TO TRANSLATE A LIFE: UNDERSTANDING THE HOLOCAUST THROUGH AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STORIES

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis seeks to understand some of the aspects and events of the Holocaust through autobiographical stories, with a particular focus on what it means to translate one's life. As there are many different ways one can learn about the Holocaust, this thesis takes a comparative approach of the works of two authors with very different life circumstances: Ruth Klüger's autobiographical works *weiter leben: Eine Jugend,* and *Still Alive: A Holocaust Girlhood Remembered,* and Nora Krug's graphic memoirs *Belonging: A German Reckons with History and Home,* and *Heimat: Ein deutsches Familienalbum*. While both authors have in common that they have written their works in both English and German, the lives of these authors are remarkably different: Ruth Klüger is a Jewish survivor of the genocide from Austria, living in the United States, and Nora Krug is neither a survivor nor Jewish, but rather, a German living in the United States with familial ties to Nazi Germany. Nevertheless, in the translation of their lives into their works, both authors raise many questions and concerns about their identity, displacement (forced for Klüger, chosen for Krug), their sense or lack of belonging, and how different aesthetic forms are necessary for them in the constructing of their life narratives, and in tandem with each other, they offer a way to further understand the events of the Holocaust

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INTRODUCTION

Our lives are shaped and informed by the stories we hear, and we shape and form our lives through the stories we tell. Everyone has a story of their life, regardless of how long or little they have lived. Everyone has experiences, and all of us have memories of these experiences that make up our lives. To make sense of our lives, we may think and reflect on our past: our childhoods, important people in our life, odd encounters, pivotal moments that shaped our outlook or trajectories, the deeper history of our family or heritage. Others of us may make sense of our lives through a variety of different aesthetic forms: for example, through music, poetry, literature, and visual art. And finally, we make sense of our lives through language. In all of these ways of acknowledging and making sense of our lives, constructing a narrative, and in some way translating and communicating these narratives to ourselves and to others.

This thesis seeks to answer questions such as: why are stories so important? How do we understand life through storytelling? What forms do storytelling take on? What roles do language, culture, and different aesthetic forms play in storytelling? What does it mean to translate a life connected to or influenced by the Holocaust, and what can we learn about such lives? To be clear, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's Encyclopedia defines the Holocaust as the

> systematic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of six million Jews by the Nazi regime and its allies and collaborators. Holocaust is a word of Greek origin meaning "sacrifice by fire." The Nazis, who came to power in Germany in January 1933, believed that Germans were "racially superior" and that the Jews, deemed 'inferior,' were an alien threat to the so-called German racial community.

I chose to focus on the Holocaust here because this genocide continues to hold relevance for those who wish to understand not only the history and culture of Germany, but the nature of the

suffering that occurred. In the introduction to her work *A Thousand Darknesses: Lies and Truth in Holocaust Fiction,* Ruth Franklin discusses the complexities of works both written on or about the Holocaust, and how it is that we as humans and scholars can discuss and learn from it, even though we did not experience it ourselves. Franklin puts forth the two dominant approaches to the Holocaust: the academic and the popular (4). She describes the academic approach as "a 'realistic' approach, [that] assumes that the Holocaust is basically knowable—that it can be understood through usual means of scholarly investigation: reading, interviewing participants, looking at photographs". In contrast, Franklin writes that the popular approach is "more mystical" (4). She continues to write:

> Understood thus, the Holocaust is not knowable; it is a unique event that cannot be meaningfully compared to any other historical phenomenon; it can be understood only by those who personally experienced it and is not transmissible to anyone else; and, most significantly for our concerns, it "could well be inaccessible to all attempts at a significant representation and interpretation," as Saul Friedlander has written. (4-5)

One purpose of this thesis, therefore, is to seek to find a middle ground to these two approaches. It would be foolish to say that a complete understanding of the Holocaust can be achieved by academic endeavors, but it is likewise problematic to treat it as purely mystical and not even attempt to gain something from the study of it.

After presenting a variety of perspectives from both those who suffered through and survived the Holocaust and scholars who have since had opinions on the matter, Franklin states: "Here is the holy grail of Holocaust literature: that forever desired and never-to-be-attained text that will provide us with a direct channel to the Holocaust" (7). Of course, Franklin points out the impossibility of this endeavor and then continues to argue for the merit of a variety of

different channels through which to understand the Holocaust, making note of the overlap between fiction and reality, and autobiographical and aesthetic works. Agreeing with Franklin's point that we cannot expect to ever fully understand the Holocaust through one work, I see the value and relevance in considering various voices and various artistic forms. To begin answering such questions, I will focus on the works of two authors, Ruth Klüger and Nora Krug, because they provide two different but equally gripping perspectives in the Holocaust through their autobiographical treatment of how their lives are connected to the catastrophe. I take a comparative approach to these the two authors, since they chose to write their works in both English and German.[1] It is important to emphasize that the lives of these authors are remarkably different: Ruth Klüger is a Jewish survivor of the genocide, and Nora Krug is neither a survivor nor Jewish, but rather, a German whose with familial ties to Nazi Germany.

In 1992, Ruth Klüger published *weiter leben: Eine Jugend,* an autobiographical account written in German about her life as a Jewish woman from Vienna, Austria, who survived the Holocaust and emigrated to the United States, where she continues to live today. Klüger tells the story of much of her life in chronological order, beginning with her childhood in Vienna before the events of the Holocaust changed her life. She recounts her experiences in the ghetto Theresienstadt, the death camp Auschwitz-Birkenau, and the forced labor camp Christianstadt, her displacement in Bavaria for a short time after World War II, and her emigration to New York and her early life in the United States. In addition to the chronological telling of her life as a

[1] Since both authors have written two texts that are very similar to the other—one in English and one in German—the question arises as to which texts I will quote. For consistency's sake, when I quote a passage from either Krug or Klüger's work that is comparable in both content and language use in both versions, I quote the passage from their first published work. For Klüger, this is *weiter leben: Eine Jugend,* in German, and for Krug, this is *Belonging: A German Reckons with History and Home,* in English. Additionally, since the content in Krug's two versions are very comparable to each other, and the pagination is identical, I do not distinguish her as an author of two different works when I reference her; this means that in referencing her work in general, I use the title of her English version published in the United States. In citing and referencing Klüger, however, when referring to her English text, she is referred to as Kluger, the English spelling of her name, and as Klüger when I refer to her German text.

displaced Jew during the Holocaust and after, Klüger also reflects on the bigger picture of how these years shape who she is, thereby also writing what I consider a metanarrative. Oxford Languages' second definition of metanarrative is useful for my understanding and application of this term, defining it as "an overarching account or interpretation of events and circumstances that provides a pattern or structure for people's beliefs and gives meaning to their experiences". One major theme threaded in her metanarrative, pertains to her identity – her position as both a Jewish and female witness to the Holocaust, as well as her reflections on what it means to be both Jewish and Austrian – and the instability that her displacement causes to her identity. Finally, in reading and considering this work, it becomes clear that the role of writing – both autobiography and poetry – plays a crucial role in Klüger's ability to process, reflect, and capture some of the trauma she experienced in her life.

About nine years later in 2001, Klüger published an English version of her story, titled *Still Alive: A Holocaust Girlhood Remembered.* To describe the function and necessity of this English version, Klüger wrote in the epilogue, "What you have been reading is neither a translation nor a new book: it's another version, a parallel book, if you will, for my children and my American[2] students. […] I have written this book twice" (Kluger 210). While much of *Still Alive* parallels *weiter leben*, and both are a chronological and autobiographical account of Klüger's life, there are several instances where the cultural and linguistic context in each text differs. While this thesis offers insight into both versions, it is important to remember that many readers of Klüger may only have read one of these texts.

Like Klüger, Nora Krug wrote and published two versions of what can be considered a graphic memoir. Remarkably, Krug first wrote the work in English, which is not her first

[2] Throughout this thesis, I refer to those living in the United States of America with their national identity as such as American, in reference to how Klüger uses this term here.

language, titled *Belonging: A German Reckons with History and Home* in 2018. In the same year, she published a nearly identical work in German, her first language, titled *Heimat: Ein deutsches Familienalbum*[3]. In her works, Krug, who is originally from Germany living in New York for the last twenty years of her adult life, traces her family roots by returning to Germany, asking to hear the stories of her family members, in order to make sense of her family's involvement in Nazi Germany. While Krug is not Jewish and was neither witness nor victim to the Holocaust, she addresses the collective guilt that she feels because of being German, and she attempts to make sense of her German heritage and identity in a constructive way. Her work also thematizes what it means to belong and have a sense of home, and the entire work offers a rich dynamic between written narrative and visual representations of original illustrations, found images, personal artefacts, and family photographs, in order to tell her own and her family's story.

The most apparent way in which both Klüger and Krug express their complex identities is through narrating, in written form, the stories and aspects of their past, whether in relation to primarily their own life story, as with the case of Klüger, or in relation to one's heritage, as with Krug. For both authors, language, feelings of inclusion and exclusion, and living in the United States as immigrants shape their lives and identities and how they perceive themselves and the world. While Klüger's work largely takes the form of what is more traditionally expected of an autobiography as detailed later in this introduction, as she writes a rather detailed chronological story of her life, Krug also writes from the first-person perspective, and the "I" in *Heimat* is connected to her identity. What sets Krug's work apart from Klüger's, aside from the apparent

[3] Since both versions are visually very similar to each other and provide near-identical content in each translation, I refer to Krug's writing as a single work; this is in contrast to referring to Klüger as having written two different works, which are not identical in content or pagination.

difference that it is a graphic narrative, is that she perceives her identity to be bound to her familial lineage, and what largely shapes *Belonging* are the narratives and accounts of her family, on both her mother and her father's side. For Klüger, it seems that displacement is what drives the main course of her autobiographical narrative and shapes her identity; for Krug, it is the fact that her roots and history of self are much deeper than anything she could understand from seeing herself as a purely autonomous individual. Krug sees that her identity is not just her own, but rather something shared and related to specific places and people, and therefore she endeavors to tell a family story that establishes a sense of 'rootedness' for her. For Klüger, this is not the case. There is neither a specific place nor people that she feels she can return to in order to feel a sense of belonging, for the events of the Holocaust took this possibility away from her. While Krug chose displacement and therefore has the possibility of discovering parts of her identity, the displacement that Klüger experiences and tells is one of forced displacement.

Reading either *weiter leben* or *Still Alive*, with the knowledge that Klüger wrote two versions of her story, may lead one to ask what aspects of her story Klüger chose to portray differently in each text, and why. The questions I first saw needing to be explored was: how is it that language and culture influence how we tell stories? What does this mean for the millions of people in the world who have been displaced and who are seeking to understand their lives in a meaningful way? These questions seek to understand, on a deeper level, geographical, cultural, and linguistic displacement through autobiographical perspectives about the Holocaust. Moreover, there is a need to broaden our concepts of representation of the Holocaust: not only do the forms of representation matter, such as visual forms, poetry, monuments, film, prose fiction, but also perspectives from people with vastly different experiences, such as Klüger and Krug. Krug did not live through the Holocaust, but her graphic memoir is something with which we

can engage in a meaningful and constructive way when considering different aspects of the catastrophe. Moreover, engaging with the works of these offers teaches us something about not only the Holocaust, but how we, as humans, form and are informed by the stories we hear and tell about our lives.

Theoretical and Methodological Approaches

Comparing the experiences of these two authors in relation to each other, I consider both women to be, to varying degrees, writing in the genre of autobiography. The way I understand autobiography is based on the work of Philippe Lejeune. In his work *On Autobiography*, Lejeune makes the case for an "autobiographical pact" that the author of a work makes with their readers; the pact is, in essence, a promise that the author's identity is the same in the text as it is in real life. Lejeune writes that this autobiographical pact is

> the affirmation in the text of this identity [("identicalness") of the *name* (author-narrator-protagonist)], referring back in the final analysis to the *name* of the author on the cover. The autobiographical pact comes in very diverse forms; but all of them demonstrate their intention to honor his/her signature. The reader might be able to quibble over resemblance, but never over identity ("identicalness") (14).

This definition will serve as a framework through which to understand particularly Klüger's works, but it will also serve an important role in the understanding of Krug's work. Both women have written autobiographical narratives in which their identities within their works are the same as their signed named attached to their published works, and both women claim that their works are authentic and non-fiction works.

The first chapter, *Identifying Identity: Inclusion & Exclusion, Displacement &* "Heimat", sets the stage for how I view and understand Krug's and Klüger's works in the two subsequent chapters. By setting the stage, I mean that I will consider how various moments of inclusion, exclusion, displacement (both voluntary and forced), and their feelings of belonging shape each of their identities, or, at least their perceptions of these identities. This chapter will first lay out in detail Klüger's identity in relation to displacement, inclusion and exclusion, and a sense of and lack of belonging, and it will end with an analysis of Krug's writings from the perspective of these similar themes. Though Krug incorporates in her narrative many tales of her family, I argue that Lejeune's definition of autobiography still applies to Krug's work. Even still, it is important to acknowledge the distinction between Klüger writing about most of her life, and Krug writing about a past, though connected to her own, that is not directly her own. To make this difference between the authors clear, I will rely on Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory, a theoretical framework she developed in *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory.* Hirsch writes, "postmemory is distinguished from memory by generational distance and from history by deep personal connection. Postmemory is a powerful and very particular form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through an imaginative investment and creation" (22). Where Klüger's life account is constituted entirely around her firsthand experience, Krug is recalling the stories and lives of her family members in the past.

In the second and third chapters, *Narrative & its Inseparability from Language* and *Different Aesthetic Forms in Narrative,* I consider what it means to translate something, both in literal and figurative ways. This is essential to my analysis, as I consider how both authors communicate their stories through linguistic and artistic means. In order to make sense of

language and translation, I will apply some of the work and definitions of linguist Roman Jakobson as a theoretical framework. To understand language and linguistics in their broadest contexts, I will consider first Jakobson's definition in his work *On Language,* in which he writes, "Language is a system of signs, and linguistics is part and parcel of the science of signs or semiotics" (50). Merriam-Webster defines semiotics as "a general philosophical theory of signs and symbols that deals especially with their function both artificially constructed and natural languages and compromises syntactics, semantics, and pragmatics". That semiotics deals with signs and symbols related to language is what is important to note here. Since both Krug and Klüger wrote their works in both German and English, it is necessary to define what it means to translate. In Jakobson's work *Language in Literature* in the chapter titled "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation", he defines three different kinds of translation in the following manner:

> (I) Intralingual translation or *rewording* is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language.
>
> (II) Interlingual translation or *translation proper* is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language.
>
> (III) Intersemiotic translation or *transmutation* is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems. (429)

In the second chapter, I will consider intralingual translation in examining the linguistic choices that both Krug and Klüger made within each of their individual German versions as well as by comparing their German works to each other. I will conduct this same process within their English versions, and I will consider what it means to translate interlingually by examining the linguistic choices made between each of their German and English versions. Additionally, in the second chapter I also consider language in a more general, metaphorical sense, and Walter

Benjamin's more general ideas of language as seen in his essay "Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers" will be helpful in considering translation not just on a technical level, but on a metaphorical level. In the third chapter, I will continue to apply Jakobson's definition of intralingual translation for the analysis of Klüger's use of poetry, and his definition of intersemiotic translation more broadly by considering what it means to use metaphorical language in order to translate and convey meaning in my examination of Krug's use of illustrations and photographs in relation to her written narrative.

Finally, in all three chapters, understanding Krug and Klüger to be transnational authors will be helpful in the understanding of their writing. In her essay "The Transnational/Translational Paradigm in Contemporary German Literature", Azade Seyhan provides great insight on how transnational writers have a unique position in the world, which is often reflected in their autobiographical writing. I will use Seyhan's perspective to better understand both Krug's and Klüger's writings. Seyhan defines transnational writers in the following way: "The transnational writer, broadly defined, considers literature a traveling phenomenon that changes the culture of the spaces it enters and is changed by it" (285). With particular regards to the identity of each author, this definition is helpful because their subject position is largely shaped by the different linguistic and geographical spaces they inhabit: both Klüger and Krug can be considered transnational authors, because their writings go beyond one border—both authors write in two different languages aimed at two different cultures and spaces.

Significance of the Project

Since it is part of human nature to make sense of our lives and world through stories, this project holds broader significance because of the many people throughout history and across the

world who have experienced and continue to experience displacement, questions of identity, and issues of cultural meaning within and across languages. To understand what it means to convey our lives, memories, and experiences, as well as our distant connections to the past, are endeavors that bear relevance for all of us. With regard to the specific context of my thesis, I believe it is important to understand the Holocaust in as many ways as possible. By examining the works of both a Jewish survivor and a German with familial ties to Nazi Germany, particularly in relation to each other, we can make sense of some of the different aspects and the greater impact that the Holocaust has had and continues to have on the lives of many. This brings up the practical importance of this project: I firmly believe in the continued relevance of the Holocaust, and I would argue that there will always be something we can learn from it, regardless of one's connection or lack of connection to it. For these reasons, we must participate in the "memory" or "postmemory work" of the Holocaust. While there will likely be no end to translating the Holocaust, our efforts to make sense of the past are not only worthwhile but also necessary.

CHAPTER 1: Identifying Identity: Inclusion & Exclusion, Displacement & "Heimat"

A Survivor's Perspective: Understanding Klüger's Identity

Throughout her entire autobiographical work, Klüger's Jewishness is a central aspect to how her life has been shaped, and it continues to be relevant in several of her experiences and perceptions of these experiences. Among the first of several instances in which Klüger wishes to establish a part of her Jewish identity more firmly is when she wishes to forego her childhood nickname, Susi, for her given name, Ruth. She writes "Und nun, als mein ungefestigter Glaube an Österreich ins Schwanken geriet, wurde ich jüdisch in Abwehr. Bevor ich sieben war, also schon in den ersten Monaten nach dem Abschluß, legte ich meinen bisherigen Rufnamen ab... Einen jüdischen Namen wollte ich, den Umständen angemessen" (41). At just seven years old, Klüger recognized that even her name had the power to tell something of who she is, in this case concerning her Jewish identity. While her autobiography shows how her feelings about being Jewish evolve throughout the course of her life, from this young age on, it is clear to her that being Jewish is an essential part of who she is. Further, her Jewishness is what largely influences many instances of both her exclusion and inclusion, particularly during her time in the ghetto, Theresienstadt.

Klüger's time in Theresienstadt served as a turning point for understanding her displacement and place in the world, the complexities of her Jewishness, and the kind of person she is in relation to those around her. In the process of being excluded for her Jewishness, she finds yet another layer of exclusion within the ghetto: namely, she is excluded from the Czech children because she and other Jews from Austria "sprachen die Sprache der Feinde" (92). In her book *The Memory of Pain: Women's Testimonies of the Holocaust*, Camila Loew writes about the exclusion Klüger faces in her life in her chapter *Ruth Klüger: Embracing Exclusion.* Loew

writes that “the exclusions Klüger suffers are not limited to the collective spheres of religion or nation; there are, in fact, so many occasions in which she shows the feeling of not belonging that it will become the connecting thread of her life story—and one of the main issues in the discourse on the current cultural problems for Jewish-German women” (112). Loew goes on to highlight the exclusion from Czech children in Theresienstadt to be one prime example of this, saying, “Klüger even finds marginalization within the Lager (camp). In Theresienstadt, the other (Czech) children marginalize her for being German” (112); more specifically, for her being a German speaker. As there are numerous passages that point to this theme of inclusion and exclusion in Klüger’s work, which Loew rightly points out with this example, what is so striking about Klüger’s writing about her time in Theresienstadt is that it oscillates between moments and feelings of marginalization and belonging. This sheds light on what Klüger’s autobiography, on the whole, demonstrates: the complex nature of identity, displacement, and ‘Heimat’. To understand Klüger’s work is to understand that moments of her life cannot be so easily defined in categories of good and bad, which becomes clear as she continues to recall her time in Theresienstadt and its lasting impact on her, in both good and bad ways.

After Klüger explains to her readers in more detail what her life was like in Theresienstadt, she begins a paragraph by writing “Ich hab Theresienstadt irgendwie geliebt, und die neunzehn oder zwanzig Monate, die ich dort verbrachte, haben ein soziales Wesen aus mir gemacht... In Wien hatte ich Ticks, Symptome von Zwangsneurosen, die überwand ich in Theresienstadt, durch Kontakte, Freundschaften und Gespräche“ (103), showing her readers that the relationship between the good and bad events and aspects of her life are entangled with each other. As she finds herself being excluded from her home in Vienna, she finds herself, for the first time, experiencing feelings of belonging and inclusion. While it was her Jewishness that

excluded her from a normal and good life in Vienna, being displaced and excluded is what leads her to understand more clearly what being Jewish means to her. Thus, Theresienstadt is also connected to Klüger's identity as a Jew: at the end of this same passage, she writes, "Wenn ich mir heute die unbeantwortete Frage vorlege, wieso and insofern ich Ungläubige überhaupt Jüdin bin, dann ist von mehreren richtigen Antworten eine: 'Das kommt von Theresienstadt, dort bin ich es erst geworden'" (103-4). This is informative for how the reader can understand how displacement during the Holocaust impacted how Klüger now understands her identity: for it was in a space of exclusion, namely exclusion from her hometown and entire life, that Klüger experiences inclusion among other Jews, and inclusion as she begins to form meaningful friendships.

Finally, in the beginning of the following paragraph, Klüger makes a stark contrast by writing "Ich hab Theresienstadt gehaßt, ein Sumpf, eine Jauche, wo man die Arme nicht ausstrecken konnte, ohne auf andere Menschen zu stoßen. Ein Ameisenhaufen, der zertreten wurde" (104). This passage affirms the misery and suffering of living in Theresienstadt, which Klüger makes clear and does not undermine. However, this description must be read along with Klüger's descriptions of the rest of her experiences in Theresienstadt: it was also in Theresienstadt that she built friendships and gained a deeper understanding of her Jewish identity. Therefore, Klüger articulates in her writing that her displacement is complex and demands more of an explanation and careful consideration. This contrast of Klüger's feelings towards her past leaves the reader feeling, perhaps, unsettled, because there is no simple resolution: thinking back to Franklin's introduction, we see that just as it is impossible to completely understand the events of the Holocaust, so too is it impossible to make simple conclusions about the complexities of an individual's life.

That Klüger's identity, which is shaped and formed by both her Jewishness and her Austrianness, cannot be broken down into either Jewish or Austrian. Rather, they are unavoidably interconnected. The inseparability of parts of her identity should come as no surprise to her readers, given that she spent her first years of life as part of a Jewish family in Vienna in the 1930s and 40s. One passage that poignantly shows this major and recurring theme of the interconnectedness of her identity markers in her life is the following:

> The city of my first eleven years is not a place where I really know my way around. When I visit Vienna now, I walk the streets like a tourist, map in hand, and easily lose my way. "Oh, you are from Vienna," Americans like to say. "How lucky you are. What a charming city." That's what they said even in the late forties, as if they had promptly forgotten what the war was about, and I'd reply incredulously, "But I am Jewish." (Kluger 24)

Though her readers today might quickly identify why Klüger's circumstance of being Jewish in Vienna in the 1940s was by no means a fortunate situation, Klüger still points it out in several instances, as in this passage quoted above. Her words here show how being from Vienna is still and will always be a central part of who she is and how she can begin to understand herself. Earlier on in the text, she writes about her hometown, saying that "Wien ist die Stadt, aus der mir die Flucht nicht gelang. Dieses Wien, aus dem mir die Flucht nicht geglückt ist, war ein Gefängnis, mein erstes, in dem ewig von Flucht, das heißt vom Auswandern, die Rede war" (19). Here, her readers learn that Klüger's beginnings were marked by feeling not only unwelcome but also imprisoned in her hometown. Despite this bad memory of Vienna, as well as Austria as a whole, however, Klüger never tries to ignore or disregard this part of herself. She writes,"Ich bin aus Österreich (wo man auf der richtigen Straßenseite fährt und deutsch spricht). Das stimmt, das

gilt, das ist, wie mir hier in Italien aufgeht, ein Satz, der mich beschreibt. Ich sollte bald eines Besseren belehrt werden, aber nicht sogleich" (Klüger 20). Therefore, Klüger's Austrianness, like any part of someone's identity, is not something that she can simply remove or extract, in the same way that she cannot disregard her Jewishness, and it is something that she seems to accept, though the aspects of her identity provide challenges for her throughout her life.

One major way that Klüger cannot so easily disassociate herself from her Austrian identity pertains to her connection to her first language, German. Regardless of how little or much she feels like she can identify as Austrian on a national level, she cannot change the language she spent her most formative years speaking. In reflecting on this, she writes, "Only the language was what it had always been, the speech of my childhood with its particular inflections and rhythms […] I understand this language, but I don't like it. I speak it, but I wouldn't have chosen it. I am hooked on it, and it's the reason I go back for visits" (Kluger 59). As the second chapter of this thesis will show more clearly, language plays a crucial role in Klüger's life and how she makes sense of her place in it. However, these sentiments, with regards to Klüger's identity, show that her associations with Vienna and its language are still things she must work through within herself. She continues to write about her experiences going back to the city, saying, "I get depressed after a while and clutch my American passport, eyeing the taxis that will take me to the train station or the airport. But it is the city where I learned to speak, listen, and read, all the basics for a human life. I remain its reluctant child. The trouble is that it was a city that hated children—Jewish children, to be precise" (Kluger 59-60). In *weiter leben*, she writes in an equally powerful way to describe the experiences of Jewish children in Vienna: "Freudlos war sie halt und kinderfeindlich. Bis ins Mark hinein judenkinderfeindlich" (Klüger 68). In this acknowledgement of her past, we see how her Jewishness, Austrian origins, and first language of

German are all intertwined. Finally, in the epilogue of *Still Alive*, she writes about how she found herself returning to German-speaking lands, recounting,

> Something pulled me back. Perhaps the language. For language is the strongest bond there is between an individual and a place. German, strange as this statement may sound, is a Jewish language. Consider that until the Holocaust, most of the world's prominent secular Jews spoke and wrote it: Kafka, Freud, Einstein, Marx, Heine, Theodor Herzl (!), and Hannah Arendt, to name the first that come to mind. (Kluger 205)

Here, Klüger points to the reality that the language she grew up speaking, German, belongs to not just her as an individual Jew having lived in a German speaking country, but that it has also been part of the lives of many Jews before her. Perhaps even more significant is that she points out Jewish *writers*: not only did these Jews speak the language, but they also employed the language in written forms of all kinds. We also see here that though Klüger may never find the perfect way to come to terms with or find resolve about her feelings towards her hometown and how the different aspects of herself all relate to this place, she confronts the reality of her past by acknowledging it by writing autobiographically about these complexities.

After the war is over, along with her displacement in the ghettos, camps, and Germany, Klüger's identity still continues to be in flux as she transitions into new stages of her life. Klüger and her mother's eventual departure from all of Europe and their transition to a new life in the United States is a crucial turning point for Klüger's identity, for as she finds herself in yet another new space and in an entirely new culture, she must come to terms with how she sees herself and how she wishes to move forward in shaping her identity, as far as this is even possible to do. In a sense, moving to the United States most clearly reveals the extent to which Klüger perceived her identity to be in flux: while she does not wish to be European, more

specifically Austrian, she is not sure how to be American and cannot fully comprehend the implications of such a national identity. As Klüger and her mother finally depart from Europe to head to New York on the *Ernie Pyle*, Klüger first begins to express the process in which she lets go of her European identity. She writes, "[ich] löste mich von Europa, das heißt, von dem einzigen Europa, das ich kannte, dem deutschsprachigen (Ehe ich es wieder betrat, war ich doppelt so alt geworden)" (222). This passage shows that there was a definitive point, and a physical one as well, in which Klüger first removed herself from her identity as a German speaking European. However, while she does wish to become integrated in the United States and let go of her Austrianness, in this given moment, Klüger does not wish to abandon her life and memories of it.

A further example of how Klüger wrestles with her Austrian and German-speaking identity comes in the form of an anecdote. She recounts how she had been living in New York for some time and studying at Hunter College, when she spent part of one summer studying in Vermont. There, she became acquainted with an American girl who, while kind and well-meaning, does not understand the complexity of being Jewish and coming from Austria and asks Klüger about her nationality. Klüger writes, "Auf ihre Frage, welcher Nationalität ich denn sei, gab ich die einzig mögliche Antwort, ich sei Jüdin, in Österreich geboren. Dann sei ich einfach Österreicherin, konstatierte sie, mein Glaube hätte nichts mit meiner Staatsangehörigkeit zu tun" (Klüger 247). In the same conversation, Klüger expresses her desire to become an American citizen, and she writes the same conversation in both her German and English versions. At the end of the conversation in *Still Alive,* Klüger includes something else that she tells her American acquaintance: "I don't want to be Austrian" (Kluger 193). This declaration, while it does only appear in *Still Alive,* shows a possible connection between the years she had lived in the United

States and Klüger's wish for emancipation from her Austrian identity. In other words, as time goes by and she becomes more removed from her life in Austria and in Theresienstadt, Auschwitz-Birkenau, and Christianstadt, she is able to see more clearly why she did not desire to have 'Austrian' as part of who she was. Further, as she begins to gain confidence in the English language and grows more comfortable in herself in her new home, she is able to express more clearly what she does and does not want to be as her life continues. While this opinion also changes over time, her reflections on her younger self during these years of her life show just how much questions of identity shaped her world.

What is important to note is how Klüger's interrogation of who she is and who she wants to be is not the same as others deciding this for her. During the beginning of her time in New York, there were two people who tried to diminish aspects of Klüger's identity, the first being her thoroughly Americanized aunt, who made clear to young Klüger her opinion about how she should move forward with her new life in New York. To make matters even more traumatic for Klüger at that time, she did not feel comfortable speaking in English yet, and she felt that it was a barrier to her communicating effectively. Klüger recounts this instance that occurred one night after having dinner at her aunt and uncle's home. She writes that her aunt and uncle

> brachten uns in einem protzigen Riesenauto nach Hause. In der Dunkelheit auf dem bequemen Rücksitz sagte die entfernte Tante zu mir: "Was in Deutschland passiert ist, mußt du aus deinem Gedächtnis streichen und einen neuen Anfang machen. Du mußt alles vergessen, was dir in Europa geschehen ist. Wegwischen, wie mit einem Schwamm, wie die Kreide von einer Tafel". Und damit ich sie mit meinem schwachen Englisch auch verstünde, vollführte sie die Geste des Abwischens. Ich dachte, sie will mir das einzige

> nehmen, was ich hab, nämlich mein Leben, das schon gelebte. Das kann man doch nicht wegwerfen, als hätte man noch andere im Schrank. (229-30)

This passage reveals Klüger's ability to recognize early on that even though her past was, in many ways, horrific, it was not simply something she could forget, rid herself of, or abandon. Even if she could, she could not imagine how this disassociation would be beneficial to her. Due to the many life transitions and traumatic experiences in her life, upon moving to New York, Klüger faced bouts of depression and anxiety which her mother thought could be solved by visiting a psychiatrist. Thus, the second person to make her feel as though she ought to question the way in which she perceived and projected her identity was Lazi Fessler, whom Klüger, perhaps bitterly, describes as someone who "sei Psychiater und sei ein enger Freund meines Vaters gewesen, mit dem zu sprechen würde mir sicherlich gut tun" (239). In actuality, Klüger could not imagine how this fellow Austrian could have possibly been friends with her father, and their therapy sessions proved to be unfruitful in alarming ways in relation to Klüger's authority of her person and identity. She writes, "Nur loskommen von diesen Gesprächen, die mich vernichten. Er zerstört das, was »ich« in mir sagt. Ich wurde ganz vorsichtig mit dem, was ich preisgab und was ich verschwieg" (245). In *Still Alive*, she writes "He is dismantling my very identity, I thought: I no longer know what I mean when I say 'I'" (Kluger 190). In both of these instances, Klüger is made to feel excluded from her own identity and voice. At no point does Klüger desire to have any sense of herself taken away that she does not wish to take from herself, which becomes increasingly apparent in how she declares her identity to be within the narrative of her autobiographical work, but also in her act of writing an autobiography and claiming authority of her "I".

The final way in which Klüger expresses her struggle to have her story heard and acknowledged in tandem with her identity is expressed in her reflections about being a woman. Klüger first acknowledges how gender can be a source of exclusion, when she writes about the war and memory: she writes that "die Kriege gehören den Männern, daher auch die Kriegserinnerungen. Und der Faschismus schon gar, ob man nur für oder gegen ihn gewesen ist: reine Männersache. Außerdem: Frauen haben keine Vergangenheit. Oder haben keine zu haben. Ist unfein, fast unständig" (12). Thus, the most obvious way that Klüger challenges the idea that discussion of the war are matters of men, and that women have no memory, is, once again, by writing about her memory and experiences in autobiographical form. Loew writes about Klüger's articulation of her role as a female voice to the Holocaust, saying that "gendered enunciation is central to Klüger's narrative voice. She tries to show that being a woman has decisive consequences on the retrospective analysis of her childhood during the war, and on the discourse that defines her stance and practice as a literary scholar" (109).

When Klüger begins a new life in New York, it is a rocky beginning and she needs time to adjust and feel any sense of belonging or inclusion. It is her friendships with three young women that have the greatest impact on her feeling integrated and at home: indeed, it is not so much the place, or even the language, that brings her a sense of home, but the people welcoming her and becoming part of her. After depicting her new friendships and lives of these three young women, she writes, "Freunde ergänzen einander, ergänzen heißt ganz machen [...] Die Freunde füllen die Lücken, sind komplementär, sie holen auf, was einem fehlt, sie tun, was man versäumt hat" (Klüger 251). In *Still Alive,* Klüger makes these sentiments even more explicit, expressing, "I was at last integrated […] My new friends welcomed me and let me be as I was" (Kluger 195). In contrast to Lazi Fessler, the Austrians of her childhood, and even the Czech children in

Theresienstadt, these friends in America let her be who she was and made real feelings of inclusion possible. In fact, her feelings of integration and belonging run parallel to her experience in Theresienstadt, where she felt that she most belonged as she experienced true friendship.

Overall, Klüger expresses a greater sense of home and belonging in and for her life in New York, retrospectively, in S*till Alive*. This could be because of another several years having gone by before she returned to write her story in English, allowing her more time to reflect on the years she lived there and its meaning in her life. The English language and writing for a predominantly American audience could also have something to do with this, and, it is likely also that English as a language influences how she feels about her sense of belonging in New York. In *Still Alive*, she writes about the impact of living in New York continues to have in her life:

> And New York, that city of strangers, is in retrospect one of several places that I would hesitantly call home, even though none of them are. New York alternated between meanness and generosity: it invited everybody in, and when you got close, it turned a cold shoulder. Yet it was in New York that I learned to speak English and memorized Shakespeare's sonnets and wrote English sentences and even verse. That's a kind of empowerment, as today's buzzword has it. […] New York freed me from the incompetent silence of otherness by teaching me to understand its language—an English, by the way, which shares with my native Viennese German an insolent humor and an aggressive, colorful verbiage. (Kluger 199-200)

Like her descriptions of her mixed feelings toward Theresienstadt, this passage illustrates how the relationship between place and identity is complex; it is at the same time near to and distant

from Klüger. Although it is unclear from this passage which other places Klüger would hesitantly call her home, by acknowledging that there are several, she acknowledges her loose, but present, attachment to place and space. Furthermore, it is not that language provides her a sense of home or inclusion, but rather, it provides her a sense of empowerment and competence to exist in a new place.

The final way in which Klüger acknowledges the sense of displacement that she feels and the kinds of places that ground her despite this displacement is in her discussion of museums. She writes that "Museums convey a sense of permanence, the idea of 'collection,' as opposed to separation and loss. In a museum I feel that I belong, though nothing belongs to me" (Kluger 198). Klüger continues to describe the effect and impact that museums and art have on a person lacking stability and belonging by saying that "art and literature can be a home for those without citizenship, because they remind us of our common race, the human race, and they sop you up, yet simultaneously feed you, like a magic sponge. They make you part of what you see and hear and let you stand back and choose" (198). In a place such a museum, a place that holds items from all over, items with perhaps no other home, Klüger feels most at home. While Klüger experiences elements of belonging in New York, Austria, and perhaps other places she does not explicitly mention, her complex identity and life of displacement, both spatially and linguistically, calls for a unique space, such as a museum, in which she can feel truly at home.

A Postmemory Perspective: Understanding Krug's Identity

As Krug sets the scene for the story she wishes to tell in the beginning parts of *Belonging,* she acknowledges the collective national guilt with which she grew up as a German in post-

Holocaust[4] Germany and how this influences the way that she is able to perceive her identity. The collective guilt that she feels began from being disconnected from her nation's past. In the first chapter of *Belonging*, she writes, "Whenever I traveled abroad as a teenager, my guilt traveled with me. 'Just say you're from the Netherlands,' my Aunt Karin told me before each trip. I should have taken her advice" (Ch. 1[5]). This passage pairs well with the passage discussed previously from *weiter leben*, in which Klüger's aunt suggests that she rid herself of anything to do with her past in Europe: in both instances, what the authors' aunts suggest is for them to disregard aspects of their identity. However, this parallel mostly shows how two coincidentally similar situations are actually very different. What is most clearly different between these two authors is that while Krug had the autonomy to choose to move to another country, meaning that she chose displacement for herself, Klüger's displacement was forced as a result of being a Jew in Austria during the Holocaust. While Klüger clearly expresses that this was destructive to her teenage self and led her to feel as if she did not have ownership over her life, Krug expresses that she felt as if she would have done better if she had hidden or "forgotten" about a crucial part of her identity: her Germanness. In both instances, Klüger and Krug do not let go of these important aspects of their identity, even though it makes life more difficult and uneasy for them. However, what each aunt encourages is different: Klüger is urged to forget and push away her past life and trauma, and Krug is urged to remove herself from guilt. While Klüger's refusal to reject her Jewish and European past has mostly to do with not wanting to let her memory go, which was one of the few things she had of herself, Krug wishes that she could rid herself of parts of her identity out of feelings of guilt.

[4] I use the term "post-Holocaust" rather broadly, to describe any time after the events of the Holocaust occurred.
[5] There is no pagination in either of Krug's works, but there are chapter headings. Therefore, I refer to the chapter from which I quote and discuss passages.

This desire to disassociate from part of her identity when she is among people of other nationalities continues in Krug's young adult life when she travels. Krug recalls that when there was a slight chance that one of her relatives further back in her lineage may have been part Jewish, she latched onto this in the hopes of overcoming the sense of guilt she felt about what being German implied to the people she encountered. She writes about this time in her life, saying, "Even though nobody had ever found, or even looked for, the slightest evidence of Jewish ancestry in our family, the conjecture promised comfort to my guilt-ridden teenage mind. As a young woman traveling abroad, I would mention the possibility with ill-founded confidence when asked where I was from" (Ch. 4). Here, Krug's generational guilt leads her to hold onto any hope of not having to fully associate with her national and ethnic identity ("Germanness"), but she is never able to fully do this, in spite of her attempts. Further, this guilt she feels pushes her to even claim Jewishness that she knows is not likely to be part of her identity. The collective guilt that Krug feels about being German manifests itself in many areas of her life, and it becomes increasingly clear that in order for her to reconcile with such feelings of guilt, she needs to address these feelings. Considering how Hirsch discusses postmemory in the following passage in her work *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust* is helpful to understand some of what Krug deals with:

> More urgently and passionately, those of us working on memory and transmission have argued over the ethics and the aesthetics of remembrance in the aftermath of the catastrophe. How, in our present, do we regard and recall what Susan Sontag (2003) has so powerfully described as the "pain of others?" What do we owe the victims? How can we best carry their stories forward without appropriating them, without unduly calling attention to ourselves, and without, in turn, having our own stories displaced by them?

> How are we implicated in the crimes? Can the memory of genocide be transformed into action and resistance? (Hirsch 104)

These kinds of questions are what Krug feels confronted by and therefore addresses in *Belonging*. Towards the beginning of her narrative, she recounts a high school field trip to concentration camps and extermination sites in which she took pictures of her classmates and herself looking dismal. About this trip, she writes, "I remember the sense of gratification I felt when I developed the photos in my basement and saw the images slowly emerge in their acid bath: here was the evidence of our collective guilt" (Ch. 1). The gratification that Krug experiences in having something tangibly associated with her feelings of guilt reveals the lack of stability she feels in being German and not knowing how to relate and understand her national identity. This instability becomes increasingly apparent as she describes in greater depth her experience as a German in the generation of people whose grandparents were part of Nazi Germany. In another recounting of her time as a student learning about history in school, Krug describes learning about the past in a more broadly and metaphorical way. In her English text, she writes: "On the path from the Versailles Treaty to the Paris Peace Conference, my teenage classmates and I left no stone unturned" (Ch. 1). In the German version of this passage, Krug describes this same idea even more metaphorically: "Auf unserem Erinnerungsmarsch durch die Geschichte" (Ch. 1), which suggests learning about at least part of her family history, if even in a removed or abstracted sense, has something to do with collective memory. Krug continues to describe these times, saying:

> We prepared questions for the old women who traveled from America to tell us about the camps, but we never thought to ask about one another's grandparents. We learned that our language was once poetic, but now potentially dangerous. We read Schiller but didn't

> learn to love him as we loved Shakespeare. We struck the German words for HERO, VICTORY, BATTLE, and PRIDE from our vocabularies. We avoided superlatives, and we used the word ZUSAMMENGEHÖRIGKEITSGEFÜHL, the sense of identifying with a group and believing in an idea larger than oneself, when defining American cultural identity, but not our own. (Ch. 1)

Here, Krug reveals that there was not just a familial disconnect and guilt that she felt as a teenager, but there was also a linguistic disconnect, meaning that as she grew up, she felt estranged from some of the vocabulary in her first language. As the following chapter will show, culture and identity are closely connected to each other; it is hard to make sense of one without the other. Indeed, the disconnect between heritage and language becomes more apparent when she continues: "We never learned about what happened in our hometown. We never learned the lyrics to our national anthem. We never learned old folk songs. We struggled to understand the meaning of HEIMAT" (Ch. 1). In these passages, Krug does not separate the concept of *Heimat* from the literal language one uses to describe such sentiments, and this particular passage reveals the sense of disconnect that Krug feels as she grows up in a post-Holocaust Germany riddled with guilt and unexplained ideas of belonging. The question posed explicitly to herself and implicitly to her readers—"How do you know who you are, if you don't understand where you come from?" (Ch. 1)—is left unanswered by Krug, but it is precisely what she seeks to answer in her quest to find a sense of home and belonging. Even after experiencing the German language in a positive way, her relationship to it, as she resides in the United States, remains strained: "And yet, after all these years, I still try to hide my accent: by covering my mouth while I speak, by keeping my answers short, by putting on a different accent" (Ch. 2). Like Klüger and her feelings about being Austrian, Krug expresses that even after many years have gone by, she still

has mixed feelings about being German. And for both authors, the German language, though they may not speak it in their everyday life, still remains significant to who they are.

Similar to Klüger, Krug experiences feelings of displacement in her life. But it must be said again that unlike Klüger, Krug's displacement was deliberate choice. In her second chapter, Krug writes, "After 12 years of living in America – I feel more German than ever before" (Ch. 2). Indeed, having lived abroad so many years does not lessen her "Germanness," as she may have hoped, but only makes her increasingly aware of it, as well as making clear that she must do something about it. In an interview with Krug about her book, Philip Oltermann from *The Guardian* paraphrases from Krug: "Being a German living abroad […] makes it harder to extricate yourself from your home country's history." Krug continues on in the interview to say "As soon as you answer someone who asks where you are from, the association with the Nazi period is there. You are constantly being confronted with it." Since being a German living as an "émigré" long-term means that she must continue to confront her origins, Krug seeks to maintain and understand a sense of her German identity by attempting to find some connection to her heritage through cultural events, and through remembering the cultural sentiments of the Germany in which she grew up.

One way Krug does this is through her entries about objects and concepts from Germany that she holds dear: sprinkled throughout her scrapbook-like graphic narrative, she features various things from Germany that she misses, captioned "From the notebook of a homesick émigré: Things German." Krug finds pieces of her German identity, and therefore some level of belonging, though not consolation, in the objects that carry cultural significance in her home country. For example, in entry *No. 2: Der Wald,* Krug writes how dearly she holds both the word *Waldeinsamkeit* and her own memories of being in a forest (Ch. 1), thereby demonstrating not

just a physical, but a linguistic connection to Germany. In entry *No. 4 der Leitz-Aktenordner,* she writes "The Leitz binder has provided reassurance in matters of utmost importance in my life" (Ch. 4). Similar to how she describes a *Wärmflasche* in her fifth entry (Ch. 6), many of the objects that she includes show how these cultural artefacts bring her a sense of security, one that she may not have any longer as she has now been living in the United States for several years.

The second way she does this in *Belonging* is through her journal-like entries about objects and things she encounters while living in the United States, which she refers to as her "Field Notes" (Ch. 2). She recounts searching through second-hand stores in Brooklyn for objects that remind her of Germany:

> The longer I've been away, the more books I pick up at the New York Public Library about my hometown, to learn everything I can about its wartime history. From this safe distance, I allow myself to see the loss it once endured. And yet, the longer I've lived away from Germany, the more elusive my idea of my identity becomes. My HEIMAT is an echo, a forgotten word once called into the mountains. An unrecognizable reverberation. (Ch. 2)

Following this passage, Krug chronicles how she visits and attends several German cultural events in the United States. At one German festival, Krug recounts how she watches what is likely an American of German descent dancing with blond braids, and she writes, "I find myself feeling sad over not being able to feel [pride], too, angry about not being able to identify with my culture, or any ethnic heritage, the way it seems to come so naturally to Americans" (Ch. 1). At the end of these field notes, after she has recounted several of these visits to German events in the United States, she concludes: "My search has yielded no satisfactory answers. I decide to look where it seemed impossible to look before" (Ch. 1). After this, Krug returns to Germany

and takes on the task of trying to find some greater sense of identity that she can take to construct a better way forward to understanding what it means to be a German in a generation connected to people who put millions of Jews to brutal deaths, not to mention the suffering of those who survived, Klüger being just one example.

For Klüger, there is a sense in which she cannot shake off her Jewish identity, as this part of herself is much more deeply rooted than even her national identity. Her Jewish identity reveals that she belongs to a lineage from which she cannot break or remove herself. Similarly, Krug recognizes that her identity is deeply rooted, shaped, and informed by her familial lineage. For Klüger, much of her trauma is connected to her religion; for Krug, her difficulties are related to her German citizenship. Unlike Klüger, the way that Krug seeks to understand this permanent aspect of her identity, and to perhaps come to terms or reconcile with it, is to spend the time to connect herself with the history of the people of her family. This becomes apparent at the end of the second chapter of her work, when she writes,

> No matter how hard I look, a nagging sense of unease won't disappear. Perhaps the only way to find the HEIMAT that I've lost is to look back, to move beyond the abstract shame and ask those questions that are really difficult to ask – about my own hometown, about my father's and my mother's families. To make my way back to the towns where each of them is from. To return to my childhood, go back to the beginning, follow the bread crumbs, and hope they'll lead the way home. (Ch. 2)

Since her identity is inevitably tied to her family, it is necessary for her to consider their past and roots, as they connect to her present life and identity. She must look behind her, in order to know something about who she is today and to understand the context of the collective national guilt

she shares with those like her in her generation. The solution that Krug resolves to make is to return to her roots in Germany.

When Krug visits the hometown of her father, the village of Kühlsheim, Germany, she seeks to understand more about what the concept *Heimat* means through the lens of her father's life. When she challenges him by asking what he would consider his *Heimat*, Krug writes what he says in reply, writing, "'I don't know. HEIMAT is a small, defined space, where you feel comfortable,' he says, as if quoting from a dictionary. 'Kühlsheim used to be my HEIMAT'" (Ch.7). As Krug receives perhaps what she would consider a fragmented or incomplete reply from her father about his views and feelings of home, she seeks to understand how her family relates to this idea, in order to inform herself of how she can understand them as well. Ultimately, this pursuit to understand her family, its history, how they conceptualize Heimat and how she belongs, is why she creates this work. The way in which Krug seeks to do this will be addressed in greater depth in the second chapter of this thesis, but what becomes clear in later parts of her story is that she finds a greater sense of identity by going back to Germany.

Both Krug and Klüger share a complex national and linguistic identity with which they must grapple: Klüger acknowledges her Austrian identity and the unchangeable fact that she comes from this nation, and at the end of *Still Alive*, Klüger includes in her epilogue that she felt a sense of incompleteness and "unfinished business with a past that's an ongoing story" (Kluger 205). Klüger also does not fail to remind her readers that her associations with Austria, specifically with her hometown Vienna continue to hold bad memories for her. Rather than returning in order to activate sentimental feelings or develop a sense of belonging, she clarifies her reason for returning to any German-speaking region by saying, "I had to go back to where

[German] was spoken and give myself time enough to understand, if not the killer culture of the past, at least the next generation and a bit more of my own" (Kluger 205). Similarly, Klug's national identity is what largely influences her to go back to Germany, address her familial roots and history, and eventually write *Belonging*, though for Krug, there is also a collective guilt she feels needs to be addressed. Both authors have lived for many years in the U.S. with parts of their identities rooted still in other lands, and their shared language and lives in the United States further connect these two authors. Though the arcs of their lives are vastly different from each other, from when they were born to their life circumstances, narrative, language, and art connect Klüger and Krug together and bridge the seemingly large gap between their lives.

CHAPTER 2: Narrative & Its Inseparability from Language

"Vielmehr beruht alle überhistorische Verwandtschaft der Sprachen darin, daß in ihrer jeder als ganzer jeweils eines und zwar dasselbe gemeint ist, das dennoch keiner einzelnen von ihnen, sondern nur der Allheit ihrer einander ergänzenden Intentionen erreichbar ist: die reine Sprache" (Benjamin 13).

These are the words of twentieth-century philosopher and cultural critic, Walter Benjamin in his essay *Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers*. I offer this as an introduction to this chapter because it can help conceptualize the nature of language. The figurative, rather than conceptual or philosophical language that Benjamin uses here suggests that language is not merely a collection of words that totally captures just the factuality of reality, but rather as something we can conceptualize as relating to an all-encompassing way of expressing and understanding reality. Notably, Benjamin acknowledges that there is a kinship, or perhaps a close relationship between languages, which work interdependently of one another in order to reveal something of what he considers to be the "pure language". Finally, I wish to highlight one other passage in Benjamin's essay that will be helpful when thinking about language in the examination and interpretation of Klüger's and Krug's works:

> Wie nämlich Scherben eines Gefäßes, um sich zusammenfügen zu lassen, in den kleinsten Einzelheiten einander zu folgen, doch nicht so zu gleichen haben, so muß, anstatt dem Sinn des Originals sich ähnlich zu machen, die Übersetzung liebend vielmehr und bis ins Einzelne hinein dessen Art des Meinens in der eigenen Sprache sich anbilden, um so beide wie Scherben als Bruchstück eines Gefäßes, als Bruchstück einer größeren Sprache erkennbar zu machen. (18)

Here, Benjamin writes in analogy, rather than in a clearly-defined philosophical manner. This influences the way I wish to think about language in this chapter: as I explore both authors' need

for narrative, it is important to note that the language used in storytelling and narrative has more than just the capability to factually explain things: it also can be used to imagine and communicate things of the world in poetic ways. I argue that this is similar to what both authors implicitly, and at times rather explicitly, do in the writing of their works. They are contributing to the greater translation of the Holocaust. By interlingually translating their life stories in both the English and German languages, Klüger and Krug contribute fragments to the larger language that communicates what the Holocaust was and what its implications are.

Making Sense of Life through Narrative

After considering in the previous chapter the complex identities and perspectives of both Krug and Klüger, I see that they address a need to make sense of their lives through a narrative framework. As a result, the ways they frame their life stories, which are quite different, are partially in response to these different needs. In her autobiographical account, Klüger writes about her life in the ghettos and concentration camp during the Holocaust, as well as her early years in Vienna and her life after the war ended. As she tells her story, Klüger encounters people who doubt the reliability of what she has to say. The act of writing autobiographically is the means through which Klüger bears witness to what she experienced and how she perceives these experiences. In writing about her life and articulating her memories, Klüger creates her own unique voice in the discourse on the Holocaust where she and people like her previously did not have one, and this better informs a broader public of the different experiences and aspects of the Holocaust. What is meant here by ‘discourse’ is what both Klüger and society more broadly perceive to be acceptable and part of the conversation about the Holocaust. After Klüger describes the horrific transport journey between Theresienstadt and Auschwitz, of which she has

nuanced ideas, she writes in *weiter leben* that the experience is "nicht salonfähig" (Klüger 110). In *Still Alive,* Klüger writes in a more explicit way on this topic, saying that her writing "doesn't fit the framework of social discourse" (Kluger 92). However, through the very act of writing her autobiography in the way she sees fit, and explicitly acknowledging that her life story might not fit the framework of the post-Holocaust discourse, she influences and shapes this discourse, because she is taking part of it herself.

One way that I consider the need for a narrative from Klüger is in light of how she first is told that she need not associate or engage with her past experiences and memories of them. The instance in *weiter leben* and *Still Alive* that most clearly shows this is when Klüger is a teenager first living in New York, visiting with family whom she recently met, as discussed above. In response to her aunt's suggestions to wipe away the memory of her past and to simply begin a new live in New York, Klüger writes reflectively: "Ich dachte, sie will mir das einzige nehmen, was ich hab, nämlich mein Leben, das schon gelebte. Das kann man doch nicht wegwerfen, als hätte man noch andere im Schrank" (230). While constructing a new way forward for her life and creating something new for herself seems to have been a good way to continue living, Klüger points out in this passage that to leave behind or wipe away memory is to leave behind her sense of self, and if she were to do that, then the person that she would construct moving forward in life would not really be her at all. In this way, we see that Klüger's need for a narrative is a necessary response to those advising repression rather than engagement with her life: in writing her autobiography, Klüger has agency over her life as a storyteller, and thereby takes ownership of her life.

There is another person in Klüger's life who attempts to influence how she perceives herself and the authority she has on her memory and story. Throughout Klüger's work, this

person surfaces again and again as someone who casts doubt on her role as a witness to what life was like during the Holocaust, and ultimately her ability to intralingually translate her testimony and experiences. Kluger, by writing *weiter leben*, shows that this is indeed possible. Klüger describes this recurring person as "die deutsche Frau eines Kollegen in Princeton, die sich der Gnade der späten Geburt erfreute" and whom she refers to as Gisela, so as not to give her identity away (85). This phrase, "Gnade der späten Geburt," refers to the generation of Germans born in 1930 or later, who feel as though they need not feel any guilt or association to Nazi Germany; since they were not the ones to commit the crimes, it has nothing to do with them. Throughout Klüger's chapters on her time in Theresienstadt, Auschwitz-Birkenau, and Christianstadt, conversations with Gisela show the varying degrees to which she doubts the authenticity of Klüger's testimony to what her life was really like, how these places really were, and the difficulty of understanding the complexities of Klüger's life in these places, particularly Theresienstadt. To explain her difficulty in 'translating' these things to Germans, Klüger tells her readers: "die wollen nicht hören, daß ich ein besseres Milieu für ein Kind vorfand als im Wien in der letzten Zeit; das wollen sie nicht hören, weil es die klaren Grenzlinien ihres Denkens verschiebt" (86) and continues to explain that other Germans, like Gisela, refuse to even try to see any other way of understanding these experiences. This passage reveals the ways in which Germans, and other people at the time, refused to accept certain ways in which the Holocaust can and ought to be "translated" (discussed or represented): in other words, the picture of the life that Klüger translates for herself, if it does not fit in with preconceived notions of death camps, ghettos, and work camps, is rejected as an inaccurate portrayal of such places and events. What Klüger attempts to translate intralingually, from her own experiences into the German language, is rejected.

In her book, *German-Jewish Literature in the Wake of the Holocaust*, Pascale R. Bos focuses on the works of Grete Weil and Ruth Klüger and the politics of address. In the fourth chapter, *Creating Address*, Bos focuses on Klüger's work, and inevitably writes about the role of the character Gisela. Bos states that she "exudes a strong ambivalence about the past and her parents' generation: she cannot come to terms with the legacy of the Third Reich, which expresses itself in her judgment of Ruth's story and her diminishing of the suffering of the Jews, which seems to function to alleviate her guilt" (83). The attempt to alleviate this guilt becomes even more apparent in later comments that Gisela makes, such as when she "informs" Klüger that "Theresienstadt sei ja nicht so schlimm gewesen" (Klüger 85). Even more than just an attempt to alleviate guilt, however, this is an attempt to take control of Klüger's testimony, voice, and translation of her life once again. After this comment, Klüger begins to narrate to her readers some details of what her life was like in Theresienstadt, beginning by saying that "Heute ist mir Theresienstadt eine Kette von Erinnerungen an verlorene Menschen, Fäden, die nicht weitergesponnen wurden. Theresienstadt war Hunger und Krankheit" (86). This passage shows the poetic and metaphorical nature of how Klüger expresses herself linguistically, and I will return to this in the final chapter of the thesis. For now, what should be pointed out is that Klüger acknowledges that a complex relationship between herself and this place exists, and this only becomes clear when she later explains how it was in Theresienstadt that she first felt a sense of belonging among peers and made friends, as I explained in Chapter 1. Additionally, this passage shows Klüger's figurative language, in particular her use of metaphor; this poetic means of communicating will be touched on more thoroughly in the following chapter. By writing her autobiography and bearing witness to the complexities of life in Theresienstadt, Auschwitz-

Birkenau, and Christianstadt, Klüger challenges her readers to rethink how they understand the Holocaust and consider to what degree they can claim they understand it.

Similar to how she translates, intralingually, her life in Theresienstadt and how she makes sense of the complexity of conveying to Gisela and other people in her life that there was still good in the midst of misery, Klüger translates her memories of life at Auschwitz-Birkenau in her autobiography. In her section on Theresienstadt, Klüger recounts more conversations with Gisela. "Auschwitz, ja, nach allem was sie gehört habe, sagte Gisela, das müsse arg gewesen sein, aber da sei ich doch nicht so lange gewesen, oder? Mir sei es doch relativ gut gegangen" (93). Here, Gisela attempts again to diminish Klüger's authority as a witness to her life and experiences, and she seeks to undermine the suffering that took place for Klüger, as well as her mother, in Auschwitz and Theresienstadt. In her chapter "Creating Address", Bos also makes note of Klüger's "meta-narrative" (80). After writing about Klüger's complex identity and life, and the therefore complex relationship between her story and her readers, Bos writes "In order to be able to misread or over-read *weiter leben*, however, it is necessary to ignore large parts of Klüger's meta-narrative, her present-day critical commentary with which she intersperses her memory text. This is a structural feature that is hard to miss, as it is so unique and furthermore integral to how *weiter leben* is composed as a narrative" (Bos 80). Here, we see that to ignore or neglect Klüger's metanarrative or to see it as a subcomponent of the chronological telling of her life would be a mistake on the reader's part. Under the next subchapter titled "Discursive Interventions", Bos furthers this idea, stating:

> [*w*]*eiter leben*'s unique quality lies precisely in the fact that the narrative turns a critical eye toward itself. It self-consciously deconstructs its own testimony and the psychological, historical, and literary discourses that have surrounded this kind of

> literature for the last twenty-five years, by commenting on it. In some ways, this text seems to 'do it all'. It provides testimony while commenting on the impossibility of testimony; it problematizes the recall of memory and the constructed nature of survivor narratives, and the function of writing. It invites a dialogue with its readers while commenting on the difficulty of this dialogue; it uses the insights of many different academic disciplines as well as from works of art and literature as intertexts, only to criticize many of these forms of theoretical and artistic discourse. (80)

What Bos highlights is that the way in which Klüger reflects on her life and writes a meta-narrative is just as important as her life narrative itself: Klüger reflects on the fact that she is writing about her life and, in a way, she is contributing to the discourse that she feels she has been excluded from, making her narrative arc particularly captivating.

This engagement with her narrative occurs again later in Klüger's life, which becomes apparent in the fourth part of both *weiter leben* and *Still Alive*, "New York", in which she writes about her life in the United States, particularly in academic settings. At one academic conference about autobiographical reports of concentration camp surivors, Klüger writes that one person posed the following question to her: "Wenn sogar die Überlebenden an der Aufgabe scheiterten, schriftlich mit den KZs zu Rande zu kommen, wie ich eben ausgeführt hätte, wie sollten dann erst die Leser solcher Schriften damit zu Rande kommen?" (142). In response to this, she poses the question to her readers, "Für wen schreibe ich das hier eigentlich? Also bestimmt schreib ich nicht für Juden [...] Also schreib ich es für die, die nicht mit den Tätern und nicht mit den Opfern fühlen wollen oder können, und für die, die finden, daß ich eine Fremdheit ausstrahle, die unüberwindlich ist? Anders gesagt, ich schreib es für die Deutsche" (142). Once again, one way that Klüger conveys her life and its complexities is through a dialogue with herself and her

readers to consider what it means to be a survivor writing about her life. In her book *The Memory of Pain*, in which she addresses *weiter leben* and *Still Alive* in her chapter "Ruth Klüger: Embracing Exclusion", Camila Loew writes also about the way in which Klüger enters into discourse with her readership, highlighting why this might be important for Klüger to do:

> By calling out to her reader directly, Klüger attempts to avoid the cathartic process of purification through suffering that many Holocaust texts promote, a simplistic interpretation that grants the story a sacred, immutable status. […] Klüger, on the contrary, narrates her experience through a direct, concise style, thus bringing daily life closer to the camps, and the camps closer to daily life. (125)

This quote highlights well what is an essential aspect of Klüger's motivations to write about her life – she does not wish to romanticize or fictionalize the past, but rather, she wants to bring her readers into the past to understand what it was really like to suffer in the way that she and millions of other Jews did.

For Krug as well, there is a desire to engage readers in a way that is both helpful in understanding the past and constructive in moving forward. The need for Krug's narrative is quite different from Klüger's, though it is true that Krug also wrote two versions of her text, in English and in German, and she also reflects on her narrative structure and purpose of writing this work. Krug acknowledges clearly that there is a need for stories, narratives, and known lineage, if she, or anyone else, wishes to know and acknowledge her collective guilt as a German in a post-Holocaust world, as well as the history of what has happened throughout generations. The guilt Krug feels and chooses to confront is not just on a singular or individual level—rather, it is something that she sees as being an issue for many Germans in her generation. For Krug, understanding her present world demands that she go back in time and address the specific, not

general, history of her own family. One way she makes this evident is in the fifth chapter of her work, titled "Unhealed Wounds" in the English version. Here, she writes about how her life narrative is fragmented due to the fragmented story of the generations before her. She writes, "My father never knew much about his father, or his grandparents, or, in fact, anyone else in his family. No shared family narrative was delivered from father to son to grandson, told over and over through generations. And because there was no story, there also was no history" (Ch.5). As the word *Geschichte* in German can mean both history and story, one may wonder how she conveys her concept of history in the German text. Interestingly, she writes in her parallel passage in *Heimat*: "Und weil es keine Geschichten gab, gab es auch keine Vergangenheit" (Ch. 5). Here, Krug uses the word *Vergangenheit*, which is typically translated in English as *past.* History is a matter of the past, and not knowing the history of her family's life estranges her from her past. Philip Oltermann writes: "In hindsight, Krug says, the family history she embarked on was the kind of project she wished she had done when she was much younger." And in this interview, Krug discusses in further detail why she chose to embark on this project:

> What I found problematic about the way in which we were taught at school about the Holocaust and the war was that it covered a very generalising sense of guilt. You learned about the facts, but you weren't encouraged to research what happened to your own city, or your own family. If that had happened, we would have learned to deal with this guilt in a much more constructive way. You would have been able to say: 'I am doing something positive now, I am contributing to retelling the story in a new way'. The sense of paralysis would not have been so strong.

Therefore, we see that Krug's engagement with her particular family past is for the purpose of engaging with her present self and life. Even more, Krug goes beyond her own individual life

and family history and considers how her generation, more broadly speaking, can deal with their guilt in a beneficial way.

The way that Krug resolves to confront this issue of being disconnected from her family's past is to directly engage with it: first, she returns to Germany to learn about her family history, and then, she writes and retells this history in a rich narrative on both a linguistic and visual level, as we will see in the final chapter of this thesis. But what I wish to emphasize here is that Krug's narrative structure is such that it chronologically engages with both the past and the present at the same time: her narrative contains anecdotes from her own childhood, followed by confrontation of her present life and circumstances, then integrated with the story of her family lineage. In this way, her work breaks down space so that we can see how the past and the present are inseparable from each other. In his book review published in *The New York Times* titled "A Visual Memoir Asks What It Means for Germany to Reckon With Its Past", Parul Sehgal describes Krug's pursuits of the past in the following way: "Krug slashes through a fog of shame, amnesia, determined oblivion and misdirection to trace the lives of two men: her father's brother, an SS soldier killed in his teens, and her maternal grandfather, who worked as a chauffeur to a Jewish linen salesman and later joined the Nazi party. What made these men? she asks. What did they believe? What did they do?" He goes on to write in his review that "The family stories are interrupted by short, passionate paeans to household goods: the Gallseife brand of soap, Hansaplast bandages, a rubber hot water bottle—items of care and comfort, reminders of childhood". About the objects that Krug draws and describes in *Belonging*, Sehgal continues on to say that they "speak to those unappeasable desires to wash away stains, mend scars, make whole. The wisdom of this book is that it does not claim to do any of those things. The notion of 'consolation' is one I suspect Krug would regard with suspicion. What she seems in pursuit of is

a better quality of guilt." Expanding on this last sentence from Sehgal in particular, it becomes clear that Krug does not want Germans, on an individual or collective level, to feel guilty about something without being moved to do something about it, either in action or discourse. Further, we see from Sehgal's comments that while Krug incorporates both elements of her particular familial history and cultural artifacts belonging to the larger culture of Germany, she does not aim to sentimentalize either of these things.

Moreover, Krug also wishes to engage with language in a way that does not console and sentimentalize herself or her readers. For example, in the first chapter of her work, she tells how she and her fellow classmates in school struggled to define and understand several German words and how they were supposed to relate to them in a post-Holocaust world. She writes about these times, saying that "We learned that VERGANGENHEITSBEWÄLTIGUNG means 'coming to terms with one's political past,' but felt that it really defined 'the process of struggling to come to terms' with it." Finally, we see this manifest in her struggling to come to terms, quite literally, with the concept of *Heimat. Heimat* is not only the title of her work, but a theme that she threads throughout its entirety, as if she were on a long journey in search for its answers. She writes on the page following the passage in which she addresses *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, that "We never learned about what happened in our hometown. We never learned the lyrics to our national anthem. We never learned old folk songs. We struggled to understand the meaning of HEIMAT" (Ch. 1). In order to avoid sentimentalizing these terms and ideas, Krug seeks to define them in ways that are meaningful for her as an individual connected to her own family lineage, and also in a way that shows how she is connected to a generation of Germans in a post-Holocaust world.

The Role of Language and Culture Within and Between Texts

As we have seen how both Klüger and Krug make evident the needs for their narratives, and the various ways in which they engage with such narratives, I will now address how and why language and culture are important within and between each author's texts, as language, specifically, is significant for how both writers conceptualize their lives. Robyn Fivush offers a helpful perspective on the nature of autobiographical writing and language, in her essay "The Stories We Tell: How Language Shapes Autobiography." Fivush argues that language plays an essential role in the cognizing and formulation of personal memory and autobiographical writing. By cognizing, I mean that language is the means through which we can perceive and know something; this is a process. Fivush writes, "Language is not *enough*, but it is critical in the development of a consciously accessible, socially sharable autobiographical memory system" (483). Further, she explains autobiography in both a helpful and a beautiful way, writing that "Autobiography is not memory of what happened; it is the way we make sense of what happened, and this is fundamentally a socio-cultural process. Language matters because it is through language that we create the shape and truth of our lives" (486). With these ideas in mind, we can see that both Klüger and Krug not only endeavor to make sense of their lives through the faculty of language, but they are also shaping their lives through language. Neither Klüger's nor Krug's narratives can paint the whole picture of the Holocaust, and neither attempt to do so. But, as Benjamin writes in "Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers," we can see that both authors contribute narrative and linguistic fragments to the greater whole of understanding this part of history. By narrative fragment, I mean that it is impossible for one narrative to capture all of the essence of something. From this argument, I see that likewise, it is impossible to fully convey a narrative, perfectly and completely, by means of language.

In the following, I will show why it is significant that Klüger, a Jewish woman from Vienna, Austria, wrote her autobiography *weiter leben* in 1992 in German, her first language, then in 2001 wrote *Still Alive* in English, her second language, and Krug, a woman from Germany, wrote her graphic memoir *Heimat,* focused on her family's history in English, her second language, then in German, her first language. Harkening back to Seyhan's definition of transnational writers, it is important to note that such writers see that different cultures and places influence their work (285). Expanding in more detail on this definition and what its implications are for Krug and Klüger, the following passage is also helpful. Seyhan writes,

> The writer in diaspora, moving between borders of language, memory, personal and collective identity, and national affiliation needs to plot complex and layered strategies of translating to negotiate these competing forms of identification. Perhaps the least ideology-driven manner of remembering languages and cultures lost, fragmented, or damaged in transport is realized in cultural translation. (283)

Indeed, we see that the ways in which Klüger adapts her narrative to make sense in the English language and in an American context, and the way that Krug engages with German vocabulary in a rich way in her English version written with an American audience in mind, *Belonging*, shows that there are multiple layers of context with which both authors engage.

While in the German version of the text the reader experiences how Klüger engages with why she wrote her work and for whom she wrote it and she acknowledges that she writes it for 'die Deutsche', the English language reader receives most clearly an explanation for the reasoning behind *Still Alive* at the very end of the work. In its epilogue, Klüger addresses her readers directly, writing,

> What you have been reading is neither a translation nor a new book: it's another version, a parallel book, if you will, for my children and my American students. I began it when my mother's slow death cut her contact with the outside world and prevented her from reading anything but the headlines of the Los Angeles Times, and I am writing these last words now that she is buried. I have written this book twice. (Kluger 210)

While it remains the same in *Still Alive* that Klüger recounts her life chronologically, covers the same events, and includes poetry in both texts, her two versions still have some notable differences in the way they address their readers. For that reason, we ought to anticipate it when she diverges into passages of reflections of life that are different in each text, since her primary audience, as well as her relation to her readers, is different in each. What she makes note of at the end of *Still Alive* is that she writes for her children and students, showing that her position as an author is different from what it was as she wrote *weiter leben*. As Caroline Schaumann puts it in her essay "From 'Weiter Leben' (1992) to 'Still Alive' (2001): Ruth Klüger's Cultural Translation of Her 'German Book' for an American Audience", "In both the German and the English version, the text's locale also determines its readership" (330). Additionally, there are the linguistic and temporal aspects of writing *Still Alive* in English and about nine years later than *weiter leben*: not only is Klüger more removed from her past and has possibly made more efforts of understanding her life, but she is expressing it in another linguistic space. Schaumann writes that to Klüger, "the Holocaust acquires different meanings at different times for different people and needs to be translated linguistically as well as culturally" (336). It is this argument that brings up the question of both interlingual translation between the German and English languages, and the question of cultural translation between a German and Austrian context and

then to an American one. The same line of thinking that Schaumann puts forth here could be applied to Krug's work, as we will see later.

By looking at both versions of Klüger's autobiography, one way that we notice interlingual translation between the two texts are the titles of different parts and chapters of the versions. In part two of her works, "Die Lager" (*weiter leben*) and "The Camps" (*Still Alive*), the interlingual translation that takes place is simple: there is a common, one-to-one translation between English and German for these terms. However, the chapters in part two of both works reveal a deeper engagement on Klüger's part for how she wishes to help her American audience conceptualize her life: in *weiter leben*, she titles the three chapters "Theresienstadt" (81), "Auschwitz-Birkenau" (106), and "Christianstadt (Groß-Rosen)" (140). In *Still Alive*, she titles the same three chapters "Ghetto" (71), "Death Camp" (89), and "Forced Labor Camp" (113). Here, the differences in titles are likely due to the need for an interlingual translation on a cultural level, which connects to what Schaumann said concerning the need for different kinds of translation (336). While a German reader might typically have knowledge of what Theresienstadt, Auschwitz-Birkenau, and possibly Christianstadt were and be able to imagine what Klüger describes under these names, the American reader can better conceptualize *ghetto*, *concentration camp*, and *forced labor camp*.

Another way that Klüger engages differently within the two versions of her text becomes apparent in certain passages she includes in one version, but not the other. One example of this is in *Still Alive*, when she writes about her American husband, saying,

> The paratrooper whom I later married was fond of telling me of the hardship he suffered because of the cold. I respected his suffering, as I respect all suffering, and it was a long time before I had the heart to tell him that I was cold, too, during those months, and that

> no army provided me with blankets. He seemed surprised. He had forgotten that we lived in the same world, though worlds apart. In the fifties the Holocaust hadn't yet been enshrined, and it was not proper to talk about it in any detail. (Kluger 117-18)

What Klüger's then-husband said to her, in relation to suffering as a paratrooper in the war, could be of relevance to the German reader, as suffering during the war took on many forms, such as the suffering of those who fought in the war. However, this passage is only included in Klüger's English version, which makes one think that her reason for describing this memory is to show her American readers that there are continued layers to how she must express her experiences to Americans and how she relates to them as a survivor of the Holocaust. What must still be kept in mind, though, is that virtually all readers may be only reading either *Still Alive* or *weiter leben*, so they would likely not observe that this passage is in one work, and not the other. This passage points to the reality that some people's experiences already fit into a narrative immediately following the events of the Holocaust and World War II, such as a soldier and his hardships. But here, the American reader learns that the narrative of the Holocaust survivor, especially in an American setting, has taken years to develop. Here, we see that interlingual translation also encompasses the need to translate culture and its context, and that these things influence how Klüger chooses to craft her narrative, given her two different audiences.

One final example of how Klüger crafts her narrative in a particular way for her English readers, and specifically an American audience, is her engagement with culturally significant topics that help her readers understand what she means to express. For example, while Klüger engages in both of her texts, though with slight variation, with what it means to be a survivor of the Holocaust, she includes in *Still Alive* the following passage:

> We who escaped do not belong to the community of those victims, my brother among them, whose ghosts are unforgiving. By virtue of survival, we belong with you, who weren't exposed to the genocidal danger, and we know that there is a black river between us and the true victims. Therefore, this is not the story of a Holocaust victim and becomes less and less so as it nears the end. I was with them when they were alive, but now we are separated. I write in their memory, and yet my account unavoidably turns into some kind of triumph of life. All I can say, helplessly to be sure, is that these are not the adventures of Huckleberry Finn and Nigger Jim, floating down the river on their raft, experiencing a somewhat sinister but mostly humorous journey. (Kluger 138)

This specific reference that Klüger brings to her readers from Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* is something that she hopes will help convey her message in a way that is meaningful to the American reader.

The work of Nina Fischer, which focuses on Klüger's works, can also be applied to Krug and is helpful to understand the prominence of multiple languages and cultures in both these writers' lives and writings. In her article "Re-Inscribing Holocaust Memory: Ruth Klüger's *Still Alive* as Jewish-American Autobiography", Fischer's main argument is that by employing cross-cultural translation, Klüger manages to create an autobiography that belongs to the genre of Jewish-American autobiography. Fischer points out that "the most significant role in this rewriting is the subject of multilingualism, which is as much at the heart of Jewish-American writing as it is the centre of Klüger's double writing of her autobiography" (30). Similarly, the subject of multilingualism, as well as multiculturalism, is at the heart of Krug's writings. Rightly so, Fischer acknowledges how the role of autobiography as the genre in which Klüger writes has implications for Klüger writing a testimony of her experiences during and after the Holocaust

(33). Fischer further argues that in the rewriting of her autobiography, Klüger employs three strategies: first, a practical strategy, in which Klüger must make linguistic choices in the English version in order to convey what she has already written in German. Fischer describes the second strategy as "an acknowledgement of the ongoing nature of history and memory and the forever-unfinished state of any autobiographical project" (54); this could mean that by acknowledging that there are limits to one's ability to totally capture the nature of the Holocaust, both Klüger and Krug manage to convey that they do not claim to present a complete representation of the Holocaust. Arguably, there is no such thing as a complete representation of this genocide, nor do I think anyone would be in the right to claim that there could be. Finally, Fischer claims that Klüger's third strategy is that of cross-cultural understanding that is embedded in the Jewish-American context, and in which multilingualism is a major aspect. Similar to Fischer, Schaumann addresses specifically the cultural and linguistic implications of Klüger writing her autobiography in English to address primarily American readers. Schaumann writes that for Klüger, "the Holocaust is conceptualized and verbalized for two different audiences, a German and an American one. Instead of calling for universal lessons, Klüger engages each audience in a dialogue about the Holocaust that is based on the shared experiences of each culture" (325). Once again, we see a similar engagement, though manifested differently, in the way that Krug engages both an American and a German audience. In the end, both Krug and Klüger show the languages they employ to convey their experiences and perspectives, though limited, are similar to the fragments that Walter Benjamin reflects on as being part of a more all-encompassing idea of language.

With these things in mind, I now turn to how Krug employs language and translates interlingually and culturally between her English and German texts. Looking at all these texts,

the way that differences of language and interlingual translation function in Krug's works is notably different from Klüger's works. Where Klüger's works take on, at times, different explanations and uses of analogies and emphases, Krug's narrative structure stays nearly identical throughout both versions of her text. At times, however, Krug expresses differences in her English and German versions through the insertion of cultural explanation. In other words, there are times, as there are for Klüger, when Krug primarily addresses an American audience in her English text. For example, in her first chapter, Krug writes "One of my favorite books as a child was DER STRUWWELPETER, a collection of 19th-century illustrated stories about children who get punished for misbehaving." In her parallel German version, however, Krug leaves out this short explanation of *Der Struwwelpeter*, likely under the assumption that her German audience already knows this.

Moreover, the prevalence of Krug's employment of the German language in her English version, which she wrote first, is what strikes the reader as most notable in the text. At times, Krug gives her English-speaking readers a definition for words, and the way she does this both textually and visually varies. English readers may feel as if they are receiving a German lesson as they read, since Krug, in a sense, teaches the German language throughout the book. For example, she writes in one passage, "Being FEHLERFREI (fault-free) was our universal goal" (Ch. 1), but in other passages, she gives a more thorough definition for German words that are more complex, or do not have a one-to-one translation (which may never be possible, anyway) into English. For example, she recounts anecdotally about the language of her friends during her youth: "We avoided superlatives, and we used the word ZUSAMMENGEHÖRIGKEITSGEFÜHL, the sense of identifying with a group and believing in an idea larger than oneself, when defining American cultural identity, but not our own" (Ch. 1).

Though this brief vocabulary lesson, Krug tells a personal story about her and her friends. Furthermore, she is actually pointing to an entire generational concern, not just one of her and her friends. This passage is an example of how Krug's metanarrative is also about uncovering what kind of cultural meaning certain words, such as *Heimat* and *Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl*, carry, as mentioned above. Moreover, though, both of these passages I highlight show the visual aspect of Krug's employment of German in the English text: namely, she often writes the German words in capital letters; in *Heimat*, Krug employs this same technique when she includes certain vocabulary words in English to show the contrast between the two languages. While there are several examples in the work where she does not do this, there are cases where she writes words that are also either now part of the English lexicon or are commonly known among English speakers. One example is when she writes about her grandfather's diary, which she says was "given to soldiers as a gift by the Führer" (Ch. 5). Ultimately, though, the impact of Krug's consistent and frequent use of the German language in her English text is that the reader might see how the specific nature of German words hold historical, cultural, and personal significance for Krug, and that to understand her story and the narrative she tells, the reader needs to know the words associated with it.

The Interdependence of Narrative and Language

Finally, I wish to conclude this chapter by considering a poignant example of the rich dynamic between language and narrative, and the way that language is inseparable from the lived experiences that both authors narrate. Though the works of Krug and Klüger offer strikingly different perspectives of the Holocaust, as both linguistically and visually manifest each of their different lives in two different forms, both authors show how reflection on language is

inseparable from the narrative of their lives. The example I turn to is found towards the beginning of both Krug and Klüger's works as they both recount in their English texts the initial associations they had with the word *Konzentrationslager.* In the first chapter of *Belonging,* Krug writes,

> I don't remember when I first heard the word KONZENTRATIONSLAGER, but I became aware of it long before I learned about the Holocaust. I sensed that concentration camps were sinister places, and I imagined that the people who lived there were forced to concentrate to the point of physical anguish. But I was too afraid to ask, feeling that this was something embarrassing to talk about, something that grown-ups discussed in whispers, something evoking the same unsettling feeling as the man who sometimes gave candy and balloons to my brother and me when we were playing alone in the front yard.

While Krug is unable to recall the specific instance in which she learned this word, her associations and feelings tied to it, since childhood, impact her. Similarly, Klüger writes on the first page of both versions of her autobiography the following passage (I quote from *Still Alive,* because of its use of the German word in spite of the text being in English):

> Their secret was death, not sex. That's what the grown-ups were talking about, sitting up late around the table. I had pretended that I couldn't fall asleep in my bed and begged them to let me sleep on the sofa in the living room. […] Of course, I didn't intend to fall asleep. I wanted to get in on the forbidden news, the horror stories. […] The voices at the table, women's voices, indistinct and barely audible because I kept my head under the blanket, were saying KZ. Just the two letters, short for Konzentrationslager. In German they make an ugly sound; they spit and cough like "kah-tset." (15)

Also having heard the word *Konzentrationslager* and the abbreviated form KZ as a young child, Klüger holds onto an unpleasant memory of understanding that the associations with this word are something miserable: namely, death; though she may have not yet fully understood the implication of death in this moment, she felt its weight. Though these two women have lived rather separate and distant lives from each other, in many ways, these parallel passages reveal that how they understand their lives and the reality around them is partially shaped by their language, and that their experiences with language and its meanings connect them in a unique way.

CHAPTER 3: Different Aesthetic Forms in Narrative

In the past two chapters, I have focused much attention on both the content and of these writers' autobiographical works, and I have explored the ways in which language informs their narrative. Both writers, however, go beyond reporting what has happened in their family's lives, as in the case of Krug, and in her own life, as with Klüger. Another reason to consider these two authors together is the way that both writers incorporate means of conveying and 'translating' the Holocaust through artistic media beyond narrative prose. For Krug's work, it is impossible to not notice that the entirety of *Heimat* is graphic. Her visual storytelling cannot be separated from her written narrative. For Klüger, her use of different modes of writing takes on a less obvious but still important form: throughout both *weiter leben* and *Still Alive*, Klüger weaves in both her own poetry and poetry written by others, and this technique adds an interesting dynamic and texture to the overall story she tells. Therefore, I consider the following questions: How are different aesthetic forms essential part of both Krug and Klüger's works? How do these different forms inform one of the past, but also construct a new way forward?

Everything Expressed by Means of the Visual: Krug

In its entirety, *Belonging* is a visual work. Comic, graphic narrative, picture book, however we may term it, the reader reads not only words, but also images. Therefore, the reader both reads the words on the pages, and she also sees colors, different kinds of illustrations serving distinct purposes, and images that serve different functions than the written words do. Krug's employment of art is distinct from Klüger's in that a visual rendering of the story she tells is the central aspect of her work. Through this visual storytelling, Krug communicates and translates her story, in a way, inter-semiotically. Her visual storytelling is not isolated; rather, it

must be interpreted in relation to the linguistic component of the narrative she tells. That is, the images the reader comes across ought not be separated from the linguistic narrative, but rather, considered as an essential component of the entirety of the story.

The reader's first contact with the work, whether the English language version published in the United States, *Belonging*, or the German, *Heimat*, occurs with Krug's illustration on the cover of the book (Figure 1, Figure 2).

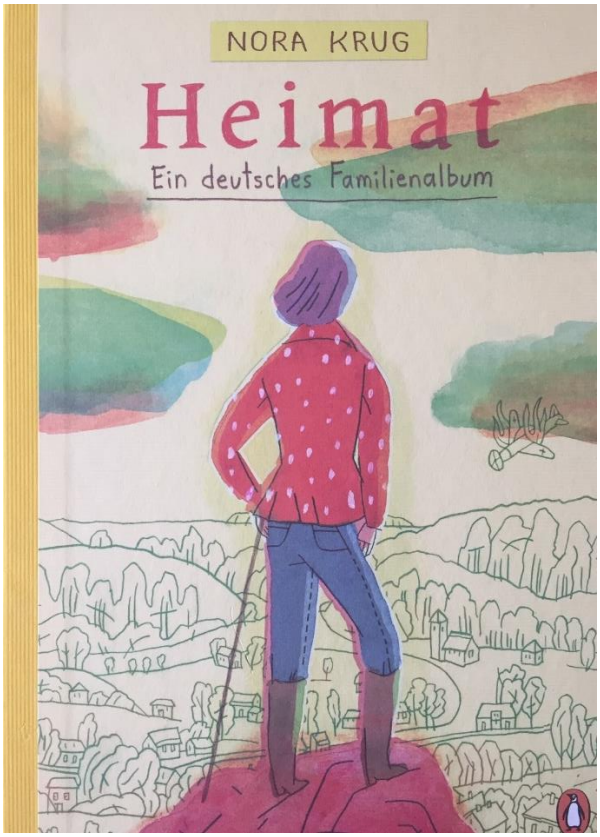

Figure 1. Photograph: Krug, Nora: *Heimat: Ein deutsches Familienalbum*, front cover.

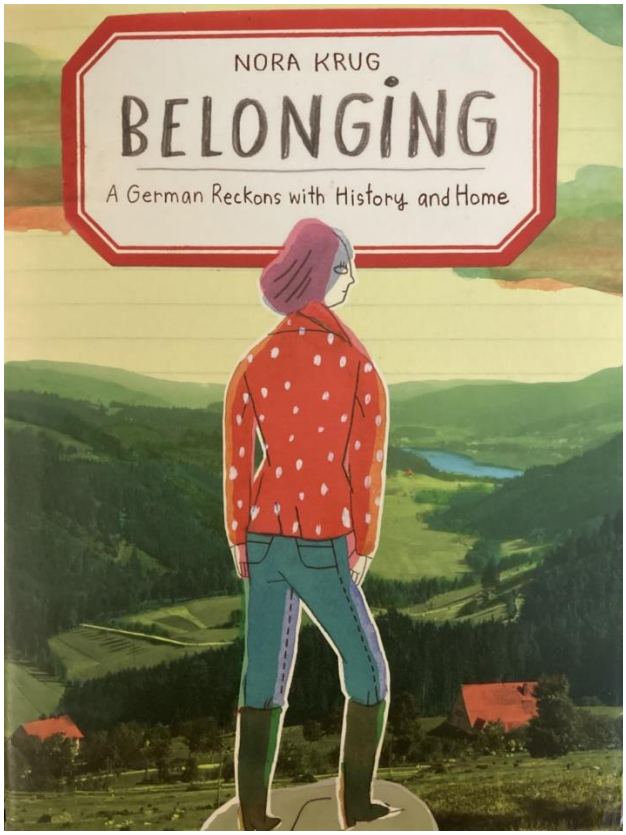

Figure 2. Photograph: Krug, Nora: *Belonging: A German Reckons with History and Home*, front cover.

While the reader may or may not be familiar with or immediately recognize the similarities of these illustrations and the painting from 19th century German Romantic landscape painter,

Caspar David Friedrich, she will eventually come across a rendition of the painting at the end of the first chapter of the book (Figure 3).

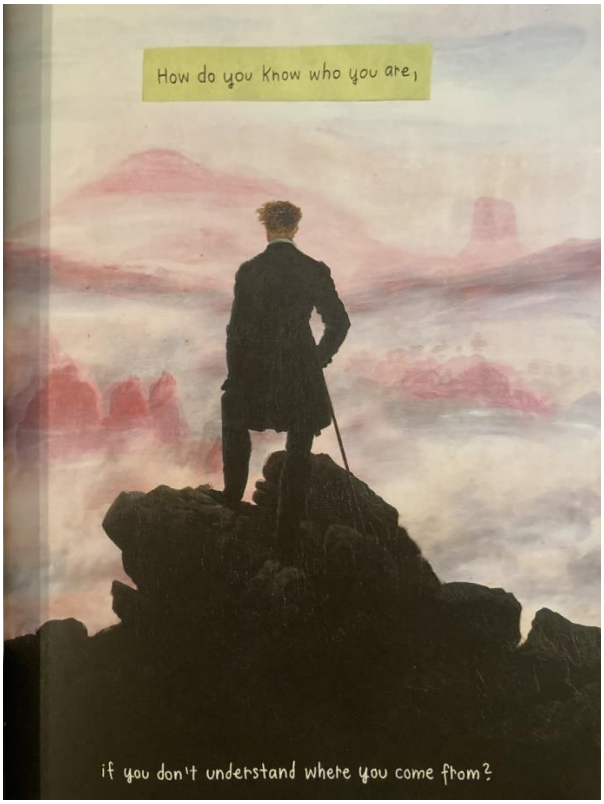

Figure 3. Photograph: Krug, Nora: *Belonging: A German Reckons with History and Home*, page from Ch. 1.

This painting, titled *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog,* seems to express the way that Krug feels as she faces her *Heimat.* In the opening of his book *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past,* historian John Lewis Gaddis describes Friedrich's famous romantic painting in the following way: "The impression it leaves is contrary, suggesting at once mastery over a landscape and the insignificance of the individual within it. We see no face, so it's impossible to know whether the prospect facing the young man is exhilarating, or terrifying, or both" (1). This description of the painting is helpful in light both of Krug's illustrations of herself on the cover, a

later illustration in Chapter 2, and her musings about identity and a sense of home. Though the image of the *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* dominates the page, the short yet significant question posed, "How do you know who you are, if you don't understand where you come from?" suggests that for Krug, the tangible aspects of her *Heimat*, that being Germany, are central to her identity and knowing of self. It should be noted, however, that Heimat need not only encompass a national dimension: rather, it encompasses the feeling of being at home in a place or space. In the case of Krug, the physical location of Germany and its connections to a nation are inevitably connected. Considering this passage again, while it could be conveyed in simple words, the use of both her own creative art and illustrations, in tandem with a well-known piece of art, moves the reader to understand why where one comes from is so significant for the shaping of Krug's identity. To the left of the image of Caspar David Friedrich's painting, Krug includes a definition of the term *Heimat*, which she writes is "From the comprehensive German BROCKHAUS encyclopedia" (Ch. 1). Arguably, this definition and painting should be read in tandem with each other. Krug quotes the following definition:

> That term which defines the concept of an imaginarily developed, or actual landscape or location, with which a person… associates an immediate sense of familiarity. This experience is… imparted across generations, through family and other institutions, or through political ideologies. In common usage, HEIMAT also refers to the place (also understood as a landscape) that a person is born into, where they experience early socialization that largely shapes identity, character, mentality, and worldviews… The National Socialists used the term to… associate a space of withdrawal, in particular for those groups that were looking to identify with a simplistic template for psychological orientation. (Ch. 1)

By looking at just the first sentence of this definition of *Heimat*, the reader learns that there is indeed a strong association with an actual landscape or place, rather than just an abstraction of it.

As the story unfolds, the reader learns that Krug makes a literal journey back to Germany in order to learn about her familial history; further, these illustrations demonstrate that the geographical space is just as important for Krug as the people in it. To make this argument even more clear, we see in Chapter 2 a very similarly illustrated image of Krug imitating Caspar David Friedrich's painting as well as her book covers. However, there are no variations in this illustration between Krug's English and German version of the text (Figure 4).

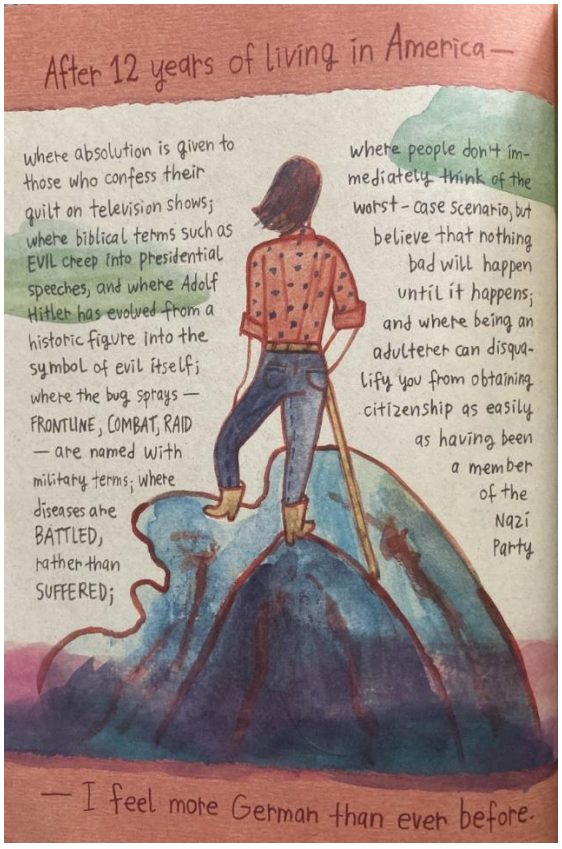

Figure 4. Photograph: Krug, Nora: *Belonging: A German Reckons with History and Home*, page from Ch. 2.

Though there is much text on this page, the reader's eye is drawn to the single sentence split between the top and bottom of the illustration, which states, "After 12 years of living in America – I feel more German than ever before" (Ch. 2). Where it might have been clear in her previous chapter that her question concerning how one knows who they are seemed to be in connection to her heritage in Germany, this illustration suggests a possible ambiguity of which landscape she is overlooking here: is it unclear as to whether she is looking out onto the American or the German landscape. What does become even more clear, however, with the combination of this single statement and her illustration, is that physical, geographical place plays a significant role in her understanding of self, and that a visual representation of this is one of the primary means through which to express this sentiment. Returning to the logic of how the layout of the book guides the reader, in connection to its narrative, after the front cover, she may next open the book cover and look inside the front cover and first page. It follows that the reader will see the family lineage of the narrator's mother's side (Figure 5).

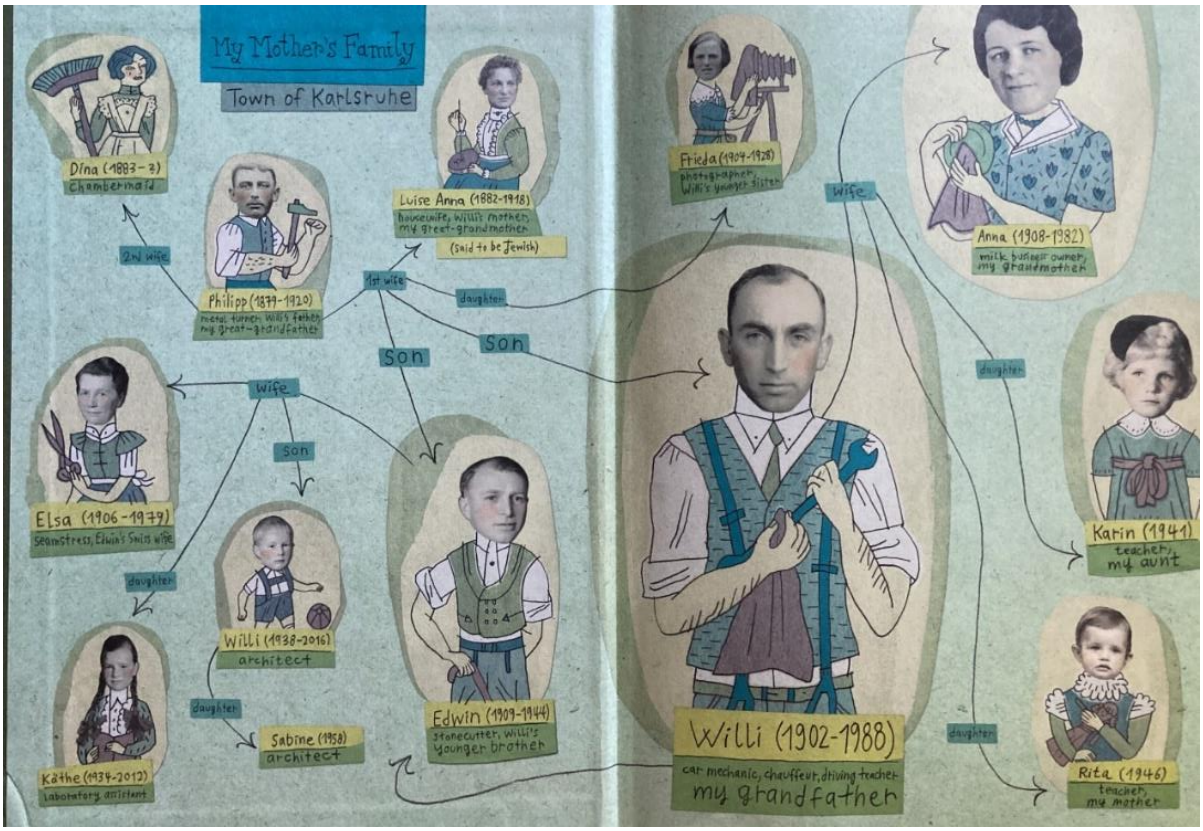

Figure 5. Photograph: Krug, Nora: *Belonging: A German Reckons with History and Home*, inside front cover.

Similarly, on the last page and inside of the back cover, the book shows the same for the narrator's father's side (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Photograph: Krug, Nora: *Belonging: A German Reckons with History and Home*, inside back cover.

Though perhaps not obvious upon first looking at these two lineages, throughout the course of the book, Krug uses similar color schemes in her illustrations of her family history. In the telling of stories on her mother's side, various shades of blues and greens dominate the illustrations. As for telling the stories of her father's family, hues of orange, red, pink, and yellow take the stage. To make this clear, the following two examples show that Krug does this in a variety of ways. From the first example (Figure 7), the reader knows that within the narrative, Krug is writing about her mother's family. Though subtle, the left page of this spread shows that Krug has colored a greenish tint on the photograph of her uncle. On the right page, comic panels are illustrated using these same colors.

Figure 7. Photograph: Krug, Nora: *Belonging: A German Reckons with History and Home*, two page spread from Ch. 4.

The next image (Figure 8) is an example of Krug's narration of her father's side of the family. The comics on both pages are similar in nature to the one above, but on the left side, the reader

will also see that even the background page behind the comic, which is a pink color, fits into the overall color scheme of Krug's paternal lineage.

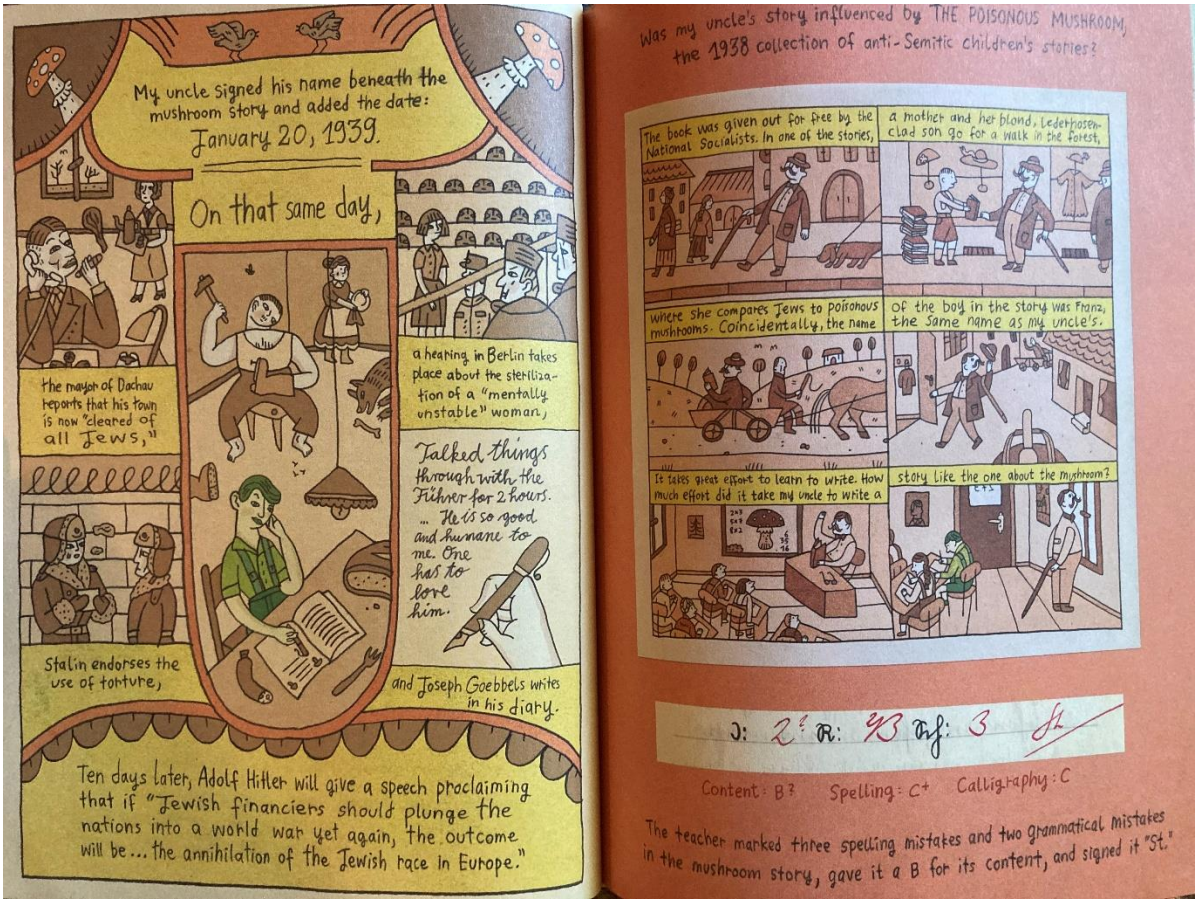

Figure 8. Photograph: Krug, Nora: *Belonging: A German Reckons with History and Home*, two page spread from Ch. 3.

Though there are many examples of unique ways to color code which side of the family she discusses, these are just two examples that show the details Krug put into organizing her narrative. If the reader were to forget momentarily which side of the family Krug was narrating, the color could function as a reminder of which side. Ultimately, however, what this intentional use of color shows is that even the simplest visual means to express difference in parts of her

story points to the fact that visual means of storytelling have their own special ways of conveying meaning that written word does not.

As all of the images demonstrated thus far show, Krug uses a variety of visual means to tell her story: real photographs, illustrations that look like a traditional comic panel, collages, and detailed drawings of people and objects. There is both a sense of the real and historical and the reimagined. To explain what this means, I consider the two pages from Figure 7. On the few pages prior to and directly after this spread, Krug interweaves even more comic illustrations and old photographs next to these illustrations. In this way, Krug's reimagining of her family's lives does not fictionalize them, but rather, adds to the dimensions of their history, giving the stories a rich context that merely text and photographs, for Krug, could not.

In *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory*, Marianne Hirsch examines the ways in which family photos function in narratives of history. While her primary focus is to consider photographs, she considers the dynamic interplay of multiple visual representations in Art Spiegelman's graphic novels, *Maus I* and *Maus II,* and her analysis of Spiegelman's works can be applied to Krug's work. Before examining in more detail the similarities between what Krug and Spiegelman do in their graphic novels, some of Hirsch's final thoughts in her introduction are helpful in reevaluating how there are multiple means of aesthetic communication that contribute to any kind of discourse and to the understanding of what is even meant by discourse. About the current circumstances of our world, Hirsch points out that "We live in a culture increasingly shaped by photographic images. But these technologies develop more rapidly than our ability to theorize about their effect" (14). Hirsch continues to ask questions about which theories ought to be used in order to make sense of what we see, noting that "The etymological roots of *theoria* define it as an act of viewing, contemplation,

consideration, insight, in other words, in terms of visuality. By returning to roots we can perhaps overturn the prevalent conception of theory as a master discourse" (14). With this etymologically rooted definition of theory in mind, I now wish to see what we can learn about Krug's work by using what Hirsch has said about Spiegelman's.

In the introduction of *Family Frames*, Hirsch writes that "Art Spiegelman's memory is delayed, indirect, secondary—it is a postmemory of the Holocaust, mediated by the father-survivor but determinative for the son. He uses his father's oral testimony and the few personal artifacts that have endured" (Hirsch 13). Though the lives and circumstances of Spiegelman's family during the Holocaust is a counterexample to Krug's, both authors and artists stand in similar positions to their family history, and both use multiple means to create a narrative that tells the story and history of their families. About Spiegelman's use of real photographs within the narrative of his graphic novel, Hirsch writes that "Inserted into his graphic text, they offer him a representational structure adequate to the task of postmemory" (12). Similarly, the family photos Krug uses, as I have stated previously, provides a sense of reality to her illustrations. Further, in her first chapter of *Family Frames*, titled "Mourning and Postmemory", Hirsch continues to write about Spiegelman's use of family photographs:

> By placing three photographs into his graphic narrative, Art Spiegelman raises not only the question of how, forty years after Adorno's dictum, the Holocaust can be represented, but also the question of how different media—comics, photographs, narrative, testimony—can interact to produce a more permeable and multiple text that may recast the problematics of Holocaust representation and definitively eradicate any clear-cut distinction between documentary and aesthetic. In moving us from documentary photographs—perhaps the most referential representational medium—to cartoon

> drawings of mice and cats, Spiegelman lays bare the levels of mediation that underlie all visual representational forms. (25)

With this passage from Hirsch in mind, reconsidering the section of *Belonging* displayed in Figure 7 shows that the story of Krug's maternal grandfather, both with photographs of him and the illustrated tales that Krug heard of him from her family members, also raises the question of how the Holocaust, and history in general, can be represented. Moreover, in line with previous arguments I have presented, I would argue that Krug's use of multiple media is necessary for how she wishes to convey the lives of her family; by illustrating several of the memories of the stories her family tells her, which become her own postmemory, she invites her readers to not just hear these stories and histories, but to imagine them and understand them both in light of her written narrative and the real photographs used.

The Poetry in Everything: Klüger

Though neither *weiter leben* nor *Still Alive* are stories told through visual means, as Krug's works are, the role of art as a means of understanding the world around her, as well as communicating her own world, is central to Klüger's narratives. As the narrative of her life unfolds in a rather traditional autobiographical form, the reader learns that literature and poetry were and are essential to the shaping of Klüger's mind and person, even in the midst of fighting for survival in Theresienstadt or Auschwitz. But Klüger does not simply talk about the role of poetry and literature in her life: rather, her life is partially conveyed and interpreted through these forms of art, and in both versions of her autobiography, this is especially obvious of poetry. To emphasize this argument, consider the amount of poetry Klüger includes in each version of her story: In *weiter leben*, Klüger embeds a total of sixteen poems that are indented in their original

poetic form. In *Still Alive*, Klüger uses ten poems, five of which are similarly embedded within the text, and five that serve as epigraphs for different chapter sections of the book. With both versions of her autobiography in mind, Klüger incorporates twenty-six distinct poems in her writing that can be observed either at the beginning of chapters or indented within the text. There are even more verses and shorter lines within the text that are not presented in an indented manner. Remarkably, Klüger includes different poems in *weiter leben* and *Still Alive*, and they are both her own and the poetry of other writers. In other words, though a typical reader of Klüger's autobiography may only read either the English or German version, and not both, she would encounter in either text Klüger's own poetry and that of other writers. Moreover, literature and visual art are also influential forms of art that mean something to Klüger, both in the way that she makes sense of her past and in how she enters into post-Holocaust discourse. Throughout both versions of her autobiography, literature, like poetry, aids Klüger in her telling her life story. And though Klüger's thoughts on visual art are less prevalent in her work, the reader finds that it too is a means through which Klüger sees life and stories being communicated.

Rather than analyzing each poem that Klüger includes in both of her works, this section focuses on how Klüger talks about poetry, both her own and others', and how the poetry embedded in her writing relates and contributes to the story she tells. In both *weiter leben* and *Still Alive*, some of the first instances the reader comes across both Klüger's discussion of and inclusion of poetry are about her father. Having first been sent to prison for the crime of performing abortions, Klüger writes about her father, saying,

> Im Gefängnis hatte er das Buchenwaldlied gelernt: »Oh Buchenwald, ich kann dich nicht vergessen, / Weil du mein Schicksal bist. / Wer dich betreten, kann es erst ermessen /

> Wie wunderbar die Freiheit ist.« In den KZs wurde keine große Lyrik verfaßt. Wäre es anders, so könnte man behaupten, diese Lager wären doch zu etwas gut gewesen, etwa zu einer Läuterung, die große Kunst zur Folge hatte. Sie waren jedoch zu nichts gut. – Ich eignete mir sofort die Worte des Lieds an. (Klüger 32)

This passage might leave the reader with an eerie feeling, and that may be just what Klüger wants – she acknowledges that although poetry, lyric, and literature were essential to the experience of Jews in the Holocaust, romanticizing the time, through poetry, should be avoided and is likely not even possible. This idea is further developed as she explains how incomplete her knowledge is of what ever happened to her father, and that while she wrote poems about it, it was not something that ameliorated or removed the confusion and pain. Prior to including her poem in *weiter leben*, Klüger writes,

> Ein halbes Leben hab ich gebraucht, bis mir klar wurde, daß diese Fabel nur auf dem Mist meiner Wunschvorstellungen gewachsen war. Ich schrieb ihm Gedichte, deutsche und englische, eine Art Exorzismus, oder vielmehr, ich schrieb sie nicht nur, ich verfaßte sie im Kopf, gedächtnisfreundliche Verse, mit denen ich wie mit leichtem Gepäck herumlaufen konnte, die einzelnen Strophen sozusagen auf der Zunge zergehen ließ und immer wieder ein Wort daran verbesserte. [...] Alles, um wegzudenken, um abzulenken. (Klüger 35)

This passage shows how writing poetry about her father functioned as a kind of coping mechanism for her, especially in light of not ever knowing the conclusion of his life. After presenting the poem just referenced, she writes, “Wenn ich diese Verse wieder lese, so scheint mir der unreine Reim und der wechselnde Refrain das beste daran” (Klüger 37), making the point that the imperfect aspects of the poem are actually more fitting for why she writes. This

sentiment ties in with her final comment on how she views writing poetry about not just her father, but those who suffered in concentration camps, ghettos, and death camps:

> Ich meine nicht, daß man »keine Gedichte nach Auschwitz« schreiben dürfe. Ich meine nur, daß Gedichte neben ihren Schaukelrhythmen und unreinen Reimen auch aus sinnträchtigen Sätzen bestehen, und hinter diesen lauert oft wieder ein anderer Sinn, der in meinem, in diesem Fall aus einer zähneklappernden Angst besteht, sich der Wahrheit zu stellen. Was hier nicht zur Sprache kommt, ist die knirschende Wut, die unsereiner irgendwann haben muß, um den Ghettos, den KZs und den Vernichtungslagern gerecht zu werden, die Einsicht, daß sie eine einzige große Sauerei waren, der mit keiner traditionellen Versöhnlichkeit und Märtyrverehrung beizukommen ist. (Klüger 38)

This passage may leave the reader not only feeling a sense of unease, but also with a sense of the "teeth chattering fear" she describes. If her readers felt tempted to have dream-like thoughts about her or her father's sufferings, they will learn not to; these highlighted passages show that Klüger is extremely wary of the temptation of sentimentalizing the horrors of the Holocaust through art, poetry and song being the present examples.

Nevertheless, Klüger continues to interweave poetry throughout her narrative, and at times she even makes clear that writing her own poetry served as a means of coping with and consoling herself with the dreadful circumstances of her life. An example of this is when she was first living in New York as a teen and was having trouble communicating with her Austrian psychiatrist Dr. Fessler, as well as suicidal thoughts. About this time in her life, Klüger writes, "I was now writing English poems. They were partly experiments in a foreign language, partly a way of coping—the usual entanglement of form and content" (Kluger 191). In a time of personal suffering, tangled trauma, and lack of communication, poetry was a place of solace for Klüger.

The final section of Camila Loew's book chapter "Ruth Klüger: Embracing Exclusion" provides helpful insight to understanding Klüger's relationship to literature and art. Simply put, Loew's opening sentence for this chapter section asserts that "Literature is Klüger's answer to the question on Holocaust representation: in literature, she finds a powerful tool to confront the past from the perspective of the present" (Loew 137). In fact, Klüger does this to her own writing and with her own past. For example, in her chapter Auschwitz-Birkenau in *weiter leben*, she includes a couple of poems she had written during her time there, and writes about all of these poems she wrote, saying that "Es sind Kindergedichte, die in ihrer Regelmäßigkeit ein Gegengewicht zum Chaos stiften wollten, ein poetischer und therapeutischer Versuch, diesem sinnlosen und destruktiven Zirkus, in dem wir untergingen, ein sprachlich Ganzes, Gereimtes entgegenzuhalten; also eigentlich das älteste ästhetische Anliegen" (Klüger 126-7). About this passage in *weiter leben*, Loew writes that "according to Klüger, art can indeed serve a consolatory function. Writing rhythmic verses was a strategy the young Klüger devised during deportation, in search of some form of relief in the midst of pain and horror, and as a way to reinsert herself into the world immediately after her escape from the camps" (Loew 140). What is more, Klüger also shows here that she recognizes how poetry and art can serve different functions throughout a life, and that there is something to be learned about her past self, and what she needed then, and what her present self needs and what present life circumstances demand. Like people and lives, art forms are not static, and the relationship that Klüger has to poetry, literature, and visual art develops and evolves as she and her life does. This becomes obvious in one of the last sentences of the paragraph where she talks about her childhood poems; Klüger tells her readers about the change of her poetic preferences, saying, "Meinem späteren Geschmack wären Fragmentarisches und Unregelmäßigkeiten lieber, als Ausdruck sporadischer

Verzweiflung zum Beispiel" (127). Unsurprisingly, this statement makes sense in light of Klüger's earlier assessment of the non-rhyming and irregular verses in her poem about her father.

Klüger's engagement with literature and poetry does not stop at engaging and understanding her own past. Instead, just as I explored the ways in which writing an autobiography and contributing to the collective voice of Holocaust survivors, Klüger's engagement with literature and poetry, her own and others', is another way that she takes part in the discourse of the post-Holocaust world. Bos focuses on the importance of Klüger writing autobiographically as an entryway into the discourse pertaining to the Holocaust, but she makes the point that poetry is also an essential part of Klüger's voice. Returning once again to Klüger's time as a young woman in New York made to visit the unhelpful psychiatrist Dr. Fessler, the reader learns just how much she struggled to both find her own voice, and, in this particular instance, work through the trauma of the past years of her life. Particularly regarding this unprocessed trauma, Klüger tells her readers: "Ich hätte ihm anfänglich gerne meine Gedichte gezeigt. Dort standen die Worte, die ich dafür gefunden hatte, und er hat mir keine anderen geliefert. Nicht einmal das Wort von der Trauerarbeit. Vom KZ war nur einmal die Rede und dann so, als sei ich in keinem gewesen, nur meine Mutter" (Klüger 245). About this passage, Bos comments that "the poems she composed in her mind in Auschwitz helped her articulate what had occurred to her […] It is *weiter leben* itself then, which contains both these poems and her life story, and which offers the opportunity to speak back to this reifying discourse that silenced her" (Bos 88). Along the same lines of this argument, Loew argues:

> Klüger's denunciation of the patterns of anti-Semitism latent in classic German literary texts is another gesture of "normalizing" the discourse on the Holocaust, by making it an

> event that can be contextualized in history, and talked about in literature; horror ("catastrophe") has its precedents, behind the scenes, in texts in which corpses have been shoved "under the table," but actually lie at their very core. (Loew 142)

This argument that Loew makes falls in line with my argument about literature and Holocaust discourse: by communicating through poetry, Klüger challenges and influences the discourse.

I conclude this chapter by looking at how the visual arts and museums hold and convey meaning for Klüger and her life, particularly as someone who has struggled with feeling a sense of home and belonging. Near the very end of *Still Alive*, Klüger writes about her thoughts and feelings about living in New York and what the place has meant to her in her life. Her friends play a significant role in Klüger's ability to consider New York to be home in some way. She writes about how her four closest friends enjoyed the free and inexpensive parts of the city. Then Klüger writes, "I loved going to museums and listening to Liselotte tell me what she liked about a painting. She would encourage me to dislike certain famous painters and to admire certain minor ones, in other words, to drift wherever my minimal understanding of art would take me" (Kluger 197-8). In this passage, Klüger recounts what aspects of her life were like with Liselotte and being in the city in museums and around art, but Klüger then continues into a reflection on what museums and art really mean to her:

> Museums convey a sense of permanence, the idea of "collection," as opposed to separation and loss. In a museum I feel that I belong, though nothing belongs to me. I lay claim to what my eyes take in. Libraries convey a similar sense of accumulated history and culture, but it's more a kind of promise, since you can't read all the books at once, whereas a museum offers you a ready-made feast. I can't be rejected by museums and books, except when the police interfere, forbidding me to enter the museum or burning

> the books. Of course that happens. But short of violence, that is, short of the ultimate abolition of meaning, art and literature can be a home for those without citizenship, because they remind us of our common race, the human race, and they sop you up, yet simultaneously feed you, like a magic sponge. They make you part of what you see and hear and yet let you stand back and choose. (Kluger 198)

This passage speaks to the heart of a life of someone who has been displaced and left wondering where they belong. While Klüger obviously agrees with this sentiment, perhaps Krug would feel the same way about feeling a sense of belonging among objects and items collected: perhaps there is something about the tangibility of objects that hold cultural significance to our lives. Along these same lines, Klüger continues on in this section of her work to describe even more of her experiences with museums and art as she grew older. Retelling an anecdote about a time she was sick in the hospital and looked forward to visiting art museums, she writes about when she first recovered and was able to return to normal life, her first priority being to see an exhibit by German expressionists at the Guggenheim Museum in New York, celebrating that she was once again living. She tells her readers: "Die Sehnsucht nach dem Museum, diesem Museum, das war die Sehnsucht nach der warmen Lebensbrühe unserer Kultur, zu der sogar die vielgeschmähte Bildung gehört" (Klüger 258). Here, we learn that art museums not only offer a sense of belonging for Klüger, but also a sense of life; to be living is to be part of art. Finally, Klüger comments on a time when she saw Picasso's painting, Guernica, at the Museum of Modern Art:

Figure 9. Painting: Picasso, Pablo. *Guernica.* 1937.

About the painting not being in its country of origin, Klüger writes, “Ein Flüchtling war Guernica in New York – auch ein Gemälde konnte ein Flüchtling sein – und blieb es, bis die Spanier es sich vor einigen Jahren nach Hause holten. Das war uns das liebste Bild von allen” (Klüger 258). Once again, Klüger expresses the connection that she, as well as her friends, feels to art: while she does not give an in-depth reason in this passage as to why they loved the Guernica best of all, it seems that they relate to it in that it is a “refugee”. From this, it seems that the connection they feel to the piece of art comes from their ability to associate with something that lacks a permanent home. With this quote in mind, it makes sense that Klüger sees herself and the world through means of different artistic forms, especially as she expresses herself and makes sense of her experiences through poetry.

Aesthetic Forms as Means of Communication

What I have shown in this chapter is that for both Krug and Klüger, working with different aesthetic forms is not merely an afterthought, or something added on to make a story better or more meaningful. Rather, these different forms are means through which to communicate these authors' stories. These forms are moreover inseparable from the verbal telling of a life impacted and influenced by the Holocaust and World War II. The reason why various aesthetic forms are such a powerful means of expressing aspects of history and life is because these things are not merely collections of facts. Life is composed of stories, many of them, and the way that we interpret these stories, especially our own, demands that we see them as more than the statement of facts and events. We understand the meaning of things, what they are and what they feel like, through the imagined and reimagined: in the form of photographs, visual art such as paintings and illustrations, simile, metaphor, analogy, and much more. In this way, we can see that the unknown must be explained by means of the known or familiar. Therefore, these forms must not be considered to be a means of communication that is a way around the real work of explaining facts: rather, they ought to be considered essential means, in tandem with autobiographical written perspectives, photographs, and other tangible or "grounded" means, through which reality is communicated and understood.

CONCLUSION

If we want to understand more about the world, we need to listen to the stories people have to tell. As we consider the ways in which much of the world, in particular the United States, is in a polarized state, with many people standing on either one side or the other, we see more and more the need to understand what it means to listen to and learn from experiences and perspectives that differ from our own. Both autobiographical works and creative fiction have the power to convey such stories and be understood by a wide audience. In the case of the catastrophic, horrific, and unjust events of the Holocaust, there seems to be no end to what we can learn about it. What we learn from two authors from even just two different perspectives of the complex events of the Holocaust that there are multiple layers of such a story that demand to be communicated. It was not enough for either Krug or Klüger to write in just English or in German the stories they felt compelled to tell. Moreover, both authors felt compelled to convey their stories through various artistic means. In fact, the final part of this last chapter was a glimpse into the possibilities that artistic forms possess to convey meaning about history and one's life experiences. What I have learned in the process of writing this thesis is that there is a plethora of stories, in multiple forms, that we can learn from to shape our understanding of the Holocaust. In no way do I believe we will exhaust this endeavor, yet we ought to continue to engage with the stories we see and hear.

As for Klüger and Krug, we have seen how both authors raise many questions and concerns about their identity, displacement (forced for Klüger, chosen for Krug), their sense or lack of belonging, and how different aesthetic forms are necessary for them in the constructing of their narratives. On some level, it is my opinion that the world we live in is forgetting how essential stories and narratives are for our life: these narrative frameworks are being substituted

with utterly fragmented ways of communicating reality, social media and mere collections of data with no explanation being just a couple of examples. As I move forward in life, I am motivated to identify the way that people's given circumstances shape their identity and perceptions of it. And I desire to have an open mind to the stories out there that may make me feel uncomfortable and force me to "re-arrange a lot of furniture" (Kluger 73) in my mind about the Holocaust.

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