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Batya Brutin, *Hayerushah: hashoah biytzirotehem shel omanim yisreelim benei hador hasheni* (The Inheritance: The Holocaust in the Artworks of Second Generation Israeli Artists). Jerusalem: Magnes, 2015. 349 pp.

When she turned thirty, the artist Anat Massad decided that she wanted to have the number A22761, which had been branded on her mother's forearm in Auschwitz, tattooed on her own arm. However, as members of her family were unequivocally

opposed, she dropped the idea: instead, the number began to emerge in her art. Massad's relationship with the number on her mother's arm reflects the coping strategies and the sense of identification among the second generation of Holocaust survivors whose works Batya Brutin seeks to examine. These works, like a tattoo, have an enduring presence as an act of intimate memorialization—of people, of narrative, and of personal experience.

It is surprising that a comprehensive study of the role of the Holocaust in the works of second-generation artists has only now been published. The Holocaust and its place in the lives of this generation occupy a central position in Israel's culture of memory. To date, however, the Holocaust's influence on Israeli artists of the second generation has not received sufficient attention. This volume, based on the doctoral thesis Brutin wrote under the guidance of Ziva Meislish, seeks to address this lacuna.[1] The author's profound knowledge of her field (she herself is the daughter of a Holocaust survivor), and the in-depth interviews she has conducted with the artists, enable her to discern a shared visual vocabulary and to enumerate its characteristics. Her formidable research brings together, for the first time, a corpus of great importance.

As defined by Brutin, second-generation artists are the children of at least one parent who lived under the Nazi occupation. The point of origin for Brutin's research is the psychology of personal memory; thus, she not only outlines the artists' family narratives but also emphasizes the manner in which art is a therapeutic tool. The book is divided thematically into a number of main topics, which allow discussion of the common denominators shared by the dozens of artists—some of them well-known, and others whose work is outside the current Israeli canon.

The first chapter itemizes representations of the dead: figures, shadows, faceless eyes, and relentlessly haunting representations of family members who perished. All of these trouble the minds of the living. Brutin describes the artists' prolonged imaginary dialogues with the dead, whose presence they feel despite their being absent. The second chapter deals with a more direct use of familiar symbols of the Holocaust: the tattooed number on the arm and the striped uniform. Apart from being items that obliterate identity, these are objects whose tangible substance is transformed into the personal memory of a father or mother. Artists such as Haim Maor, Yossi Lemel, and Anat Massad engrave, draw, stamp, and photograph the Auschwitz number repetitively, even obsessively. In addition, the striped uniform is highly charged with intimations of survival and laden with allusions to the biblical story of Joseph and the crucified figure of Jesus, functioning as a symbol of sanctified victimhood.

In the third chapter, Brutin looks at the use of documentary materials familiar to us from museums and memorial sites: piles of hair and clothes, photographs of the dead, heaped-up corpses and other iconic representations in the collective consciousness of Holocaust memory. The artists use the photos and archival language in their art in an attempt to provide these anonymous survivors with an identity. The fourth chapter, which is the one most profoundly rooted in psychology, describes how some of these artists, in an act of total identification, put themselves in the victims' place. This, understandably, is especially the case with artists who have been named after family members who perished (Brutin herself bears the name of her mother's dead sister). But even those who have not been named for the dead similarly strive to actualize a

dread or a desire to go back in time and “be there,” putting themselves in the victim’s shoes and treading the boundary between fantasy and horror.

The final chapter offers a surprising and controversial portrayal of identification with the role of perpetrator. Brutin begins by describing works in which the artists deal with issues related to Israeli society, which has moved from a condition of victimhood to one of aggression. A number of other works require the observer to experience the dialectic between victim and aggressor in universal terms. Brutin discusses each of these instances in the light of the artists’ life experiences, with questions related to absolution, reconciliation, and evil inclinations hinted at between the lines.

The volume’s wealth of visual expression and variety of topics demonstrate the complexity of Holocaust-related imagery. Brutin not only traces the evolution of the visual imagery of the Holocaust as seen through the eyes of the second generation but also endows the reader with the ability to identify additional patterns and themes that are not explicitly described, such as brutality in depictions of Nazi perpetrators, the place of femininity and sexual violence as part of the memory process, or childhood experiences during the Holocaust.

Total identification with the experience of previous generations is an inseparable part of the work of the artists described in this book. The philosopher Avishai Margalit, author of *The Ethics of Memory*, addresses the importance of memory as a basis for the formation of interpersonal ties (or, as he terms it, “thick relations”). According to Margalit: “Memory is the cement that holds thick relations together” —a view that accords with Brutin’s description of the inherent power of memory wherever family is concerned. Margalit adds, however: “Communities of memory are the obvious habitat for thick relations,”[2] thus stressing the role of community and society as an active part of the expression of personal memory. From this point of view, questions arise as to the place of the “community of memory” in the life and work of these artists.

Brutin would appear consciously to focus on personal experience, while leaving the broader context aside (in an interview conducted in January 2008, she noted: “There is no such thing as the Holocaust, there is a Holocaust for each individual”).[3] Thus her research underscores the common language and connections among this group of second-generation artists, while only implicitly touching upon the tension between individual and collective memory, and between memory’s personal versus public manifestations.

Brutin omits discussion of the place of the Holocaust as national and cultural ethos in order to emphasis its psychological aspects, and she makes only passing reference to the numerous studies on patterns of collective memory. Furthermore, there is hardly any discussion on artists’ response or criticism toward collective memory strategies in Israel. This last omission is evident in view of similar research that has been undertaken with regard to cinema, for example, and which frequently presents the work of the second generation as an inseparable part of Israeli politics, culture, and education.[4] Such omissions notwithstanding, Brutin has performed a major service in putting together this anthology of material, which should greatly aid in future research on second- and third-generation artists.

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