

Under Siege: A Mother–Daughter Relationship Survives the Holocaust

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In this article, I look at a mother–daughter relationship under the traumatic circumstances of the Holocaust. I present two vignettes from the video testimony of a mother and daughter who survived the camps together and reflect on certain dynamic aspects of their dyadic relationship in the context of starvation and of witnessing infanticide. I reconstruct the perspective of the adolescent daughter and explore connections between developmental issues of female adolescence and her real-life experience as a camp inmate. Psychoanalytic interpretation is balanced with historical background information to show the importance of the dyadic space of the mother–daughter relationship for the (emotional) survival of both women and to acknowledge the limitedness of the protection the dyadic shell of their relationship could provide in the face of external trauma. During the testimony, these limits are revealed in moments of disintegration of an otherwise highly elaborate and contained mother–daughter narrative and through empathic absences of both survivors from each other.

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WHEN PSYCHOANALYTIC LITERATURE EXAMINES MOTHER–daughter relationships in the context of the Holocaust, usually only the generation of the mothers survived the genocide (Auerhahn and Prelinger, 1983; Adelman, 1995; Kogan, 1995). Thus, the focus is frequently on the intergenerational transmission of trauma (e.g., Gampel, 1982; Herzog, 1982) or on a “genealogy of identifications” (Faimberg, 1988). Often, the second generation is considered to have emerged strongly affected by the traumatization of their parents without having ever shared their immediate experience. Pines (1986) described how female survivors of the Holocaust relive their own experience of loss in the relationship with their children. Kaplan (2000) showed how the ability of child survivors of the Holocaust to rear children is affected by their own traumatic childhood experience.

This article, however, is about a mother and a daughter who both survived the Holocaust and shared the experience of massive persecution—thus shifting the focus from the question of how the mother’s experience is reenacted in relationship to or by her daughter to the question how the relationship between mother and daughter was affected by the Holocaust and to what extent this relationship could help to mediate the impact of the actual experience. This different perspective is situated outside the analytic setting, for the material presented here did not emerge in a therapeutic context, and neither woman was an analytic patient. Rather, the vignettes I present are excerpts from the video testimony of Rosalie W and Jolly Z (HVT-34).¹ Unfortunately, I can offer but glimpses of their complex joint narrative; I do not place their testimony in its larger historical context, and I do not dwell on the genre of video testimony with special attention to memory and questions of representation of horror and trauma.² Although a short article

¹The video testimonies I refer to in this article are from the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut. This article is part of a larger study on mother–daughter relationships during the Holocaust based on video interviews from the Yale archive. The testimonies cited here are T-34 (Rosalie W and Jolly Z, 1979) and T-220 and T-972 (both Jolly Z, 1983, 1988). The text refers to these tapes as Holocaust Video Testimonies (HVTs).

²For a short summary of HVT-34, see *Guide to Yale University Library Holocaust Video Testimonies, 2nd ed.*, ed. Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, New Haven, CT: Yale University Library, 1994, p. 10. For overarching studies on Holocaust video testimonies, see Langer (1991), Felman and Laub (1992), and, most recently, Kraft (2002).

can hardly be expected to do justice to the complexity of Rosalie's and Jolly's stories of survival, from the excerpts presented here I glean a basic understanding of the dynamics of the mother–daughter bond and of its importance to their survival on two levels. First, as captured by the camera, there is the bond that weaves through the evolving narrative of their testimony. (At the time of the testimony, Rosalie was in her 70s, Jolly in her 50s.) This bond is not understood here as a product of the Holocaust; it is seen in its continued holding function, which allows for an elaborate and detailed narrative to emerge. Second, as remembered by Rosalie and Jolly, there is the mother–daughter bond that existed during the Holocaust. This bond is understood here as a connection maintained *despite* the Holocaust, not as a posthumous creation—that is, not as a construction of meaning through a deferred act of symbolization, as described by Grubrich-Simitis (1984) for the children of survivors.

Mothers and Daughters in the Holocaust

In 1944, with their civil lives as Hungarian citizens dismantled, Rosalie and Jolly (then 40 and 17 years old) were thrust back into the structures of a dyadic relationship inundated by the alienating threats of their persecution and imprisonment. Their relationship became the eye of the hurricane—a shell protecting their emotional inner space, under siege by traumatic reality. No doubt it was a brittle protection, yet it was their only refuge from the assaults of their persecutors. When I refer to the dyad here, it is thus without any implication of regression into early infant stages when the relationship with mother functioned as an emotional incubator for the evolving sense of self of her child. Despite a phenomenologic similarity regarding the exclusivity and hermetic state of their relationship, Jolly and Rosalie's dyad encapsulates what is left of their pre-Holocaust identities and is refuge from a life-threatening external world in which they have only each other. The life-sustaining quality of the dyad thus shifted from allowing for emotional growth and from facilitating life in the external world to maintaining and protecting the results of this process when life in the external world becomes impossible.

The importance of close relationships with other inmates for survival, which has been emphasized by Holocaust survivors (Delbo,

1968), has been described by Holocaust scholars as the phenomenon of having “camp cousins.” The relationship between two inmates has its structural basis in the mother–infant dyad in that it stabilizes one person’s ability to relate to herself or himself in the presence of the other (Laub and Auerhahn, 1989). Even empirical research with little interest in psychodynamics has confirmed the importance of a prisoner’s ability to relate to other inmates for adapting to camp life and thus for surviving; it has also shown that this ability hinges on the person’s relationships during pre-Holocaust family life (Matussek, 1971). In Rosalie and Jolly’s case, however, this emotionally stabilizing camp relationship did not bind two strangers sharing the same fate but continued the pair’s previous mother–daughter relationship with its potential for conflict and its task of meeting the developmental needs of an adolescent girl (Keilson, 1979; Dalsimer, 1986; Kaplan, 2002).³

The first vignette presented here allows us to (re)construct Jolly’s perspective as an adolescent daughter on a crucial moment of sharing with her mother, with the help of additional material from two subsequent video testimonies (HVT-220, HVT-972), which Jolly gave without her mother. Unfortunately, we cannot know what variations of the mother’s story could have evolved in the absence of her daughter, as there is only one interview of Rosalie. The second vignette makes the narrative dynamics of the joint mother–daughter testimony transparent as a resonance of the past and, at the same time, as the encapsulation of the undoing of their relationship because of trauma and repression.

*A Bowl of Soup, Bergen-Belsen
Concentration Camp, April 1945*

Shortly before the liberation of Bergen-Belsen on April 15, 1945, both Rosalie and Jolly expected to die. Neither shared her premonition with

³Whereas Dalsimer (1986) extracted the developmental needs of an adolescent girl from *The Diary of Anne Frank* and found evidence that such needs are not stifled by the historical circumstances under which the diary was written, Keilson (1979) showed the impact of separation from and loss of mother during the Holocaust on children of six age groups reflecting different developmental stages (for 13- to 18-year-olds, see pp. 244–268). For the age-distorting effects of Holocaust experience on child survivors, see Kaplan’s (2002) study on video testimonies.

the other. Jolly volunteered for work to earn a precious extra food ration. For a day of digging pits to bury some of the thousands of inmates who had died of malnutrition or disease, she “earned” a bowl of soup, which she brought back for her mother. In HVT-34, Jolly Z related:

And somehow I found the barrack where she was waiting for me. [Putting her arm around Rosalie] And when I came in, I said, “Look, mother, I have a bowl of soup.” And she said, “I don’t want any. You eat it.” I said, “I had already a bowl.” She says, “No, I want you to survive. You are young. I had my life already.” And I said, “Please, no, you have to survive. Father will be waiting, my brother will be waiting. We both have to survive.” So we decided to share it. My mother took a spoon, but the spoon was empty. She hardly took anything. And when I took a spoon, it was also empty, because I didn’t want to take much that she should have. So we realized that we’re not getting anywhere, and we decided to feed each other. So she was feeding me, and I was feeding her. And that bowl of soup most likely really saved us, because in a day or two we were liberated.

Before we turn to the scene described here, we have to understand that death looms large in it. Mother and daughter felt that their physical endurance was exhausted. But death was not only creeping up as fear inside them—it was closing in on them from outside as well. During the last weeks of the war, the Bergen-Belsen camp was overflowing with prisoners brought there from other camps, which had been cleared before the approaching Allied forces would come across them.⁴ The sparse infrastructure of the camp had collapsed, and food and water were no longer being distributed to the inmates. Hygienic conditions were catastrophic. Prisoners died faster than it was possible to bury them. Dead bodies were scattered everywhere. Therefore, life in Bergen-Belsen closely resembled death. With the distinction between life and death blurred, experience reached a psychotic level at which one could no longer be sure that one was alive. Even the future Jolly painted for Rosalie was one in which life and death were in

⁴For a history of the Bergen-Belsen camp, see Kolb (1988). For descriptions of the conditions after liberation, see the medical reports by British physicians Collis (1945) and Mollison (1946).

suspension. The father/husband had been gassed on the family's arrival in Auschwitz about 10 months earlier—a loss so painful to both mother and daughter that their narrative does not reveal when they could eventually acknowledge that they would never see him again. The fate of the brother/son remained unknown to both women until 1946, when they located him in Palestine. They had not known whether he was alive or dead since he fled from his hometown in 1938. The future Jolly had in mind remained undefined: It was perfectly open whether it would be with the dead or with the living.

In this context, the importance of the survival of another can be understood as a mere affirmation that life is still real and does exist after all. Through Rosalie, Jolly was trying to keep life alive—not her mother, but a living person whose real life would withstand the realness of death. The external reality of the Holocaust shaped the situation between mother and daughter with such brutal decisiveness that it seems far-fetched for the purpose of my interpretation to introduce intrapsychic motivations to explain Jolly's attempt to feed Rosalie within the framework of the regular interpersonal dynamics of a mother–daughter relationship. Bergen-Belsen cannot be considered an average expected normal environment for it does not constitute a dependable external reality that helps to maintain the internal world of the people living in it. It seems to me that the struggle for survival on an emotional level entails the struggle to maintain one's internal space. For the purpose of this article, I limit myself to describing inner reality only when the testimony itself provides evidence of it.⁵

Jolly and Rosalie, as depicted by the daughter, both take the position of the self-sacrificing mother. It is the reciprocity of their positions that preserves the sustaining quality of their maternal embrace. In their different ways, Rosalie and Jolly are ready to give in to their own dying for the sake of the other's survival, and yet neither woman can accept the self-sacrifice of the other: "We both have to survive" (HVT-34). In a later interview, which Jolly gave without Rosalie (HVT-220), she described her exchange with her mother in Bergen-Belsen explicitly as a

⁵I lack the space to reflect extensively on the interplay of external and internal realities and on the degree to which the external reality of the Holocaust imposes shifts and changes in the dynamics of this interplay. For a fine discussion of this matter, albeit in the context of the analytic setting, see Oliner (1996).

fight. Their disagreement is, however, an inversion of the typical fight between starving inmates over an extra ration. When Rosalie and Jolly fight over a bowl of soup, neither fights for herself. In fact, Jolly described how her coworkers that day were so desperate for their share of the soup that they knocked over the kettle, in which it had been delivered. Between Jolly and Rosalie, the question “Who eats the soup?” is answered with “you” rather than “I.”

In Jolly, the expectation of her end is coupled with a determination to save her mother’s life. Care for the other is not expressed as passive renunciation of one’s own best interest but by action. Jolly goes out to “earn” a bowl of soup for Rosalie; in other words, she mothers her mother. But no simple role-reversal takes place: The daughter may well become the breadwinner, but the mother is still strong enough not to regress to the needy position of child. The reciprocity of the parallel surrender to death and hope for life in both women helps them to strengthen their bond and to eliminate the mutual exclusivity of their survival: “We both have to survive” (HVT-34). Thus, a generous economy of mutual sharing, transcending the original asymmetry of the early mother–child relationship, is established between two women.

But this newly established symmetry between mother and daughter is not yet good enough. A simple division into equal halves does not yet allow for the eating of the soup. The spoons, which dip into the soup, remain empty, and the bowl remains full. Only when Rosalie and Jolly feed each other can the precious soup be consumed. Mother and daughter remain alive by keeping each other alive through an act of mutual caregiving. The spoon that goes to the other’s lips says, “I care for you.” The bowl of soup is not a third, which triggers competition; rather than creating a divide, it evokes an act of mutual mothering. Both Rosalie and Jolly are provider and receiver, mother and daughter, to each other at the same time.

In her second interview, Jolly pointed out that it was Rosalie who came up first with the idea to share the soup and then with the idea to feed each other. It seems that the mutual constellation around the soup bowl did not evolve quite as smoothly as the joint testimony would have it but was created by a mother who managed to feed her child by giving in to her adolescent daughter’s wish to save her mother’s life. This thought casts Rosalie not only as the creator of the situation but also as the ever so powerful mother who contains a

conflict with her daughter by letting her child have her way—without resigning her own role as her daughter’s caregiver. At its core, Rosalie’s initial refusal to eat the soup must be understood as a refusal to eat without her daughter, even though Rosalie’s response seems in perfect symmetry with her daughter’s self-denial in their joint testimony.

It is interesting that the harmony of a merged *we*, which Jolly describes in her mother’s presence and which Rosalie does not contradict at any point, gives way to a more powerful depiction of mother only in Rosalie’s absence. Only when Jolly is apart from her mother, it seems, can she abandon the *we* of their shared narrative and acknowledge the differences between Rosalie and herself (which allowed for more independence and antagonism). This impression is further confirmed in the third existing interview, in which Jolly reveals what she called a “terrible thing” (HVT-972). She remembers that the sharing of the soup, which in retrospect she characterizes as a “beautiful moment,” was charged with conflict for her when it happened: “Although I was sharing [the soup] with my mother, there was a terrible guilt not to share it with the rest [of the inmates].” Jolly considered the sharing her mother had suggested as “limited.” She was painfully aware that the women around them were also starving. While Jolly “wanted to share beyond” her mother, Rosalie “would want me to share with her.” In other words, Jolly was critical of her mother’s suggestion, though there was no way to reject it: “I tried to almost shift my guilt on [my mother]. . . . If I would suggest that we should share this soup with more than the two of us, she would be mad at me. This is a conflict we never overcame” (HVT-972). Jolly felt limited by the boundary of the dyadic structure in which her mother operated and at the same time guilty of her desire for the world beyond her mother. A sense of betrayal tainted the idea to share the soup with the other women. As just as Jolly’s idea to split one bowl of soup among all the women may have been, it was also unrealistic: One spoon of soup cannot save anybody’s life. The limited economy Rosalie suggested was better adapted to the reality of the camp and could provide for more than one. Only, Jolly was not concerned with the amount of soup as much as she was troubled by the amount of need around her. Jolly’s altruism was certainly an expression of her youthful idealism, but, besides that, it reached out to the world beyond her

mother. Her altruism was, in other words, her wish to be independent. The daughter's wish for independence from her mother was transformed not only into guilt feelings but also into the image of a retaliating mother punishing her daughter's betrayal.

This is not to say that the underlying polarity or conflict between Jolly and Rosalie contradicts or devalues what I have said about the version of the soup story shared by mother and daughter. Quite the contrary. Their joint narrative does not simply gloss over the darker aspects of their relationship but sublimates the underlying feelings of guilt, rage, and limitation and bridges the disagreement between mother and daughter. Jolly tells the soup story at the very end of the interview, and her mother listens full of delight. The soup could not overcome their conflict but—much more important for their survival—conflict could not prevent them from sharing the soup. Ultimately, Jolly is able to maintain a close bond with her mother while acknowledging their differences—only not in her mother's presence. Like every woman, she walks the tightrope between her mother and herself. She has to negotiate her wish for closeness with her mother, which forces her to avoid open disagreement, with her desire to “share beyond mother,” which she is able to express when alone. Her conflict with Rosalie, as Jolly describes it, sounds typical: Rosalie was the “most giving, dedicated, possessive mother—but that's where it ends. But I always had a need to go beyond that. This is a conflict that was never resolved” (HVT-972). It seems to be the nature of this mother–daughter conflict that it can never be resolved but has to be negotiated continually—that is, it is part of the ambivalence that underlies any mother–daughter relationship. The decisive difference between the way their conflict manifests in their testimony and the way Jolly remembers the conflict is that it has loosened its grip on Jolly in later years. The core of their conflict, however, has to remain disguised even in retrospect: The desire to go beyond mother must be understood not only as Jolly's realization that there is a world outside her relationship with Rosalie but also as her longing for a world without mother (a world of her own object choice). Thus, this desire is ultimately a matricidal wish that can be conscious in the daughter's mind only as guilt or (projected) maternal rage.

It is astonishing that Jolly could come so close to her matricidal wish despite the Holocaust. The harsh outer reality of her persecution

as a Jew created such horrible absences and such abysmal neediness that we have to understand the absolute imperative of maintaining a good and reliable relationship with mother and of keeping her alive as a good object that would allow for the emotional survival of Jolly's inner world. Jolly's wish to reach out for the world beyond Rosalie, and the conflict this wish causes her, are therefore testimony to the integrity of her emotional space and psychic reality *despite* the Holocaust. Hers is an exceptional case in which an inner enclave of psychic reality drifts well protected and intact through the emotional chaos and traumatic fragmentation of her Holocaust experience.

Rosalie and Jolly's bonding inadvertently defeated a central Holocaust scheme—an economy of starvation in which camp inmates struggling for survival are set up against one another as competitors for scarce resources. This mother and daughter were able to adopt a different scheme—an economy based on caregiving (i.e., mothering) as a mutual act. In this respect, their soup sharing was a highly ethical accomplishment, a moral victory. Thus, the soup not only nurtured them physically, and emotionally (through the reassuring act of feeding), but as a memory brings closure to an otherwise upsetting and overwhelming narrative. As a narrator, Jolly both merges with her mother (into a *we* who “decided to share” and “feed each other”) and reaches out beyond her mother (to share the soup of her memory generously with her interviewers and other listeners). Thus the bowl of soup is transformed into a deeply reassuring and comforting gift to all.

*“Little Moses” and Walter Kümmel, Eidelstedt
Concentration Camp,⁶ Winter 1944–1945*

This vignette puts the story from Bergen-Belsen into perspective, as this time the impact of the external world on the relationship between Rosalie and Jolly was extremely forceful. Both mother (R) and

⁶Eidelstedt, a satellite of the Neuengamme concentration camp, was situated within city limits. It was used as a concentration camp for approximately 500 women from October 1944 to April 1945.

daughter (J) give testimony (HVT-34) regarding their witnessing of the murder of a newborn in the Eidelstedt concentration camp in Hamburg:

J: There is another incident in speaking about Hamburg. When we got in the ghetto, some women were pregnant without realizing it. Young women. There was a beautiful woman among us, and she was pregnant.

R: I know.

J: By the time we arrived in Hamburg, she was already in her fourth, fifth, sixth month, and so on. And believe it or not, she was the hardest working person even with her pregnancy. Maybe this life within her gave her this courage to go on and wanting to give birth to her child. And the S.S. let her stay with us because he saw she's a good worker. So there was no reason to do something. And when the day of delivery was approaching, he actually made us prepare a little box for the baby. And my mother worked in the kitchen. He asked her to prepare hot water. There was a prisoner doctor woman who assisted with the birth, and I stayed in the next room. I was afraid to see a delivery. I was young. I never saw a delivery. And suddenly I heard the baby cry. And the S.S. brought out the baby. And there was a sink. [She starts to cry] And I stood there with the little box hoping he'd put the baby in. He took the baby under the sink faucet and drowned it.

R: Yeah.

J: And he said, "Here you go, little Moses." And he drowned the little baby there.

R: Yeah. The head. In the hot water.

J: And the woman went [back] to work in two days.

R: And the baby . . . I maked hot water. I was sure they have to clean the baby.

J: "Little Moses."

R: And he tooked the baby down with the head in the hot water.

J: He said, "Here you go, little Moses, down the river." Something like this. In German. And he drowned the little baby.

R: Yeah. Yeah. This was [Walter] Kümmel.

J: Yah. . . . She came in the ghetto pregnant. . . . Or she might have even gotten pregnant in the ghetto. Now the Ghetto was in

May. So if you figure out nine months—that takes us to what? December? Or January?

At first, Jolly takes the lead as narrator—a role she fulfills over extended sequences of their testimony. Up to the moment when Jolly can no longer fight back her tears and has to struggle to keep her voice firm enough to speak, Rosalie authenticates her daughter's narrative predominantly through her physical presence as listener to Jolly. Rosalie signals that she remembers what her daughter is relating. Her "I know" endorses the shared memory of the murder of the newborn. This narrative structure changes abruptly when Jolly arrives at the actual drowning of the baby.

The *we* of their story is suspended, there is a narrative splitting between mother and daughter, their voices detach from each other and operate on separate planes. Jolly can no longer speak for herself *and* her mother. In fact, she cannot even speak for herself but remains present only as an observing ego. Her narrative stalls—the drowning of the baby has to occur three times, and with each repetition the words of the S.S. man are pieced together bit by bit. They ring in her mind and encapsulate the scene of the crime while screening off Jolly's own painful presence at the drowning. The "I" of the narrator is sucked up by the immediacy of her memory, only implicitly present as the narrating voice. Parallel with her daughter's undoing as their narrator, Rosalie more and more becomes present, in her own voice. However, this is not a mothering intervention, for mother is no longer backing Jolly's story. Rather than trying to stand in for her daughter and maintain the narrative flow of their testimony, Rosalie contradicts Jolly with what she has to contribute: Jolly states that Kümmel opened a faucet to drown the baby, but Rosalie relates that the S.S. man killed the newborn with hot water prepared before the delivery.

What is to be made of this contradiction? One's first impulse is, of course, to wonder which version of the story is more likely. One might then look for explanations for the existence of the alternative, possibly distorted version. It seems to me that Rosalie's version comes closer to what really happened for the simple reason that her testimony is too self-incriminating to be invented. Therefore, I consider Jolly's version to be a modification. But, before I can jump to such a conclusion or elaborate on how the daughter's perspective relates to her mother's story, I have to introduce information regarding the

actual event, for the story behind the contradiction is much more complex: In 1982, Kümmel was indicted for the murder of *two* babies in Eidelstedt. At the time of his trial, one of the two women whose newborns he had murdered was still alive, and she testified against the former camp commander.⁷ Other witnesses described how Kümmel had drowned the baby *under running water* (Hütgens, 1983). This glimpse into the historical background allows us to assess the contradiction between Rosalie and Jolly in a different manner: Mother and daughter only seem to refer to the same murder when their testimony indeed merges two separate crimes into one, which neither of the two survivors seems to acknowledge. Before examining this blind spot further, I try to understand the interplay of merging and separation that occurred between mother and daughter and in their testimony with respect to the drowning of the baby.

Obviously, both Rosalie and Jolly were surprised when Kümmel drowned the baby. Jolly had prepared a box and expected it would be the baby's bed. Rosalie had heated water and expected it would be used for the newborn's first bath. They seemed to expect that the baby would be presented to its mother after it was cleaned. Generally speaking, the pregnancy seemed to give rise to all kinds of expectations—in contradiction to the reality of the camp. Jolly praised the expecting mother with glowing eyes for her beauty and her spite. Even if I am reluctant to go along with the rather heroic depiction of the pregnant woman—as I cannot help imagine how desperate her struggle must have been to prove to the guards that she was “functional” as a slave laborer despite her pregnancy—the idealization of her and the life within her seems to speak to Jolly's need to hope for a future life even while her expectation of her own death in the camp was imminent on a day-to-day basis. It is difficult to imagine what it must have meant to the camp inmates to witness the woman's evolving pregnancy—to follow the process of (pro)creation and (re)productivity. A flicker of such meaning showed in Jolly's using the pregnancy as a calendar, by which she could measure time and specify an approximate date of birth within this frame. The pregnancy had the potential to introduce structure, to suggest an outcome, to restore meaning to a camp routine that had otherwise radically

⁷The other woman was killed in an accident in March 1945 (Fried, 1996, pp. 132–141).

erased distinctions (and therefore orientation) and imposed hollow repetitiveness evolving around endless chores. How forcefully the camp reality had eradicated the meaning of the pregnancy is encapsulated in Jolly's sentence: "The woman went [back] to work in two days." After two days, the camp routine not only had swallowed the murder of the newborn and weeks of expectation and hope but had also been reinstated as if nothing had happened.

Amid the disturbing reality of the camp, the pregnancy created a pocket of normal life. It seems that, in the minds of Rosalie and Jolly, the S.S. man Kümmel partook of such normality, at least to the extent that his involvement in the preparations for the delivery had *not* been understood as indicating that the baby was doomed. Of course, this could have been true only of the first murder. Both Rosalie and Jolly could have trusted Kümmel only once: Had they been present at both crimes, they would have *understood* what was going to happen *before* the second murder took place. Mother and daughter did not even have to be present at the second crime to know about it. They could have learned about it from other inmates. It is even possible that the other murder happened before the drowning they witnessed and that they found out about it only later. Ultimately, it is impossible to determine the chronology of the two murders, but I argue that the first murder Rosalie and Jolly witnessed was the one committed with hot water and that this method of drowning was replaced in Jolly's subsequent narrative with the method used by Kümmel in his other crime. It is the murder that came first *for them* that took them by surprise, made an impact, and carried the emotional weight. Jolly's insertion of the other crime causes the narrative splitting between her and her mother.

The murder of the newborn, which Rosalie and Jolly witnessed, not only destroyed their expectations and killed what they were hoping for but also revealed the mercilessness and brutality of the man who for moments had been cast, in the favorable light of their expectations, as a fatherly figure. Loss and sadness were overcast with terror and shock: Kümmel's crime opened before their eyes the horrible scene of their own vulnerability and doom. But whereas Jolly watched from the wings as she held the box prepared for the baby, Rosalie played a much more active role. From the point of view of the daughter, Rosalie was part of the scene. I suggest that this connection between mother and murder deepened the emotional impact of the

event on Jolly. But, before I delve into the chaos of a traumatic reality—which shatters the fine lines between inner and external spaces and accounts for a failing possibility to distinguish between what is real and what is imagined, even in people whose psychic structures otherwise allow for such distinctions—I have to point out that the implication of guilt and the association of Rosalie with Kümmel’s crime must not be understood as factual or objective statements but must be considered exclusively as subjective formulations in the minds of Jolly and of her mother.

Objectively speaking, the chances of saving the baby’s life would have been very slim even if the pregnancy could have been concealed from Kümmel and had remained a secret among the inmates.⁸ But the absence of resistance against the S.S. man, judging by the testimony, cannot go unnoticed. It seems likely that Kümmel’s crime, when he first committed it, was so unexpected and so horrible that neither mother nor daughter could grasp the situation as it evolved. This would mean that they entered a dissociated state of shock, in which the murder could not register or could register only too late (Caruth, 1996; Laub, 1998). Presence of trauma is indicated by the fact that Jolly did not “know” the gender of the child despite the fact that Kümmel addressed him as “Moses” (HVY-220). Trauma also manifested itself when Jolly read about Kümmel’s trial but failed to recognize herself as an eyewitness who could prove his guilt (HVT-972).⁹ It is possible, as well, that the only thing that registered in both women was the threat to their own lives, and they fended for their survival by not fighting for the life of the baby (i.e., the instinct for self-preservation took over). Both mother and daughter stood in front of Kümmel, who had drowned the baby; they were stripped to the nakedness of their bare life. In the face of Kümmel, protection was non-existent. Rosalie and Jolly could do nothing to protect their hope for a

⁸As far as I can determine, none of the sources referring to the situation of these newborns in Eidelstedt has been translated into English. Bamberger and Ehmann’s (1995) anthology refers to Eidelstedt (pp. 124–126) but gives a more general assessment of the situation of children and adolescents—one reflecting the impossibility of their survival in camp (pp. 53–67). For a very recent English-language historical study touching on childbirth during the Holocaust, see Tec (2003, especially pp. 68–69, 162–164).

⁹Kümmel had to be acquitted because no eyewitnesses to the murders could be found to testify against him.

life to come; they could not save the baby or their own future. Their testimony reflects a radical split in their dyadic relationship—one that occurred as they watched the S.S. man commit murder. Two separate narratives emerge during the interview, with both Jolly and Rosalie stammering their own repetitive versions of the murder—detached from each other and at a loss with themselves.

If we interpret Jolly and Rosalie's separateness as narrators as a reenactment of the shattering effect that Kümmel's crime had on their emotional bond, we can understand how trauma shapes narrative through fragmentation. In this respect, the contradiction between mother and daughter marks the loss of connection and context in their relationship in the face of infanticide. Throughout their joint interview, neither Rosalie nor Jolly acknowledges the contradiction between the hot water and the open faucet. Reflections on the difference between their accounts are absent from their testimony, as if both women are oblivious of the gap that opens between them when they narrate. This divide was imposed by a traumatic reality that damaged the dyadic texture of Jolly and Rosalie's interrelatedness and isolated each woman in her own traumatic state. Their testimony goes through what Felman and Laub (1992) called a "crisis of witnessing," but, rather than falling apart, it encapsulated the moment of undoing of the mother–daughter relationship. After struggling to describe Kümmel's crime, Rosalie and Jolly reestablish their joint narrative, and their relationship prevails, just as it did during the Holocaust, when it survived the forceful intrusion of a perverted reality and its traumatic impact on their relatedness and their ability to relate.

In this context, the importance of the narrative contradiction between mother and daughter cannot be overstated. The contradiction marks the traumatic chasm separating mother and daughter and also reveals Jolly's attempt to *maintain* a connection with her mother. By obliterating any connection between Rosalie and Kümmel's crime, Jolly can preserve her lifesaving emotional bond with her mother. The daughter has to repress the fact that her mother prepared the water in which the S.S. man drowned the newborn. She has to blot out any hint of mother's participation in the murder to keep her good object alive and to keep herself alive in relation to that object. Repression allows Jolly to protect her inner representation of a good mother, but, as I point out, it creates an empathic void vis-à-vis her mother as a real other.

Jolly's retreat to the dyadic structure within herself ultimately allows her ego to survive but likewise helps her fend off a threatening triangulation involving Rosalie, Kümmel, and herself. On a symbolic level, oedipal undercurrents in her adolescent mind and the real event of infanticide gel into what closely resembles an "alternative primal scene of atrocity" (Auerhahn and Laub, 1998, p. 372): Her mother and the camp commander are a murderous couple who drown a child. Only, this primal scene is not based on a fantasy that lays claim to the secret of the parental relationship and from which the child remains excluded; at the core of this horrible scene is a real event that occurred in front of Jolly. And, whereas her own part in the scene is left entirely to Jolly's imagination, based perhaps on her identification with the mother-to-be and with the baby born to be killed, the connection between her mother and the S.S. man is based in reality—Rosalie worked in the camp kitchen in Eidelstedt. She prepared meals for the S.S. Working this job allowed her to obtain, for her and her daughter, more than the meager food rations usually given. Among the S.S., she became known as "Frau Rosa," and her herring dish was acclaimed. All this suggests a certain benevolence and intimacy to her interactions with the S.S. and with Kümmel. When we consider Jolly's identification with the pregnant woman and the life within her, what horror and torment it must have been for her to watch the S.S. man drown the baby with the hot water her mother had heated. When we consider that Rosalie cooked for the camp commander, what was Jolly to make of the horrible "dish" her mother had prepared to satisfy Kümmel's murderous appetite?

The contradiction between the hot water and the open faucet, then, echoes the inner conflict the infanticide sparked in Jolly: She had to repress her mother's threatening aspects to avoid losing her protection. In accusing Rosalie of being Kümmel's helper in the murder, Jolly not only would have provoked mother's retaliation but would have put the mother-daughter bond in jeopardy when she needed it most. Daughter's relationship with mother could survive only if mother's presence at the crime was repressed. In the testimony, likewise, the scene of infanticide can be released from Jolly's memory only if Rosalie remains out of the picture.

Therefore, the narrative splitting that occurs between mother and daughter during their testimony not only marks the shattering impact of trauma on their bond but speaks to an ambiguous success of Jolly's

repression: Although the splitting helped her to preserve an internal representation of her mother as good object during the Holocaust, it opened an empathic void during the interview. By referring to the hot water, Jolly obliterates the impact of the event on Rosalie. The shame and guilt her mother obviously feels when she remembers that she prepared the hot water do not dawn on the daughter sitting beside her. In the testimony, the repressed can return in the words of the mother but does not return to Jolly's conscious mind, and, thus, the emotional pain of her mother as another person remains unacknowledged by her as well. Jolly's repression leads to an absence of empathy. But Rosalie also does not acknowledge the difference in her daughter's narrative. This failure betrays her own words: She does *not* know what her daughter is talking about. Rosalie is absorbed by her own feelings and eager to emphasize that she did not know what Kümmel had in mind when he had her prepare the water. Around Kümmel's crime, Rosalie's powerful position as mother unravels. She could not protect the newborn in Eidelstedt, and she cannot be present to Jolly as listener during the interview.

Both women remain alone with the event and their memories. Unlike with their sharing of the bowl of soup in Bergen-Belsen, they can do nothing to transform Kümmel's crime into an experience affirming their mother-daughter relationship. They cannot share the memory of the murder through a joint testimony. However, their detached state in which they were emotionally unavailable to each other remained a temporary episode in their ongoing relationship. Their joint narrative contains their empathic void since the emotional foundation of their ability to relate was not destroyed. It is possible that they could emotionally survive the drowning of the baby only in a state of self-preservative withdrawal from each other. Fortunately, Jolly was mature enough to detach from Rosalie and was no longer emotionally dependent on her for her own survival.

Conclusion

Whereas the vignette involving the bowl of soup affirms Rosalie and Jolly's relationship both in its narrative function and in its ability to transcend the economy of starvation of their imprisonment in an act of mutual caregiving, the dyadic relatedness of mother and daughter

cannot fend off the impact of Kümmel's crime and remains fragmented even within the shared narrative of both women. It seems to me that Rosalie and Jolly's relationship was set against a forceful external reality that could at times, but not always, be absorbed and contained through modifications in their relationship (abandonment of its asymmetry). Even in the context of trauma, Jolly managed to salvage a good internal mother representation from the shattering scene of the infanticide in Eidelstedt.

The bowl-of-soup vignette showed how mother and daughter in their responsiveness to each other could establish a relative inner independence from their external world—an independence that allowed them to avoid spilling and wasting their soup in a fight and spared them from having to self-sacrifice for the sake of the other's survival. Their joint narrative reveals its function as a cap on the conflicts and disagreements of their mother–daughter relationship. The daughter can conceal her differing perspective in front of her mother under the merging disguise of a *we*, yet at the same time she can claim her mother's initiative and strength for herself by making it *theirs*. That is, in her mother's presence, the daughter is both stronger (through her merger with the powerful mother) and weaker (through her dependency on mother for strength). When Jolly is on her own, she can acknowledge her separate agenda, and the struggle against her mother is much more explicit.

The emotional richness of Rosalie's and Jolly's testimony is particularly striking, as it relates to a historical event notorious for the erasures, absences, and voids it produced in the minds of those who survived it. This dyad's ability to relate to their own experience in a complex and elaborate narrative points to the importance of the holding maternal function and the internal space it opens and stabilizes within the external world not only during the Holocaust but also during Jolly's and Rosalie's post-Holocaust existence. In the vignette involving the infanticide, however, the brutality of the external reality was too forceful to be captured as shared experience in a joint narrative. There the separateness that occurred between mother and daughter manifests itself in two narrative voices contradicting each other; this separateness marks the shattering effect of traumatic experience on their relationship. In the context of the infanticide, neither Rosalie nor Jolly is empathically available to each other's pain. The mother–daughter relationship survives Kümmel's crime only to the extent

that Jolly can hold on to her internal representation of it through repression. On one hand, this situation speaks to the object status of the mother from the child's perspective: Mother does not matter as a real person but is needed and used as an object, and her independence and uncontrollability as a person in the real world are eclipsed. (Such functional reduction corresponds to developmental needs during early childhood and adolescence.) In the context of the Holocaust, however, we cannot limit ourselves to such an intrapsychic perspective and must acknowledge that the infanticide as a historical event in the external world keeps mother and daughter out of each other's reach as real women with a shared experience.

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