Daughters' Stories: Family Memory and Generational Amnesia[1]

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Abstract: After World War II, most Bulgarian Jews emigrated legally to Israel. Those who stayed had to take part in the building of socialism and integrate in a monolithic "socialist nation." Thereby they had to "forget" their ethnic identity ("aided" by the state in various ways) and to become *Homo politicus* rather than *Homo ethnicus*. Since 1990, a revival of Jewish identity has begun in Bulgaria. Here I explore how the women of three generations from the same family reinvent their Jewish identity in their life stories. Drawing on this particular case, I suggest an approach to the question of the interplay of individual and collective memory. I focus on family and generation as different types of collectivities influencing individual memories and self-actualizations.

Keywords: communism, family, generation, Jewish, memory

Looking for a way to establish meaningful links between collective memory and personal memory, I shall look here at the notion of generation and will try to explore its potential, drawing on the case of three generations in a Bulgarian Jewish family. The very notion of collective memory seems to be somewhat ambiguous while very rich and open ended. It seems to be more practiced than theorized, as is the notion of memory itself. Thus, it seems to be already worn out of surplus use without developing its explanatory potential. To make sense of the particular case that I am going to examine, I need to work with two notions of memory: the very concrete one of personal autobiographical memory and the broader (and more problematic) one of collective memory as a frame

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that conditions the former. Also, I have to work with two notions of generation: the very concrete one of generations in the family and the broader (and more problematic) one of generations as cultural identities constructed around a collective response to a certain political situation.

The generations in the family can be thought of in terms of positions that unite individuals and at the same time distance them from each other. Societal generations, on the other hand, can be regarded as positions linking specific values, orientations, and attitudes of age groups to the respective historical periods. The first conceptualization of societal generations belongs to Karl Mannheim who, in his now-classical study, argued that generations were not age groups or cohorts, but rather a "particular kind of identity of location."[2] The identity of social location (*Lagerung*), that is, the objective structural situation, was a prerequisite for the collective cohesion of a generation. But the "actuality of a generation" was achieved by the "*participation in the common destiny* of this historical and social unit,"[3] that is, the collective organization of the experiences. Thus, a generation is characterized not only by temporal simultaneity but also by shared orientations. The third level of cohesion is the so-called "generational unit," a group of people belonging to a generation and developing common ways of coping with their generational "destiny." A particular generation usually consists of a number of units depending on the different ways of reaction to the same social circumstances. The core ideas of this theory that are particularly important for the discussion of the case that follows are, first, the importance of the historical situation and, second, the importance of the stage of life at which individuals are exposed to that situation. Mannheim stresses that youth, the formative years of one's life, is the period of formation of the "natural view of the world" that may or may not lead to the actuality of a generation. Thus, the concept of generation enables a "synchronisation of two different calendars: the first pertaining to the life's cycle of the individual, the second to his/her historical experience."[4] In other words, the concept of generation makes the historical localization of individual biographies possible.

Revising and further developing Mannheim's ideas, contemporary authors have highlighted the importance of traumatic events as the main constitutive factor of generations—an idea that is particularly relevant to the case in point. In this perspective, the "actuality of a generation" can be sought in a "collective response to a traumatic event or catastrophe that unites a particular cohort of individuals into a self-conscious age stratum. The traumatic event uniquely cuts off a generation from its past and separates it from the future."[5] Thus, the constitution of generations is triggered by the social significance of their time. It is, however, dependent on the acquisition of a generational consciousness and memory. Therefore, generations involve the organization and institutionalization

of collective memory or, using Pierre Bourdieu's concepts, "share a common habitus, hexis and culture, a function of which is to provide them with a collective memory that serves to integrate the cohort over a finite period of time."[6]

Linking, thus, the concept of generation with the notion of collective memory understood as the implicit patterns that mold personal reminiscence, I shall try to explore the influences of different mnemonic communities (family and generation) on individual self-conceptualizations presented in the course of life story interviews with three Bulgarian Jewish women from the same family.

Historical background

As an official ally of Nazi Germany during World War II, Bulgaria adopted anti-Semitic legislation that should have led to the extermination of its Jewish population. A special Commissariat on Jewish Affairs was established. It managed to carry its tasks in the newly annexed parts of today's Macedonia and Northern Greece where 11,343 Jews were sent to the death camps in February–March, 1943. In the "old territories," however, a mass campaign in defense of the Jews started, initiated by influential persons among the intellectuals, the politicians, and the higher ranks of the Orthodox clergy.[7] As a result, Bulgarian Jews from the old territories (about 50,000) avoided deportation to the Nazi death camps. That is why, as a Bulgarian Jewish author has put it recently, their "involvement in the Holocaust is panoramic rather than paralysing" and therefore "the theme of Holocaust, which is something like a password to the realms of pain for Jewish survivors from Western Europe, has, for Bulgarian Jews, proven to be part of a collective experience observed from the distance of an illusory security."[8]

While some Bulgarians did hold anti-Semitic views, anti-Semitism was not part of everyday public culture in Bulgaria[9] as in other East European countries. The Jews, however, suffered from repressions resulting from the anti-Semitic Law for Defense of the Nation (1941): 90% of the Jews living in Sofia were interned and their belongings sold out; most able-bodied men were gathered in forced labor camps.[10] The repressions were probably one of the factors triggering support for the communist movement among the Jewish population, together with strong Zionist attitudes. Many Jews took part in the communist resistance and a few of them got important positions in the newly established institutions after the 1944 coup d'etat. Two tendencies developed in parallel among the Bulgarian Jewry in the first years after World War II: of integration into the post-war Bulgarian society and of emigration and establishment of a sovereign Jewish state.

In an atmosphere of growing animosity between the communist-dominated Bulgarian government and the newly established state of Israel demonstrating its orientation toward the United States, the greater part of the Bulgarian Jews

emigrated to Israel in 1948–49 with no right to return. Those who stayed had to take part in the building of socialism. Thereby, they underwent a process of de-Judaization much like the Jews in Western Europe, where the dominant post-war attitudes were of national unity and reconciliation.[11] In communist Bulgaria, this process was more intensive and far-reaching, including not only secularization but tacit ethnic homogenization as well. In addition to their religion, Bulgarian Jews had to "forget" their ethnic identity and integrate in a monolithic "socialist nation" ("aided" by the state in various ways, such as nationalization of the property of the Jewish communities, merging the Jewish organizations with the Fatherland Front,[12] etc.).

The postcommunist transformations changed this situation dramatically and set the stage for a Jewish cultural revival. In Bulgaria, this process seems to have been less controversial than in other postcommunist countries where the Jewish communities were destroyed in the Holocaust. Since 1990, urban Jewish property has been restored in Bulgaria. Certain forms of community life have been restored, and new ones established, including youth organizations. International Jewish organizations sponsored a Jewish school in Sofia as well as courses in Hebrew for children and adults. With the liberalization of publishing in the 1990s, a number of publications for and from the community appeared. A conscious interest in community memory can be observed among the younger generation. After decades of ethnic homogenization, Bulgarian Jews, much like those in the other postcommunist countries, have been involved in a process of re-ethnification.[13]

The project

In 2002–03, a group of social scientists and historians carried a feminist oral history project in Bulgaria placing particular emphasis on giving voice to minority women. More than half of all interviewees were of Turkish, Pomak,[14] Jewish, Armenian, and Roma origin.[15] The interviews comprised a first part in which the narrator's life story was elicited with a particular focus on gender roles and power in her family of origin and her own family, on gender issues at the workplace, etc. In a more structured second part, questions were asked about the interviewee's opinions of gender relations in contemporary Bulgaria and her attitudes to women in politics, to women's representations in media and advertising, etc. Where possible, women from different generations of the same family were to be interviewed. The idea behind this was to capture the handing down of gender roles between generations and their presumed change.

In the context of this project, in the last days of 2002, I interviewed a medical doctor, her elderly mother, and her daughter. Here I will leave aside the gender

issues representing the thematic core of the project and will focus on family memory and generational memory as possible intermediate layers between personal recollections and what might be considered the collective memory of the wider Jewish community in Bulgaria.

The interviewees

The eldest of the three women I interviewed, Adela (aged 85 years at the time of the interview), was born into a Jewish family in the northwestern Bulgarian town of Vidin, notable with its ethnic diversity and its large Jewish community in the early-twentieth century. At high school, she became a member of the Hashomer Hatzair movement[16] (see fig. 1).

Fig. 1. Adela as Hashomer Hatzair member (second row, center), c. 1935. Photo courtesy of the family archive.

She earned a university degree in economics but exercised her profession for only a short period before her marriage.[17] At the age of 30, she married a Bulgarian[18] and gave birth to two children. She had a few chances to emigrate to Palestine during and after World War II—as the Jewish youth movement, Hashomer Hatzair, demanded from its members—but circumstances always precluded emigration: she did not take the chance in 1940 for she was in the middle of her studies at the university. Neither did she go right after the war, when another chance for illegal emigration appeared: she had to take care of her elderly mother who was sick. In 1948, when there was an opportunity to emigrate legally, and most Bulgarian Jews took that chance,[19] she had just married a Bulgarian and again decided to stay. Her daughter Nadezhda (aged 47 years) married a Bulgarian as well. She married early in life and had an early divorce. Thereafter, she pursued her career as a medical doctor and raised her daughter Katya almost alone but with Adela's crucial help in the first years after the break-up of her marriage. Like many others, she emigrated to Israel[20] with her daughter in the early 1990s and spent four years there—a fact that she hardly ever mentioned in her talk. Katya, my third interviewee, aged 26 years, not married, had a Master's degree and worked at a Jewish institution in Sofia.

The interviews

I first visited Nadezhda in her apartment one December morning just after she had decorated her Christmas tree.[21] Comfortably sitting in an armchair under a Wassily Kandinsky poster, she talked at length about her parents' family, her childhood, and her profession. She was self-contained, ironic, and eloquent about what she was willing to tell and easily withholding the rest. (One of the reasons was that I did not press her on the issues she avoided.) For about an hour, we talked about Nadezhda's life, her family, and her work; mostly about the latter. Not a word was uttered about her Jewish origin.[22] Her four-year's stay in Israel merited only half a sentence of her narrative. Later, Katya remarked that I had failed "to tease her on the Jewish theme" and that her mother did not like to talk about the years spent in Israel. Toward the end of the interview, Nadezhda's elder brother came to visit her and the interview ended abruptly and somewhat prematurely. Though I was fascinated by her personality, I gave up the idea of a second interview for I did not know how to deal with what I felt was a negative reaction to the feminist agenda of the interviewing project.

The interview with Adela was easier: because of her physical condition, she did not go out and did not enjoy many visitors in her small flat. Therefore, she seemed enthusiastic about having somebody to talk to and had prepared for the event: she had put on her white knitted sleeveless jacket (kept for special

occasions), she had taken off the cover of her mother's 120-year old sewing machine, and she had thought her talk over (see fig. 2). The latter must have been relatively easy for she had already written her memoirs before under the title *Memories of a Vidiner*. Though in that title she identified herself by her native town, a good deal of her talk with me was focused on "Jewishness." The greater part of her story was about her childhood and her parents' family. She also talked in detail about Hashomer Hatzair, which was essential in her formation "as a person." A good deal of Adela's talk revolved around her dreams to emigrate to Israel and her "destiny" to stay in Bulgaria, gradually replacing the theme of Jewishness. Thereafter, she focused on her family and children omitting her grassroots political activism as a member of the Communist party.

The interview with Katya was different from the other two not only because she was present at the interviews with her mother and grandmother. As I turned on the tape recorder, she remarked that it was the first time she was "on the other side of the mike," that is, being interviewed rather than interviewer. Her education and her earlier work in radio included some experience in both oral history and

Fig. 2. Adela with her mother's sewing machine, c. 2004. Photo courtesy of the family archive.

journalist interviewing. This set the conversation—for me at least—on an equal footing. Furthermore, she was in a position to comment on her mother's and grandmother's stories in her own talk. She spent her childhood with her grandmother till the age of 10–11 years and since then has lived with her mother. Her 4-year stay in Israel in the early 1990s and the difficulties she and her mother had to face there formed a considerable part of her narrative. Her M.A. thesis was on the Jewish revival in Bulgaria after 1990 and she had recently begun working at a Jewish institution in Sofia. Not surprisingly then, her talk was the most reflexive one of the three, as regards both Jewish identity and women's situation. Partly, this was due to her professional activities and certainly also to her better knowledge of the objectives and the approach of the project. Her talk was a mixture of impressionistically sketched childhood memories, attempts at self-analysis, and comments on her mother's and grandmother's stories.

Generations in the family: transmission and solidarity

The importance of the family as a guardian of Jewish traditions and identity has been stressed by both researchers and members of the Jewish community.[23] The family is the primary social framework of identity formation and the primary community of memory. Seen in this perspective, the three stories offer an opportunity to broach the question of intergenerational transmission. My approach to them is inspired by Daniel Bertaux's method of "social genealogies"[24] and by the project he and a group of Russian sociologists carried in the mid-1990s in Russia on the ways families managed (or failed) to preserve and hand over to younger generations their "cultural capital" after the 1917 revolution.[25] However, while Bertaux and the Russian colleagues were interested primarily in the social contexts and their impact on the individual life paths, I will focus on the symbolic and ideological resources for identity construction and on the intergenerational continuities and discontinuities of self-identity in times of abrupt social changes such as the socialist and postsocialist transitions.

Assuming that the sequence of generations is about continuity and conflict, I am turning to the three women's utterances which throw some light on the intergenerational relations in the family. Adela spoke affectionately and respectfully of her parents alternating the account of their habits at home on the eve of Sabbath with her own reflections about their influences on herself: her mother taught her all practical skills and her father, who was "very eloquent" and "well-respected in the town," bequeathed his spiritual attitudes:

> He brought us up spiritually with his example. My mother, on the other hand, educated us with her example in the home. Laziness did not exist as a concept for her. Till her very last day she could not understand what it

> means … […] And my father … used every occasion to educate us with stories and proverbs. […] Spiritually, I take after my father. My mother taught me to work, to work a lot. But in terms of worldview, as a person, I take after my father. He would tell us these stories and we'd put on the table whatever food we had. […] He really loved telling us tales. That's how he taught us integrity and compassion, and also keeping to Jewishness, and taking care of the reputation of the Jews.[26]

Jewishness in Adela's understanding is more than religion: it seems to embrace traditions, community, and a kind of moral stamina that she associates with Jewish identity. According to Adela, her father was "not religious at all" even though he performed the daily rituals, observed the Sabbath, and went to the synagogue on religious feasts. Having given up identification with Judaism quite early in life under the influence of Hashomer Hatzair, and having later joined the Bulgarian Communist party, Adela may well underestimate her father's religiosity in thinking of him as an intellectual ally and willing to see only his wisdom, moral integrity, and loyalty to the Jewish tradition.

Interestingly enough, a similar intellectual proximity between father and daughter seems to have existed in Adela's own family. Her daughter Nadezhda admitted to having been "spiritually" closer to her father:

> My mother is very strong minded, and I suppose she influenced my personality a lot in everyday matters. She was very active in our education, even too active. She was a controlling, strong person, who had not had the chance to express herself through a professional career. […] Maybe in contrast to her hyperactivity, dad was quiet, calm, and closed in. Spiritually, I felt much better with him. Maybe he influenced that part of me. So, to sum it up, for everything related to being organized, being orderly, for all these everyday life issues, the influence of my mother has been decisive, while with my father I remained spiritually closer.[27]

Nadezhda admitted to having hated the "absolute order" that reigned in her parents' home though she had unwillingly carried a lot of it over to her own home. Contrasting her parents' home to that of her friend at school, she found the former "quite depressing"—she did not like the furniture, the clothes her parents used to wear, the manner in which they used to behave. Her mother did not seem to be aware of that or maybe did not attach much importance to it. In Adela's narrative, all tensions and conflicts seemed to find a peaceful resolution, and there was an essential continuity in the "destinies" of successive generations of women.

In her turn, Katya, who had spent a few years of her childhood with her grandmother, remembered her as a grassroots activist:

> I remember that a lot of women got together in the local branch of the Fatherland Front and I went with her. She also kept the books for our apartment building, she did all kinds of things. She was very active. From time to time, she took me to some awards ceremonies that she had organized, in some halls, with some medals. She was always organizing things, she even tried to order us around the home. […] she always exuded this strong spirit of the communist activist, with her grey skirt, the blouse, her tidiness, etc. And I imagine she must have looked exactly like the activists of [the] Hashomer Hatzair movement … I think of her as an aged copy of what she used to be in her youth.[28]

Katya's narrative of her mother was more complex and reflexive:

> When I was younger, I don't know why, but somehow in my mind, my mother was more or less marginal. Things actually changed for the first time, that is, we started getting closer, when we moved to our own flat. That was the first serious trial for me.[29]

An even more serious trial was their stay in Israel where each of them led her own struggle apart from the other and was unable to rely on each other's help: Nadezhda was constantly at work while Katya struggled to learn the language, to integrate, and to form herself "as a person." Both of them did the impossible, as she stated in her talk, at the cost of drifting away from one another:

> Because at that time my mother and I were already becoming quite alienated. She was struggling very hard at the time. And she did well, she managed to achieve things people dream about. At the very first attempt she passed the medical exams and started working in the largest hospital of Tel Aviv. […] so she was constantly at work and she was almost like a zombie. We didn't have anything to say to each other. She didn't have her own circle of friends there, she was very isolated, while I had my circle, we drifted really far apart, really far.[30] […] Now that I am older, I realize that the years go by and it's much harder for me to accept this, and I am much more sensitive to her situation, you know, that she is alone. And especially on holidays I've often thought that if I have to, I'd stay at home because of that. […] I have to do it, because I feel that unfortunately, since we are both women, we need to support each other, simply because it is only the two of us.[31]

At these moments of the interview, Katya was more appreciative of her mother's achievements and showed more understanding for her situation than the two

elder women seemed to show in respect to their mothers. Certainly, she may not have reasoned like this in a different conversation, when questions of women's situation were not so central. Even without this statement of gender solidarity and emotional bonds between generations, however, it is clear that there are important continuities within the family: self-reliance, holding education in high esteem, seeking intellectual challenges, regarding work as self-fulfilment. Nadezhda spoke most readily about her profession and her work. Adela was proud about her university education. Katya admired her mother's professional success in Israel; she herself had begun working on a Ph.D. thesis. The three women shared a disposition to cope with their lives alone, not relying on their partners. They also had shared interests in literature and a common way of spending their free time: reading. Neither of them talked about the conflicts in the family: they only mentioned the "nightmare" of "three families, four generations" living in one apartment before Adela decided to sell it and buy smaller separate ones. They (particularly the two elder women) stated that it was disastrous for their mutual relations but neither of them expanded on that topic. All three preferred to demonstrate that mutual help, care, and respect existed in the family. None of them mentioned any predecessor beyond the ones they had directly interacted with. Thus, for all of them, family was more of an alliance rather than filiation. Nevertheless, the relations between generations seem to be no less important than the intragenerational ones. A number of basic orientations and dispositions have been transmitted between generations. To a certain extent, the daughters have acquired experience and attitudes from their mothers and have integrated them in their own life expectations. Using Bourdieu's concept, we could conclude that the three generations have kept and successfully transmitted the "cultural capital" of the family. Thus, the family appears as a community with its inherent tensions, but one that has been held together by a distinct "familial culture" more or less shared by the three generations.

The intergenerational moral economy of the family looks, however, quite different as far as Jewish identity is concerned. If, in relation to their life strategies, the three women seem to belong to a shared world, their perceptions of their ethnicity make them inhabit divided worlds—and this is where societal generations come into the picture.

Historical generations: the loss and reinvention of Jewishness

In the first half of Adela's talk, the one concerned with her parents' family, the theme of the Jewish identity—or Jewishness, as she called it—was central. In

addition to the sweet memories of the family evenings with her father telling stories, she had quite bitter ones of the hostile attitude toward the Jews in Vidin, of how the children were afraid to go out on the street at Easter: "There were some people who would never forget that we had killed Christ," she explained. In high school, she experienced her Jewish identity both positively—belonging to the Hashomer Hatzair movement, and negatively—suffering the mockery and the threats of some classmates and teachers who would not let her "stand out with anything." At the same time, she stressed that the pro-communist students and teachers, whom she called "progressive" using the term from the communist propaganda vocabulary, used to support her. Thus, she provided an acceptable "emplotment" for the events that followed (her dream to emigrate and her decision to stay), so that her "destiny" did not appear pitiful. After that moment, there is no more mention of Jewishness in her talk. Herself a communist, married to a communist, she had been staunch in giving up any form of religious identification. Marrying a Bulgarian and staying in Bulgaria while her kin emigrated, she was not able (or motivated) to sustain her Jewish identity through tradition either and to transmit it to her children.

Jewishness, and the time spent in Israel, made a conspicuous silence in Nadezhda's story. Katya suggested that this was because that period was very difficult and her mother was reluctant to return to it in her memory. While this may very well be true, it must be noted that Nadezhda's case was also one of the so-called "split mind" typical of the communist everyday: the inappropriateness of any mention of one's feelings, personal attitudes, and life strategies—which belonged to the private world—in a presentation of one's "public" personality.[32] The situation of the interview was for Nadezhda, a public situation where her private attitudes ought not to be on display. Thus, it remained unclear whether her decision to move to Israel was triggered by economic reasons only (the severe economic crisis in the early 1990s in Bulgaria) or was an attempt at rediscovering her Jewish "roots" (given the low religiosity of Bulgarian Jews, the state of Israel seems to have a key symbolic importance for their constructions of ethnicity and belonging) or, alternatively, emerged as a chance to seek self-fulfilment in another social and cultural environment (given the isolation of the communist countries, such chances were unavailable before the 1990s). Whatever her motivation might have been, her return to Bulgaria suggests that the attempt had been a failure. However, instead of guessing at the particular reasons for it, Nadezhda's silence lends itself to a broader interpretation[33] as an echo of the silence imposed by the communist authorities on the multicultural realities of Bulgarian society.

Thus, the family member who was most interested and most competent on the subject of Jewishness turned out to be Katya, the youngest. Nothing of her

understanding of Jewishness was handed down by her mother or grandmother. She remembered no mention even of the word "Jew" in her childhood though relatives from abroad used to visit her grandmother's apartment and to talk in a language (Ladino) that was familiar neither to herself nor to her mother and uncle. She remembered Adela's attempts to teach her that language without explaining what it was and her own resistance to those attempts. It was only when she and her mother settled in Tel Aviv that she started to learn about Jewish history, tradition, and religion. During that period, she made great efforts to learn Hebrew and managed so well that she was the only immigrant who was allowed to sit for the matriculation exam in Jewish literature and history (instead of math and biology).

When she came back to Bulgaria in 1995 and enrolled at the university, she discovered that a revival of Jewishness had begun: an interest in Jewish traditions, rituals, history, and language had been stirred among the Jewish community in Sofia. Political loyalties and citizenship seemed to have lost their salience while cultural belonging had become central for the individual's self-definition. Furthermore, the very fact of belonging to the Jewish community offered access to networks for jobs, education, and support from abroad, etc. While her mother was annoyed by all those who "played at being Jews," Katya found new opportunities for herself. She was needed as a translator and teacher of Hebrew. In spite of her young age, she had become an "expert." She was confident enough in her knowledge to explain to me her grandmother's limited perspective and to caution me against taking all she had said at face value:

> My grandmother, from a modern perspective, always presents things differently. […] She had no way to learn about these things. And I think she doesn't understand them well.[34]

Nevertheless, in her talk, Katya expressed her regret about having only *studied* Jewish traditions instead of really *adopting* them from her family. It is not clear whether and to what extent this deficit is felt in terms of personal identity or of professional competence. Maybe she feels that she lacks enough "insider" knowledge that might prove essential for her work. But in her words, there also seems to surface a certain discontent and a quest for "roots" that cannot be motivated by professional ambition only:

> In a lot of respects, I have a lot to learn. Tons. But the easiest way to learn about tradition is to follow it. For me this means following it in a real life environment. And I don't feel the need to do this, I don't feel this as mine, I never have. While I was in Israel, I followed the Israeli way of life. Yet it didn't really work because we had a very cold, unpleasant, bleak home.

> Practically, I had no family there. So, even over there, these things never really came back, they were never established. And I practically know that I am not going to pass them on to my children either. I don't have the motivation. Traditions are a great thing and it's good to know them, because you feel you belong, and that's important for you.

Living in an environment of alternative possibilities, Katya has a more complex attitude toward the "cultural capital" of the family: she seems to be aware and to regret the loss of a part of it that could have enriched her life and her personality. Her professional commitments, the fact that she has learned Jewishness from books seems only to increase her sensitivity to this topic. Katya's case, thus, seems to correspond to the so-called three-generation hypothesis formulated in a totally different context by Marcus Hansen in 1938 and noting the return of the third-generation American immigrants to values that had been ignored by their parents.[35]

Conclusion

The three stories are interesting from the point of view of how collective memory influences personal identity. They demonstrate the complex intertwining and interpenetration of different layers of memory: the "official" memory managed by the communist state whose aim was to homogenize and de-ethnicize; the newly "awakened" memory of the Jewish community seeking to accommodate the Holocaust, communism, and Israel; a family memory ensuring adaptation and coping; and individual memory pertaining to the construction of different personal models of Bulgarian Jewish identity. A possible way to make sense of these differences seems to be their relating to the idea of generation as developed by Mannheim's followers: from bio-anthropological generations in the family to societal generations as "communities of remembering" constructed through a certain institutionalization of memory. Indeed, conceived in such a way, generation seems to play an intermediary role linking meaningfully the first two layers of memory, which are forms of public memory, and the latter two, the private/individual memory. While family memory appears quite homogeneous and free of conflict in all three stories, each of them relates and refers to Jewish memory and (partly at least) to the official communist memory in a different way. The differences are clearly not random but due to the fact that each of the three women belongs to a different societal generation. Each generation has defined itself in relation to the previous one and in relation to its formative (traumatic) event. Each new generation has a different relation to the past (e.g., the two socialist generations, Adela's and Nadezhda's). This means that each generation maintains its own narrative (collective memory) of its origins and its formative

events, that is, each generation sustains a distinct self-consciousness or "a generational culture or tradition."[36] Adela belongs to the generation whose constituting traumatic event was World War II. In their formative years, the members of this generation suffered the repressions following the anti-Semitic Law for Defense of the Nation and the threat of being deported to the death camps. Adela's involvement in the Hashomer Hatzair movement and later in the communist party can be regarded as belonging to a specific "generational unit." These circumstances made acceptable her choice to stay in Bulgaria while her kin emigrated. Having herself suffered from exclusion for being a Jew in her youth, Adela abandoned Jewish practices and stopped being a *homo ethnicus*. She became a *homo politicus* asserting "progressive" communist values rather than ethnic ones.[37] While her case may be extreme, some degree of "ethnic amnesia" was an inherent part of the collective memory of her generation. Thus, she virtually deprived her children of the chance to construct an identity as members of a minority group. True, she did not have her husband's support in that, and the larger social environment was not favorable either: the Bulgarian socialist nation was constructed as a monolith from a social, ethnic, and ideological perspective, and there was no place for Jewishness in the communist national narrative. If they were to be accepted, Jews from Adela's generation who stayed in communist Bulgaria had to be loyal to the system and its ideology. They were subject to a subtle, indirect coercion to purge their memory of their religious and ethnic singularity and to suppress elements of their culture for the sake of integration.

Nadezhda did not have any choice of ethnic identity till the age of 40 years, and after that, she did not seem to need one. While Adela strove all her life to be accepted in the Bulgarian society, Nadezhda's belonging to it was never an issue. (One important reason for that might have been the fact that her name was Bulgarian rather than Jewish.) Her Jewish origin was not an issue either. This does not seem to have been essential for her. It was not something to try to forget about but also not something that guided any choices in her life except one—the emigration to Israel. Nadezhda's generation experienced neither ethnic humiliation nor ethnic pride; they did not take their ethnicity to be problematic. Neither was it salient in the way they conceptualized themselves. In the quest for Jewish identity during the 1990s, Nadezhda's generation that grew up during socialism came to be referred to as "the lost generation" for they had not kept their Jewish memory. When, after 1990, revalorization and, indeed, reinvention of Jewish identity has become possible, it has been met with certain resistance because of its all too obvious invented ness (Nadezhda). Nevertheless, there remains the feeling of loss of symbolic resources that could have enriched the narrators' lives and personalities (Katya).

Finally, Katya's generation was the one that constituted itself during the postcommunist transition. Its formative/traumatic event is the "velvet revolution" of 1989 and its aftermath. The representatives of this generation had more freedom to rethink and reinvent their cultural heritage, to select positive traits to develop, and to regard their belonging as a matter of their own choice. On the other hand, their social situation probably called for a more stable form of self-identification in a dynamic postsocialist environment where the united and unifying communist memory was severely questioned. Therefore, this generation found it possible (and desirable) to develop a greater reliance on Jewish memory in the quest for personal models of identity.

NOTES

1 Earlier versions or parts of this text were presented at "Diversity in an International Context," Berkeley, November 1–3, 2006; "Memory and Forgetfulness" 17th International Round Table, Blagoevgrad, February 15–17, 2008; "Community, individuality and creativity: A life stories perspective. In honour of Paul Thompson." University of Essex, Colchester, May 16–17, 2008. I am grateful to Paul Thompson, Larry Ray, and Yulina Dadova for their insightful comments on earlier versions.

2 Karl Mannheim, *The Problem of Generations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952), 292.

3 Ibid., 303. Italics in the original.

4 Alessandro Cavalli, "Generations and Value Orientations," *Social Compass* 51, no. 2 (2004), 157.

5 June Edmunds and Bryan S. Turner, *Generations, Culture and Society* (Buckingham: Open University Press 2002), 12.

6 Ron Eyerman and Bryan S. Turner, "Outline of a Theory of Generations," *European Journal of Social Theory* 1, no. 1 (1998), 93.

7 See, for example, Michael Bar-Zohar, *Beyond Hitler's Grasp. The Heroic Rescue of Bulgaria's Jews* (Avon, MA: Adams Media Corporation, 1998); *The Survival. A Compilation of Documents 1940–1944*, compiled by David Kohen (Sofia: "Shalom" Publishing Centre, 1995).

8 Emmy Barouh, "Ancestral Memory and Historical Destiny: The Sense of Belonging" in *Jews in the Bulgarian Lands: Ancestral Memory and Historical Destiny*, ed. E. Barouh (Sofia: International Centre for Minority Studies and Intercultural Relations, 2001), 12.

9 In a letter to his superiors, the German Ambassador in Sofia from 1941 to 1944, Adolf Heinz Beckerle, explained this attitude with the traditional multiethnicity of Bulgarian society: "Having lived all their lives with Armenians, Greeks and gypsies, the Bulgarians see no harm in the Jew to justify special measures against him." Quoted from Ethan J. Hollander, "The Final Solution in Bulgaria and Romania: A Comparative Perspective," *East European Politics and Societies* 22, no. 2 (2008): 203–48.

10 Boyka Vassileva, *Evreite v Bulgaria 1944–1952 [Jews in Bulgaria 1944–1952]* (Sofia: St. Kliment Ohridski University Press, 1992), 8. See also Kohen, *The Survival*.

11 Emmy Barouh, "The convenient clichés of remembrance," in *History and Memory. Bulgaria: Facing the Holocaust*, ed. Emmy Barouh (Sofia: Open Society Foundation, 2003), 43.
12 Otechestven Front [Fatherland Front] was established as a broad anti-fascist coalition lead by the Bulgarian Workers' Party (communists) in 1942. Later, it developed into a mass organization, in service of the ruling Communist Party.
13 I think that this term captures best the ongoing processes in the Jewish community from the perspective of the participants. A survey carried in 1998 among Bulgarian Jews covering a representative sample of 1,215 individuals living in 608 households showed that the respondents did not consider Jewish ethnicity as synonymous with Judaism as religion. While all identified themselves as Jews, only 2% stated that they were "deeply religious" and 83% replied that they were "wholly irreligious" or "tend to be irreligious." (Barouh, *Jews in the Bulgarian Lands*, 13–14).
14 Bulgarian-speaking Muslims.
15 The project, entitled *Voices of Their Own: Oral History of Women from Five Minorities in Bulgaria*, was initiated by the Bulgarian Association of University Women and funded by the Open Society Fund, Sofia. It took place in 2002–03.
16 Hashomer Hatzair [Hebrew—"The Young Guard"]—socialist Zionist youth movement, founded in Eastern Europe in 1916. Many Jewish youth, affected by the process of modernization that had begun among East European Jewry, sought a means of maintaining their Jewish identity and culture outside the Orthodox Jewish life. The movement was also a response to the growing anti-Semitism. In its early stages, it was heavily influenced by the Scout Movement and by the socialist movement. Hashomer Hatzair stressed the need for the Jewish people to normalize their lives by changing their economic structure (as merchants) and to become workers and farmers who would settle in the Land of Israel and work the land as *chalutzim* (pioneers). They dreamt of creating in their new homeland a society based on social justice and equality. The first members of the movement went to settle in Palestine in 1919, immediately after World War I. They established the so-called *kibbutzim*, collective settlements. On the eve of World War II, Hashomer Hatzair numbered 70,000 members worldwide. The movement was active in leading resistance in the ghettoes and the concentration camps. As the war ended, members of Hashomer Hatzair were among the first to organize and to take part in the illegal migration to Palestine.
17 According to the 1934 census, most Jewish women were housewives. Only 6.25% of them worked outside their homes. See Vassileva, *Evreite v Bulgaria 1944–1952*, 6. Till 1948–49, this share did not significantly change: housewives represent 33% of all persons who emigrated to Israel. Given that whole families emigrated and that the share of children was 29.15% (Vassileva, *Evreite v Bulgaria 1944–1952*, 123), it seems likely that most married women were housewives. However, Adela did not explicitly mention that she followed this pattern after her marriage.
18 Intermarriage was quite common for Bulgarian Jews: according to a representative of the Jewish Agency for Israel in Sofia, 80% to 90% of Bulgarian Jews come from mixed marriages, while in the U.S., for instance, their share is 52% (Barouh, *Jews in the Bulgarian Lands*, 13).

19 Between October 1948 and May 1949, 32,106 Bulgarian Jews emigrated to Israel and less than 10,000 stayed in Bulgaria. Since then, due to emigration and low birth rate, their number slowly continued to diminish, reaching 6,431 persons in 1956 (Vassileva, *Evreite v Bulgaria 1944–1952*).

20 The 1998 survey mentioned above demonstrated that many Jews harbored the thought of emigration: only 17% of the respondents were categorically against it while 19% of the households had already made the decision, and emigration was only a matter of time. The primary reason was the difficult economic situation in Bulgaria, and the favored destination was Israel. Zhivko Georgiev, "Socio-demographic and socio-economic profile of the Jewish community in Bulgaria," in Barouh, *Jews in the Bulgarian Lands*, 9–10.

21 According to the 1998 survey, 65% of Bulgarian Jews celebrate Christmas and 63% Easter. Krasimir Kanev, "Ethnic Identity, Interethnic Attitudes and Religiosity Among Bulgarian Jews," in Barouh, *Jews in the Bulgarian Lands*, 43. The author attributes this to the minority status of the Jews who, "on the one hand, ha[ve] suffered discrimination and cultural pressures from macro-society in the course of history, and, on the other, [are] actively seeking ways to integrate." He also points to the high level of integration of Jews in Bulgarian society as an additional important factor (Barouh, *Jews in the Bulgarian Lands*, 45).

22 Her half-joking complaint that she was always on duty at Christmas could be taken as a hint to her origin. It can have an alternative explanation, however: hinting at her "incomplete" family after the divorce.

23 Tsvetana Georgieva, "Mechanisms of Ethnification: The Family and the Festival System," in Barouh, *Jews in the Bulgarian Lands*, 58–76.

24 Daniel Bertaux, *Les recits de vie. Perspective ethnosociologique* (Paris: Nathan, 1997); Daniel Bertaux and Paul Thompson, ed., *Pathways to Social Class: A Qualitative Approach to Social Mobility* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

25 Victoria Semenova, Ekaterina Foteeva, and Daniel Bertaux, ed., *Sudby liudei: Rossia, XX vek* [Destinies of people: Russia, 20th century] (Moscow: Institute of Sociology, 1996).

26 Krassimira Daskalova, ed., *Voices of Their Own: Oral History Interviews of Women* (Sofia: Polis Publishers, 2004), 17–19. I do not agree with the translator's choice of the word "Judaism" and prefer Jewishness because Adela is not referring to the religion in this passage but to Jewish identity in a broader and more fluid sense.

27 Ibid., 31.

28 Ibid., 43–4.

29 Ibid., 45.

30 Ibid., 49.

31 Ibid., 54.

32 Lutz Niethammer, "Der Prügelknabe," in *Die Volkseigene Erfahrung: eine Archäologie des Lebens in der Industrieprovinz der DDR*, ed. Lutz Niethammer, Alexander von Plato, and Dorothee Wierling (Berlin: Rowolt, 1991).

33 "Taking silence into account means watching out for the links between forms of power and forms of silence." Cf. Passerini, Luisa, "Memories between silence and oblivion," in *Contested Pasts: The Politics of Memory*, ed. Katherine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone (London: Routledge, 2003), 238–54.

34 Daskalova, *Voices of Their Own*, 50.
35 "What the son wishes to forget, the grandson wishes to remember." Cf. Bernard Lazerowitz and Louis Rowitz, "The Three-Generation Hypothesis," *American Journal of Sociology* 69, no. 5 (1964): 529–38.
36 Eyerman and Turner, "Outline of a Theory of Generations," 93.
37 For comparison, see Viktor Voronkov and Elena Chikadze, "Different Generations of Leningrad Jews in the Context of Public/Private Division: Paradoxes of Ethnicity," in *Biographical Research in Eastern Europe. Altered Lives and Broken Biographies*, ed. Robin Humphrey, Robert Miller, and Elena Zdravomylsova (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2003), 249.