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“DON’T GIVE ME AWAY, MUMMY”

MESSAGE AND EMOTION IN A JEWISH WOMAN’S HOLOCAUST NARRATIVE

Susanne Nylund Skog

We refugees that live in Sweden, we look like most people, but we are permeated by indelible memories. We will die eventually and with us all witnesses will be buried. The written word fades away but remains.

This is my translation of Miriam’s words. Miriam is a Jew that survived the Holocaust and wrote about it. In this article I analyze her manuscript. It is archived as one of the life stories in the Nordic Museum collection of Jewish memories. How does Miriam communicate her “indelible memories”? And while doing so, what is it that she communicates? Or to put it in another way: What are the messages of her narratives?

The purpose of the article is to examine the relationship between emotion and narration. The main question is concerned with how the messages of a narrative are communicated emotionally. How does Miriam make us as readers experience what she experienced, or feel what she felt? What formal and artistic techniques does she use in order to establish an emotional relationship with her readers, and to emphasize the messages of her narratives?

A central metaphor in Western thought is emotions residing inside the body, ready to be triggered and released (Harding & Pribram, 2009, 6ff, Wulff 2007, 22). Similarly to Sara Ahmed and many others I argue that emotions are created relationally.¹ Ahmed uses the example of a child being afraid of a bear. The fear is not in the child, she writes, it “is a matter of how the child and bear come into contact. This contact is shaped by past histories of contact, which allow the bear to be apprehended as fearsome” (Ahmed 2004, 7). The emotion of fear is thus created in the present and in relation to an object, in this case a bear. This means that, although individually experienced (or felt), emotions are culturally taught and created in social relations (Ehn & Löfgren 2007, 103; Harding & Pribram 2009, 12ff).

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In the article I examine how emotions are created relationally in Miriam's manuscript, towards the events she describes and towards the receiver of her narratives. Furthermore, and above all, I explore how Miriam is narrating and creating the gist of the story, taking advantage of formal and artistic techniques .

Fundamental for my understanding of narrativity (oral as well as written) is that I presuppose a connection between form, content and meaning. Similar to Dell Hymes, Barbro Klein maintains that even if the study of form does not automatically lead to an understanding of content and meaning, we must take for granted a covariation or interplay between form and meaning (Klein 1990, 45-46). In that sense formal and stylistic features are to be regarded as flexible communicative tools, which can be mobilized in different ways for different communicative purposes (Bauman 1992, 58).

THE JEWISH MEMORIES AND MIRIAM'S MANUSCRIPT

The Jewish memories at the Nordic Museum in Stockholm were collected during 1994–1998 and amounted to over four hundred life stories, approximately 1600 photographs, six hundred historically valuable original documents and fifty objects. The collection was motivated by several coinciding factors. At the time fifty years had passed since the end of the Second World War and those who had survived the Holocaust and were able to speak about it were already becoming old. Other reasons were that anti-Semitism seemed to have returned to Swedish society and that there was a growing number of people denying the Holocaust.

The incitement to document experiences from the Second World War (mainly from Jews but also from a few non-Jews) made people to emphasize the terrible events during this time. Although the museum also asked for experiences from Jewish life before and after the war, the collected material is still concentrated around the fears of the wartime and this theme therefore creates the core of the material and its emotional base. The material is available only by permission, which also proves that most of it is extra sensitive or emotionally charged.

Summarized descriptions of the material are kept in three files, with 'Materials content' and 'Anonymous version' written on their backs. On a couple of A4 pages each life story is summarized under six headings: formalities, personal information, chronology, war years, post-war period, and other information. Sometimes there is not enough information to fill in all the gaps under personal information, and at other times it almost overflows. It seems as if it was impossible to subject the narratives to the rules of archiving.

In the left corner of the summarized descriptions there is a note saying that the material is accessible by permission only. This means that the archive director must give permission for me to work with the material, and that I have to sign a special document prior to getting access to the material, and finally that I, if I wish to quote from the material, need permission from the person who wrote the life story,

or in case that person is dead, it is again the archive director from whom I obtain permission. The process is customary to a great deal of archived material and quite understandable. At the same time it is also contradictory. The collection was created in order to end the silence concerning Jewish life in Sweden and the terrible things that happened during the Second World War. And now it is kept hidden in the museum archives. Beige anonymous boxes contain handwritten letters, worn kippas and dented tin mugs, fading photographs, videotapes and thick piles of written life stories. The sterile environment preserves everything that nobody wants to be aware of, and that therefore needs to be remembered.

Miriam was born into a Jewish family in Hungary during the First World War and grew up with three brothers. She got married and gave birth to a daughter called Anna in 1940. The next year her husband died and shortly thereafter her father followed. Miriam, her daughter Anna, and her mother were deported to Auschwitz in May 1944. Both the mother and Anna were gassed to death immediately after their arrival. Miriam was released from Bergen-Belsen in April a year later, and from there she was brought to Sweden.

Miriam calls her manuscript a testimony and a book. It is typewritten, more than 200 pages long, has the characteristics of a novel, and is, as mentioned before, filed as a life story. Parts of the manuscript have been published in a collection of edited life stories about Jewish memories (Johansson 2000). In the same manner as the editor of the collection Johansson, I corrected some grammatical and linguistic mistakes in the life story, although I did not make any changes in chronology or tense forms. The translation from Swedish into English was made by me. Since Miriam learned Swedish as an adult, her command of the language was not excellent, especially when it came to grammar, but nevertheless I find her text driven, articulate and because of the subject matter extremely hard to endure.

Miriam's manuscript is focussed on her Anna's short life. This is how Miriam introduces her.

The story about Anna is a true one.

She was born in Hungary on 4 March, 1940. Her life was cut short. Anna died in May 1944 in a gas chamber. Her tender body was turned to ashes and smoke in the crematory of Auschwitz.

This way an emotional drama is immediately established – an innocent young girl is brutally murdered. The first part of the manuscript speaks about how Miriam in Sweden in the 1980s learns about a girl who is quite similar to her. She hopes that could be her daughter and she sets out on a journey in search of her. In the manuscript the journey begins with a recapitulation of their separation in Auschwitz. We enter the narrative when Miriam together with her daughter and mother get off the train in Auschwitz after several days of travelling.

Anna slept in my arms, hugging her rag doll. She was lucky not to see what I did. I put my arm protectively around her and waited until all the others were out of the train wagon.

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The step from the wagon door to the ground was too deep. I couldn't jump with Anna in my arms, so I turned myself with the back outwards and fumbled with one leg for a foothold. At the same moment I felt a powerful blow to the head. It was a German officer who tried his rubber baton. My scream wasn't audible because of the others' screams. Mothers searched for their children, children screamed crying for their mothers, siblings and friends searched for each other.

I tried to reach my mother; she was squeezed in the mob. I was still holding Anna in my arms for fear that she would be stamped to death. I felt that she had bent backwards. At first I thought that she had fallen asleep but to my astonishment I saw that it was a man in striped clothes that was pulling her towards himself. I held my breath and pulled Anna back, fighting against the man's hold. He was stronger than me, but it scared Anna and that gave me strength to hold her. But for how long? "Mother, mother!" I screamed my emergency call. Mother was just three steps away, but people were lying on the ground, making her steps difficult. "It would be better if you walked without your child," said the man in "pyjamas". Finally my mother reached me and closed her arms around us. I cried, my mother cried, but Anna was scared the most. She held her arms round my neck and screamed out her panic. "Don't give me away, Mummy, don't give me away!" I cradled her in my arms until she had calmed down. "Hush, hush, the apple of my eye, don't be afraid. We will never be parted, no, never, never!" I kissed away her tears. Who knew then that in just a few minutes [...]

There were thousands of people; we couldn't lose each other in the tumult. Most of them went to the right. Somebody must have been chasing them because they went at a rapid pace. In the strong reflector light everybody's face had a white shimmer. They looked as if they were all wearing white masks.

"Does it take long? I am hungry and sleepy, Mummy." "Hush!", I put my forefinger over my mouth to warn Anna. In a low voice I encouraged her: "No, my darling, we are soon there." I kissed her hastily. "Look who is walking there." I pointed to Magda, who was engaged to Alex.

No one of us suspected that the right side meant a gas chamber and that the left side was the waiting room for death [...]

Now it was Anna and me who were standing eye to eye with the Germans. It went as I had anticipated; someone's thumb showed us the way to the right. We didn't have time to take a step before another officer, doctor Mengele, stretched his hand for me. He grabbed my wrist, looked me in the eye, and pulled Anna's hand out of mine. "Tomorrow you'll see each other again," he said. Paralysed, I followed Anna with my eyes. I was pushed aside – you were not allowed to stand there. The Germans worked as if on a piece basis. I saw that my mother followed the others; she and Anna walked hand in hand. Hand in hand they went towards death.

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That is how easily it happened. How easy it was to break the promise I had given my only child only a few minutes earlier. "No, my darling, we shall never part."

This happened nearly forty years ago but I still hear Anna's desperate cry. "Don't give me away, Mummy, don't give me away!"

This is the key scene in the manuscript, and without doubt it describes the most important event in Miriam's life. According to the manuscript everything she experiences and speaks about after the separation relates to the event – the separation between Miriam, her child and her mother.

GIVING TESTIMONY

As mentioned before, there are traces of several genres in the manuscript. The manuscript can be regarded as an unpublished novel, as a Jewish woman's life story, as several personal experience narratives, and as a testimony. The latter is by many researchers regarded as the most used and well established genre when depicting the Holocaust (Waxman 2008, 165ff, Horowitz 2007, Kremer 1997, and Lang 1988).²

According to Paul Ricoeur a testimony has three main characteristics (Ricoeur 2005). Firstly, the witness defines herself by claiming that she was there. This authorisation is fundamental to Holocaust literature (Ohlsson 2002), and in Miriam's manuscript it is established prior to reading, in addition to also being repeated throughout the text. Secondly, the witness claims that she is telling the truth. This is, as we have seen, another important aspect of Miriam's script, captured in the sentence "The story about Anna is a true one". Thirdly, the witness also opens herself for subjective trial, saying that if people do not believe her, they can ask somebody else (Ricoeur 2005, 212–215).

In addition to these three aspects Miriam also bears witness for those who are no longer able to do it themselves, especially her mother and her daughter (see also Ohlsson 2002, 11 and Rosen 2008). The fact that you are an eyewitness is important for authorizing and validating a testimony, since the concept of witnessing is usually defined as "first-hand seeing" (Waxman 2008, 154). In the manuscript Miriam repeatedly emphasizes that she has been to Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen, she has seen what the Nazis did. Paradoxically, seeing is also what has made Miriam's life after the war almost unbearable. She points out that she is lucky that Anna did not see what she did.

Within Holocaust literature, the vast genre covering everything from novels to archived documents, the connection between the writer and the events depicted is a crucial and debated one (Ohlsson 2002, 36ff). The closer the connection, the more trustworthy the story seems to be.³ How would we have reacted to Miriam's narrative if we had not known that she herself had experienced what she wrote about? Whatever the answer, my point is that the genre of Holocaust testimonies in itself evokes

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or creates morally coloured emotions. Although the theme in Miriam's narrative of a mother and a child being separated and the child brutally murdered is of course in itself highly emotionally charged, the fact still remains that we as readers also know that the writer and the mother is the same makes it even more so. And had we not known whether it was a true story or not, had we then felt the same way as we do if we consider it being based on first-hand experience?

As mentioned before, Sara Ahmed argues that emotions are relationally constructed in the present. Emotions conjure in a 'towardness' or 'awayness' to an object (Ahmed 2004, 8). It is in our relation to Miriam's narrative that emotions are created. Emotions are neither in the body nor in the object, meaning in the example of Miriam's narrative that there are no fixed emotions in the text waiting for us to be uncovered, nor are there any emotions connected to the event that her narrative tells about.

The fact that Miriam's manuscript is, first and foremost, framed as a testimony, although there are traces of several other genres, is of great importance when it comes to how emotions are depicted in and by the narratives in the manuscript, and how we as readers feel about it when reading it.

TALEWORLDS AND STORYREALMS

In the following I analyze how Miriam creates emotions in her manuscript. The analysis begins in formal features, in other words, I concentrate on *how* Miriam narrates her experiences.

The folklorist Katharine Galloway Young regards oral narratives as enclaves in a conversation, as one region belonging to another, as one province of meaning enclosed by another (Young 1987, 9). In her analysis she divides a conversation into three different realms or provinces of meaning. Firstly, she distinguishes the events in the story, which take place in the taleworld, and secondly, the comments about the story and storytelling, which are made in the storyrealm. The storyrealm draws attention to the storytelling event as a performance, while the taleworld focuses on the events that are being depicted. With the help of comments (or frames in Young's terminology) the listener and the teller move between different realms, while at the same time the story as well as the storytelling event are being evaluated by both. Finally, Young distinguishes the realm of conversation as yet another province of meaning.

This way of looking upon oral narratives gives an insight into the strategies of storytelling and, as an analytical instrument, also works well for written accounts (Nylund Skog 2005). The realm of conversation is, when it comes to written accounts like Miriam's, to be translated into the manuscript as a whole, usually scattered and highlighted by smaller more form-bound narratives (conjuring taleworlds and entered or framed by storyrealms), such as the one Miriam has written about the separation. In telling her life story Miriam moves between these three provinces of meaning. In that manner Miriam creates a specific rhythm, a special kind of drama and, as I argue, certain emotions.

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When Miriam, in her manuscript, is to leave the realm of the manuscript and enter the taleworld, she must do this by means of the storyrealm, in other words she must prepare the reader for what is to come and advise on how the narrative is to be understood. In the case of the narrative about the separation she does this by speaking about how she was travelling on a train in Sweden and had just begun to hope that her daughter was alive.

It felt strange to sit on the train, apparently untouched, but despite that my thoughts circled around Anna. Now and then I glanced at my fellow passenger and played with the thought of telling her about the night in May 1944, when we arrived at Auschwitz in an overcrowded cattle train wagon. Would she have understood what we felt when the doors were thrown open?

This passage makes us see that one of the reasons for Miriam to speak about the separation is to try to communicate how she was feeling at the time. The narrative is emotionally motivated. She is framing it in such a way as to make the reader concentrate on its emotional aspects.

When Miriam enters the taleworld, she does not change the tense, as is common in personal experience narratives (Young 1987, 157ff, see also Stahl 1989). The fact that she conjures the taleworld in the past tense instead of the present can depend on many things. One reason might again be generic: maybe she does not think of the events as a personal experience narrative; instead, she regards it as a witness report, a testimony. The detailed account of what Miriam saw and how she moved her body points in this direction, as does the seemingly emotionless language.

In the book *Writing the Holocaust* Zoë Waxman examines written testimonies from the time of Holocaust (Waxman 2008). She writes that objectivity is often expected from the survivor-writer, and argues that the importance of keeping to a calm sober language correlates with the view that the Holocaust holds messages for the advancement of humanity (Waxman 2008, 154). In such a perspective the emotionless language has a purpose; it strengthens the writer's authority and gives meaning to the narrated events. To fall victim to one's own feelings is not recommended under the circumstances that the use of the personal experience narrative genre and present tense might have signalled (compare Young 2000, 79ff and Wieviorka 1999).

Another reason might be that Miriam does not want to enter the taleworld; that she does not want to be fully absorbed by the experiences she writes about. Her use of the past tense has the effect of keeping the events at a certain distance. The present tense, on the contrary, possesses a unique ability to draw the writer/teller and the reader/listener into the taleworld, to make them feel what was once felt, to do what was once done (Nylund Skog 2002, 150ff, Young 200, 79ff). By refraining from using the present tense Miriam avoids being completely drawn into the taleworld and back to the experiences of the separation.

But when she is to truthfully write about what happened in May 1944, she uses her own and her daughter's words from that time: "Don't give me away, Mummy, don't give me away!", "Hush, hush, the apple of my eye, don't be afraid. We will

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never part, no, never, never!", "No, my darling, we shall never part", and "Don't give me away, Mummy, don't give me away!" Perhaps it is with the help of these key phrases that Miriam recalls the events, which does not hinder them from being also a way to render the narrative's authenticity and authority. These phrases are the emotional and dramatic engine of the narrative. Hence, despite the distancing choice of tense, Miriam creates a strong sense of presence with the help of these phrases.

It is plausible to assume that Miriam used the past tense in order to avoid being drawn back into the strong emotions connected with the separation. So her choice of tense can be understood as a strategy for maintaining a distance from the events she is writing about, or simply as the only way possible for her to write about the separation. But as she still wants the readers to feel a little of what she was feeling at the time, Miriam repeats the phrases and through this establishes an emotional relation between herself and the reader.

In the narrative about the separation, the tense, rhythm and quoted direct speech create a strong sense of presence. When Miriam returns to the event, further ahead in the manuscript, she looks at it from a distance. She has changed the tense. Resignation marks the description and the sense of presence in the separation story is lost. Instead, it is the emotions Miriam had at the time of writing that are elicited.

I had tried to paint a picture of how my four-year-old girl walked to the right. I had tried to describe the scene when little Anna's hand was pulled out of mine by Mengele. But how could I have rendered the fear that was felt and is felt even today? The iron hand did not want to lose its grip on the brain. Not even in the night when I sank down, exhausted. In my feverish dreams I felt Anna's small body that I held hard to mine. I heard her desperate voice. "Don't give me away, Mummy, don't give..."

The major part of this narrative is in the storyrealm, the province of meaning that surrounds the taleworld and connects it with the conversation, in this case the manuscript as a Jewish memory and archived testimony about the Holocaust. When the teller is in the taleworld, it is not possible to simultaneously reflect the telling itself or the situation within which the narrative is created. This is possible only when re-entering the storyrealm, as in the example above, where consequently tense and form differ from the taleworld of the narrative about the separation. With the help of the direct quote "Don't give me away, Mummy, don't give..." Miriam links the storyrealm to the taleworld and recreates the strong feelings that have been created by and in the taleworld.

Katharine Young has pointed out the necessity of taking into consideration the whole situation in which a narrative is being told (Young 1987, 69ff). If the narrative about the separation is analyzed as enclosed and framed by Miriam's manuscript as a whole, it becomes obvious that other narratives are linked to the narrative about the separation and further accentuate and explain it to the readers. It is the theme of Miriam not having been able to keep her promise to Anna about not abandoning her that connects and gives meaning to the narratives.

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The reasons why Miriam does not use the present tense in the narrative is related to the genre used, but also to the character of the events and experiences that are narrated. They are simply too atrocious to be endured, so in order to write about them, they are being circled around instead of being completely entered and relived.

WRITING AMONGST THE DEAD

It is not only by analyzing how the narratives are related in the manuscript or what Miriam wrote in the storyrealm that the relation between emotions and narration is highlighted. The fact *how* Miriam described the events, or, in other words, how she created the taleworld, also gives insight into what emotions she aimed to create.

When writing her manuscript, Miriam used several stylistic and formal devices. One of them is combining contrasting elements, which creates the effect of accentuating a theme or an emotion. One example is when she quotes herself, when telling her daughter about Magda who is engaged to Alex. Here the everyday knowledge about relatives and friends is brought into the taleworld, highlighting the extraordinariness and unbelievability of the narrated events. Another example with a similar effect is when Anna is pulled out of Miriam's arms by a man dressed in "pyjamas", a term that also accentuates the morbid absurdity of the events.

These writing devices establish the taleworld and the unusual events taking place there. The central theme in the narrative is that of Miriam not being able to keep the promise to her daughter that they will never be separated. She concludes her narrative by remarking on how easy it was to break the promise she had made just a few minutes earlier. To explain or make the reader understand why it was an easy thing to do, Miriam conjures up the taleworld as an unbelievable place where things happen that would never happen in the ordinary world or under normal circumstances. The kind of place that Miriam's narrative depicts is a place of horror and nightmare, a place of terror and underworld, where nothing is what it appears to be at first, a place where no ordinary rules or moral apply. It is a place not for the living, but for the dead.

Another stylistic device that permeates Miriam's manuscript is that she relates to and builds up an emotional drama with the help of the relationship between life and death, between the living and the dead, and between humans and non-humans. She often questions the meaning of life, sometimes she rages about death, and at other times it is as if she was standing with one leg amongst the living and with the other amongst the dead. This is especially clear in the following quote. In this passage Miriam has completed the journey in search of her daughter and finally realized that she is dead. She writes:

So far I have looked brave. Nobody has noticed that I am like a zombi. [...] Nobody has understood me. I was demanded to forget. Forget – I would only be able to forget if I were dead myself. This thought has become an obsession and I have decided that I should forget.

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But before that I wanted to clean up the labyrinth of memories. I wanted to see if it was worth living and surviving.

The tense she uses in the last two sentences here suggests that she has already decided between life and death, and in some respect Miriam seems to know what she chooses between. Notice here how she describes the last days at Bergen-Belsen before the liberation.

I I mustered up all my strength and crawled out of the barracks. I was able to move six meters, and then I collapsed and remained lying on the ground. Out there I was able to breathe. I was only nineteen kilos, but my limbs felt as if they weighed many tons. I don't remember if I was cold during nights, but I do remember that the early April sun warmed me up. It was a wonderful experience not to feel hunger and thirst. If the intestines hadn't been bothering me, if the fleas could have stopped nibbling at me, then I could have said that I was fine. My brain still functioned, there was nothing wrong with my eyesight, either. The fact that I once had had a mother and a daughter named Anna had been erased from my memory by the Germans.

This description is a break from painful memories, from the thoughts of Anna and the mother. If it had not been for the intestines and the biting fleas, it would have been a wonderful experience, she writes, giving the reader an emotional key to the dimensions of living with the loss and grief. Here Miriam is a like a zombi and death is depicted as liberation. When Miriam later writes about the experiences that led up to this, it seems as if a timeless power is released, a sort of terror of the memories that becomes another kind of imprisonment. Miriam writes:

The memories pour themselves over me. The pictures are so clear as if all this had happened today. Forty years has passed since then. Forty years! A whole life! And after so many years the pictures are just as clear. Who said that time heals all wounds?

Miriam's memories seem to be leading a life of their own, when they torment her by pouring themselves over her. She describes it as her destiny to live with the memories, but nevertheless she speaks and writes about them. Contrary to those who argue that speaking about an experience is a way of overcoming it (see, e.g., Kaplan 2003), this part of Miriam's written manuscript argues that to speak or write about a trauma does not dissolve it.

However, Miriam is not only suffering from her terrible memories, but also from the fact that she is alive and others are not. She writes:

Often have I been pained by remorse because I survived. It would have been better if I had been allowed to follow, and die together with the ones whom I loved more than myself. I have asked myself innumerable times and and I still do today why I was doomed to life. I

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have not fought to survive; my stomach was as empty as the others'. My body was not fat and my eyes burned of the same hatred and despise when I was standing before Mengele.

In this short passage several characteristics of Holocaust narratives are to be found. On the one hand, it is the theme of Holocaust survivors that describe themselves as doomed to life and not to death. On the other, it is the description of the daily selection at the camps that seems almost a compulsory theme in Holocaust narratives. The selection meant a daily routine when all the prisoners, naked, were lined up for inspection and general degradation. Those considered capable of working were separated from those regarded as useless. The latter were gathered together during the day and executed (Waxman 2008, 59).

I have not found a single Holocaust narrative in Swedish that does not describe the daily selection between those that were to live and those that were to die. But despite the fact that many survivors describe how they were tormented by the question of why they had survived and others had not, it is extremely unusual that they describe the survival like Miriam does. Instead of describing it as a curse, others consider it as a blessing or simply as luck. In the above quote Miriam seems to be arguing that she belonged with the dead since she was already like a zombie, and that she wished to be dead but was denied the favour. Thus, despite the hardship that many survivors depict in their narratives, it is seldom that they have survived against their will as seems to be the case with Miriam.⁴

Another common trait in Holocaust narratives is to make Dr Mengele represent the ruler over life and death. This is common also when events are being described where it is impossible that Dr Mengele could have been present, as in Miriam's narrative about the separation, or when the teller could not have known and been able to identify Dr Mengele in person, which Miriam probably could not at the time of the separation. This way Dr Mengele, the representative of all the unjust and spiteful aspects of the Holocaust, has become an almost mythical character in Holocaust narratives, including Miriam's (Waxman 2008, 165).⁵

Hence, in the narratives in her manuscript Miriam uses the familiar themes of life and death, human and non-human in somewhat unaccustomed ways. Within the frames of the familiar she creates the unfamiliar. We recognize the themes and the forms of story telling, but the main character and her emotional reactions are strange to us. The main character does not feel or have the emotions related to the form and themes used, and consequently a discrepancy between form, content and meaning in the genre is created. What does Miriam want to tell us when she uses the familiar in this rather unfamiliar way? What are the messages of her narratives?

EMOTION AND MESSAGE

In the remaining part of this article I concentrate on the messages of Miriam's narratives. Since what we learn from a story is tightly linked to emotion I first explore the plausible emotions experienced when reading her manuscript. I also discuss why

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some parts and not others in Miriam's manuscript were chosen for publication. I argue that these choices were emotionally motivated and linked to the messages of the narratives as well as to questions of whether the narratives offer emotional identification. Before addressing these issues, I would like to offer an answer to the question of *why* Miriam spoke about her experiences in the first place, since my argument is that the answer to this question is connected to the messages of her narrative.

Miriam's brothers also survived the Holocaust. After the war they got married and became parents. They have chosen not to talk about the past. This is how Miriam writes about the issue.

All of us, my brothers and sisters-in-law, have been to the camps. Still, they have avoided talking about it. The word "camp" has been a taboo in their homes. I should have understood them. They had their children and grandchildren; they had their worries and joys. I had a desperate need to talk about the camps, about Anna, and, by doing it, keeping them alive. As long as one talks about the dead, they remain alive. Nobody has understood me. They insisted that I should forget.

Miriam is eager to talk about Anna and her mother: it is her way of keeping them alive. And a possibility for recapitulating the encountered experiences and events is by writing about them. Today we often regard storytelling as beneficial, as a way of overcoming and transforming bad or traumatic experiences. This is fundamental to the practices of psychotherapy (Harding & Pribram 2009, 9–10). Within the field of Holocaust literature and studies, the story-telling theme is highly debated (see, e.g., Horowitz 1997, Lang 1988 and especially Reich 2006). Many Holocaust survivors refrain from speaking about their experiences, others wait as long as they can, still others speak about them willingly.⁶

Many argue that it is beneficial to talk about one's experiences; they mean that narrativity is a therapeutic activity transforming traumatic experience (Kaplan 2003, 107). This was also argued within the Swedish maternal care system in the 1990s when I conducted fieldwork there (Nylund Skog 2002). Most of the women I met during this time maintained that if they often spoke about their childbirth experience, it lost some of its magic (see also Kaivola-Bregenhøj 2003, 331). Because of that many of them refrained from narrating about their experiences. But does this simple logic count for all kinds of experiences? Is it really so that experiences lose strength by being shared with other people? Would Miriam's loss of her daughter and mother have been relieved if she had recalled it more often than she did?

In the above quote Miriam writes that it was demanded from her to forget, in other words to keep quiet. Those who argue that the definition of a trauma is that the experience is resistant to being transformed into a coherent and continuous narrative (Waxman 2008, 119), would probably agree that the only possible way to forget would be to keep quiet. This also means that it does not matter if one believes in the transforming power of narratives or not, since the process in itself is impossible when it comes to traumatic experience. On the other hand, there are those who argue that the thesis of traumas being resistant to the transforming powers of narratives is only

an alibi for those who do not want to narrate, and that the large number of testimonies from the Holocaust show that traumatic experience is possible to be narrated (Storeide 2007, 18).

Zoë Waxman writes that since the Holocaust is unique and extreme, narrating about it is considered a duty rather than an act of transforming one's trauma. Her experience proves that survivors often resist the idea that writing and narrating about the experiences of the Holocaust should lead to some sort of solution, since that would imply that the reader or listener are doing them some kind of favour (Waxman 2008, 153, see also Ohlsson 2002, 131–132). And since survivors like Miriam actually speak about what they experienced during the Holocaust, one can argue that they oppose both those who maintain that narratives can transform a trauma and those who claim the opposite. Jeffrey C. Alexander captures the dilemma and offers a model for understanding the expanding sphere of Holocaust narratives. He argues that since today the Holocaust has come to be regarded as a 'trauma drama', it is in its nature to urge for constant repetition without solution, without the trauma being transformed or emotionally weakened (Alexander 2002).

From this we can conclude that it is unlikely that Miriam wrote about her experiences in order to transform or overcome them. On the contrary, it seems as if the experiences might have become strengthened and even more unbearable by speaking about them. We can therefore also assume that she probably used the available familiar forms in somewhat unusual ways because she had a wish to communicate something more or something else than only the experiences as such.

PUBLICATION AND IDENTIFICATION

The part of Miriam's manuscript where she writes about the separation from her daughter and mother has also been published in the book about the collection of Jewish memories (Johansson 2000, 165–168). There is no doubt that the narrative sequence describes the key event in Miriam's life and is the dramatic core of her manuscript. It is therefore not surprising that Johansson has chosen this sequence (and the chronological events that took place before and after) for publication. Johansson writes that from the collection of Jewish memories she selected stories for publication that she in some ways found to be representative of the varying experiences contained in the collection (Johansson 2000, 180).

In *Writing the Holocaust* Zoë Waxman argues that many female survivors, when writing about their experiences, struggle with their inability to fulfil the requirements of motherhood during the Holocaust. She also writes that "studies of women in the Holocaust favour stories that are seen as suitable or palatable for their readers, often avoiding those that do not accord with women's expected behaviour or pre-existing narratives of survival" (Waxman 2008, 124). In that manner women's testimonies are often used to show us what we already know or want to see (Waxman 2008, 125).

Waxman argues that studies of women and the Holocaust tend to portray female witnesses in much the same way as child witnesses – as unproblematic victims. Little reference is made to women who, as a result of intolerable circumstances, acted contrary to traditional expectations of female behaviour, such as the women who placed their own survival above that of their children.

This way the identities of women are constructed on the basis of roles such as a mother, a caregiver, and a daughter, and testimonies are often written and selected to reinforce these pre-existing ideals. Consequently, many testimonies focus on the aspiration to fulfil traditional gender expectations. Other testimonies, Waxman writes, describe the split between the desire to meet particular expectations and the realization that they could not be fulfilled (Waxman 2008, 150, see also Kremer 1999).

Under normal circumstances to abandon a child like Miriam does in the key-narrative of the manuscript, is considered a crime against the norms and rules of parenting and in particular mothering.⁷ In order not to be considered heartless, un-human, and un-motherly, Miriam is culturally demanded to explain why she abandoned her child, or else she and her manuscript will not be considered trustworthy. And this is what she does with her narratives. In the process she also reclaims herself as a good mother; a position that the Nazis deprived her of, both metaphorically and literally. So it is not surprising that the theme of Miriam being unable to maintain her role as a mother and a daughter permeates the script and structures the narratives, such as the following.

Then I remembered what I had heard – what happened to those who went to the right. They had been told that they should wash themselves, and that everybody should fold their clothes and together with the shoes put them in such a way that after washing they could find their belongings. Mothers carried their children in their arms. In my mind's eye I could see that my mother held Anna in her arms and covered her nakedness with hers. When the "bathing house" was full, the hermetic door was closed. From the shower heads gas came instead of water. The gas pellet was named ZB (Zyklon B). An invention of human brain, a technique for mass murder. "Come on! Hurry up!" The German Nazis were able to see the condemned through a hatch, they timed the death struggle. They witnessed how the Jews were flinging with their arms in the gas until they sank down, the weaker under the stronger ones. Their arms were braided together as if in a huge love embrace.

It was the prisoners who worked in the crematory that told me about it. Their task was to separate the corpses, to open their mouths and pull out the gold teeth with special tongs. Many of the workers recognized their relatives. Another prisoner cut off the corpses' hair. Nothing was to go waste.

This abstract contains two short narratives linked together. The first one is a general description of what happened to those that were directed to the right, with the example of the destiny of Miriam's mother and daughter inserted. The second narrative explains why Miriam was wise enough to describe the events in the first one, and this way the second narrative authorizes the first, rendering authenticity to

Miriam's testimony . These narratives also strengthen the one about the separation, making it the core of the manuscript.

In these narratives powerful oppositions structure the narrative and create emotions. The dead Jews are braided together in a huge love embrace, while the Nazis coldly observe the process. It is the living, here the Nazis, which are the emotionless and inhuman creatures, while the dead Jews are the real humans capable of feelings. The innocence of the Jews is highlighted and the cruelty of the Nazis emphasized.

Before writing about her brothers and sisters-in-law, Miriam remarks that everyone has their cross to carry, and that some carry it bravely. "So far I have also looked brave. Nobody has noticed that I was like a zombi", she writes. To begin with, I found the symbolism of the cross hard to decipher, but when analyzing it in relation to the central theme of the manuscript, it appears as an excellent way of framing the core-narrative with the Christian and existential theme of Virgin Mary and the Child Jesus . Framed that way, Anna becomes the Child Jesus, dying for our sins, and Virgin Mary is represented by Miriam herself and by her mother. This way, the martyrdom of Miriam, Anna and the mother is strengthened and, once again, the impossibility of Miriam to keep her promise to Anna is explained.

Many of us can identify with the horrible feeling of being separated from a defenceless child we should protect, and with Miriam's struggle to reclaim motherhood. But it is not only the adult responsible for the well-being of a child that it is possible to identify with; the child is a feasible object of identification as well. In Sara Ahmed's terminology it is possible for us to establish a "towardness" to the innocent and defenceless daughter Anna (Ahmed 2004, 8). And in that "towardness" the feelings that are related to being abandoned are probably created. Hence, the core-narrative about the separation includes a possibility for identification and therefore also a possibility for understanding, for a "towardness" of creating feelings. To my mind this is of importance when making choices about what to publish.

The above quoted narratives could have been chosen for publication; they are representative as they describe scenes almost compulsory for Holocaust literature (Storeide 2007). On the other hand, they are not based on first hand experience and therefore lose some of their authenticity. So, part of the motives for publication appear as emotional, for how can we, when reading the narratives above, develop an emotional understanding of what Miriam writes about? How can we relate to the events and experiences described?

When it is possible for us to identify ourselves emotionally with the character of Miriam's narratives, the messages of the narratives seem to unfold. "Please understand why I abandoned my child," Miriam's narratives call out. "Feel what I felt and thus understand me," they plead. And in doing so, not only do we grasp the enormousness of Miriam's suffering, but also the Holocaust as something that concerns us all, and disrupts humanity in itself.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

I wonder whether the readers were able to cope with all the dirt and suffering, or closed the book out of distaste. My purpose was not to shock. My purpose was to shed light on the truth in its brutal nakedness.

When Miriam was finished with writing her life story, when she had shed light on the truth, she took her life by pouring gasoline over herself and setting herself on fire.⁸ Her death was symbolic. She wanted to join her daughter and mother in a death similar to theirs. Through her narrative she had kept a connection with her dead daughter and mother, but the effort of writing about them, of reliving the experiences, had been too unbearable. And when she no longer had the strength to keep them alive by recalling them, she found no reason for going on with her life. She was free to die, she had done her duty; she had left the printed fading words behind for us to read.

This knowledge adds an extra emotional dimension to the reading of Miriam's manuscript. When the object is changed, so are the feelings towards it. "Feel what I felt, and understand why I couldn't live with the memories," her message cries out. From the manuscript we learn that the Holocaust turned life a living hell and made humans better off as dead. We also learn of the dangers of racism, impassivity of the bystanders and of turning a blind eye. We learn that the Holocaust concerns mankind and that we have an obligation to retell the memories of those who will soon be gone, for as Miriam writes: "We will die eventually and with us all witnesses will be buried."

I am deeply touched by Miriam's life story, in some ways it has affected my own life, and in many ways also my research on emotions. Still, I have had doubts as to using her manuscript in my work with the article. In the end though, it is Miriam's own written wish to share her experiences and to communicate "the truth in its brutal nakedness" that has convinced me of being justified to draw my readers in to the nightmarish taleworlds of Miriam's narratives.

This means that my choice to analyse Miriam's manuscript is motivated by her wish to communicate her feelings. In other words, the fact that she wrote the manuscript was emotionally motivated as was also my analysis of it. And, as I have argued, it is also highly plausible that the publishing of Miriam's narrative in the book about the Jewish memories was emotionally guided.

In addition, Miriam's manuscript provides an excellent example of how emotions are created in and towards written narratives. In this article I have tried to demonstrate how different genres create different feelings, and how the use of different formal and artistic devices creates emotions, proving that formative matter-of-fact language creates feelings different from a narrative filled with emotional evaluations. I do not claim here that the latter necessarily creates more or stronger emotions than the first, or holds a different message. From Miriam's manuscript we can see that sometimes the contrary seems to be the case, for when she describes in the past tense, using pre-

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cise and seemingly emotionless language, how she was separated from her daughter and mother in Auschwitz more than sixty years ago, at least I find it emotionally almost unbearable to read.

NOTES

- 1 In this article I make no distinction between emotion, feeling and affect. Not all bodily reactions (called affects or feelings) count as emotions, and not all emotions are bodily felt. But since we are culturally educated and know how to name and interpret feelings or affects as emotions, a conceptual distinction is not always helpful (cf. Harding & Pribram 2009, 9).
- 2 Historian Annette Wierviorka (1999) argues that the survivors of the Holocaust were not "heard" until they changed their personal narratives into the genre of testimony and began to act as witnesses.
- 3 A telling example is that the American publisher Berkley Books stopped the publication of the book *Angel at the Fence* written by Herman Rosenblat, since it had been 'discovered' that Rosenblat's story about the Holocaust, where he writes about how he met his wife in a concentration camp, is fabricated. But even if the love story is partly fictive, Herman Rosenblat was still a prisoner in Buchenwald.
- 4 This again is related to the use of genre, as well as to whom the narrative is aimed. Survivors who wrote to the archives or got their narratives published, might have felt a need to show gratefulness for their survival and the fact that they were able to migrate to Sweden.
- 5 The common trait of Dr Mengele is also a good example of how public representations in novels, films, media, etc, and personal experience interact with each other (Ashplant et al 2000).
- 6 It is said that the survivors from the Holocaust who first came to Sweden did not speak about their experiences since no one understood or believed them. What they had to say was too much or too terrible for people to be able to listen to it. Others say that they did talk and yet others that they did not want to. Like Miriam's brothers, they just wanted to forget. And since talking or writing about an experience also means partly reliving that experience again, it is not surprising that so many kept quiet for so long (Lomfors 1996 and the animated film *Silence*, cf. Wierviorka's (1999) argument above, that the survivors at first did not present their experiences in the form of a testimony).
- 7 The violent separation of one's loved ones is a common motive and theme that has been treated also in public representations of the Holocaust, for example, in *Sophie's Choice*.
- 8 Miriam's manuscript was brought to the Nordic Museum eleven years after it had been written, by a friend of hers who spoke about Miriam's suicide.

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ARCHIVE MATERIAL

The Archives at the Nordic Museum, Stockholm
The Jewish Memories (Judiska minnen), D375:102

FILMS

Silence 1997: by Sylvie Bringas & Orly Yadin, told by and based on Tana Ross's life.

Sophie's Choice 1982: by Alan J. Pakula, based on a novel by William Styron from 1979.

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