgdorf cycle was written as a way to grapple with this haunted past and to arrive at a relation with the past. Hegi had herself commented on how she had "grown up in a very authoritarian community" in Germany. (Lewis n.p.) It is this aspect of obedience that Hegi details as the crux of German society in her analysis. She elaborates how this obedience is built into the very fabric of society and children are taught obedience from a very young age.

Essentially, the Burgdorf cycle is about the disintegration of a society and Hegi shows how Jews were excised from society even before the use of the 'Final Solution.' The Germans in the novels suffer from the fear of fraternisation with Jews as Nazi policies around them call for a disjuncture between Jews and the 'racially pure' Germans. This disjuncture leads to fissures in society which is also mirrored by the landscape of the town. The change in the architecture as a result of the war reflects the ugliness of the war. It also marks these sites as commemorative ones which reflect the memory of a war that everyone wants to forget. The river Rhein stands free-flowing in the wake of all the changes to the town and it is a symbol of the passage of time. The river is full of stones which impede its free flow. The stones can reflect the structures of the past that close upon people.

In no way is the Burgdorf cycle an attempt to 'master' or 're-envision' the past but it merely offers a glimpse into the German past. It works in an incisive vein and attempts to present a historiography of German women, who have been under-represented in work on the Holocaust. The Burgdorf cycle uses the categories of gender, identity, disability amongst

others to understand the collective memory surrounding the Holocaust, giving voice to disparate, disjunct pieces of memory at the same time.

Hegi effortlessly maps the contours of the war upon an imaginary setting, perhaps reflecting on the questions of representation around the Holocaust. Literature around the Holocaust can often assume the role of "historiographic metafiction" which denotes its "capacity to unearth forgotten and repressed aspects of the past and defamiliarize history." (Knittel 7) The Burgdorf cycle refers to this metafictive aspect by placing emphasis on the act of story-telling. However, the Burdorf cycle also takes into account history and comments on its relation to fiction. Trudi experiences how learning history makes her more connected to the townspeople as "history began to influence how she saw these current stories" making her feel a "far stronger link than ever to the people in her town." (Hegi 112)

Hegi familiarizes us with German history which she says has a way of repeating itself if lessons are not learnt. At the same time, she defamiliarises us with the normative view of history, which aimed to 'master' the German past and negate the Holocaust. While using disability as a trope, as a "narrative prosthesis," the Burgdorf cycle is also a reflection upon the ideology surrounding difference. Hegi also shows us the domestic patriarchal world inhabited by both German and Jewish women, managing to make gender an inescapable category of analysis. The ideas of trauma transference are also explored through the mother-daughter relationships of Gertrud-Trudi and Jutta-Hanna, wherein inherited memories are evoked through touch and remembrance. The Burgdorf cycle thus acts an elegy to the victims of the Holocaust as well as a seamless study of the multiple facets of identity, memory and various other sites of the traumatic landscape.

Chapter IV

'Distorted Reflections' : *Salt Dancers (*1995) and *Tearing the Silence: On Being German in America* (1998)

The persistence of trauma has been an integral part of the landscape of Holocaust fiction. In the Burgdorf cycle, Ursula Hegi has described the effect of trauma on personal relationships as well as identity and collective memory. The Burgdorf cycle is an attempted historiography of a German town during the Holocaust and the years after it. However, it is in her book *Tearing the Silence* that Hegi has tried to come up with an oral history of the subsequent generations of Germans. Hegi follows the same vein of integrating personal histories into the larger, collective history of the nation as she interviews German-Americans about their uneasy relationships with the Holocaust.

The act of 'tearing' thus marks a confrontation with the past as opposed to the German notion of 'mastering' the past. Tearing thus becomes an act of configuration of cultural trauma and a recognition of the taboo that surrounds the Holocaust. Many of the German-Americans interviewed during the course of the book admit to feeling ashamed as a result of their heritage, a trait which Hegi explored even in Caleb's character in *The Vision of Emma Blau.* The traumatic landscape of the Burgdorf novels is born out of the 'problematic' questions that no one wants to ask, lest they bring fore the aspect of culpability. Hegi continues to ask these questions in *Tearing the Silence,* a work that takes into account processes of exculpation and culpability.

The process of denazification brought in its wake, an attempt to distance oneself from the violent past of Germany. Building a wall of silence around the Holocaust was one way of suppressing the painful memories associated with the Holocaust. With time, this wall of silence manifested as taboos for the subsequent generations of Germans. For the second generations of Germans, the Holocaust was not discussed and Hegi herself shunned her German heritage initially as an immigrant in America. In *Floating in my Mother's Palm,* Hanna describes how questions about the German past are not encouraged in her school and history books bear revisionist stains, as Hitler is not mentioned at all. Hanna narrates how Klara Brocker and her own mother Jutta, along with the town pariah Trudi are the only ones who answer questions related to the Holocaust.

The practices of remembrance and forgetting shape two distinct cultures, one that is marked by inclusion of this traumatic past and one that harbours silence. The town of Burgdorf in its

post-war return to normalcy tries to cloak the events of the Holocaust with silence. The townspeople take solace in the fact that Hitler was an Austrian and not a German, thus trying to wipe off the taint of Nazism from their Germanness. However, Hegi lays bare the construction of this cultural memory based on silence.

In the construction of the memory of the Holocaust, German guilt cannot be effaced and Hegi points to the same by using oral history and testimony in her work. Oral history of Jewish survivors points to the systemic abuse and oppression faced by Jews. On the other hand, the oral history attempted here by Hegi places emphasis on breaking the taboo surrounding discussion of the Holocaust in Germany. The basic question that is being asked here is that how do young Germans feel about their German past and the Holocaust. In the processes of *Aufarbeitung* and *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* which are attempts at reappraisal of the German past, the public memory of the nation is moulded. However, Hegi is of the contention that the past needs to be worked through, as opposed to its being mastered.

This is because trauma associated with the past cannot be easily erased. Alf Lüdtke points out to the "bodily connectedness that links past experiences with actual well-being or misery." (542) This bodily connection can be a link to trauma which does not go away quickly and may persist in subsequent generations as well. The guilt associated with the Holocaust led to the rise of traumatised psyches even with respect to Germans who had immigrated to America. Hegi had earlier raised the questions of culpability and guilt with reference to immigrants in *The Vision of Emma Blau,* where Helene was assuaged with guilt over the wrongdoings of her fellow Germans. Hegi explores the dynamics of identity and guilt in *Tearing the Silence,* where she uses the interview process for recording the testimony of German Americans.

Through her interview process, Hegi outlines how denial and 'not knowing' replaced the truth regarding the Holocaust. When the second generation of Germans questioned their parents and grandparents regarding the Holocaust, they were met with a wall of silence. Most parents either admitted to 'not knowing' which was a blatant lie or reiterated how they had suffered during the war years.

This 'not knowing' often leads to a rage in the second generations about the denial of their history or access to the past. The rage then turns into an alienation from the first generation and leads the young Germans to equate themselves with the perpetrators of the Holocaust. Hegi demonstrates how the meaning of the word Germanness becomes imbued with a deep

sense of shame and embarrassment as the German-Americans believe that they are too capable of such gruesome acts.

The shaping of a collective consciousness in the wake of Holocaust revisionism and denial is at the crux of these interviews. Hegi inches towards a view of history which takes into account personal memories to protest against the anti-semitism masquerading as widespread denial of the Holocaust. In a contemporary post-truth society, it becomes even more important to look back at history and glean out the truth in the face of alternative facts. One of Hegi's interviewees, namely, Johanna says poignantly how "this kind of evil or negativity is something I have to see as part of human beings." (intro n.p.)

Hegi has written about this 'evil' that is perpetrated by ideologies of difference in the Burgdorf cycle, where she also makes a reference to '*eine Heile welt* or the intact world.' Trudi realises that silence has folded itself around her town Burgdorf where parents want to preserve a pristine world which existed prior to the Holocaust. However, with a scalpel-like incision, Ursula Hegi demonstrates that an *eine Heile welt* never existed in Germany at all and familial settings were rife with instances of violence.

With respect to cultural trauma, Jeffrey Alexander writes how "collective agency develops, or fails to develop in response to the experience of social suffering." (intro n.p.) Hegi scrutinises how the lack of collective moral agency became a medium for perpetrating atrocities. Hegi is herself aware of the "tenacity of the silence" that takes a stronghold in a need to evade the past on part of Germans. (n.p.) She advocates looking at the trauma from outside which helps us to see others' suffering as well as our own. German adults, in an evasive stance, only focused on their suffering and saw the war through the lens of their own victimhood. As part of the second generation of Germans, Hegi espouses a new means of analysis, which includes making their own victimhood a part of the whole. She refers to this as a 'total lens' which includes empathy for the suffering for others as well as a recognition of that suffering.

Hegi's primary aim in interviewing German-Americans regarding the holocaust is to identify how practices of remembrance and forgetting are shaped. The passing down of memory often becomes 'distorted' and leads to the genesis of many "unreliable narrators." (Hegi n.p.) The transmission of this memory involves a process of exoneration as memories are "censored and sanitized." (n.p.) Hence, the subsequent generations are often handed transmitted memories that are riddled with holes. German-born Americans of the second and third generation are therefore convinced that their families are exonerated from the stain of the

Holocaust. In fact, there is a reverse process of victimisation that is set into motion due to the distortion of memories.

The distorted nature of memories is one of the many hurdles that is faced by oral history projects. Hegi tries to effectively balance her research as she tries to include opposing views as well. However, she mentions how she has to keep 'silent' in front of a racist man, Kurt who praises Hitler for his acumen related to gun laws. Kurt turns into one of the 'unreliable narrators' that Hegi has cautioned us against, who espouses wrong facts based on emotions. While post-truth has been a phenomenon in recent years, the idea of post-truth and the subversions of truth becomes important in the context of Holocaust memory as well. Lee McIntyre writes how "the greater threat comes from those who have the hubris to think they already know the truth." (7) This is why, for Hegi, the revelation of prejudices is equally integral to her research.

The overarching truth that Hegi discovers during the course of her interview is the collective shame that all German-American descendants find themselves dealing with. Hegi also aims to uncover the implications of silence when it comes to the Holocaust, another hurdle faced by oral historians. Due to the unreliable nature of memories or reluctance on the part of the speakers, testimonies can not be seen as the complete truth. Jeffrey Blutinger writes how the discourse surrounding the Holocaust has been "perpetrator-based." (269) There is a divide which exists between the discourse on "oppression and resistance." (269) Blutinger argues for discourse which centres around the victim as well as the perpetrator. Hegi too focuses on both aspects to achieve a balance in her research as she tries to uncover prejudices "fed by ignorance and fear." (intro n.p.) Much of her work, including the Burgdorf cycle delves into the psyche of those who were by-standers to the Holocaust and did not either resist or perpetrate the acts.

Hegi, in her oral history narrative tries to also unearth how the experience of each German-American descendant is also atypical, as is the case with Jewish survivors and their descendants. Thus, Holocaust testimony is made up of myriad personal narratives which cannot be coalesced into one. Giving voice to everyone involved in the process becomes a mammoth task with moral limitations. For example, Hegi finds herself questioning her own silence when it comes to her conversations with the racist and homophobic Kurt. She stays silent so that Kurt may reveal himself and all his prejudices as any confrontation would have hindered this process.

However, it is the accretion of many such silences that contributed to the wall of silence that emerged around the Holocaust in Germany. At the very outset, Hegi makes it clear that her aim is not to arrive at any statistics or any definition of what Germanness means for German-Americans. She declares that "I was not out to prove something or to conclude." (intro n.p.) However, she does ascertain that all the specific stories point to a universality and the similarity of experiences.

The "fallibility of memory" has been well-acknowledged by prominent oral historians like Donald A. Ritchie, in his work on oral history. (n.p.) However he contends that oral history and testimony is imperative to understand the past and he distinguishes between "autobiographical memory," "collective memory" and "public memory." (Ritchie n.p.) Hegi too recognises the inherent contradictions in this task of memory inquiry and she is well aware of the distortions carried by the process. However, she makes it clear that her role as a listener is to bear witness to the personal histories; a role in which she is not impassive. She mentions that she is "not an impartial listener, (she) was angered, moved, drawn in shocked." (Hegi intro n.p.)

As an interviewer, someone who records oral history, Hegi advocates for an intimate connection between the interviewee and listener. An impartial approach has been well espoused by oral historians on the other hand. For Hegi, her stance as an interviewer is to encourage people to come clean "about what it means to live with the knowledge of the Holocaust." (n.p.) She is clear that the accuracy of these memories is doubtful yet they transmit stories of lived experiences. The question of the 'real truth' is one that plagues oral history, testimony and memoirs alike. Paula S. Fast writes about the 'private' lives being investigated in memoirs and she is of the opinion that "like all forms of writing, memoirs are deeply implicated in complex issues of representation." (108)

The issue of representation is important with respect to testimonies and oral history as well. In fact, any representation of the Holocaust has ethical ramifications, given that the Holocaust is generally considered irrepresentable. How then do we approach the problem of representation and find solutions to it? A lot of work regarding the problems of representation, notably by Caruth and Jeffrey Alexander suggests that we acknowledge the problem of representation. Acknowledgement involves giving due credence to various voices and experiences, which Hegi seems to be doing. Testimony related to trauma will always be mired in problems of authenticity due to the complicated nature of trauma itself.

Hegi is of the opinion that "once we commit something to memory, it becomes distorted." (intro n.p.) Our emotions and thoughts influence the shaping process of our memory. In the face of these problems of representation and authenticity, she seems to act like an involved listener, who does not censor much or add critical insight. She just lets her interviewees tell their stories in their own words and leaves it to the discretion of the readers what they want to embrace from these experiences. However, she is able to find commonalities in all the experiences. As a listener, she aims to provide safe space to the ones recounting their inner turmoil, which makes her assume the role of a therapist. As a writer though, she has arranged parts of some interviews to illuminate certain aspects.

In *Tearing the Silence*, Hegi has played the role of the listener as well as the writer, choosing to stay in the background and not offer analysis. This presupposes that the writer will have conscience in choosing to let the experiences speak for themselves, or knowing how not to label people. In choosing "what to relinquish and what to embrace," the writer then filters the stories for us. (Hegi 525) So, does our access to these stories and their censoring or enhancement depend completely upon the writer? There are layers of problems of authenticity and representation in the aspect of oral history and testimony. As the interviewee's memory is 'distorted,' only a certain portion of it is transmitted to the listener. The listener, in the act of witnessing, may add their own analysis to the story which forms a second layer of perception through which the readers approach the memory.

By relinquishing her role of analysis as the listener, Hegi tries to dismantle this second layer and give the readers a direct access to the memories. As she accesses the memories of German-Americans, along with the question of a collective burden of guilt, Hegi also finds similarities in the immigration experiences. She discovers that a few have immigrated to America as a result of the war, finding the collective shame a great burden to bear.

Hegi herself found the collective guilt and shame constrictive and says that it defined her life to a large extent. She also draws out experiences where German people have felt their share of prejudice in America, as they have been labelled Nazis. It is against this uniformity in labelling and marking people that Hegi writes. When Ursula Hegi's son Eric brings home a friend from school, she encounters the unpleasant word 'Nazi.' Hegi's writing in the Burgdorf cycle draws upon these experiences, especially in *The Vision of Emma Blau*, where Helene faces the same kind of prejudices.

The sense of this shame and guilt caused Hegi to wish that she was not "blond and blue eyed, not to fit that German stereotype." (*Ursula* n.p.) It is the same kind of wishful thinking

displayed by Helene, who instead wishes she looked more like a foreigner so that people would not express surprise at her German heritage. The major questions posited by this oral history are twofold -how to deal with the trauma passed on by the previous generations and what can be done by German-Americans of the second generation regarding the Holocaust. The solution offered by Hegi involves the act of tearing the silence that has cloaked the previous generations' actions.

The memories of the war shared by first-generation parents with their children focus on the acute lack of necessities during the war, the bombings and the relentless hunger. There is little mention of any culpability in the mass genocide, which Hegi finds disconcerting. The refusal to answer the curious questions raised by the younger generations leads not only to silence but also myth-making.

Ursula Hegi remarks how the lack of access to information about Hitler made her and her school friends speculate about him. The children would fill their minds with fanciful ideas that Hitler was still alive and living in hiding as a nun. This builds up Hitler into a fantastical figure, one that goes beyond mere flesh and blood. The idea that great evil took place at the hands of the generation of their parents fills the subsequent generations with a fear of nationalism. Hegi writes about her own fear of uniforms and national anthem, which she still lives with in America. The fear at the base of this is about the burgeoning of nationalism into a beast out of control.

Hegi talks about the difference between 'becoming German' and 'feeling German.' The sense of becoming German is exacerbated during Christmas, when Hegi makes German delicacies and takes part in traditional rituals. This 'becoming' German is a ritualistic process that is in contrast to 'feeling' German. Hegi underlines how she doesn't feel German, due to the encumbered sense of nationalism. She does not feel a sense of belonging due to the collective shame at the Holocaust. Hegi also mentions that she does not feel like she fits into an American identity either. As an immigrant, she feels the burden of dual identities which can provide a disorienting experience. Hegi explains in the chapter on her own story how she feels like a misfit in America due to her German heritage and also finds that she is unable to embrace Germany completely.

Hegi also writes how she has buried the grief of her childhood christmases beneath an "idealized Christmas" which doesn't take into account her "father drunk and (my) mother rigid embarrassment and silent anger." (*Ursula* n.p.) Instead, she has suppressed these childhood memories to re-create a perfect Christmas for her own children. She tried to map

the idea of the ‘intact world’ onto her own version of Christmas and this reflects the same behaviour displayed by the previous generations.

The idealised world is built upon a haunting notion of silence, which Hegi excavates in her work. She writes about her first work experience in America, with a Jewish man, who asked her if she felt guilty about the Holocaust. As a young German-American, Hegi’s first response was to situate herself away from the Holocaust. She told him that she was not responsible for it as she was born after the event. Reflecting upon her answer, Hegi says it was born out of the “grace of late birth” or “*die Gnade der spaten Geburt.*” (n.p)However, this late birth does not mean historical realities can be simply erased and Hegi is aware of the disquieting conflict that is a part of German heritage.

In writing about the Holocaust, Hegi is perhaps revisiting her answer to her Jewish colleague Sy Hecht. Through her writing, she has confronted the historical event to provide an understanding of the silence and to direct her energies at never forgetting. Hegi calls this process a “coming to terms” with Germany. (n.p.) She also draws upon the aspect of German community while talking about shared heritage, as she can “neither trust that community nor identify with it.” (n.p.) By talking about the fragmentation of identity caused by communal shared heritage, Hegi has situated the younger German-American generation into “carrier groups.” (Alexander ch. 1) The Jewish population definitely forms a carrier group since they have undergone a traumatic collective injury. However, subsequent German generations also assume the role of a carrier group as they represent “the perspectives and interests of a younger generation against an older one.” (Alexander ch.1)

Thus, we would not be amiss to say that the Holocaust becomes a single event that has traumatised everyone associated with it. Yet, it is also made up of discrete, individual traumas that have shaped identities and caused disruptions. Jeffrey Alexander posits that attribution of responsibility is part of the trauma experience. Hegi lays the responsibility of the Holocaust upon the younger generations of Germans as well, for breaking the silence and taboo surrounding the Holocaust.

In describing the silence in these composite interviews, Hegi attributes it to “*Schleier*, or a veil of memory” which has filtered and censored the memories of the previous generation. Hegi’s grandmother, Tante Kate advised her to take pride in her German heritages well and encouraged her to read about Germans who were actively involved in Nazi resistance. Hegi also discovers the passive role played by her own mother and grandmother, who believed that as women, they did not have much agency to resist against Nazi politics.

Hegi also posits that Germanness is more marked in German-Americans due to the nature of immigration. Immigration marks the second and third generations of Germans as outsiders and Hegi believes it has given her a whole new lens to look at the Holocaust. For Hegi, 'being German' thus becomes a journey into the inner self, which she understands in many layers. Most of the interviewees in the book are linked together by this sense of being German that is both on an individual level and also at the level of the country's history. Since the country's history involved systemic annihilation of another race, this leads to a rift in identity and shame at the Germanness.

Hegi offers that to understand the German past, each person must delve into their own familial past and try to use compassion to understand the suffering of others. Hegi visits the concentration camp at Buchenwald to let herself face the facts of her German lineage, where she is struck by the mass graves. Through introspection, writing, compassion she manages to break through the shackles of silence and this book is an exercise in the same.

The book also talks about how the first generation of Germans expunged the painful memories of the Holocaust, choosing to focus only on their own privations. Hegi's own grandmother records her experiences and divulges information about their Jewish neighbours. The man of the family was imprisoned and later returned back home, crawling in the manner of a dog. Hegi's grandmother was a witness to these events and did not reveal whether she helped her neighbours. Hegi recreated the scene in *Stones from the River*, where Trudi and her father help their neighbour Herr Abramowiz reach his house to his wife Frau Abramowtiz, who has been waiting by the window. The help extended by Trudi and her father is the act of compassion that Hegi wishes had been displayed by several Germans in her own family.

The Burgdorf cycle has thus grown out of the writer's own conflicts and struggle with her Germanness and the silence surrounding these witnessed atrocities in her family. In examining the heart of the German society, Hegi urearths how efficiency, obedience, adherence to time are in-built into the state machinery. Children in Germany in the postwar years were taught not to raise doubts and Hegi writes about an incident where her mother caught her reading *The Diary of Anne Frank*. Hegi was chastised by her mother for reading a book about disobedience. Growing up, Hegi realised that the book was taboo as Anne Frank's breaking of the silence had meant "talking back to authority, to society." (Ursula, n.p.)

This ingrained process of obedience is in conflict with the dissociation caused by knowledge of the Holocaust in the young population of Germany. In the manner of traumatic memories, dissociation causes fragmentation, self-doubt, lack of unity of self in German descendants. However, since there was absence of any 'real' trauma for these descendants, it is questionable whether this kind of transmission can be termed traumatic. We need to ask if the fragmentation of identity and the state of feeling nationless after the Holocaust can be equated with trauma of some kind. If that is the case, does this constitute a sacrilege to Jewish memory?

While examining her mother's letters, Hegi comes across her horrors of the war, where she had to flee to the basement with coats and suitcases, along with her small children. In letters to Hegi's godmother, Tante Kate, her mother had emphasised upon her fears, anxieties and loneliness. Hegi's father too battled alcoholism which may be attributed to his years as a soldier in the Russian front. Are we justified in contrasting these experiences with the horrific experiences of Jewish victims, who were stripped of their dignity and Jewish women who were subjected to rape and humiliation?

The important question here, I believe, is not about contrasting the experiences of German (if we may call them so) 'survivors' of the war and Jewish victims. The larger question is about the transmission of this 'grief' to the second generations. The question is about understanding history, analysing human behaviours in the face of the Holocaust and of breaking the silence. It is about understanding how certain descendants still feel pride in this convoluted, disturbing piece of history and what gives shape to such prejudices. The most vital part is to situate these questions about collective shame, guilt and agency in a society that has now turned grief into an industrial complex.

For all the persons involved in the process of interview, coming to terms with shame and breaking the silence is a transformative process that is deeply personal. In an indictment of the first generation Germans and the subsequent generations as well, Hegi points out what Michael Rothberg calls the presence of the 'extreme' in the 'everyday.'(4) The examination of German society also shows how 'culture' exists side by side with 'barbarism.' (3) The interviewees are aware of the implications of the silence as well, in what can be termed as a "post-Holocaust self-consciousness." (2) The book thus becomes an effort to engage with the idea of shame and guilt, which has become the legacy of the Holocaust for German second and third generations.

Most of the interviewees conceive of the Holocaust as a "monstrous legacy," delving deep into personal spaces to deal with the guilt. (Crasnianski n.p.) From Johanna who struggles to understand this shame to Joachim who finds peace after giving his testimony, the interviews all demonstrate that collective guilt has become a part of the psyche of the second generation. There are also German descendants like Kurt who can be seen as a neo-Nazi or Annelise who is proud of her father's lineage as an SS officer. By looking at their testimony, Hegi wants to understand where the drive for exoneration and exculpation comes from. Annelise associates the SS with a kind of elitism, even in a turbulent phase of the country's history.

For most participants, the interview process acts as a catharsis and a reflective, engaging process. It signifies the process of 'working through' or 'coming to terms with' a non-negotiable past. The interviews were collected in the form of recorded oral history pieces which were turned into transcripts. Hegi writes that her aim for this interview process was to "guide each voice into the world and let it stand on its own." (intro n.p.) Hegi also makes a reference to the fragility of memory, which can even be implanted as false memory but this does not discredit the oral history process. It merely shows us that memory is full of gaps and contradictions as well yet these interviews will classify as what Donald A. Ritchie terms 'episodic' or 'autobiographical memory.'

The demand for documenting and archiving the past is also a part of the Holocaust industrial complex, which is born out of the fascination with trauma and its dilemmas. The fact that memory can be dissociative or dispersed also signals how trauma affects memory. The question at the core of all this also remains whether the stylised self-consciousness of German-American or German descendants can even be a part of the traumatic landscape.

What Hegi tries to achieve through the Burgdorf cycle and these interviews is an examination of the silence and the political and institutional aspects of it. Individual introspection is desirable of course but at the same time, closer analysis of the forces shaping the silence is needed. While guilt and shame has been transferred to German descendants as part of a process, "the transmission of knowledge never took place."(Crasnianski n.p.) However, the legacy of Nazism is transmitted to the subsequent generations, which prompts the question -

> Is this a burden we inherit at birth? (as qtd in Crasnianski n.p.)

This double-edged inheritance, which is self-aware as well as marked by the forces of mutism negotiates a fine line between truth and community. How can someone feel part of a community while being aware of its sinister aspects? This is a contradictory impulse which

leads one to feel 'nationless,' an awareness that Hegi has examined in *Tearing the Silence.* Silence may be an inadequate escape from the past but tearing that silence requires great resilience, so that one may face the community where one has taken birth and engender conversation about the implications of its past.

While the veneration of Nazi fathers has also been an oft-discussed topic of Holocaust literature[lxxiii], Hegi has focused on mother-daughter relationships in the Burgdorf cycle. It is mostly in *Children and Fire* that she has examined a father-daughter relationship in the context of madness and its stigmatization. Thekla's father, Wilhelm Jansen, suffers from an undiagnosed case of post-traumatic stress disorder, which further exacerbates the fragility of his mind. In her standalone novel *Salt Dancers* (1995), Hegi has made another father-daughter relationship the pivot of the story. The novel deals with life in Hegi's adopted country, America and follows the protagonist Julia who returns home to confront her absentee and abusive father many years later.

The damaged father-daughter relationship often exists as a wound which becomes traumatic for the recipient. As Diane Wakoski writes in the poem 'The Father of My Country' :

> And I thought my father was handsome and I loved him and I wondered/why he left me alone so much/ so many years in fact/ but my father made me what I am/ a lonely woman without a purpose. (as qtd in Leonard I)

The absentee father figure has been a recurrent character in Holocaust fiction as well because during the Holocaust, men were sent to war or were recruited for various jobs. The women stayed behind with the children and the only men in town were those who were not physically fit to serve in the army. This led to an inversion of the gender norms where the women assumed the role of the breadwinners of the family. Trudi's father Leo Montag could not participate in the war because of his wounded leg while Thekla's father returned home from the war in a vulnerable state. In fact a potent critique of Holocaust fiction is that "all paternal male are interpolated into the role of the Nazi torturer." (Schlipphacke 45) Ursula Hegi presents a host of paternal figures, notably Leo Montag, Stefan Blau, Emil, Wilhelm Jansen who do not fit into the stereotypical Nazi father figure role.

It cannot be denied however, that the paternal figure was seen as a source of strength and power under the Nazi regime. The Nazi policies placed a lot of burden on the German family and resulted in the absent father figures which can be seen as a reason why mothers and motherhood figure a lot in Holocaust fiction. Even though *Salt Dancers* is situated in

America yet it displays the same dynamics of "a postwar middle-class nuclear family, often characterised by an absent breadwinning father and an available stay-at-home mother." (Couser 637)

The mother in *Salt Dancers* is also an absent figure as her desertion and subsequent disappearance leads to an elusive relationship which mars Julia's life. However, the narrative is largely about seeking closure with the paternal figure in Julia's life, which makes this "a narrative of filiation." (635) The relationship is marked by trauma as Julia's childhood constitutes a traumatic landscape, full of abuse, in a broken family. The impaired relationships manifest in the form of pain for the protagonist who believes that her pain "had rooted itself inside me, a vine with countless runners." (Hegi ch.1) This can be seen as a comment on the repetitive nature of trauma which as Caruth pointed out, manifests as a recurring nightmare.

The novel flits between Julia's reminiscences of her childhood and the present day where she herself is pregnant. Julia's own pregnancy prompts her to confront her father and revisit her childhood home. While portraying Julia's memories of her childhood, Hegi comments on the fragility of memory in this novel as well. She uses the term "distorted reflections" for the process of memory-keeping and talks about the 'gaps' and inherent contradictions in memory. (ch. 1) Hegi also mentions that stories can often be embellished due to the elusive nature of memory and the changed memory can take the place of truth.

Hegi writes that 'gaps' can often serve as a protection and by erasing certain bits of memory, we are making traumatic aspects of them inaccessible. As Caruth has pointed out however, trauma is both 'uncontrolled' and peculiar. The very nature of trauma makes it irrepresentable hence embellishment, gaps and erasures become part of the trauma process. Hegi writes that such memories often feel as they have "been observed through the eye that someone embroidered on the face of a stuffed animal." (ch.1)

The major challenge faced by the protagonist is to come to terms with the two images of her father that she has in her mind. One is the figure of the absentee father who practised physical violence and sunk himself into alcoholism. The other is the father figure who taught her the salt dance and the art of being carefree. The salt dance, from which the title of the book is also derived, is something which bonds the father and daughter. Julia was taught by her father to draw a line of salt and cross over it. The crossing over would signify that all the cares of the world were left behind. Practising the salt dance with her father is one of the fondest

memories that Julia has. However, it is in sharp contrast with her later memories of her father when she remembers his abusive nature.

In the face of trauma, Julia looks for an emotional breakthrough as she tries to confront her past. As a child too, she is aware of the monstrous force that she feels stays hidden "beneath my parents' marriage." (ch.2) It is the disintegration of this marriage that leads Julia for a lifelong search for her mother which is resolved when she learns the truth from her uncle. For several years, Julia and her brother Travis believe that their mother deserted them because she did not love them enough. It turns out that Julia's mother, who got pregnant after an affair was forced to leave her children at the behest of her husband. The vanishing of her mother leaves Julia with recurring nightmares. She believes that she chases down "an endless corridor after a tall figure." (ch.2) The figure turns out to have a blank face and no skin or features.

Julia's traumatic dreamscape is a result of what Caruth has called the 'engraving' of trauma. Trauma constitutes suffering that continuously repeats itself and its alleviation can be through various means. In Julia's case, the cure comes from a confrontation with her father and her vanished mother. When she learns the truth about her mother's disappearance, it assuages the feelings of abandonment felt by Julia and her brother. The difference between the personal trauma faced by Julia and the trauma that we have encountered earlier in the Burgdorf cycle is the historical experience of trauma. Both look at the inaccessibility of certain parts of memory to understand the traumatic experience.

In describing an instance of discord between her parents, Julia demonstrates how repression and embellishment constitute traumatic memories. Julia witnesses an ugly fight between her parents where she sees her father physically abusing her mother. In a moment of panic, she can feel the words turning the air 'hazy-gray.' When she remembers the event later, she sees her family "as if through the roof of the trouble people box." (ch.2) Her mother and father become part of a portrait or a vignette. This serves as a device to distance herself from the traumatic memory witnesses in childhood. It forms the basis of Julia's deep fear and panic, which she keeps revisiting through repeated nightmares. The scene which she sees between her parents does not involve her brother. Yet, in her re-enactment of the memory, she visualises her brother asleep with his Teddy as well.

While describing this memory, Julia refers to the "safe frame of secrecy" that had held their family together. (ch.2) This frame is in opposition to the fight which she sees as a young child and provides the basis of the disintegration of the perfect family portrait. Through her

memories, Julia tries to preserve the family portrait by hiding the abuse but the "insistent reality of the past" shapes itself through the traumatic memories. The abuse that she endures at the hands of her father manifests in psychic PTSD type symptoms even when she grows up and gets pregnant.

In her work on trauma, Caruth has pointed out how traumatic memories 'etch' and 'engrave' themselves on the mind. The connection that exists between a distorted memory and the "precision of recall" is aptly demonstrated by Julia's remembrances. (Caruth 153) Julia envisions her memories as both "luminous and gauzy" at the same time. (ch. 2) She remembers minute details about her mother before her disappearance like the hat she tried on or the hair around her face. Yet she is unable to tie these memories together to make sense of what happened in the aftermath of her mother's disappearance.

The novel centres around this idea of memory as both precise and hazy, which keeps "reeling over the same impressions without a sense of conclusion." (ch. 2) Hegi has previously examined the concept of memory in the Burgdorf cycle as well as the idea of silence. Sara Horowitz has discussed how "the trope of muteness (has been) predominant in Holocaust fiction." (1) This is due to the fact that Holocaust victims often tend to have gaps in their memory as their subconscious tries to filter out negative, traumatic events or repress them. Due to this repression, muteness or silence becomes part of the traumatic landscape.

Hegi's Burgdorf cycle has examined on the other hand, the muteness that comes from deliberate erasure or omission on part of Germans, as a manifestation of guilt. Hegi works with the awareness that memory cannot often be reliable either. Hegi has also explored the complex relationship between fiction and testimony. She already announces to the reader how storytelling works by embellishing facts or by omitting certain details.The idea of repression working in sync with memory is prevalent in *Salt Dancers* as well. Julia feels that her memories are a maze which she needs to negotiate through storytelling.

Art Spiegelman, the creator of the iconic *Maus*[lxxiv] has distinguished between "artistry" and "fiction." (as qtd in Horowitz 5) Fiction exists separately from truth and artistry comprises storytelling. Hegi is inching towards artistry when she acknowledges that storytelling involves embellishments. The same patterns of trauma and memory exist in this novel as well. The trauma from her childhood causes a split in identity for Julia who realises that a divide exists between the old, 'aunthetic' side of herself and what she has become. Julia feels that the "fierce side…the side that was openly defiant and oblivious to consequences" has been repressed. (ch. 3) It gets replaced by an "unfamiliar caution" from which Julia strives to

free herself however finds it futile till her meeting with her mother. (ch. 3) Confrontation with the past has been shown to be a cathartic process in the text for those suffering from personal trauma.

The confrontation with her mother teaches Julia something fundamental about her father. She has perceived him in two ways-one as the father who used to tuck her in and teach her the salt dance and the other father who used to beat and abuse her. Meeting with her mother shows her the facets of her father's nature which pointed towards the abuse even before her mother's disappearance. After her mother left, Julia became the subject of the abuse. She also recognises that her father was an over-possessive man who wanted to be repeatedly told how much he was loved. The confrontation at the end of the book thus lays bare the emotional dynamics of the family and the complex personality of both the abuser and the victim.

Contemporary popular culture has started labelling all 'victims' of abuse as survivors where 'survivor' stands for someone who has defeated all kinds of odds. However, Danielle Campoamor writes how "survivor presents a misleading picture of victimhood and healing, promoting a super-human response." (n.p.) A more politically correct term for victims of abuse can be 'person who experienced assault or abuse' or simply "person who has experienced violence." (n.p.) Although, when the words 'victim,' 'survivor,' and 'perpetrator have been used in my analysis of the Burgdorf cycle without imbuing a sense of pity or helplessness to the victim but we cannot undermine the implications of the words. The word 'victim' carries a sense of vulnerability while the word 'survivor' carries a super-human connotation to it.

The complex politics around the mere usage of words denoting abuse points to the larger problem of representing abuse and trauma. In *Salt Dancers*, Hegi represents the abuse of Julia's mother through the eyes of a child and Julia's own abuse in her dreams and nightmares. Julia's memory of her past is often evocative as well as blurred regarding the actual details of the abuse. Physical objects and senses are often evoked as they can serve as "powerful mnemonic metonyms." (Couser 642) Julia tries to suppress her memories of her father being good to her as she finds that the bad memories "were familiar and kept me from feeling his loss." (ch.11)

Julia's abuse is thus constituted by different incidents which she remembers sometimes in detail or rationalises to herself. As trauma, abuse thus marks a sense of incomprehensibility in the victim and it eludes representation. However, in the novel Hegi points out two things-the first being that memory can be used for a constructive purpose and how working through

the past can be of significance in relation to trauma. Julia does not fit into the mould of a victim and her father's character is also complex and not a black and white portrayal of a perpetrator. The novel shows how erosive trauma can be on the psyche of a child as it leads to fragmented identity. While the novel is essentially about Julia's relationship with her father, her mother too forms the absent subject in the background. *Salt Dancers* communicates the experiences of trauma and the repercussions of family secrets along with examining the aporias that constitute memory and representation. It aptly demonstrates how healing can be a lifelong process in the case of trauma.

The novel also shows how the salt dance is something that is perhaps a wish to deal with trauma; that one may simply jump over a line of salt and forget about it. The reality though is, that trauma is a complicated process fraught with emotional dynamics that requires resilience to heal. Trauma that impinges upon childhood can often get simulated in adult life and repeat itself through recurrent nightmares. In that respect, *Salt Dancers* essentially serves as a narrative of childhood trauma, something that Hegi has also explored in *Stones from the River*. The recounting of Trudi's rape as a child serves as an analysis of childhood trauma. Trudi's experience is also shaped by her disability which forces her to think of herself as undesirable even during the assault.

Disability also forms the core of Hegi's story *Trudi and Pia*, a piece of short fiction written in 2003. The story serves an adaptation of the encounter between Trudi and Pia from *Stones from the River*, which serves as an epiphany for Trudi. [lxxv]Pia teaches Trudi how to hold her own body and rock herself back and forth so that she may begin to find comfort and love within herself. Disability has been used as a narrative trope as well as an empowering tool in the text. *Trudi and Pia* can be read as a short story but has been written as a short children's book of merely forty pages. The story takes away the narrative of the Holocaust to turn the encounter between Trudi and Pia into an adventure at the circus. However, the notion of corporeality is still situated in the text as it deals with bodies. Trudi's preoccupation with her dwarf body forms an integral part of the story. Trudi and Pia also laugh at "bellies, elbows and fat bottoms" of other people. If we apply critical discourse to children's literature, we can unearth that it is not apolitical.

Trudi and Pia serves as a political commentary on disability and builds up a framework of inclusion. "Markers of identity" can often be inserted into texts which seem 'innocuous' as children's literature. (Harris 147) Hegi uses children's literature as an empowering tool to change attitudes towards disability and counter the stereotypical representation of persons

with disability in literature. Classical literature often had an abundance of negative portrayal of persons with disability and often stereotyped such a person as "the moron as a menace." (Margolis and Shapiro 18)

In *Stones from the River*, Ursula Hegi has used Trudi's disability as a trope and rested the verisimilitude of the narrative upon her. The German word for dwarf, that is, *zwerg* has been used abundantly in the text but not as a pejorative term. I would however, use the term 'person with short stature' with respect to Trudi's disability in the analysis of this story.

In the face of exclusion and difference, Hegi advocates what Lynne Vallone has dubbed a children's literature 'manifesto':

> Even if I welcomed you, it wouldn't change the feeling of being the only one. No one but you can change that. (Hegi n.p.)

Imagination and self-acceptance thus form the core of the story, thus turning the story into a narrative of inclusion. Pia gifts Trudi a paper rose which symbolises the power of the imagination. Lynne Vallone has linked this rose with the "rose of contention in Wilde's tale," drawing upon Oscar Wilde's story 'The Nightingale and the Rose.' The story may be placed under the ambit of children's literature but it portrays the politics of difference. Pia finds that long arms look ugly and tall people seem to be verging on losing their balance. Hegi inverses the idea of stereotyping here that is faced by persons of short stature who are relegated to the periphery merely for possessing shorter limbs.

Hegi takes the idea of the 'circus dwarf' and reverses the prejudices associated with it by turning "the notion of the performing dwarf clown on its head." (Vallone n.p.) Pia teaches Trudi that physical limitations cannot be seen as deformities and that *zwergs* are a community as well. The critique of dismissive attitude and exclusionary practices makes this work a multicultural one, which takes into account under-represented persons. The idea of normalcy is also examined in the Burgdorf cycle by Hegi, wherein she unearths the ideology of difference at the heart of the Holocaust.

Hegi carries forward Trudi's fears from the beginning of *Stones from the River* to this story, where Trudi falls asleep, hoping that she would wake up into a grown girl like other girls her age. Hegi neither presents Trudi's short stature as something to be pitied or as something extraordinary but merely as a physical feature. The attribution of either inadequacies or grandeur to physical bodies suggests how myths form around bodies and corporealities. *Trudi and Pia* takes a look at an approach to disability in a children's book which takes into

account multiple stances of corporeality. Pia tells Trudi about a magical island where no 'little' people suffer from loneliness, leading Trudi to believe she is not alone.

Hegi thus advocates for a children's literature that is inclusive and empowering as well as makes a political statement. The Holocaust was perpetrated upon those who did not fit into the 'able-bodied' category and Jews who were disabled were violated in the name of medical experiments. In this context, Hegi talks about disability in the Burgdorf cycle where Trudi's disability gives her the power of resistance against the SS. *Trudi and Pia* carries forward the conversation on disability, which Hegi believes needs to start from a young age hence the labelling of this book as children's literature.

Hegi demonstrates a host of strategies for the representation of trauma in the Burgdorf cycle as well as her subsequent works. In *Tearing the Silence*, she uses the interview to document oral history of German descendants, who have migrated to America. The book is a probe on identity, from the focus point of immigration and Holocaust trauma. The interviews deal with the processes of guilt and culpability and Hegi examines how remembrance has been formed around the Holocaust. The interview process also serves as a kind of memorialisation of past experiences and forms a cathartic experience for the interviewees. Through the work, Hegi examines how guilt has been passed on to second and third generations in the shape of trauma.

Salt Dancers carries forward the theme of confrontation with the past as it negotiates the dynamics of memory and trauma. It posits emotional breakthroughs in the form of the confrontation with the past which help to deal with trauma of abuse. The novel is also about an elusive relationship between a father and daughter which is similar in content to novels about post-war middle class families. Such families were common in Germany as the fathers had been sent to war and hence formed an absent relationship with their children. However, the novel is set in America and examines kinship and its relation to trauma. Familial assault and abuse is quite prevalent and often manifests in the form of secrets which the abuse survivor has to carry around.

In both texts, Hegi explores what Kali Tal has termed the personal-political nature of trauma. Tal has used this in relation to cultural trauma however personal experiences also pave way for further awakening. Hegi also shows the fragile and elusive nature of memory which also forms the traumatic landscape and furthers its incomprehensibility. Hegi's traumatic landscape takes into account the extreme situated in the everyday and also the dilemmas caused by trauma with respect to identity.

The father figure has been central to Nazi doctrine, wherein Hitler was seen as the father of the *Vaterland*. The father-daughter relationship becomes important in the context of the war, where normative relationships suffered as a result of absenteeism of the father figures. Hegi has examined Trudi's relationship with her father as well as Thekla's relationship with her father Wilhelm Jansen. With respect to Thekla and Wilhelm Jansen, the question of illegitimacy also crops up.

Trudi and Pia is a multicultural critique of the normative ideas of corporeality that probes the stigmatisation around disability. Pia makes Trudi believe that there is a magic island inhabited by the 'little' people. Hegi uses the medium of children's literature for the shaping of consciousness from a young age. In the Burgdorf cycle, she has talked about how collective consciousness failed with reference to the Holocaust and caused guilt as a result. Perhaps the contention of the author is to begin shaping young minds with a healthy attitude to all genders, races, bodies so that the division between an 'us' and the 'other' ceases to exist.

Chapter V

‘And so we embellish our stories…and take all of that for truth’ :Questions of Identity and Memory in Ursula Hegi’s ‘storytelling’

Ursula Hegi has raised questions of identity and memory in the Burgdorf cycle as well as her later work, as she examines identity schisms and memory gaps. In *Salt Dancers,* she returns repeatedly to the fragility of memory by pointing out how it causes distortions and absent holes in consciousness. For Hegi, while examining trauma, the nature of remembrance and how the process of remembrance is formed is also important.

In her work on Trauma, Cathy Caruth too had raised the question of memory, believing that aporias or irresolvable contradictions occur in representation due to the elusive nature of memory. Hegi adheres to the same school of thought, as she openly writes that stories are often embellished and censored and it is upto the wisdom of the writer and reader to choose what to believe. In a post-truth world, story-telling becomes an even more complicated process when it comes to representing trauma that happened in real life.

Holocaust memory is inextricably attached to trauma and seemingly made up pf private, personal memories and transnational, collective memory. The transnational memory of the Holocaust also takes into account how collective consciousness and agency are formed. Wulf Kansteiner agrees that Holocaust memory is linked deeply with the field of memory studies. In fact he goes on to contend that the “conceptual infrastructure of memory studies developed in large measure through analysis of emerging memories of the Final Solution.” (Kansteiner 305) However, memory studies has now assumed a shape of its own, which takes into account contemporary memories, past memories as well as collective and individual memories.

Hegi’s work shows engagement with different kinds of memories, namely, collective and cultural memory in the Burgdorf cycle where she actively revisits Holocaust memory. In *Tearing the Silence,* she uses individual and collective memory during the interview process to understand how memory and identity complement each other. The formation of identity through memory is not a strait-laced affair as memories do not constitute identity in a chronological manner. Memories shape up as multiple repositories which give rise to identity but not in a clear or lined way. Memory gives rise to personal identity in a Lockean[lxxvi] manner but the gaps, holes in memory and the idea of false memory often cloud this theory. Despite the dilemmas related to the definition of memory studies and the relation between

memory and identity, we can easily say that the acknowledgement of Holocaust memory at least signifies regret.

In *Salt Dancers*, Hegi writes about the diaphanous, temporary nature of memory which occurs as multiple projections at the same time. So while Julia may remember exact details about the room when she remembers her parents' fight or the abuse she suffered, she skips the harsh realities of the abuse and the fight. This may be a reference to screen memory, wherein certain portions of memory are screened out in a bid to protect the self from trauma. In a way, Caruth had referred to this in her work on trauma and memory where she had talked about the inaccessibility of certain parts of traumatic memory. This in turn, makes the traumatic landscape a problematic one, marked by memory loss craters that gives a rough surface to the landscape. This also engenders problems of representation of Holocaust memory, as this bears grave implications in the form of aporias and gaps.

Sometimes, when a Holocaust survivor may choose to recall the traumatic memories of their time during the war, they may be too old. The memories can lose their sharp focus and be riddled with gaps, as we have discussed earlier. A survivor may recall events differently from another survivor. Age and factors like psychic trauma caused due to post-traumatic stress disorder from the war may give rise to hazy and clouded memories. This is a question of verisimilitude and authenticity that even plagues memoirs and autobiographical writing of all kinds. Hegi makes a reference to this dilemma again and again as she comes back to the focal point of story-telling. She makes truth a question of belief, as she writes how we "take all of that of truth. All of it." (Hegi, *Salt Dancers*, ch.1)

Hegi calls this kind of a screen a 'trick' which lures us into believing what we want to. As she writes in *Tearing the Silence*, when she asks her Tante Kate about her memories of the Holocaust, she discovers lapses in her remembrance. Tante Kate remembered her Jewish neighbour being dragged off in the middle of the night however Ursula Hegi chooses not to ask whether Kate helped the neighbour or not. In the interview of Tante Kate, Hegi comes across a 'veil' of memory, which can be akin to screen memory as it filtered out the painful aspects of the sights she had seen.

Holocaust memory is thus "sanitized," as Hegi writes, to preserve self-identity and family names at times. The '*Schleier'* or the 'veil' that Hegi talks about in *Tearing the Silence* can thus be a deliberate attempt or a mechanism put in place for self-preservation. Several questions thus arise when it comes to the nature of memory studies and Holocaust memory in particular. An important thing to consider is how the process of sanitisation and censorship

take place for Holocaust memory. What does that do to the nature of memory, by raising doubts over its authenticity? Since the Holocaust industrial complex has also hijacked Holocaust memory to suit its needs, memory often finds itself at odds with a fact-based process of archival. Given the paradoxical nature of memory and the contentions that arise in the field of memory, how do we approach Holocaust memory? Is it a conduit for regret and a guilt-dealing mechanism or is it a manufactured and negative scholarship?

Holocaust memory is made up of two major strands- one being the public, collective memory of the Holocaust and the other is individual memory. These can often clash or coalesce together to form the collective memory of the Holocaust. We need to understand the determining processes that go into the making of this narrative. In understanding Holocaust memory, we need to acknowledge that history and collective memory go together. The process of memorialisation is often controlled by those who wield power and try to rewrite the course of history. Hence, individual memories can often contest collective memory for a large event that took place.

When we talk about Holocaust memory, we also need to remember that the Holocaust was made up of discrete events, all of which were engendered by anti-semitic policies. To view Holocaust memory as one large umbrella term for every survivor's memory would only be a perfunctory analysis. There is an obvious difference in approaches to Holocaust memory by Germans and Jews, as well as survivors of other descents like Poles and Serbs. Holocaust memory, if taken in collective, is also made up of individual and multi-directional memories. These memories, which remind of personal traumas cannot be disavowed and need to be voiced in the wake of Holocaust denialism.

Holocaust memory is traumatic memory and as goes for all traumatic memories, they are marked by re-emergence. Trauma survivors have to face recurring nightmares as they are faced with the "elision of memory" as Caruth has pointed out. (153) Recollection can be in the form of nightmares or flashbacks which haunt the survivors, such as the PTSD which manifests as madness in Thekla's father in *Children and Fire*. Wilhelm Jansen descends into complete depression after he returns from the war, his troubles further compounded by questions of legitimacy about his child, Thekla. *Children and Fire* is the only novel in the Burgdorf series which takes such a close look at PTSD in soldier survivors of the war. There are passing references to this in *Stones from the River*, which is set both in the war and post-war period. However, Jansen's character, modelled perhaps on Hegi's own alcoholic father is the only character who is studied in detail as his life spirals out of control after the war.

Caruth in her work on trauma and memory points out that traumatic memories fail to be integrated fully into the consciousness hence there are gaps and absences. The aporia or the gaps thus become a response to trauma, as the mind tries to return to the origin of the traumatic event without fully comprehending it. Dominick LaCapra has also agreed that the unsettlement caused by trauma can be seen as a post-traumatic response, in what he calls "compulsive repetition." (699) Caruth has focused on the incomprehensibility of traumatic memory when it turns to narrative memory. Focus on the aporias and gaps in traumatic memory does not provide us with any solutions to the problem of this impasse.

The solution to aporias that Hegi offers is through storytelling and while that may not solve the problem as a whole, it is certainly a step forward. In her work, Hegi lays out the porosity of memory that lends this aspect of irrepresentability to a narrative. From the outset, the reader is aware of the self-conscious, reflective strand that runs through the novels that tells one at face-value that memory is 'distorted.' This story-telling then can be seen as what Aarons and Berger term "an attempt at knowledge-making…weaving together the strands of stories." (5) Trudi's storytelling thus involves sorting out the various memories and fragments so she can build a narrative for herself.

However, this task of 'weaving' stories from strands of memories to simply fill interminable gaps and aporias is not simple nor sufficient enough. The question of authenticity again rises up, making us wonder about the 'sequence' that such a storytelling would offer. Hegi terms this the "final design" or a "rearrangement" which can be achieved through "perseverance and a reverence for the task." (525) In that sense, Hegi makes Trudi a preserver of memory along with other characters like Hanna, Jutta and Thekla. She rests the burden of history and memory upon the shoulders of German women, one of whom turns out to be a Jew.

The assurance of truth has been debated even in postmodern and deconstructionist approaches to Holocaust representation. In a post-factual and post-truth world, the question again arises whether we can trust what memory reveals to us. If we doubt the veracity of memory knowing that it is already elusive, does this count as a sacrilege towards Holocaust memory? Hegi's approach to memory shows that how the representation of memory can show us so much about the German past and help in an understanding of German society at the time of the Holocaust. This is the 'reverence' that Hegi seems to be pointing at; to examine the fissures in society and understand where the ideological impetus for the Holocaust came from.

This knowledge-building of Holocaust memory was used as an "effective moral education" by the Western world. (Kansteiner 306) However, despite the availability of such knowledge, as Wulf Kansteiner points out, further genocides did not cease in the world. Holocaust memory can be seen as one of the first "transnational collective memories" that was used by the Western world. (305) Yet, it has only existed in some measure as a "mediatized self-reflexive memory culture." (306) If we agree with Kansteiner, that there needs to be a purpose to the study of Holocaust memory, then these considerations also need to be taken into account.

In *Children and Fire*, Thekla Jansen, the school teacher is aware of this knowledge but she is still rendered helpless. Emma, in *The Vision of Emma Blau* finally understands that it is not possible to keep anything safe in the world and she too unearths the "knowledge that it can take generations for a curse to come to fruition." (Hegi ch. 14) The curse that Emma talks about is the curse upon the Wasserburg as discussed in Chapter three but it can also stand for the curse upon the third-generations of Germans and Jews. The second and third generations, are "caught in something of a double bind, caught in the abyss between the imperious need to speak and the prohibition on speaking." (as qtd in Aarons and Berger 6) Hence, the act of speaking is imperative in tearing the silence and Hegi's narratives explore the memory of a culture.

Another question that crops up when we speak about Holocaust memory is that how are the memories of survivors transmitted to the second and third generations. After "direct testimony," does the Holocaust become "past history?" (Aarons and Berger 7) The memories that second and third generations find themselves grappling with, are not often their own. Can we rely on the intergenerational transmission of memory in the face of the "ineviatble end of direct testimony?" (7) In *Tearing the Silence*, Hegi continues the conversation on Holocaust memory by interviewing second generation German descendants. In her interview with Tante Kate, she chooses not to impinge upon her memory and ask further questions whether Kate helped her Jewish neighbour or not. Perhaps it is because she is not desirous of the answer and chooses to not taint her family memory. However she does raise the question in her own mind and does not voice it, given Tante Kate's age and gaps in her memory.

Holocaust memory was also marked by obliteration as certain members of Germany's elite class who wanted a "return to historical innocence." (Kansteiner 3) Burgdorf is also shown to be inhabited by the likes of such people who try to erase all the memories of Nazi occupation. Hegi writes that:

All the town's energy went into this frenzy to rebuild, to restore order, to pretty itself up as if nothing had changed in the war. (473)

Kansteiner dubs this attempt at restoration and normalisation "the first trajectory of German memory" and he calls the second generation, most of whom were too young to perpetrate atrocities but witnessed them, the "memory hybrids." (4) The other direction of Holocaust memory went towards the shaping of a collective German guilt. Kansteiner believes that this language of Holocaust memory displayed by Germans was widely different from Jews in its "lack of moral precision." (7) As Hegi examines in *Tearing the Silence*, German descendants of the contemporary generation feel the need to delve into their past to come to terms with their own identity, instead of trying to master the past.

The contradictions that appear in Holocaust memory and remembrance processes of Germany are based upon "communicative silence." (Kansteiner 7) This silence is born out of the language of memory in Germany which offered vague, moral platitudes in the postwar years and did not take actual responsibility for the events of the Holocaust. Hegi attempts to break this silence which has cloaked the details of German society during the time of the war. She examines the role of ordinary citizens during the war and in opposition to the official narrative, chooses to let Trudi be the memory-holder for the culture.

That Hegi's memory work is serious in intention and self-critical is shown by her own admission of guilt in the chapter 'Ursula' in *Tearing the Silence*. Her interest to learn about the Holocaust comes from years of jostling with her dual identity as a German and an American. She tried to relinquish her German identity and its negative aspects but realised that the path to acceptance lies in understanding the past. She further engaged in active participation in awareness programs in her own life so that events like the Holocaust could never occur again. In that sense, Hegi lays the blame for the Holocaust on individual stakeholders who were bystanders instead of diverting the blame into one symbolic, collective guilt.

Hegi's approach to Holocaust memory is thus different from those Germans who either tried to rewrite the cultural memory of the nation or those who were unwilling to delve deep into the memories. Hegi approaches Holocaust memory with the awareness that memory is fickle and fragile yet she knows that serious work needs to be done in order to understand the past. She does not offer symbolic guilt as a peace offering in the Burgdorf cycle. In fact she takes Tante Kate's memory about her Jewish neighbour and converts it into an episode in *Stones from the River*. Trudi and her father Leo Montag help their neighbour Mr. Abramowitz to

reach back to his waiting wife. Through this episode, in an almost wish-fulfilling manner, Hegi answers the question that she had herself raised about Tante Kate's alleged role in the Holocaust. Haunted by the ghost presence of what Tante Kate might not have done, Hegi, through her character tries to make it right.

However, the Burgdorf cycle cannot be seen as an exercise in exculpability; it is an attempt to understand the past. *Tearing the Silence* and the Burgdorf cycle are part of the "ongoing open-ended obligation of *Vergangenheitsbewaltigung"* or working through the past. (Kansteiner 84) Hegi's stand is that the German guilt exists because of the very reason that atrocities were committed and that needs to be acknowledged. Acknowledgement is the first step of the process of reconstruction while living with these ghosts of the past. Hegi's approach to memory makes it clear that the Burgdorf cycle is not merely a way to assuage guilt and attempt guilt management. It is a genuine effort to understand the complexities of a society which stood by or perpetrated such brutalities.

In the act of bearing witness to another's memories, Hegi's approach to memory can fall under what Marianne Hirsch has termed 'postmemory.' It signifies the relationship with a past that is marked by vague recall as the second generation of Germans was either young or not born during the Holocaust. However, *Stones from the River* is set during the actual period of the war and Hegi uses extensive research to build the skeletal framework for a German town during the war. She fills it with almost living, breathing characters modelled on German citizens who were bystanders. This is a Holocaust novel which neither examines the concentration camps in detail nor offers a character study of a Nazi perpetrator. It looks at the minutiae of German life, the in-built obedience, and other such things which should also be discussed in Holocaust studies.

Stones from the River also describes briefly the panic and angst felt by Jewish residents of Burgdorf. Hegi turns Tante Kate's ghost-presence of her Jewish neighbour into the Jewish lawyer Michel Abramowitz. At the ages of sixty and sixty-two, Ilse and Michel Abramowitz have to face a future full of forced labour. Hegi writes that:

> It's amazing, Michel thought, what people can get used to and still call life: we have lost most of our belongings; we have been crowded into small rooms; we're not allowed to leave our hometown. (339)

The horrors of the concentration camps; the stripping and degrading work conditions are first presented in the forms of rumours heard by Michel. Hegi, as a German writer builds these

details into the fabric of the novel, perhaps sourcing them from public domain or testimony. Such details have been passed on to the second and third generations of both Germans and Jews in the form of transmission of memory, turning the second generation into what Marianne Hirsch calls the "hinge generation." (n.p.) The traumatic memories of the concentration camp survival and the humiliating conditions that are passed on to Jewish descendants make their idea of Holocaust memory different from the German second generation. German Holocaust memory has been marked by denial and repression. People in Burgdorf also tell Trudi that it was "not good to dwell on the things that were terrible" and that "nobody wanted to relive those years." (Hegi 522) However, this elision is also based upon the lack of willingness to take responsibility for the Holocaust.

The obsession with Holocaust memory that dawned in the years after the Holocaust has been marked by what Hirsch calls "the syndrome of belatedness." (3) The works by second generation writers like Hegi are defined by an obsession with the past and its deep links to identity. Several terms have been floated, as Hirsch points out, to talk about the relation between the second generation of German and Jewish descendants of the Holocaust survivors. These terms include but are not limited to -

> absent memory (Ellen Fine), inherited memory, belated memory, prosthetic memory (Celia Lury, Alison Landberg)…vicarious witnessing (Froma Zeitlin), received history (James Young) (3)

All of these terms signify a relationship of belatedness with the past and a struggle to understand something that is not lived experience yet palpable enough to mark its presence.The second generation grows up with a feeling of being haunted by the past, like Hanna in *Floating in my Mother's Palm* grows up with the stories of the town's tainted past. She imagines and fills in the details which are not shared with the second generation of Burgdorf. Hanna remarks that teachers in schools do not even mention Hitler and this denial of that phase of history makes the children more curious. In the changes to the town's architecture, remnants of the war are visible. Yet, the denialism practised by the town of Burgdorf exacerbates the ghostly presence of the Holocaust in their midst.

Hirsch views this connection with the past as a "sense of living connection." (1) Aarons and Berger term it as the "secreted gaze of both the living and the dead."(5) The lives of Hanna and her generation are buffered through the ghost presences of these memories. Hanna and Trudi both are shown to evoke memories through touch and often Hanna acts like a precocious narrator at times. In specifying the second generation as what Eva Hoffman has

called the ‘postgeneration,’ Hirsch adds the prefix post to memory to come up with the term ‘postmemory.’ Postmemory deals with the ‘after’ and the transmission of trauma to the second generation. In coming up with postmemory, Hirsch wanted to define her own “relationship to (her) parents’ daily stories of danger and survival during the Second World War in Romanian Cernauti.”(4) While post memory specifically includes the transmission of trauma and stories of survival, perhaps we can classify many of Hanna’s memories about her mother as the same.

For instance, Hanna remembers intricate details about her mother’s pregnancy where she was carrying Hanna herself and it was a precarious situation. Jutta Malter, Hanna’s mother was informed by the sister at the infirmary that her baby was going to be still-born and it was after Jutta drove many miles to a hospital that she could conceive the baby. This traumatic memory is etched in Hanna’s brain and she recalls it in vivid detail in the chapter on her mother. It is not possible that as an unborn child Hanna could have access to the colors, sounds and smells that pervade the memory yet she recalls the minutest detail. The memory had been transmitted to her through Jutta, who even remembers the dreams that her mother envisions while pregnant.

The connection that exists between Hanna and Jutta, her mother can serve as memory although it is doubtful how Hanna has access to these memories in the first place unless these memories were narrated to her by Jutta. Perhaps the connection exists as a transference to the new generations, who have endured trauma of their own just by witnessing their parents and grandparents living in a state of trauma. Hirsch writes how these received memories are different from the “recall of contemporary witnesses and participants.” (3) The received memories experienced by the second generation constitute the after-effects of the trauma that their parents have undergone. While ‘postmemory’ can be used for the descendants of survivors and bystanders alike, the transmission of received memories as trauma is visible in Hegi’s book *The Vision of Emma Blau* as well.

Emma receives the ‘vision,’ symbolic here of the transmission of memory from her grandfather in the form of textures, smell and sight. Hirsch writes how the effects of the traumatic memories in the past continue to affect the present. In the case of Emma too, the ruination of the Wasserburg does not happen because Emma is unable to take care of it. The Wasserburg slowly crumbles because it carries a curse which represents all the family trauma and secrets. In the case of survivors’ children, their traumatic memories were shaped by seeing and witnessing the memories of their parents. In that sense, there is a distance from the

actual trauma yet also a deep relation with it, which is what makes postmemory a complicated process. Not only do the second and third generation carry this burden around, they are also invested in it. Caleb, Emma's brother adds his own "imaginative investment, projection and creation" to the history of his German family in the aftermath of the Holocaust. He does so by making a film on his family's precarious position as Germans in America, facing discrimination after the Holocaust after being perceived as Nazis.

Hirsch emphasises again on the belated aspect of postmemory as she says that "we live in an era of posts, which for better or worse- continue to proliferate." (5) As Hegi mentions in *Tearing the Silence,* she was aware, even as a child of the silence that was the undercurrent in her family conversations around the Holocaust. Her mother did not even allow her to read *The Diary of Anne Frank*, finding it too blasphemous. Unearthing her own family history of being a bystander to the atrocities was challenging for the author yet she persisted as she was imaginatively also invested in the process.

Shame, guilt and silence were part of the process of upbringing of the second generation who were told not to ask questions about the Holocaust. For Jewish descendants of the Holocaust, trauma was part of the vocabulary of growing up as they saw survivor parents and grandparents live with symptoms of psychic trauma. German descendants grew up with an overwhelming feeling of guilt over the perceived abdication of moral responsibility by the generation of their parents. As Hegi points out in her process of interviews, for many descendants, it took a long time to process what it meant to be a German and the process involved an overhaul of identity completely. Silence was inextricably wound up and linked with the idea of an intimate family life and Hegi points this out in most of her novels.

The secrets that intimate, cloistered spaces sometimes give rise to are an integral part of the culture of silence. In her introspective chapter Ursula in *Tearing the Silence,* Hegi writes about how this culture became an inbuilt mechanism for coping with guilt and attribution of responsibility. Postmemory describes the relation of two generations through memory and Hirsch wonders why the term 'memory' is "used to describe these transactions." (6) She also points out how postmemory is linked to intimate spaces like families and also larger spaces like a community.

Another question that arises when we talk of postmemory or any negative recall is why these only work for traumatic memories, as Hirsch points out. In several of her works, Hegi points out how traumatic memories and 'happy' memories can co-exist. In *Salt Dancers*, the protagonist finds herself torn as she remembers her abusive and alcoholic father as a caring

father as well. It is hard to reconcile two different sets of memories about the same person and she finds them overlapping into one monolithic narrative that she cannot make sense of. Memory is deeply connected to trauma which is why traumatic recall is linked with postmemory.

In both *Stones from the River* and *Floating in my Mother's Palm*, the memories of the mother are often accessed through the daughters, as shown in the case of Trudi and Gertrud or Hanna and Jutta. Marianne Hirsch points out how "in psychoanalysis, the mother's voice is rarely heard, but that the daughter tends to speak for her." (10) The mother's point of view in Gertrud and Jutta's case is presented in the other novels from Burgdorf cycle. However, Gertrud's point of view is presented from Trudi's aunt Helene's perspective, who tries to accept Gertrud despite the stigma of madness that she is shown to carry. Similarly, Jutta's perspective is presented through Trudi at times although Jutta stands out for her independent view.

Hegi's Burgdorf cycle is a powerful voice for women who give a voice to other women's memories. Thus, she presents different subjectivities in contrast with narratives that have been largely written from male perspectives. In voicing the memories of the maternal figures, their voices are not lost into oblivion. In her works, as discussed earlier, Hegi describes a close relationship between mothers and daughters where memories are accessed through touch. While Gertrud's relationship with Trudi is not close at all as she even refuses to hold her baby, Trudi builds a sense of closeness by forming stories in her head about her mother.

For Marianne Hirsch, "family photos" become part of the "media" of postmemory and she also considers archival knowledge to be a part of the same. (14) In that sense, access to memories through objects, photos, touch and other means can also constitute memory of recall. Knowledge thus becomes an intersection of memory and fantasy, as in the case of Trudi who fills the gaps in her relationship with her mother through the use of her imagination. The connection with the mother thus serves to take a close look at the past, something that Hirsch signifies using the metaphor of the umbilical cord by Barthes.

Hegi has a penchant for writing fiction that examines intimate family settings, which often foster shame and secrets. Her books are often an "extended dialogue about the way shame festers when personal history is suppressed." (Sayers n.p.) In Hegi's novel, *Sacred Time* (2003), she deals with the same themes of shame, secrets and personal memory. Sacred time tells the story of Anthony who coaxes his cousin to fly out of a window, wherein she falls to her death. Yet, Anthony's role in her death is not discussed in the family where the women of

the family suppress this secret and deal with the guilt on their own. Their guilt plays out in their own recall of the traumatic memories, which also fills them with anger. Hegi's novels offer a glimpse into the vileness that runs beneath ordinary, domestic family lives.

The characters in most of Ursula Hegi's novels carry pain that is a result of childhood trauma or trauma that has occurred in the family. Children of Holocaust survivors often feel the strain in their relationships with their parents. The Holocaust forms a personal trauma as well as a larger collective trauma for the society in general. In contrast, the family secrets in *Salt Dancers* or *Sacred Time* that bear the stamp of trauma fall under personal traumatic recall. As Valerie Sayers writes about the women in *Sacred Time*, notably Anthony's Aunt Floria, his mother Leonara and his cousin Belinda that:

> …the grief, guilt and anger these women bear is, paradoxically, expressed in language that often seems to float above the page, its lightness of tone belying the weight of the characters' pain. (n.p.)

Family relationships thus often see the perpetual return of trauma and often screen memory gets deployed in the case of family trauma as in the case of Anthony's female relatives. They try to suppress their memories of Anthony's actions and their fears that he pushed his cousin Bianca to her death. However, this guilt manifests in the form of encounters that shake the core of the characters, who have been living with secrets like infidelity by their husbands as well. Catharsis thus comes from working through the past and confronting your fears, as Hegi has also demonstrated in her other novels. In *Salt Dancers*, interaction with her mother leads Julia to finally find a release from her trauma. In *Sacred Time*, Hegi uses the stream of consciousness form to write about memory, thus aptly representing the inner memories of characters like Floria.

Stream of consciousness takes into account the depths of consciousness of the character and reveals memory to be layered and complex. It often shows how narrative recall functions in an involuntary manner in the same way as memory does. Don Gifford has pointed out language and narrative registers in terms of memory are themselves "elusive, not stable." (13) He refers to it as the "pass-the-ketchup" variety. (13) He means to point out the utilitarian nature of language when it comes to memory.

Hegi uses language to her advantage when it comes to delineating questions of memory and identity. Language often points out the irrepresentable and ineluctable nature of Holocaust memory among other traumatic memory. There are aporias and gaps, which have led to

Holocaust memory being known for its darkness despite the creative attempts to channel it. In terms of memory, Holocaust memory is linked with both forgetting and remembering. Bjorn Krondorfer questions whether forgetting with respect to Holocaust memory should not be seen with reprehension. Whereas some survivors may choose to put a screen or what Hegi terms a 'Schleier' or a veil to save themselves from traumatic recall, others choose to break the taboo surrounding Holocaust memory. However, screen memory often proves to be fragile and prone to letting things seep through, as psychic trauma is known for its elision and repetition.

While writers like Elie Wiesel have professed that they can never forget the traumatic events of the Holocaust, others have stated on record that they have chosen to forget. While an approach of forgetting works for personal trauma, do we find questions of ethics in this decision when it comes to collective trauma? We need to ask on whom the task of remembering the Holocaust lies, since survivors are free to choose to forget if it helps them deal with their trauma. Krondorfer quotes from Yosef Yerushalmi who has stated that:

> For my fear of forgetting is greater than my terror of having too much to remember. (233)

If a survivor chooses to forget, upon whom lies the responsibility of preserving the memories? Hegi points out that it is upon the second and third generations who are emotionally invested in these memories as well. Hegi seems to be saying that there is greater responsibility upon the children of perpetrators and bystanders, that is, upon German descendants of the second and third generation. The onus is on them to try to break the silence and bring the memories of their families in the collective, public domain as well. Krondorfer, however, conceives of forgetting as the "necessary companion" to the processes of remembrance. Again, the question arises, do we cease the process of memorialisation and then begin the process of forgetting? What does adequate representation of Holocaust memory to facilitate its remembrance constitute? Is there any such thing as adequate remembrance when it comes to a large, collective traumatic memory?

Krondorfer seems to be suggesting that forgetting is deliberate and forgetting benefits those who have been affected by such traumatic events and their memories. Forgetting thus becomes distinct from erasure or deliberate omission. It becomes a tool for catharsis and it is upto the survivor to choose either remembrance or forgetting to deal with the trauma. In that sense, forgetting is not a "reprehensible act" and cannot simply be "rejected." (Krondorfer 233)

However, it is memorialisation of the Holocaust that we should be concerned with, as I believe that forgetting should be undertaken on a personal level with respect to trauma. For collective, traumatic memories as incriminating and huge as Holocaust memory, there needs to be commemoration of the victims. The memorialisation of any such large traumatic event takes into account collective memory. Michael Rothberg terms Holocaust memory as a multi-directional memory, which comprises different kinds of memory. Screen memory has been widely used in Hegi's fiction, with various characters living behind a veil of memories. Hegi's Tante Kate in *Tearing the Silence* says that she does not remember a lot about the Holocaust days. However, Hegi points out the presence of a '*Schleier'* or a 'veil' in Tante Kate's memories which serves as a screen and filters out the traumatic memories for her.

Michael Rothberg terms memory as 'multi-directional' and he says that it is "subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing and borrowing." He also talks about an intersectionality between different kinds of collective memories, for example, slavery and the Holocaust. Rothberg examines both slavery and Holocaust consciousness from the perspective of postcolonialism. Holocaust consciousness has gained credence even in American critical circles. A whole Holocaust industry has been built around this memory, which also serves as a kind of sacrilege to the whole idea of victimhood and commemoration. Burgdorf collective memory around the Holocaust in Hegi's Burgdorf cycle is shown as one of erasure and elision.

Citizens rally around each other to restore faith in their idea of the town but completely conceal their own actions of perpetration when it comes to the Holocaust. They deny that anything of that sort has happened and try to shrug it off as it something of that magnitude could be shrugged off. The silence that builds around these memories is not because of Holocaust denialism in Burgdorf, although that is not a far-fetched theory for the town. The silence exists because it works as a veil between them and the traumatic memories of their own participation. It also seeks to preserve an 'intact world' as we talked about earlier in Chapter III. This intact world that the Germans of the town try to build does not take into account the fact that their children are transmitted guilt as a result of their parents' actions.

Hanna's character in *Floating in my Mother's Palm* is someone who offers a difference in opinion as she asks questions about the Holocaust. Hanna reveals how the citizens of Burgdorf shy away from answering questions about the incarceration of Jews. However much the silence envelops the town, the changes to the town's architecture as a result of the bombings belie any claim that the town puts forward. Trudi's character serves as a protector

of those individual, private memories that serve as testimony in the face of Holocaust denial. Collective memory has been sanitised to an extent as Hegi points out in her book *Tearing the Silence.*

Hegi even interviews Germans who are proud of their heritage and their memories about the Holocaust differ from memories of other Germans. For example, descendants of Nazi officers who held elite positions during the war with respect to military strategy, feel a sense of pride. However, there is also a sense of shame that lingers due to the heinous nature of the actions of their parents. Hegi gives a voice to everyone, including such ideologies which she doesn't agree with.

In the book, Hegi also points out how memory and identity go hand in hand, however the process of identity formation from memory is not direct. It is not unknown that our past experiences shape our present identity. Rothberg points out how memory shapes identity but "not straightforwardly and directly" and "the borders of memory and identity are jagged." (5) The relationship is one of closeness as Hegi points out in her work and it is often a re-evaluation of our memories that also changes our notions about identity. Growing up, Hegi realises the full force of the feeling of shame that she associates with a German identity. It is only a renegotiation with her past that enables her to understand her own identity and to deal with its complexities.

While discussing Holocaust memory, Rothberg writes how it was shaped as a unique memory as Holocaust consciousness developed, so much so that the term Holocaust was appropriated for slavery. Critics had a problem with the use of the term 'Black Holocaust' to signify systemic oppression that occurred in the structure of slavery in America. Rothberg points to a more inclusive use of Holocaust memory in which its uniqueness is used to its advantage. By terming it a 'multidirectional' memory, he means to say that "dynamic transfers take place between diverse places and times during the act of remembrance." (11) This does not mean we do away with the uniqueness of each traumatic event or coalesce them into one but merely draw on different memories for the purpose of study.

As a collective memory, Holocaust memory drew upon a plethora of available archived material, including images as Hirsch pointed out in her work on 'postmemory.' The relation between the past and the present also continues to be blurred through the use of a culture of images. However, individual and collective memory often stand distinctly and in cases, they can also merge together. In the Burgdorf cycle, in the novel *Stones from the River,* a lot of people from Burgdorf align their memories with the rest and form a collective memory. Only

Trudi holds on to her distinct memories. In the process of reformation, the town chooses to build upon only certain memories and obliterate the others. Trudi keeps in mind the "great sorrows" that have affected the town of Burgdorf and keeps the voice of those who have gone missing alive. While the town anchors itself using silence as a stronghold, Trudi and Jutta keep documenting the pain through their art and stories.

Hegi's work highlights multiple memories which work closely with each other instead of contesting each other. However, she also points out how there are huge gaps in collective memory like the memory of the town of Burgdorf which seeks censoring of memories. Here, the personal memories that are part of the private sphere inhabited by people like Trudi, Jutta, Leo offer a stark contrast to the group memory of the town. Trudi can feel the force of nature in the town changing as well as a sudden spurt in acts of violence. The fabric of the town has changed yet people keep pretending that things are normal.

Hegi approaches memory from different perspectives, whether it be historical or cultural. She also examines identity not as a by-product but a continuous parallel with memory. Hegi's work also shows how collective processes work both in forgetting as well as remembrance. The personal acts of violence that took place in Burgdorf were not seen as a result of the Holocaust violence but instead their memories were repressed by the town. The town refused to approach any memory that differed from their sanitised version of the Holocaust. By using an imaginary town as the backdrop to approach these questions, Hegi adds another layer to the representation of these diverse practices of memory and forgetting.

Memory studies developed in conjunction with a Holocaust consciousness as we discussed earlier and the Holocaust was seen as a discrete event. Earlier work on trauma by Cathy Caruth pointed out the relationship between trauma and memory. However, in the field of memory studies, trauma changes its nature as "the public inscription of trauma in national and international public sphere corresponds to fixing its public meaning." (ed. Tota and Hagen intro n.p.) While the meaning and nature of a certain public trauma changes, personal traumas retain a strong grip over their victims. So the victims have to negotiate a tricky terrain while witnessing the commemoration of the public trauma, as they live with it. It as as if people are told that this is the particular nature of a trauma while they are aware of its other hidden aspects. Memory studies thus needs to take into account diverse viewpoints as well as all forms of trauma recall, something that Hegi shows in her approach.

While the protagonist of the Burgdorf cycle's *Stones from the River* is Trudi, Hegi gives ample space to the memories of other people of the town, even those who don't agree with

Trudi's viewpoint. These memories get filtered to the reader through Trudi, who stands for the storyteller or a symbol of the writer who bears witness. Hegi writes a lot about the trauma that routine life also offers and the trauma that is implicit in the secrets of intimate family life. Rothberg points out the Freudian theory about the "banal memory of the everyday" which he also posits as screen memory of a kind. (13) Screen memory serves as a placeholder for deeply traumatic memories.

Rothberg calls screen memory a "substitute for a more disturbing or painful memory that it displaces from consciousness." (13) The same has been displayed by Hegi in the Burgdorf cycle and in other works like *Salt Dancers* or *Sacred Time*, where characters carry around a lot of burden and use other memories as a screen. Rothebrg points out that screen memory should also be seen as an authentic memory. In her work, Hegi calls out the screen that lodges itself subconsciously between traumatic memories and their recall in daily life. Hegi also calls attention to the reality of this screen memory by acknowledging it as a veil.

Freud posits that screen memory is formed by projections and based upon the timings of these projections, he divided them into "retrospective, anticipatory and simultaneous" screen memory. (as qtd in Rothberg 13) Rothberg however differs a little when he terms screen memory also multi-directional. In fact, according to him, screen memory serves as both a "barrier" as well as a "site for projection." (13) Hegi has pointed that out very well through the use of Tante Kate's example, as we discussed earlier. Tante Kate's non-remembrance of the fateful night her Jewish neighbour was mistreated and crawled back in a supine manner, is based upon this screen or cover. However, Hegi uses the projection of this memory to form a different memory for her character. She draws upon a memory which already is a projection thus referencing the multiple layers in meaning-making of memory. This is not the only instance where Hegi remaps memories, she also projects Stefan Blau's unconscious desires and fears onto Emma in *The Vision of Emma Blau*.

The Burgdorf cycle points out that history and memory often contest each other or are in conflict. Trudi also realises early on that politics and history are inter-connected and that history is often a narrative of the oppressors and the conquerors. In that respect, Hegi also offers us parahistory or individual histories which may differ from the dominant position. Thus, what we unearth is that the process of memorialisation and commemoration is really complex and layered because individual and collective memories also go hand in hand at times.

Memory studies should serve as transformative and healing process for the victims and survivors who have been suffering from years of traumatic recall. Survivors should feel comforted by the work of memorialisation and commemoration. Memory studies has no relevance if it fails to provide solutions or at least healing to survivors of traumatic events.

Collective memory is defined as " a set of social representations concerning the past which different social groups produce and then institutionalise." (ed. Tota and Hagen n.p.) It is often in contest with private memory yet formed by the private memories of different social groups. We need to ask how the process of formation of collective memory takes place. What practices of remembrance decide which narrative best suits the collective, public memory?

There is struggle involved in the process of memorialisation with different groups laying claim to different kinds of trauma. The process of censoring and erasure also occurs with respect to certain traumatic memories. Hegi is well aware of the politics of the act of remembrance and Trudi recognises that "our country has a history of…justifying attacks on those who are different. Erasing them." (482) Trudi begs people around her for acceptance of the reality and to see that "the war is still going on." (482) People, however, choose to focus on bringing back normalcy instead of recognising that their silence is hurtful to the fabric of society.

Rothberg has argued for "a more just future of memory" where memory studies can help in positive processes of healing. (21) Memory studies should thus help people in articulation of even the gaps and absences in their traumatic memories. It should recognise screen memory for what it is, a kind of authentic memory on its own and work towards a retrieval of those memories which are hindered by the screen. In giving a voice to memories of all kinds, it should open up a space of catharsis for the survivor and their descendants. Thus Rothberg calls for a "more inclusive re-narration of the history of memory." (21)

Hegi too argues for a more inclusive framework of memory studies through her works, where she first of all recognises the processes of erasure, censoring and sanitising of memories. She is also aware of the reality of screen memory when it comes to traumatic recall and she references to it as a 'Schleier' or a 'veil' in *Tearing the Silence*. She demonstrates through her work on the Burgdorf cycle how the processes of remembrance for a German town are subservient to the framework of silence. The repression of memory is adequately pointed out in the latter half of *Stones from the River*, where Trudi is the only memory-keeper in town. Thus, the processes of collective memory and private memory are shown in juxtaposition in

this text while they are shown to be contemporaneous and simultaneous in other works like *Salt Dancers* or *Sacred Time*.

By terming memories fickle and 'distorted' in Julia's recollection in *Salt Dancers*, Hegi points out the unstable and complex terrain of memory. Memory also shapes identity and that too happens in a layered and complicated manner. In the transmission process of trauma, screen memory dominates again wherein the descendants of survivors or bystanders do not know the exact nature of the memories that haunt them like ghostly presences.

Rothberg has also argued for a more inclusive memory studies with respect to postcolonialism. He wishes for a connectedness in the field of memory studies that does not venture into competition between different traumatic memories. He writes:

> Europe's ambivalent memory of the Nazi genocide has left traces that inflect policies and discussions concerning race, religion, nationalism, and citizenship today. (23)

Histories can thus be shared and lessons can be learnt from memories is what Rothberg believes in, in the sense that different collective memories can contribute to understanding of trauma. Instead of seeing different collective memories of traumatic events like the Holocaust or slavery as competing and full of conflict, they can be seen from similar lens like that of postcolonialism. Thus, a multidirectional approach for memory works best and is something that Hegi espouses as well. This approach has been well explained by Michael Rothberg in his work on the multidirectionality of memory, wherein he argues for an inclusive approach instead of a comparative approach.

Hegi's work also looks at the memories that float in the day to day lives of small towns. These memories are closely linked with the landscapes and architecture of the town. Trudi finds that the changing landscape of the town reflects the memories of the town after the Holocaust has ended and their lives disrupted. The link between memory and landscape is also pointed out in *The Vision of Emma Blau*, where Helene recreates a miniature of Germany in her home in America. This imitation helps her to keep the memories of her hometown alive. Memory is shown as ambiguous, fragile yet linked to familiarity. Hegi thus presents an 'alternate memory' model which points out the construction of memory as opposed to ideas about its permanence.

Conclusion

The Burgdorf cycle by Ursula Hegi deals with Holocaust post-memory and trauma and also points out the lacunae in representation of the Holocaust. In her work, Hegi deals with these aporias and gaps using representational strategies like use of an imaginary landscape, use of disability as a prosthesis among others. The Burgdorf cycle novels deal with the inter-generational transmission of trauma as guilt to German descendants whose parents survived the Holocaust. This is a theme that Hegi explores in other books like *Tearing the Silence* as well, where she interviews German descendants whose families migrated to America. This work, in the form of interview and oral history, also explores the notion of immigration identity as a kind of dual identity.

I have also examined another novel by Ursula Hegi other than the aforementioned ones, namely, *Salt Dancers*, in which Hegi continues to examine shame and secrets in intimate family portraits. The novel also deals with trauma and abuse in intimate family settings and details how memory serves as a screen or placeholder in the face of the traumatic recall of the events.

I have earlier looked at the characteristics of Holocaust literature to ascertain whether Hegi's work falls under the ambit. The Burgdorf cycle and the other two novels also come under the category of trauma novels. Even if we do not focus on the specific category of the works, given that they are inter-disciplinary, the novels broadly deal with trauma studies and memory studies. Hegi also takes into view gendered subjectivities, as she details women's experiences during the Holocaust primarily. The protagonists of the Burgdorf cycle are all women, be it the fiery teacher Thekla Jansen or the introspective Hanna, or story-teller Trudi and the strong Emma Blau. All these women represent a variety of qualities that make them stand apart. Trudi and Thekla's ideological non-alignment with those in power, during a time in history where different ideologies were looked down upon, shows their mettle and grit. Thekla is far-sighted enough to realise the beginning of the destruction that Nazi policies bring in their wake.

Hegi's Burgdorf cycle keeps referencing to nature throughout and she brings a lot of elemental characteristics to the titles of the book. Stones, river, fire etc all feature either as destructive forces of nature or impediments in the way of an understanding of trauma. The stones can be construed as symbols of the gaps in memories that impedes the process of

remembrance while the free-flowing river Rhine, modelled after the actual Rhein river in Germany stands for an inclusive narrative. 'Fire' in the title *Children and Fire* is a direct reference to the Holocaust, which draws its origin from the Greek 'Holokaustos,' alluding to fire and burning.

Hegi's work thus can be seen as a part of Holocaust literature but it subverts the ideas implicit in the understanding of this literature. Due to the perverse nature of the trauma industrial complex, Holocaust literature has often also been seen as a hoax or sensationalised. Critics have also pointed out the use of graphic violence in works of writers like Ka-Tzetnik, who describes the horrific incidents of assault and rape faced by Jewish women during the Holocaust. In expressing the perspectives of women during the Holocaust, Hegi picks them up from where male writers have left them, as merely receptacles of violence. Women writers, both Jewish and German have been coming to the fore and writing about the experiences faced by women during the Holocaust. [lxxvii]There has been a lot of debate whether these experiences should even be seen as gendered but such writers are adamant that the systemic violence that women had to face was a by-product of the deeply embedded patriarchal thought process in the Nazi universe.

The policies put forth by the fascist regime under Hitler, viewed women's wombs not as their own prerogative but as a controlled object. The reins of control were ofcourse, in the hands of men, who wanted Aryan women to bear genetically perfect children for the 'superior' race. These same policies forcefully controlled the bodies of Jewish women in their captivity as well. Prior to the unmasking of the hideous agenda of the 'Final Solution' as well, Jewish women's wombs were regulated by the government, which looked down upon any new births in the Jewish populace.[lxxviii] There was a lot of experimentation perpetrated upon disabled women in the concentration camps, where their bodies were used as objects of curiosity and study. Perhaps the impetus to rest an entire work on the shoulders of Trudi, who possesses a short stature, came to Hegi from this archived material.

Other than these issues, Hegi also examines the role of family violence in the shaping of identity. *Salt Dancers* deals with the abuse of a female child, at the hands of an alcoholic father and the repercussions of this trauma in the form of post-traumatic stress disorder. It wouldn't be then amiss to say, that Hegi's work deals primarily with the violence faced by women in close, intimate spaces as well as in the wake of historical upheavals in society like the Holocaust. Hegi's work is pivotal in the space of Holocaust literature as it explores trauma not only in relation to gender, but also madness and disability. The aim is not merely

to write about gendered traumatic experiences, as Hegi also touches upon the psychic trauma faced by say, Wilhelm Jansen, a soldier during the World War. Hegi aims to recuperate women's experiences from the alienation they have suffered at the hands of male narratives.

Instead of utilising 'official' records of the Holocaust, Hegi uses testimony of German American descendants, thus giving voice to personal narratives, which are important for healing of trauma. She also mentions the sexual assault that was rampant in German society as well, as Trudi, Ingrid and her daughter suffered from violence by known perpetrators. For Hegi to write about the concentration camps and the suffering of Jewish women would be seen as appropriation given that she is German by birth. However, she points the similarities in the gendered experience of women during the Holocaust, be it German or Jewish, which does not mean that she undercuts the assault on Jewish women's reproductive rights and bodies.

Sexual violence was part of the culture propagated by Nazi policies even though 'official' documents will deny it. How then can one deny that men and women's experiences during a time of conflict are not different? Rape was perpetrated upon hundreds of women, as more and more testimonies have been released in the last couple of years. This makes it part of the larger narrative of the Holocaust and an insidious part of Nazi policy as well. It also ties up with the larger question of the autonomy of women and the control of their bodies, as well as the emphasis upon the perfection of the female form.

So, the inclusion of a disabled protagonist in the narrative is a deliberate narrative strategy on part of the author, to bring to fore the stereotypes surrounding women's bodies. Trudi is seen as a child, even though she is a grown woman, due to her short stature. This infantilisation is present to such a degree that when Trudi is discovered with a man (her lover Max) on the banks of the river, people believe that the man was trying to assault Trudi. It is improbable for the townspeople to believe that Trudi could exercise her sexual autonomy and be engaged in any kind of a relationship.

Another thing that sets Hegi's work apart is that she also writes about madness, working to remove the stigmatisation around female madness. The writing of female madness has slowly been reclaimed by women writers, who try to undo the years of stigmatisation and oppression that women have faced at the behest of patriarchy. It suffices to say that "women's history was first of all a history of their bodies," so a discussion around corporeality, disability and madness can offer insights into gendered experiences. (as qtd in Tydor intro n.p.)

Hegi's work is different from when survivor stories by Jewish women as it focuses mostly on German women's experience of the world war. It lays bare the foundational underpinnings of the Holocaust by examining German society and its notions of obedience. Trudi's father tells her how Germans have a history of sacrificing things for one leader. The Burgdorf cycle is a close examination of the notion of the by-stander, the ordinary German citizen who neither perpetrated the Holocaust nor actively stopped it. The by-standers might have indulged in little acts of resistance but participated in the Holocaust by not raising their voices against it.

The silence that haunted the lives of ordinary German citizens during the Holocaust continued to haunt it even in the aftermath of the war. The Burgdorf cycle is an exercise in trying to decode this silence, to pin down the use of screen memory to resist traumatic recall and to think of ways of how to 'tear' the silence. The commemoration and memorialisation of the Holocaust in later years was also marked by this 'communicative' silence, which did not take any moral responsibility for the atrocities committed. While Hegi points out the silence in the Burgdorf cycle, coming up with narrative and representational strategies to counter it, she devotes an entire exercise in the form of *Tearing the Silence* to the process. The book, which is in the shape of interviews, offers oral testimony as a means of countering the widespread silence in Germans after the Holocaust.

In that sense, Hegi lays the burden of countering the silence on the shoulders of the second and third generation of the Holocaust, who are emotionally invested in the event as well. German descendants' feeling of shame over being called 'Nazis' is accurately captured in the book. The act of tearing the silence thus becomes a strategy to cope culturally. Silence is thus not a by-product of the war but a cultural construction which also requires individual participation. Trudi wonders why people around her in Burgdorf are unable to view the silence for what it is- a measure of their culpability in the war.

The silence that became part of the landscape in the aftermath of the Holocaust was dualistic in nature. On one hand, survivors of Jewish descent were unable to articulate their trauma due to the gaps and screens in their memory. The lack of verbalisation of the trauma into narratives and testimonies gathered itself into silence. Jewish survivors began to write first-person accounts of the Holocaust that they had endured, and prominent voices, as discussed earlier were Elie Wiesel and Primo Levi. The space of survivor narratives was predominantly male and few novels were written about the war from the perspective of women. Hegi's work, which focuses on the viewpoint of German women thus stands out for the uniqueness it brings to Holocaust fiction.

The other kind of silence encountered in the space of Holocaust fiction is what we have earlier discussed as 'communicative silence.' It is one of the milder kinds of silences that haunt the German imagination after the war. The silence that built a wall around Holocaust memories was born out of guilt and shame and while 'communicative' silence tried to undo the wrongs of the past, it was not enough. The two strands of silences run into two different kinds of approaches, what Robert C. Holub has distinguished as "mastering the past" and "working through" or "coming to terms with the past." (105)

The two approaches are different in the sense that a sense of mastering the past signifies power conflicts, as Holub points out and working through is a cathartic, psychological process. The process of 'mastering' the past suggests that the past is a one-dimensional, monolithic thing that can be conquered. As Holub writes, 'mastering the past' implies "in its sense of conquering and its proximity to the word power (*Gewalt*), the very penchant for violence and destruction that ought to be overcome." (105) The past thus isn't something that needs to be destroyed, it needs to be accepted and understand.

Hegi wants to understand the past by examining the psyche of the German society in an attempt to break the silence that has been at large. Breaking the silence involves taking charge of the process of culpability; by accepting responsibility for moral failure of both the individual and the system. Holding German by-standers accountable for the crimes perpetrated on Jews is part of the process. However, in no means is the Burgdorf cycle a guilt-dispensing exercise, meaning that Hegi wants to dispense off the burden of built. The Burgdorf cycle not only tries to break the shackles around German silence but also tries to figure out where the ensuing conversation would lead.

A suitable answer is provided by Hegi in *Tearing the Silence*, wherein she says how we can all work together to ensure that systemic brutalisation and violence does not take place in the future. The conversation ahead of breaking the silence is about the lessons learnt from the Holocaust. However, we do need to ask tough questions about what the breaking of the silence entails. Is the act of 'tearing' the silence helpful to those who have wilfully chosen to forget? As we discussed earlier, people deserve a choice about forgetfulness or remembrance when it comes to personal trauma. Do we hold them to higher moral grounds in the face of a collective trauma? Breaking the silence has to be accompanied by means of institutional redress and again, we must ask if it is even possible to redress the horrendous acts of violence that were in the garb of policy during Nazi regime.

Silence can be deliberate and the act of 'tearing' can be seen as an obtrusion when it comes to traumatic recall. As Sam, a Jewish reporter for the News of the Week magazine tells his colleague Jane in the show *Good Girls Revolt* (2016), "One thing you learn when you grow up around that kind of pain is that, it needs to be respected." (S 1,Ep. 6) Sam did not know any of his relatives who did not escape from Europe yet he feels that this has changed him fundamentally in a way. He still wants to maintain the aura of silence around the pain, which manifests as trauma and for a similar reason, chooses not to interview the mother of a Vietnam soldier who died in the battlefield.

Thus, silence can be a conscious effort to choose not to remember, although it can also be an omission. Silence on part of the German populace was a part of an erasure, a return to an 'intact world' which Hegi writes about. Does the act of tearing the silence become a moral issue for German descendants? It seems so to Hegi that the responsibility for breaking the silence around the Holocaust should be undertaken by German descendants of the second and third generation.

Questions may be raised about the notion of silence that Hegi writes about, since Holocaust fiction is already well known. Why are we talking about silence when everyone is aware of the horror that took place as mass genocide? The question here is not one of availability of material; enough survivors have now broken their silence, several towards the end of their lives. There are a lot of testimonies available in public domain but can we really say that it is enough? Moral responsibility needs to be taken on part of the perpetrators and the by-standers in the German populace in the form of public policies and redress. This is the kind of 'communicative' silence that Hegi wants to address, which gives generalised, blanket statements on the Holocaust, without delving deep into it.

When we talk about the politics of silence, we must take into account what George Steiner termed the silence of language in the wake of the Nazi genocide. Steiner famously wrote that:

> To speak of the unspeakable is to risk the survivance of language as creator and bearer of humane, rational truth. Words that are saturated with lies or atrocity do not easily resume life. (123)

This has been markedly said by other critics as well, who have argued that silence is perhaps the best way to deal with such horrors. Again and again we are reminded of the irrepresentability of the Holocaust and the aporias that prohibit one from its literary representation. However, like Ursula Hegi, I believe that this kind of silence constitutes a

denial of the event. While we may be aware of the fallibility of language in representing trauma, it should not deter us from even making an attempt.

As opposed to viewpoints like those of Sam in the face of Holocaust memory, other survivors often believe it is a necessity to speak out. As Dorian Geiger points out in an article for the *Al Jazeera*, the Holocaust did not happen all of a sudden. The clues for the development of the horror were hidden throughout German and European history in general. Geiger echoes the sentiments of several survivors who believe that commemoration should prevent other such acts of evil from being perpetrated again. Geiger believes that the Holocaust was what happened when "toxic ideologies grip entire countries and continents." (n.p.)

The same ideology is advocated by Hegi who attempts to tear the silence born out of a forgetful European memory and believes in taking the conversation forward. A similar article on the "collective amnesia" of Europeans in the face of the Holocaust had earlier appeared in the New York Times in 1986. Judith Miller had aptly pointed out how the collective forgetting is deliberate by those who "often remember it all too well, and they deeply resent being reminded of it." (n.p.) In the face of this amnesia, Miller posits "alternate memory," which we have looked at earlier as parahistory. (n.p.) In the town of Burgdorf, it is people like Trudi and Jutta who continue to keep the flame of memory alive, going against the entire town.

Memory thus becomes an act of conscience and silence a deceitful cloak which is used for suppression and repression.

Silence thus divides the seekers of history into two widely distinct sides, those who seek to accept alternate history and those who attempt to deny it. The German descendants, mostly youth were outraged at the German past and felt ashamed of their German identity, as Hegi had done. As NY Times had pointed out in 1996 as well:

> Public opinion polls show that there is simply no appetite among German youth for a replay of the Nazi years, that there is almost no receptivity towards right-wing extremism. (as qtd in Miller n.p.)

Contemporary German youth reaction to the Holocaust remains more or less the same, with youth getting disenchanted with the state of Germany's past. The creative need for introspection has also majorly come from second and third generation descendants of both Germans and Jews. Hegi's work is important because it goes beyond the ideas of self-exoneration and exculpability to understand how years of foundation paved the path for the

Holocaust. In a contemporary post-truth world, where anti-semitism and Islamophobia is on the rise in the wake of toxic nationalist ideologies, such a work becomes all the more important.

The denazification procedures that were put in place after the end of the Second World War are quite well known today. Yet, there needs to be an active participation from the ordinary German citizens as well, who were equally complicit in not stopping the genocides. This is what Hegi espouses in the Burgdorf cycle, which can thus be seen as an 'alternate memory' work along with being part of the trauma landscape.

There are several strategies that Hegi employs in the process of 'tearing' the silence. These include narrative strategies, tropes like the use of an imaginary landscape, the use of testimony etc. Using such strategies Hegi has attacked the institutional myth-making that engenders the silence process. Examples of these include the disavowal of Hitler post the war by the townspeople of Burgdorf. People who meet in the streets of Burgdorf often tell each other that Hitler was Austrian and not German. Hegi writes in her own testimony in *Tearing the Silence* how Hitler had become a monstrous myth by the time she was in school, as girls in the convent spoke in hushed whispers about him.

This kind of a denazification that gets rid of a certain past and contributes to myth-making does not actually help in breaking the silence. Rather, it becomes a prelude to a silence of another kind, what we can term as 'communicative' silence. Richard J. Evans writes about how Germans were quick to emerge themselves in the process of denazification. He mentions that:

> Stone swastikas were chiseled off the façades of buildings, Nazi insignia were taken down from flagpoles, and, in towns and cities across Germany, streets and squares named after Hitler reverted to their previous designations. (n.p.)

Hegi has drawn inspiration for the 'cleansing' and reversal process that occurs in Burgdorf from these factual details. She describes similar changes taking place in the town after the Holocaust is over and allied occupation of Germany begins.

It can be said that despite the rise of a Holocaust consciousness, there is ignorance, denialism, revisionism and anti-semitism still prevalent. Current trends in Germany show that anti-semitism is on the rise, as Harry D. Wall points out in a 2019 article. If we do not acknowledge this as an active part of the silence process, then what else can we call it? This silence needs to be challenged through an act of 'tearing' its fabric, being aware of the

'distorted reflections' of its memories. In the face of a new wave of neo-fascism in the current world, Hegi's work gains greater relevance as well.

Burgdorf citizens frown upon Trudi for keeping the memory of the Holocaust alive. She is repeatedly told that she has lost pride in her nation. Frau Blau tells her that "the whole *Ungluck*-misfortune—came to the *Vaterland* through one individual and that's very regrettable." (Hegi 517) Perhaps the townspeople are aware that the actions of merely one individual alone could not have brought along such a catastrophe but don't want to be reminded of their part in the Holocaust. This is to preserve their idea of Germany as untainted by this 'misfortune' and to disengage themselves from the guilt that nibbles away at them. This is why the denazification process after the Holocaust had seen such a tremendous response as well.

Hegi writes her novels in an incisive manner, using several tropes to try and break the silence. Among the first of many is the use of an imaginary landscape, as the town of Burgdorf is not historically authentic. There are references to several historical events and a lot of factual details are incorporated into this imaginary world. So, the author is at the same time straddling two different worlds, while also bringing them together. Using an imaginary landscape can serve two purposes-that the writer tries to distance herself from the historical narrative and also to point out the uncanny nature of the Holocaust. It allows the writer more freedom to express herself as she builds an entirely new world and brings fresh perspectives to the 'official' narrative. The River Rhein, possibly named after the European river Rhine, is described in a poetical manner and serves as the life-force of the town.

In his work on trauma, Dominick LaCapra has repeatedly stated how the Holocaust eludes representation because that would entail a sort of reconstruction. He believes that for "events where an extreme threshold or limit is crossed, something unique happens and the standard opposition between uniqueness and comparability is unsettled." (as qtd in Colvin 9) What this essentially means is that literature can lose its objectivity and needs to try out new things for representation of such extremes. Perhaps the juxtaposition of the imaginary and real thus works to contrast the banal, the everyday with the extreme in Hegi's case.

The Burgdorf cycle thus does have any fantastical elements other than references to an 'island of the little people' that is merely wishful thinking on Trudi's part. There are no characteristic elements of fantasy other than the usual superstitions of the town that manifest themselves in Trudi's stories. It is merely that the town of Burgdorf doesn't not exist in reality but its fleshed out characters, its setting at a tumultuous point in German history all

make it seem all the more real. The writer's purpose behind this kind of a reconstruction could be to point at the fallacies of literature in representing trauma or to show closely trauma and the fantastic imagination are linked.

The traumatic event can thus only be represented by subversion of ordinary literature mediums and tropes. Hegi's insertion of a fictional town into a very real and traumatic history is proof of the same. The imaginary landscape, carrying the distinct physical and cultural features of a German town is thus an "imaginary interlocutor" that helps in the "communication of traumatic experience." (9) Perhaps the kind of investment that Hegi can make as a writer in an imaginary town is not possible with a real landscape where facts and history would keep interjecting itself.

Victoria Aarons and James Berger point out how subsequent generations have access to the memories of the Holocaust but only in an uneven and unclear manner. This leads to fragmentation in narrative and the birth of aporias in literary representation. They term the representation of the Holocaust by the subsequent generations as a "re-created past, a matter of filling in gaps and putting in scraps together." (4) Perhaps the use of an imaginary landscape also serves to highlight the nature of re-construction in Holocaust fiction, as it aims to give a voice to trauma. Aarons and Berger also posit how for many survivors, the horror of the traumatic events could only be conveyed through silence as they lacked an adequate means of representation. The post-war generation can thus only recreate the past through the use of an active imagination.

The use of fantasy as a trope in literature on trauma has been discussed in chapter I. However, the only so-called element of fantasy in the Burgdorf cycle is the use of an imaginary town. In a sense, it is empowering to the writer to allow her more leeway in the fleshing out of characters in the town of Burgdorf. Thus, knowledge and imagination go hand-in-hand for achieving a reconstruction of the past that serves to break the taboo of silence. An interesting fact is that Burgdorf is also a town in Germany, situated in the Hanover region. However, Hegi's Burgdorf is a fictional German village, which she sometimes also calls a small town. It is not the historically situated Burgdorf but perhaps the use of the name serves to establish the imaginary town's German credentials.

Another trope used by the author in the act of tearing the silence is the use of a disabled protagonist. Trudi's short stature makes her a misfit in German society, specially one which focuses on able bodies and rejects anyone who does not fit into the norm. Trudi herself desires to be like the 'perfect' female form that she sees on the covers of books. However, by

the end of *Stones from the River*, Trudi understands that she is comfortable within her own body and how her so-called disability has empowered her. She "could no longer imagine herself with any kind of different body. A new body would take years to get used to." (Hegi 521) Trudi also forgives her younger self "for the way she'd mistreated her body." (521)

Trudi's disability serves in the text as a prosthetic device, meaning that it is used to support and empower the narrative. It helps her to subvert the traditional power structures, like when she uses it to her advantage and fools a Gestapo officer. Due to her short stature, she is not suspected or infantilised in German society. Trudi's disability is thus used as a narrative trope which helps in subversion and brings to fore an alternativity in structures of corporeality. Hegi re-negotiates conversation around the female body and also brings into focus the ill-treatment of people with short stature and shorter limbs by the Nazi government. It is often overlooked and Hegi turns the Burgdorf cycle into a conversation around these traditional schemas of corporeality.

Trudi is thus favoured to an agent of catharsis; someone who breaks the silence because she is also a misfit in German society which has relegated her to the background. What would be seen as transgression for another female, is overlooked for Trudi as she is seen as a child. This enables her to be an agent of change; to talk back to the SS and Gestapo upon her arrest and to hide Jewish friends in her cellar. While her neighbour, judge Ewin Spiecker, is charged for treason, Trudi is let go because she is not seen as a capable woman in her own right.Through Trudi's character, we become aware of those who faced oppression in German society even prior to the advent of Nazi policies. Hegi incisively points out the deliberate exclusion of such people from the social fabric in Germany.

This exclusion pertains to women suffering from mental disorders as well, like in the case of Trudi's mother Gertrud. Gertrud's madness is neither stigmatised nor romanticised in the novel but Hegi offers a variety of viewpoints related to it. Other women look upon Gertrud with pity or discuss her as a sensational topic. The town gossips over how Gertrud is unable to look after her child Trudi and there is little assistance. Helene Montag, who plays an important role in *The Vision of Emma Blau* as Stefan's third wife, often finds Gertrud strange and wonders why her brother Leo married her.

In the representation of women in the Burgdorf cycle, Hegi presents gendered subjectivities along with a feminist outlook. The women protagonists of the Burgdorf cycle are strong women who stand for self-empowerment even in the face of fascism. Trudi, Thekla, Jutta and

Hanna are all misfits in German society, merely by virtue of their outspokenness. Myrna Goldenberg writes that:

> The handful of women's survivor memoirs published in the 1940's and 1950's went quickly out of print even as memoirs by Victor Frankl, Elie Wiesel, and Primo Levi were re-printed and reviewed. (667)

Much less is the number of women-led narratives from the German side of Holocaust fiction, to put it simply. Hegi's work thus becomes phenomenal because it explores the experiences of German women prior to and post the war. Her work also explores family dynamics and how sexual assault and shame are part of family narratives but repressed as secrets.

In what is seen as transmission of memories, the daughters often turn interpreters for their mother's memories as in the case of Trudi and Gertrud, or Hanna and Jutta. Trudi finds herself linked to her mother almost through touch, as she can feel the stones lodged beneath her mother's skin after a fall from a bike ride with Emil Hesping. The 'stones' which connect Trudi to her mother can be seen as a transmission of memories as family secrets. Most often, it is the women in the family who bear the brunt of these secrets, as Hegi points out in *Sacred Time* as well.

Gender plays a crucial role in both the promulgation of political ideas and their aftermath. As politics is closely related to the personal, domestic sphere, so women often find themselves facing the brunt of any misguided political decisions. The role of German women in spreading Nazi policies far and wide cannot be denied and often Hegi sketches out characters in the town of Burgdorf who are helpers of Nazi officers. Yet, more so than this, women found themselves at the receiving end of the consequences of Nazi policies.

Hegi's work can be seen with reference to Kali Tal's personal-political theory of cultural trauma, which posits that cultural trauma often has far-reaching personal consequences for women. Critics continued to question the inclusion of gender in the narrative of trauma surrounding the Holocaust. However, gender is an important lens through which one can view the politics around the Holocaust. Elisabeth Krimmer writes how:

> In addition to altering perceptions of guilt, notions of gender can also make female suffering and victimisation invisible. (2)

Hegi's Burgdorf cycle focuses on the resilience offered by ordinary women in Germany, along with showcasing the domestic lives of women during the war years and after them. Hegi also focuses on the stigmatisation of female madness, which has been essentially seen

as a ‘female malady,’ as Elaine Showalter put it. Hegi also delves into episodes of sexual abuse and assault which afflicted both German and Jewish women. In detailing the sexual assault on Trudi even prior to the war, Hegi portrays a society with flawed, patriarchal tendencies. Women are relegated to the domestic sphere; which they throw themselves into with much zeal, utilising their home-decoration talents post the war. However, the war upsets the gender status quo of the town, in both its assault on women as well as the drawing away of men to the borders.

Sexual abuse often manifests itself as a screen memory, along with most other traumatic memories. This is why Julia in *Salt Dancers* is often unable to recall the details of her physical abuse by her father while she remembers the intricacies of the preceding moments. In *Tearing the Silence*, Hegi writes about the silent camaraderie between her mother and Tante Kate, who provide each other solace in troubled times during the war. Female friendships often helped women tide over the difficult times, as shown by Trudi-Jutta’s friendship or Sonja and Ilse Abramowitz’s relationship. Krimmer points out how focus on women highlights their absence from the narrative of the Holocaust in two respects. One is with respect to their “active participation in war and genocide…and their sufferings as refugees, rape victims and concentration camp inmates.” (2)

Hegi uses the notions of gender to highlight suffering and sexual assault and through the varied episodes narrating the same, she aims to break the taboo surrounding it. She puts forward a feminist consciousness, which takes into account the abuse suffered by women regardless of their race and nationality. Another important thing which sets Hegi’s work apart is the delineation of German women’s experiences during the Holocaust and in its aftermath. This also forms an integral arc in women’s experiences during the Holocaust and yet there is little work on the same. To understand how Hitler’s toxic hyper-nationalism flourished, one must understand its influence in the domestic sphere.

Women’s experiences in the Holocaust were given more emphasis after feminists started re-examining the Holocaust in a different light. Carol Rittner, Melissa Raphael, S. Lillian Kremer, Shaaron Cosner are amongst the many women who worked on alternate histories of the Holocaust based on gendered experiences. Wendy Lower has worked on a book *Hitler’s Furies: German Women in the Nazi Killing Fields* (2014) which detailed the vicious side of German women participants of the Holocaust. Elisabeth Krimmer provides a grim view of the same in her book on the lives of German women.

The lives of German women who stayed in the domestic sphere and bore the brunt of the war, while not agreeing with Nazi policies, have not been discussed in detail. Focus on German women's experiences during the war is on their complicity as Nazi female agents and perpetrators of injustice. However, Krimmer also dedicates a chapter to the German victims of sexual assault. Hegi carries this conversation forward as she details how assault and abuse was often part of the familial structures even before the beginning of the war. Ingrid Baum faced abuse from her father from an early age and the same cycle was repeated upon her daughter. Trudi was raped by boys she had known in her childhood, who assaulted her because she was 'different.'

Helene Montag finds herself married off to a man who doesn't understand her desires and she has to take charge in her marriage to get herself heard. Gertrud is reduced to a social pariah because of her mental disorder and Jutta finds herself a misfit because her ways are different from others. There are ample instances of women supporting other women during the war in the Burgdorf cycle, which is not a counter-attack on the narrative of complicity. It cannot be denied that German women were complicit in the war, as agents and perpetrators. They held positions of nurses, secretaries and helpers in the Nazi regime. However, this does not mean that all German women were complicit in the war as several like Sophie Scholl were vociferous in their protest and executed for the same.

Hegi's feminist narrative then works in twofold ways-one, it shows the domestic sphere of German society which was occupied by women at the time and also, it gives a voice to those women who meekly protested against the Nazi regime. I call it a 'meek' protest because while women like Trudi hid their Jewish friends in their basements or cellars, they did not give a voice to their differing thoughts in the public sphere. One can say that it might not have been possible given the rigidity of the Nazi structure. Yet, there were scores of German women who found their consciences assailed at the thought of the Holocaust. Hegi's work references these women and shows how gender permeates the power structures, domestic life and the making of trauma as well.

The identification with Nazi policies occurred for many women because of the collusion of the church and the family. Hegi's work also shows how nationalism works in tandem with the invocation of religion and the domestic sphere. The fact that the war changes the architecture of the church in Burgdorf is a comment on the disintegration of religion in the face of war. As Primo Levi had pointed out in the aftermath of the second world war, it was impossible to believe in religion and God witnessing what had happened. Hegi's stance on

religion throughout the Burgdorf cycle is critical and she points out the flaws inherent in it. She shows how early on for German children, obedience is indoctrinated through the church.

The people of Burgdorf believe that "only catholics could go to heaven." (Hegi 58) Protestants and people of Jewish faith are seen as pagans by the townspeople who do not say it outright. In a sense, Hegi is positing that the Holocaust brought to fore the ideological differences that had existed even prior the war, in German society. Hegi brings to fore all aspects related to German society which are not given prominence in Holocaust literature, like the role of the church and of ordinary German women citizens.

It was not as if Nazism was sanctioned by the church and several catholics heroically rescued Jews during the war as well. Yet, Hegi seems to say that the church, or rather any form of religion merely propagated a culture of obedience. The church had no scope for the misfits in society, as people like Jutta or the gypsies were frowned upon. Michael Phayer writes that the church's initial response to the Holocaust entailed silence and that "Pope Pius had other options other than speaking out or being silent." (xii) The church's non-interference in the Nazi state resulted probably in an increase in atrocities committed against the Jews. Trudi and Helene find themselves questioning their beliefs in the church after the war has taken place. Klara Brocker finds herself liking the original windows of the church, whose architecture had changed after the war.

Klara finds that "the light above the altar was harsh as though the solitary priest on the marble stairs, raising the sacred chalice in an ancient ceremony, had little to do with her." (Hegi ch. 4) Although Ursula Hegi has stated that she has not tried to write 'political' novels in the Burgdorf cycle but the politics seeps in with the personal. The fact that Klara feels that the priest has not much to do with her is an indirect indictment of the church by ordinary catholics who felt that the church had abandoned them during the Holocaust. Phayer also mentions "how the ethical credibility of the papacy fell to its lowest level in modern times." (xii)

The Burgdorf cycle questions the credibility of institutionalised religion in the face of the Holocaust. It brings to fore questions of gender, culpability and shows their close relation to warfare. War affected the ordinary lives of German women deeply as they suddenly found themselves handling the affairs of the household. In the breaking of the silence, Hegi questions the accountability of these women as by-standers and also the role of the church. Cultural trauma thus works at both a collective, political level along with a personal level.

The novels detailed in this study detail the nexus of silence that lay between the domestic sphere and the collective, political sphere.

On a personal level, psychic trauma deals with rupture in representation and narration, due to the inaccessibility of memory. The wall of silence that surrounds trauma has been widely discussed in psychoanalysis and literature, from Cathy Caruth to Jeffrey Alexander and Dominick LaCapra. Hegi's approach to the intergenerational transmission of trauma is multidisciplinary as she takes into account gender, disability as well as memory and identity studies. First of all, we must recognise that the transmission of guilt here can be seen as a kind of traumatic memory. Guilt shapes the identities of German descendants in the form of a collective shame, that makes them question the idea of a German identity.

There are different kinds of identity that Hegi explores in the Burgdorf cycle, Salt Dancers and Tearing the Silence. While she questions the ideas of transnational, collective identities in the Burgdorf cycle, she examines ideas of collective shame and German identity in her testimonial work. Hegi also raises the issue of immigrant identity as a dualistic identity which is beset by assimilation and nostalgia. Helene Montag finds herself drawn deeply to her German identity as she shifts to America after marriage to Stefan Blau. At the same time, Helene finds herself horrified by the Holocaust and encounters prejudices in America, where she is seen as a Nazi. The word 'Nazi' thus becomes a slur, signifying the lowest denomination and becomes associated with shame for Germans.

Hegi shows the association between language and identity in *The Vision of Emma Blau,* where native German language is shown to hold a sense of familiarity for Helene. She also finds learning a new language a challenge and both Stefan and Helene revert back to German in their old age, as it draws them closer. Assimilation in a new culture for an immigrant thus involves a "dialectics of change and sameness, with the afferent scrupulous balancing of allegiances and loyalties and most importantly, a newly discovered perspective on one's self-identity." (Ritivoi 14)

Identity is thus informed by a collective sense of belonging which immigrants find themselves displaced from. While interviewing immigrant German descendants for *Tearing the Silence,* Hegi found that most of them also felt a sense of displacement along with guilt. Jewish descendants whose families had migrated during the Holocaust are burdened by a sense of loss along with displacement.

Through her work, Hegi lays down certain defining German characteristics like obedience, punctuality which are drilled into Germans from a young age. What Leo Montag tells his daughter Trudi is not too far from the truth that Germans often sacrifice everything for one leader. Michael Perraudin and Jurgen Zimmerer talk about the "colonial amnesia" that Germans suffered from in the aftermath of the Holocaust. Germany had forgotten about its deep ties to colonialism and the persecution of the Herero and Nama people for which they apologised in 2004, as Perraudin points out. In a sense, the history of the nation has been marked by upheavals and wrongs. So, often Hegi finds herself drawn to the German past as she interweaves historical fact and fiction.

The aim of the Burgdorf cycle especially can be seen as "tracing the roots of malignancy far back in German history." (Fulbrook n.p.) Whereas in the two other novels, Hegi explores the notion of identity, shame, guilt and memory. The purpose of this exercise is not to come up with what Fulbrook calls an "acceptable German national identity." (n.p.) The attempt to understand the past is not even to forge a process of reconciliation or get rid of culpability. For Hegi, the major aim is to examine the psyche of a society to understand how such atrocities may be prevented in the future, for which the moral conscience of a society should be unassailable.

The logical step ahead after interviews and testimonies for Hegi, is to take these learnings and implement them. For her personally, it was in the means of joining a protest march and encouraging her young son to do the same. Hegi found her parenting style to be influenced by these factors as well. Overall, the books might, on the surface, appear to deal with personal traumas but these are reflective of cultural traumas as well. When we speak of cultural trauma related to the Holocaust, we refer to the suffering faced by Jewish people and others who were persecuted. Yet, some German women also faced sexual assault both prior to the war and during it. Where do we place such victims? Do we equate them with Jewish survivors of abuse and sexual assault?

I have stated that the transmission of guilt forms a traumatic bond even for German descendants yet it does not take away from the trauma of Jewish descendants. Hegi is not advocating for a broad representation of trauma related to warfare and gender. She is merely pointing out what kind of dominant structures were prevalent in German society prior to the war. The war period and its disruptive feature in domestic, ordinary lives is described in great detail in *Stones from the River,* which also details the postwar period. Hegi uses the process

of testimony to understand the shaping of identity and the fragility of memory, themes she uses in other works like *Salt Dancers* and *Sacred Time* as well.

In examining Hegi's works, I am not saying that the texts are universally true for all ordinary German citizens who were by-standers. But I believe these novels are an important step ahead in understanding the role of the by-stander and the intricacies of gender and warfare. Hegi advocates the shifting of responsibility from survivors to the by-standers. By responsibility here, I am referring to what Des Pres calls "the task of survivors in the awakening of conscience in the greater community." (as qtd in Tal 125) Why must survivors be tasked with even the need to shake the moral foundations of society? In a world where the notions of guilt, responsibility etc have been reinstated after the war, why can't perpetrators and bystanders acknowledge their actions?

Hegi's work also details the pattern of abuse prevalent in society, which is normalised within close, familial spaces and under the garb of religion. Ingrid, who faces abuse from her own father, internalises it to such an extent that she believes that she is "doomed because of original sin." (Hegi 173) These sheer number of women who face sexual abuse, rape and assault during events of cultural trauma is staggering, be it the institution of slavery or the partition between India and Pakistan. Due to the traumatic nature of abuse, women are likely to develop PTSD in more numbers than men. [lxxix]These incidents are not examined with the same reverence shown for male writers like Wiesel, as the "atrocities against women are grounded in a system that supports them." (Tal 126)

Thus, Hegi brings to these novels a postmodern feminist consciousness and uses the lens of feminism to describe women's everyday lives and experiences, which are also grounded in abuse. Politics is thus personal and Hegi seems to quite concur with Kali Tal's idea of cultural trauma in her work. Ursula Hegi's work is however, not merely a feminist analysis; it is multi-faceted and multi-disciplinary as she takes into account gender, memory and identity. In creating an 'alternate memory' universe, she projects the memories of the Holocaust onto an imaginary landscape. Thus there is a creation of a community and in the understanding of its day-to-day lives, we come to know transnational mythologies are created.

In a post-truth world, culture is increasingly becoming pathological, or as Mark Seltzer terms it, it is a "wound culture." (3) Trauma is now a part of public sphere yet the ideas of guilt, responsibility and ethics related to it remain shrouded in layers. Hegi's work points out that whether it is the family, or the institution of the church, 'normative' models do not exist. Prevalent attitudes in society give rise to the foundations of traumatic events as the Burgdorf

cycle enunciates. The novels give access to women's interiority and show the impact of cultural trauma on the individual.

This research has looked at the politics of Hegi's novels in terms of identity, memory, gender, disability and most importantly trauma. I have posited that transmission of guilt occurs as intergenerational trauma in German descendants of second and third generation. This does not take away from transmission of trauma in Jewish descendants, which has been examined under the ambit of trauma studies. As pointed earlier, Holocaust studies have become a constantly evolving field, operating also within a trauma industrial complex in the Western world.

Even when Hegi is writing from the point of view of a German, in what is generally seen as the other side of the Holocaust, she chooses to focus her work on the 'subaltern' or the 'other' in society. By no means does Hegi intend to take away from the suffering of Jews but in her work, she represents the unrepresented and the misfits. Trudi is a person of short stature, referred to as *zwerg* in German society and infantilised by the town. Jutta who paints the beauty as well as the ugliness of the town, is shunned for her boldness and self-confidence. Thekla, Helene, Hanna, all of Hegi's protagonists are women whose ideological alignment is different from the locals in town. Hegi thus delves deeper into women's subjectivities and recoups their experience of the war. However, it should be noted that she does not equate the suffering of Jewish women or German women in any way.

Holocaust literature has burgeoned as a field and a comprehensive survey on the same was undertaken by Naomi Daimant and David. J. Roskies. Harold Marcuse has worked on the same and examined how Holocaust literature emerged as a genre. Research on trauma studies has been extensively undertaken by Cathy Caruth, Jeffrey Alexander and Dominick LaCapra, which examines traumatic recall, aporias and the irrepresentability of trauma. Holocaust literature has only just begun to focus on gendered subjectivities and the relation between gender and warfare. Gender provides another lens to look at the Holocaust and ruptures previous discourse.

Few writers have examined the gendered experience of German women during the Holocaust and those who have done so, have chosen to focus on the participation of women in Nazi policies. That is a crucial aspect that needs to be brought to light and Ilse Koch's infamous case serves as a grim reminder of the same. Koch was a Nazi sympathiser whose husband ran a concentration camp and she was responsible for brutality inflicted upon the inmates. Those who see women's actions as Nazis in a more negative light than men's actions, have held

women up to higher standards of morality. Motherhood has always been equated with saintliness in society, which is why it was hard to believe how women like Ilse Koch could wilfully subject people to torture.

Hegi examines the other side as she writes about German women who find themselves grappling with uncertainty over the fate of the nation at the hands of fascist forces. Hegi shows the lives of these women who were by-standers during the Holocaust. Their experiences hold as much merit as the importance given to German women like Sophie Scholl, who vehemently protested against Nazism. The reason is that in order to understand how fascism became a life-force in Germany, its impact on domestic lives needs to be reflected upon. The psyche of German society prior to the Holocaust holds as much weightage in Holocaust studies as the dissimulation of German identity and language after the war.

Holocaust representation, the texture of memory in relation to it and the motifs of haunting as transgenerational trauma have been well researched. Hegi re-negotiates Holocaust novels as she writes from the point of view of by-standers during the war and also focuses on gendered subjectivities. What sets the Burgdorf cycle apart is its most famous novel *Stones from the River*, which uses disability as a lens to examine the role of local participation in the Holocaust.

Lynne Vallone has examined Hegi's short children's novel *Trudi and Pia* by looking at performance and the dwarf community, both of which are recurring ideas in the text. Vallone briefly looks at the text, which she calls "a picture-book version of characters from Ursula Hegi's novel for adults, *Stones from the River.*" (n.p.) Vallone points out the nuanced use of the 'dwarf' perspective in Hegi's work as she situates it in the context of other works on disability. However, by using the phrase 'extraordinary bodies' in the title of the book, to describe disability, I believe there is an undue emphasis placed on the physical limitations of persons with disability. The answer to the able-bodied normative model is not to elevate the bodies which do not fit in, as some sort of extraordinary form.

Trudi's character thus is an attempt by Hegi to rewrite the representation of disability in literature. Ato Quayson writes how "the intersection between anti-Semitism and disables affects the evolving consciousness of Trudi Montag."(214) Quayson also briefly looks at *Stones from the River* among other texts to understand how the 'crisis of representation' affects disability. Eva Feder Kittay in her book on the care of what she terms "disabled minds," uses the same novel to look at how Trudi's disability as an infant drives her mother

insane. (n.p.)However, here I beg to differ as after examining the entire set of novels in the Burgdorf cycle, one can come to the conclusion that Gertrud Montag suffered from a mental disorder even prior to her marriage. Helene Montag finds herself wondering whether her brother Leo, would be able to look after Gertrud. So, if one looks at *The Vision of Emma Blau* and understands the intertextuality between the novels, one can easily reject Kittay's hypothesis that Hegi offers a "moral model of disability." (n.p.)

It cannot be denied that to Gertrud's ailing mind, the birth of a 'dwarf' daughter is punishment for her adultery with Emil Hesping. However, this is mentioned in the text to point out how deeply entrenched ideas of the church about adultery and punishment are, in the fabric of German society. Hegi's view of disability is an empowering one, as throughout the Burgdorf cycle, Trudi grows emotionally and learns the importance of self-acceptance.

Hegi's fourth novel of the Burgdorf cycle *The Vision of Emma Blau* deals with immigrant identity in the wake of the Holocaust. Helene Montag, who gets married to Stefan Blau, finds herself questioning whether she is "really innocent of what's happening in Europe." (Hegi ch. 4) David Cowart has examined Hegi's immigrant fiction from the point of view of "new world achievement." (56) Cowart terms Stefan Blau's vision of the Wasserburg as born out of his "monomania or obsession with the American dream." (57) Cowart finds traces of magic realism in Hegi's work, imputing it to the fact that Greta, Stefan's daughter is a psychic among other things. *The Vision of Emma Blau* presents the history of a family as we discussed earlier but also carries the "imputation of a larger German guilt." (58)

Cowart's research on Hegi's work focuses on the literary traditions, and what he calls 'fatalism' in the novel. Hegi presents a family's history by linking it to a building called the Wasserburg, which "encapsulates the immigrant ethos at the heart of the American dream." (Cowart 62) Hegi's work links memory with identity and is steeped in realist traditions. It deals with the legacies of nations which turn a sense of superiority into a sense of shame and in that sense, the Wasserburg emerges as an "emblem of national identity." (62)

Research on Hegi's work till now has been limited and focused either on immigrant identity or her representation of disability. In my research, I have examined the Burgdorf cycle and other novels by Hegi through varying lens of gender, identity, memory, disability and trauma. The research has looked at the contesting identities of Germanness and Americanness, as a duality that exists upon immigration. I have posited that the transgenerational transmission that occurs in German descendants of the second and third generation is the legacy of guilt that manifests as trauma.

Hegi's work carries traces of a postcolonial reading as well and is deeply entrenched in a feminist consciousness. It works on the domestic level and showcases family conflicts which are in turn, representative of the nation state. Hegi uses nature as not merely figurative language, but ties it up with the larger schematic framework of her novels. For example, as mentioned, the stones in the river Rhein symbolises the impediments in memory that hamper representation. The stones represent hardness that seeps into the town of Burgdorf after the war and it hinders the free flow of humanity. The river, the pear tree, the stars seen by Emma in the night sky can stand for a multitude of things. Most importantly, all these symbols signify an ancient language, a language that has been lost by humanity in its violent travails. These symbols are thus "the embodiments of the myths and the stories by which humanity defines and sorts recurrent experience." (Cowart 61)

The fact that Hegi places these symbols in a fictive language is a testimony to their universality. This kind of magical association of the eternal and the everyday is what Hegi tries to do with her storytelling as well. Hegi reiterates about this pattern, design or the 'sequence' as she calls it in her work, specially in *Stones from the River*. This is the same pattern that can help tear the silence, which has built itself up like a wall and needs to be raked, like Trudi imagines. My research points out the various ways in which Hegi attempts to break the silence, by incorporating women's subjectivities in the experience of war. The novels question the ideas of by-stander, victim and perpetrators and attributes responsibility and culpability to the by-standers.

The works, which deal with the deep psychological trauma of sexual abuse, especially *Stones from the River* and Salt Dancers, can be seen as trauma novels. This research has examined these novels from two modes, trauma and guilt, effectively in German by-standers of the Holocaust. The town of Burgdorf exists as a fictional edifice, which is used to probe the psyche of German society.This research also points out how Hegi is self-conscious of the limits of representation of trauma, as she refers to memory as 'distorted.' In her oral testimony work *Tearing the Silence,* she makes a reference to the 'Schleier' or the 'veil' of memory, which hints at screen memory. This research has thus tried to point out the intersections of screen memory and trauma, as well as the interconnectedness between history and memory.

Further research is this regard can be undertaken in terms of cultural trauma and gender. The notion of hybrid identity, for example, is a similar experience faced by all immigrants who migrate from their homelands after a historical trauma. Gender and identity can be used as

two framework of analysis to link cultural traumas like the partition, slavery and the Holocaust together, which would enhance our understanding of trauma itself. Instead of a competitive streak between different cultural traumas, a dialogue will provide a re-negotiation of the past and history.

In an emerging neo-fascist, post-truth world, a re-examination of an impactful cultural trauma like the Holocaust serves to understand the worst moments in history. After the symbolic and literal act of tearing the silence, Hegi paves the way forward for the conversation. The path ahead should utilise the lessons from this re-engagement with the past so that another Holocaust does not occur again. In breaking the silence, Hegi also finds her own voice, in the sense that she is able to mediate between her Germanness and her identity as an American migrant.

This research thus brings to fore the construction of cultural memory and identity, and the transference of guilt in German descendants after the Holocaust. Ursula Hegi points out the extreme in the banal and the fragility of what is seen as ordinary, domestic life. Hegi's is a different kind of post-Holocaust self-consciousness, one that fits in with her artistic vision of storytelling. In the face of traumatic silence, the cathartic role of literature is used as a redemptive tool. Hegi's vision ties personal history, memory, identity (hybrid or transnational), into a "story that would hold an entire world." (Hegi 525)

[lxxx]End-Notes

[i] The term 'Blood Memory' has been taken from Lisa Rosowosky's exhibition on the Holocaust. Accessed through web on 15 July 2017.
https://www.hmh.org/ViewExhibits.aspx?ID=90&ExhibitType=Past

[ii] This biographical information has been gleaned from the Wikipedia page on Ursula Hegi. Accessed through Web on 17 January, 2019.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ursula_Hegi

[iii] Accessed through web on 17 January, 2019
https://www.enotes.com/topics/ursula-hegi

[iv] Dominick LaCapra has worked on the links between trauma, history and Memory in his article 'Trauma, History, Memory, Identity: What Remains?' Volume 55, Issue 3 October 2016 Pages 375–400, published in 'The Journal of History and Trauma,' Wesleyan University.

[v] The term 'Final solution' was used in 1941, to give a concrete voice to Adolf Hitler's idea of the complete destruction and annihilation of the Jewish race.

[vi] Accessed through web on 10 March, 2018.
https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/first-moments-hitlers-final-solution-180961387/

[vii] The word 'holocaust' was used in newspaper reports and then by historians in the 1950's. This information has been gleaned from English Language Usage and Stack Exchange-
https://english.stackexchange.com/questions/106031/who-coined-the-term-holocaust-to-refer-to-the-nazi-final-solution-for-the-je
Accessed through Web on 10 march, 2018.

[viii] In *Night*, Elie Wiesel raises theological questions about the existence of God. After witnessing such horrors, Wiesel is forced to ask whether God exists? Wiesel's work was criticised by anti-semitic people who did not concur with the intended results of his books -to raise uneasiness about the Holocaust. Isaac Bashevis Singer once said in a slur directed at Jews that ' they are a people who can't sleep themselves and let anybody else sleep.' Perhaps we can see the emphasis upon proving Wiesel was an impostor stemming from the deep-seated unease about the holocaust, what is termed as 'Holocaust denial.'

[ix] In his essay '*Fear and Hope: Three Generations of the Holocaust*' (Harvard University Press, 1995), Dan Bar-On talks about the methodology of 'softer assumptions.' Using this, he interviewed first generation survivors and let the respondents share their own story vis-a-vis interpreting their stories.

[x] The page number of the original quotation is disputed, as some critics point out that the quotation by Adorno is modified a little. Frederik van Gelder has pointed out that the quotation is actually a misquote and the original runs like this:

The critique of culture is confronted with the last stage in the dialectic of culture and barbarism:

to write a poem after Auschwitz is barbaric, and that corrodes also the knowledge which expresses why it has become impossible to write poetry today. (30)
However, the quote has become famous as "to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric" and I have used it in the same vein.
Source -https://www.marcuse.org/herbert/people/adorno/AdornoPoetryAuschwitzQuote.htm
Accessed 28 April, 2019.

[xi] Efraim Sicher defines this generation as "all those who write 'after' in order to survey a wide-but not exhaustive-range of themes and issues in the context of both the particular problems of the generation of the children of survivors and the broader issue of writing identity after Auschwitz." This definition of the second-generation (or the children of survivors) of the Holocaust has been taken from Ayla De Greve's work 'Holocaust Representation in third-generation Literary Non-fiction: Postmemory in Daniel Mendelsohn's T*he Lost: A Search for six of six* and Edmund De Waal's The Hare with Amber Eyes: A Hidden Inheritance. In her research, De Greve talks about the various generations of survivors -first generation, second generation and third-generation and the notion of survivor guilt. This 'survivor guilt' decreases as the temporal distance from the event (the Holocaust) becomes more. For example, in children of survivors, there is a mix of vulnerability and artistic pursuit as they are able to verbalise their trauma better than their parents or loved ones.

[xii] Menachem Kaiser, in his article "The Holocaust's Uneasy Relationship with Literature' reviews Ruth Franklin's book *A Thousand Darknesses.* He comments upon placing emphasis on the verisimilitude of Holocaust literature which has been done since a long time. He says-"Since the genre emerged, this has been the defining stance of Holocaust literature—that a work's verisimilitude, or its truth-value, far outweighs its literary merit. The memoir, the first-person unembellished account, has long been considered the apotheosis of the form."Kaiser is of the opinion that Holocaust literature should engender critical opinion hence we cannot treat it as 'inviolable.'

[xiii] From Menachem Kaiser's review of Franklin's book in The Atlantic.
https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2010/12/the-holocausts-uneasy-relationship-with-literature/67998/
Accessed through web, 23th January 2018.

[xiv] Mathew Boswell in his article 'Holocaust and the Taboo' writes about the notion of taboos in holocaust literature, wherein certain critics believe that factual historical accuracy should be 'safeguarded' against falsification. However, we cannot merely take this straitjacketed view as Boswell suggests. These novels, which do not adhere to the straight pattern of historical accuracy and merely give a description of the horrors of the Holocaust, "which might appear, on the surface, to be crude, offensive or factually misleading, are not always as gratuitous or misdirected as they might seem." These texts often seem to be working in wider cultural and social contexts and deal with more than surface issues, like in the case of Ursula Hegi. Hegi's texts cannot be termed as historically true as Burgdorf didn't exist in Germany but the trauma that she writes about cannot be effaced.

[xv] This idea of working through or dealing with the traumatic memory of the Holocaust comes from the German term *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* which is an attempt to understand German responsibility in the Holocaust. It is a way of understanding how ordinary German people committed heinous acts as they subscribed to the ideology of Nazism.

[xvi] The authors David J. Roskies and Naomi Daimant divide Holocaust literature into three distinct periods after the war which they term -"communal memory", "provisional memory" and "authorized memory."Communal memory belongs to the community and can be bracketed under personal history and memory while provisional memory deals with the 1960's and 1970's literature which defined Holocaust literature as a genre. Authorized memory is related to contemporary times.

[xvii] Taken from Sandu Frunza's article 'The Memory of the Holocaust in Primo Levi's *If This is a Man* where he surmises that the Holocaust has been seen as a "continuous challenge" in its depiction.
Accessed through web
https://www.jstor.org/stable/42944684?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents
24th January 2018

[xviii] The SS or Schutzstaffel was another name for the rigid paramilitary organisation in Nazi Germany. It was also known as the protection squadron and was responsible for conducting military raids to capture prisoners. The SS was a much despised and feared organization.

[xix] The 'chimney' in *Survival in Auschwitz* is an important symbol for the genocide. Whenever other prisoners hear about the 'chimney' being prepared, they become certain that one of the prisoners is going to be burnt alive/killed.While the 'chimney' is a symbol for death, 'bread' is a symbol for life in the novel.

[xx] Naomi Siedman in her article 'Elie Wiesel and the Scandal of Jewish Rage' talks about the momentous role of silence on Elie Wiesel's novel, as it signifies "the absence of divine justice or compassion…becomes the agency of an immense, murderous power." Siedman also talks about the theological perspective raised by this novel as it turns the focus from the "immediate terror" to a "larger, cosmic drama."

[xxi] Levi's idea of history as complex is based upon the notion of the 'gray zone' which he outlined in his book *The Drowned and the Saved* (1986) in which examined the extermination of Jews by Nazis. Levi concurs that 'us' and 'them' are two distinct groups like 'murderers' and 'victims.' However, the 'gray zone' is the ambiguous space between the two, which includes the victims who often collaborate with the perpetrators. The gray zone is positioned topographically between evil and good and is a 'vast zone of gray consciences.' Levi first mentioned the 'gray consciences' in his story *Story of a Coin*, which he wrote for the Italian newspaper *La Stampa*.

[xxii] This definition of 'genre' has been taken from -
http://condor.depaul.edu/dsimpson/awtech/lexicon.html
Accessed on 27 November 2018

[xxiii] Carolyn Miller in her essay 'Genre: Permanence and Change' talks about the multi-dimensional nature of the current genre theory, building upon her previous idea of genre as a 'social construct." She view genre as a framework to explore multiple pedagogies and ideologies and says that it has "interest across traditions of rhetoric and many disciplines."
Thus, we can safely say that genre is not a limited approach; we can view Holocaust literature as a separate genre which weaves across different kinds of genre. For example, Ursula Hegi's *Stones from the River* is a text which not only talks about disability but also the Holocaust and combines the two themes into a larger running commentary on the idea of difference.

[xxiv] Roskies and Diamant are of the opinion that defining Holocaust literature in terms of genre is a "dry, academic exercise." Nevertheless, they view it as a separate body of work, as a separate genre and propose this functional definition of Holocaust literature. Regardless of the debate surrounding the representational aspect of the Holocaust or any trauma, it has been very well represented in all forms. Hence, a working definition of it is not only important, it also provides flexibility to the genre.

[xxv] Roskies and Diamant refer to the "alternative landscapes" of certain Holocaust novels which can be seen as narratives interspersed with fantasy or allegory. The use of an imaginary landscape in Ursula Hegi's novels can be seen as a symbolic act on part of the author. Is it an attempt to distance from the real horror of the genocide or a comment upon the fact that the Holocaust has shaped even our imagination?

[xxvi] Roskies sets the time limit for the "free zone" as 1938-45. He calls the naming of two wartime zones " a Holocaust specific map." The "Jew zone" on the other hand worked year after year trying to weave resistance in its works.

[xxvii] In his book *Jewish Responses to Persecution 1942-1943*, Kerenji makes a case for those Jews who did not live in the Jew zone, but in the free zone and their testimonies show us that their lived experience of the Holocaust was not so "free" either.

[xxviii] Jonathan Druker in his article 'Recouping the Roots and Branches of Holocaust Literature' reviews David. J. Roskies and Naomi Diamant's ambitious attempt to provide a comprehensive survey of Holocaust Literature. He calls the Jew zone a reminder of the persecution that occurred during the Holocaust and hence justifies the need to divide wartime writing into two separate zones. He says that the term is a reminder that he "desperate texts produced inside were fundamentally different from the literature of the "Free Zone."

https://networks.h-net.org/node/28655/reviews/31069/druker-roskies-and-diamant-holocaust-literature-history-and-guide
Accessed on 4th October, 2018.

[xxix] Maurice Halbwachs coined the term "collective memory" to look at memory as a means of reconstruction and reconfiguration of the past through a set of images in our minds. Halbwachs offered that human memory is "collective". Lewis A. Coser in his introduction to the book *On Collective Memory* writes that Halbwachs termed all memory collective and also "selective." By this he means that memory can be selectively different in different groups.

[xxx] Roskies and Diamant also conclude that communal memory can be divisive as well as different members of a group may have different memories of a discrete event.

[xxxi] *Tkhiyes-hameysim* or *Resurrection: The First Shoah Survivors* was started by Mordecai Strigler as a handwritten newspaper for fellow Auschwitz survivors. Roskies and Diamant also mention other periodicals and works like *Bamidbar (In the Wilderness),Baderekh* and *Vidergeburt (A New Life)* amongst others.

[xxxii] The "generation after" is a term that gained credence after Helen Epstein and Nadine Fresco introduced it in their respective texts, to examine the relationship between survivors and their children. In her books *Children of the Holocaust* and *Where She Came from:A Daughter's Search for her Mother's History,* Epstein talked about the transmitted trauma for the generation after the survivors of the Holocaust. Nadine Fresco in her text *Remembering the Unknown*, presented interviews of Jews who were born after the Holocaust and thus constituted the generation after.

[xxxiii] Provisional memory, unlike communal memory gives a voice to each personal horror faced by individuals. It provides more depth to the genre as a whole, as Roskies and Diamant contend, as they term it a "new artistic code."

[xxxiv] Roskies and Diamant discuss the "archaeology" of self and place when they refer to the concept of identity in texts dealing with provisional memory. They believe that the survivors who lived through to this phase became "sacred vessels" and were used to commemorate the resistance of Jews. By "vertiginous time", they refer to the amassed history of the Holocaust that has existed for over several years now, making it a confusing space to begin.

[xxxv] Taken from Ayla De Greve's essay 'Holocaust Representation in Third-Generation Literary Non-Fiction: Postmemory in Daniel Mendelshon's *The Lost: A Search for Six of Six* and Edmund De Waal's *The Hare With Amber Eyes: A Hidden Inheritance,* where she discusses Helene Epstein's idea of "phantom pain" and the idea of "transferred loss" which was introduced by Eva Hoffman. "Transferred loss" is the idea that trauma can be shared by subsequent generations without directly experiencing the loss or trauma themselves. As De Greve writes:

> The feeling of absence can be transferred into a feeling of loss. (5)

[xxxvi] The origin of the word 'ghetto' has been reflected upon a lot and consensus seems to say that the word originated in Venice, Italy where Jews were forced to live in sequestered surroundings. The Online Etymology Dictionary defines a ghetto as "the quarter in a city, chiefly in Italy, to which the Jews were restricted." The association of the word and its sinister implications came about when it was used in conjunction with Warsaw ghettos and the concentration camps.
This definition of a ghetto has been taken from the following article on the *National Public Radio.*
https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2014/04/27/306829915/segregated-from-its-history-how-ghetto-lost-its-meaning
Accessed 6th Octorber, 2018.
By ghettoization here, we simply mean a segregation and also an association with the inordinate crimes committed against Jews. In their book on the history of the Holocaust, Roskies and Diamant talk about the ghettos, the bunker, transit camps and concentration camps as the places where violence was inflicted as well as resistance orchestrated. In fact, there were many uprisings and revolts in the jewish ghettos during 1941-1943, as mentioned on Wikipedia.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ghetto_uprisings
Accessed on 6th October, 2018.

[xxxvii] Victoria Aarons, in her essay 'A Genre of Rupture:The Literary Language of the Holocaust, writes about the "subversive impulse" that is characteristic of Holocaust literature and hence terms it a

genre of 'rupture.' According to Aarons, this genre draws upon literary traditions to form a literary language on its own that is marked by "narrative disjunction."

[xxxviii] While talking about the trajectory of his research on the Holocaust, David J. Roskies said that it took him from "intense to attenuated group memory, from group memory divided along regional, ethnic, religious, and ideological lines to a zero-sum memory pool. I had moved from public remembering to public forgetting." Roskies contends in his work on the history of the Holocaust that it took a while for the history of this literature to take shape.
From
https://forward.com/culture/175389/david-roskies-and-naomi-diamant-guide-readers-thro/
Accessed 6th October, 2018.

[xxxix] Aarons writes that Holocaust literature has been influenced by traditions in Jewish expression, namely midrash and lamentation. Midrash is a part of the Hebrew Bible and in Holocaust literature, it serves as "openings for moments of continuity and amplification." (Aarons 2), while lamentation is also from the Judaic tradition. Using lamentation, texts serve to give an "elegaic response" to the ruination caused by the mass genocide. As Aarons points out, in the Judaic *Book of Lamentations*, the prophet's voice is that of the messenger and in this 'elegaic' style, he transfers memory through speech.

[xl] This definition has been taken from the Online Etymology Dictionary.
https://www.etymonline.com/word/survival
Accessed on 6th October, 2018.

[xli] Ayla De Greve in her essay 'Holocaust Representation in Third-Generation Literary Non-Fiction:Postmemory in Daniel Mendelsohn's *The Lost: A Search for Six of Six* and Edmund De Waal's *The Hare with Amber Eyes: A Hidden Inheritance'*, writes about the inspired creative output that comes from the second and third generations of Holocaust surviving families, as a search for their family's past and history, as well as a reconfiguration of familial trauma.

[xlii] Ayla De Greve writes about the issues of the 'mediating distance' faced by members of the second and third generation when they talk about the Holocaust. The act of documenting these stories stems from the fear of losing the first generation of survivors. The second and third generation are guided by the principle of preservation. De Greve terms the third-generation survivor stories as 'a story about telling a story about the Holocaust.' (13)

[xliii] In a poem, Borowski writes-

> neither poems nor prose
> just a length of rope
> just the wet earth --
> that's the way home.

Sourced from https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/476989-neither-poems-nor-prose-just-a-length-of-rope-just
Accessed on 6th October, 2018.

[xliv] 'Voices of the Holocaust' was also a special project undertaken by the British Library in which an attempt at documentation of the oral stories of survivors was done. The stories can be heard on this archive-
http://www.bl.uk/learning/histcitizen/voices/holocaust.html
Accessed on 6th October, 2018.
The transcripts from Sylvia Rothchild's can also be accessed as tapes stored in the William E. Wiener Oral History Library of the American Jewish Committee.

[xlv] In her introduction to the book, Ursula Hegi refers to the Holocaust as 'unspeakable' for German as she probes deep-seated unease about the Holocaust and German guilt.

[xlvi] Hegi interviews German descendant Johanna, who in her interview uses these words as she tries to form an understanding of her parents' denial of the Holocaust.

[xlvii] There have been numerous accounts and survivor stories written about the Holocaust. This list serves to bring forth some of the most compelling work on the Holocaust and can be accessed here-
https://fcit.usf.edu/holocaust/arts/litSurvi.htm
Accessed on 6th October, 2018.

[xlviii] Arlene Stein in her book *Reluctant Witnesses:Survivors, their Children and the Rise of Holocaust Consciousness (*2014) says that first generation survivors tended to see the telling of the story about their survival as a "private affair."

[xlix] Holocaust distortion is another name for blatant anti-semitism which works to discredit genuine survivor stories. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum lists Holocaust distortion and denial as forms of anti-Semitism which must be confronted and negated at all costs. This can be accessed from the USHMM website-
https://www.ushmm.org/confront-antisemitism/holocaust-denial-and-distortion
Accessed on 6th October, 2018.

Through her works, Ursula Hegi is advocating for more German participation in the rhetorical landscape of the Holocaust, in order to achieve closure for both Germans and Jews.

[l] Taken from Ayla De Greve's essay, where she discusses Dominick LaCapra's idea of 'empathetic unsettlement.' Empathetic unsettlement means that "the hearer identifies with the victim enough to reach an affective response but at the same time realises that these events happened to the speaker and not to oneself." (De Greve 3)
This term can be used for any trauma-related experience where the listener may show empathy but is not able to fully gauge the complexities of the event. This term can even be used in disability related studies. In Ursula Hegi's *Stones from the River* (1994), Trudi Montag's short, stunted growth is seen as an 'affliction' by the townspeople and even the ones who sympathise often find themselves at a distance of communication from her.

[li] This term, as we discussed earlier, is taken from Helene Epstein's work, in which she designated the survivors of the Holocaust as 'ghosts' and discussed about the 'phantom pain' felt by the children of the Holocaust; the children of these survivors.

[lii] Robert S. Leventhal in his review of George Steiner's *Language and Silence: Essays on Language, Literature, and the Inhuman* writes about the act of language; wherein language becomes an act in itself. Language assumes a significant role when we speak about a history of trauma and persecution.

[liii] According to George Steiner, the "postwar history of the German language has been one of dissimulation and deliberate forgetting." While language is imbued with inadequacy in this context, there is also an ominous silence which is equally a part of the rhetorics of Holocaust literature. Ursula Hegi, in her work, uses literature to talk about the past from the German viewpoint. Thus, we must ask the question whether she is trying to undo the damage from the years of 'dissimulation' as Steiner puts it? Is she re-negotiating German language in this attempt? Is this attempt a means to take responsibility for the past and to 'cleanse' it of the 'falsehoods it has been injected with?' (Steiner 109)

[liv] In her article 'Trauma, Recognition and the place of Language', Juliet Mitchell terms trauma as the great 'equalizer'(121) which needs various mechanisms to cope with. Our ordinary mechanisms of coping with loss and grief fall flat in the face of trauma, which needs a new language in fact, a whole new semantics to understand it and negotiate its tricky terrain. Thus, ordinary language is often infused with allegory, fantasy, magic realism in the case of Holocaust literature in order to find an appropriate response. In such cases, language often serves as a mode of inquiry.

[lv] Kathryn Harrison in her review of *What's Left Unsaid* by Annie Rogers, in the *New York Times* talks about the contention that Lacan posited that "the unconscious is structured like a language." In *Four Fundamentals of Psychoanalysis*, Lacan talks about the void engendered by traumatic events. Ali Yansori in his work 'The concept of Trauma in Lacanian Pyschoanalysis' writes that trauma often serves as a "*point de caption*" or a word in everyday use whose meaning is not fixed. However, it evokes certain feelings and creates a certain 'illusion.'
http://psychoanalyzadnes.cz/2018/02/19/the-concept-of-trauma-in-lacanian-psychoanalysis/
Accessed on 16th October, 2018.

[lvi] Accessed from Leslie Chapman's article called 'Trauma and the Real'
https://therapeia.org.uk/ttr/2016/10/26/trauma-and-the-real/
Accessed on 16th October, 2018.

[lvii] If Lacan's 'real' is an immutable truth, how do we read trauma as a manifestation of it? Can trauma be equated with the experience of the "real" or not even be assimilated in analysis, as Lacan says? As we discussed earlier, if language and the unconscious are structured similarly, what position does language hold in this analytic experience? Can we use the concept of 'deferred action' to talk about delayed responses to trauma? If so, language becomes a conduit through which a trauma survivor can act about repressed memories. However, it is plagued by gaps, silences as what is assigned to the unconscious once gets riddled with holes in memory.

[lviii] In her book *Magic Realism in Holocaust Literature: Troping the Traumatic Real,* Jenni Adams examines supernatural and fantasy elements in Holocaust literature. Adams examines how elements of fantasy co-exist with traumatic realism as a mechanism of coping.In an essay in the book, Maria Takolander shifts the 'phallocentric' view of magic realist fiction to include works by women authors as well.

[lix] Michael Rothberg's concept of 'traumatic realism' forms a framework for Holocaust representation in the face of the ethical dilemmas of representing trauma. Primo Levi, as we earlier discussed, had dubbed the Holocaust as a death of humanity and questioned the very existence of God. In this context, we can say that the representation of the Holocaust is riddled with ethical strife. In his book *Traumatic Realism: The Demands of Holocaust Representation,* Rothberg says that an anti-realist outlook only contorts the demands of representation. Hence traumatic realism is a realism that is not only tinged by, but marked and defined by trauma. Rothberg talks about the fallacy of language when he says that:

Coherence, however, is not always so easily obtained. When violence takes extreme forms, forms of knowledge are also implicated. (107)

[lx] In the paper 'Words of Fear, Fear of Words: Language Memories of Holocaust Survivors,' Karin Doerr writes that certain words used in Holocaust literature and reportage of the Holocaust act as triggers for survivors as they evoke fearful memories for them.

[lxi]*Symbolism: An International Annual of Critical Aesthetics* is an important journal which looks at magic realism and fantasy. The December 2013 issue specifically looked at Jewish magic realism, an 'engagement' which deals with issues of identity, oppression and persecution.' This particular issue examines works by Salman Rushdie, Meir Shalev, Doron Rabinovici, Benjamin Stein and Dara Horn amongst others. While questioning whether Holocaust novels can even be seen as magic realist, this issue also talks about liminal spaces in the act of representation.

[lxii] Taken from the review of David Grossman's work in the Chicago Tribune.
https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-1989-04-02-8903310521-story.html
Accessed on 18th October, 2018.

[lxiii] Miryam Sivan in her article 'Negotiating the Silence: Sexual Violence in Israeli Holocaust Fiction' talks about rape as the "litmus test" for a community's vulnerability and says that texts which depict intense violence often work to break the barriers that surround conversation around rape.
https://shiloh-project.group.shef.ac.uk/negotiating-the-silence-sexual-violence-in-israeli-holocaust-fiction/
Accessed 18th October, 2018.

[lxiv] The word 'Aporia' was brought into prominence in the writings of Jacques Derrida who referred to it as the "blind spots of any metaphysical arguments."
https://www.litencyc.com/php/stopics.php?rec=true&UID=1578
Accessed on 18th October, 2018.

[lxv] 'Absent memory' and 'hole of memory' are terms brought into use in the domain of Holocaust study by Nadine Fresco. This analysis is taken from Ayla De Greve's essay, from which I have drawn from earlier as well. De Greve in her essay talks about how "amnesia takes the place of memory." (5)

[lxvi] Taken from Ruth Franklin's book *A Thousand Darknesses: Lies and Truth in Holocaust Fiction* (2011) where she discusses Elie Wiesel and Primo Levi's work.

[lxvii] This definition has been taken from the Oxford English Dictionary. However, Cathy Caruth says that there is no standard definition of trauma that critics agree on alike. For the purpose of her book, she, however, uses Charles Figley's definition of trauma from the book *Trauma and its Wake.* Trauma thus is defined as "an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic experiences." (Caruth 181)

[lxviii] In writing about a post-war world, Maurice Blanchot talks of a "wound culture" when we write about disasters in literature. Blanchot also writes about the metaphorical "death" of the writer when writing about disasters or trauma. Blanchot terms all culture political and sees it rife with traumas and wounds. The idea of trauma as an 'open wound' has become established in post-war narratives. See Maurice Blanchot's *The Writing of the Disaster*, trans. Ann Smock 1980 for more information.
[lxix] The notion of a perfect 'Aryan' family was central to Hitler's idea of racial 'cleansing.' Women were subjected to humiliation and were forced to follow Nazi doctrines such as the *Lebensborn*, which was essentially a control of female reproduction rights. Jewish women faced a lot of sexual assault in the concentration camps, as works by Ka-Tzetnik depict. For more on the subject of Fascism and Gender, see *Gender and Power in the Third Reich: Female Denouncers and the Gestapo* (1933-1945),by Vandana Joshi and *Women in the Third Reich* by Matthew Stibbe.
[lxx] Mardorossian takes the idea of '*ressentiment*' from Nietzsche's *States of Injury* (1967). She writes in her essay:

> And every sufferer seeks a cause for his suffering, a guilty agent who is susceptible to suffering…and a desire to deaden pain. (as qtd 761)

[lxxi] The Ovitz family was a family of dwarves whose trials and tribulations during the Holocaust have been widely reported. The Ovitz family was experimented upon by Joseph Mengele of the Holocaust regime, who ran tests upon them as part of the dehumanizing experience they faced. Yehuda Koren and Eilat Negev have worked on the history of the Ovitz dwarves during the Holocaust in their book *Giants: The Seven Dwarves of Auschwitz* (2013). Koren and Negev mention how the ritual killing of people with deformities was done under the Aktion T-4 Euthanasia programme, under which "the Germans set out to kill people who were physically and mentally disabled." (n.p.) The case of Alexander Katan also springs to mind, as he was killed by the Nazis due to his physical deformity.
[lxxii] The Rhine River Three Jazz Band is a musical band formed by Oskar Matzerath in the book *The Tin Drum*. Edward Diller equated Gunter Grass' novel to"a mythic journey" in which the River Rhine features as a powerful, recurrent motif. (n.p.) The River Rhine can thus be seen in comparison to Hegi's River Rhein. The lives of everyone living in Burdorf are moulded by the impetus of the river and it forms the site of many transgressions as well as victories.
[lxxiii] Refer to *Children of Nazis: The Sons and Daughters of Himmler, Goring, Hoss, Mengele* by Tania Crasnianskifor a detailed examination of the Nazi father figure.
[lxxiv] *Maus*, which has assumed the status of a cultural symbol, is a graphic novel by Art Spiegelman. It was serialised over a long period, from 1980 to 1991. *Maus* represents Jews as mice, something that Speigelman drew from Nazi policies. The Nazis treated Jews as unwanted creatures and did not even offer them human dignity, which is why Spiegelman has represented Jews as mice in the work.

[lxxvi] Refer to John Locke's 1690 essay 'An Essay Concerning Human Understanding' where he elucidates upon how memory is linked to personal identity.
[lxxvii] For more information on feminist voices in Holocaust fiction, one can refer to *Women in the Holocaust: A Feminist History* by Zoe Waxman, *The Female Face of God in Auschwitz: A Jewish Feminist Theology of the Holocaust* by Melissa Raphael or *Women's Holocaust Writing: Memory and Imagination* by S. Lilian Kremer.
[lxxviii] The Nazi policies towards Jewish women were dehumanising to say the least, as several documented archived material in Jewish centres of learning report. Concentration camps became spaces of abject torture for women, including forced labour and rape. *Sexual Violence against Jewish Women during the Holocaust (HBI Series on Jewish Women),*edited by Sonja M. Hedgepeth and Rochelle G. Saidel, is a book which uses testimony and other available material to talk about the assault on Jewish women's bodies during the Holocaust.

[lxxviii]Sourced from National Centre for PTSD.
https://www.ptsd.va.gov/understand/common/common_women.asp
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