Between Victim and Perpetrator Imaginary: The Implicated Subject in Works by Rachel Seiffert and Cate Shortland

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> Mémoire involontaire: ihre Bilder kommen nicht allein ungerufen, es handelt sich vielmehr in ihr um Bilder, die wir nie sahen, ehe wir uns ihrer erinnerten.
>
> – Walter Benjamin

The question of the future of the past seems fitting in light of the fact that the study of Germany's catastrophic history has long superseded particular national and cultural contexts. This catastrophic past has taken up residence in the arena of the transnational shape of post-sovereign territories.[1] As a result, we are now reading the future of the past in light of complex intersections of the local and the global, the real and the virtual, while still mindful of generational and representational shifts.[2] In the context of these challenges which have also informed reconsiderations of historical subject positions, such as the perpetrator and victim imaginary, I propose to examine the reconfiguration of the witness, in particular the figure of an adolescent witness born into a perpetrator history in Rachel Seiffert's text "Lore" (2001) and Cate Shortland's cinematic adaptation of that text.

In his article on "Perpetrator Fiction and Transcultural Memory," Richard Crownshaw notes a shift in aesthetic representations of the Holocaust around the turn of the millennium. Texts by Bernard Schlink (*Der Vorleser*, 1995, *Die Heimkehr*, 2006), as well Jonathan Littell (*The Kindly Ones*, 2009), Kate Grenville (*The Secret River*, 2006), Toni Morrison (*A Mercy*, 2008), and Sherman Alexie (*Flight*, 2007) privilege the figure of the perpetrator.[3] To this list we can add the material under consideration here, "Lore," the middle story in *The Dark Room*, a collection of three related narratives by British author Rachel Seiffert, and the 2012 film version by Australian filmmaker Cate Shortland. Both text and film explore the end of WWII from the perspective of a young teenage girl born to Nazi parents. In his essay Crownshaw asks if the shift towards the perpetrator perspective found in recent memory texts could be a response to representations of history that previously focused on, and maybe even universalized, the perspective of the victim? Mindful that a simple reversal of the empathetic trajectory, i.e., a turn from victim to perpetrator perspective, may be equally problematic, his essay explores whether

[1] For more on memory formations in the context of post-sovereign territories, see Jureit and Levy/Sznaider, for more on recent re-conceptualizations of aesthetic memory transpositions see Rothberg, and Silverman.

[2] For more on recent critical investigations of the "post-Holocaust" condition, in particular about how this historical event has migrated across national, generational, and medial borders and is connected to larger questions in multi-directional ways, see McGlothlin, Kapczynski.

[3] For more on that topic also see Jenny Adams and Sue Vice.

"the recent theory and practice of cultural memory that is perpetrator-centered make[s] the perpetrator an appropriable figure available for facile identification across different cultural memories where once the victim figured such availability" (75).

In the following I want to pick up on this issue of mnemonic focal point by asking if and how the perspectives of children or young adults born into a perpetrator legacy may offer epistemological insights into aesthetic transpositions of violent histories. We all know intuitively the extent to which our specific subject position is defined by race, class, and gender, as well as by age, generation, and other details of our familial and personal histories. The same is true, of course, for aesthetic projections of remembering subjects that anchor 'memories' of a difficult past, in this case the characters of Lore and her younger siblings experiencing the collapse of the Third Reich as children of Nazi parents. Do the intuitive, yet often insightful, perceptions of children or juveniles that are coupled with a limited and immature understanding of larger factual contexts provide a useful lens for presenting the legacy of violence? The question of focal point is of great, if not pivotal, importance in any memory regime, and of particular relevance with respect to such violent and catastrophic events as the Holocaust.[4] It may be useful to ask how accurate, constructive, or meaningful the victim-perpetrator imaginary can ultimately be for understanding historical subject positions that are inflected in multiple and, more often than not, contradictory ways. Inevitably, victimization and perpetration exist within realities dense with historical specificity, as well as personal, generational, ethnic and local differences that inevitably modulate any binary simplification. Yet subsequent transpositions of history often erase these very differences, thus contributing to what Crownshaw has identified as a problematic 'homogenizing' and 'universalizing tendency' in current memory regimes.[5]

My reading of Seiffert's and Shortland's memory work engages Michael Rothberg's notion of the 'implicated subject,' a notion that calls attention to the contradictory and often un-reflected modulations of history in our personal stories that no simplifying binary can adequately address. The implicated subject occupies a diachronic space that is at once connected to—as well as distinct from—an original event of perpetration. It articulates how legacies of violence reside in us across space, time, and generation. Moreover, the implicated subject 'benefits' from the effects of a culture of perpetration without ever having been personally involved in it. Since this subject position registers transgenerational perpetuations of historical violence, it lends itself to an analysis of the aesthetically reconceived child or juvenile witness born into a perpetrator legacy. Marianne Hirsch has theorized the subject position of children born into a legacy of victimization and shown how this kind of implication translates into suffering the effects of trauma for children of Holocaust survivors. In fact, her notion of postmemory describes how traumatic parental experiences are absorbed most intimately and on a visceral level as adopted 'memories' by their children. It is important to note that, like the notion of the implicated subject, postmemory does not connote temporal succession, let alone a kind of *Bewältigung*. Rather, it as an index of proximity inflected by critical

[4]The question of positionality is particularly pertinent for us as readers and teachers of the Holocaust as Pascale Bos has pointed out in an insightful essay on the topic.

[5] In her insightful analysis of recent perpetrator-centered work, Erin McGlothlin lays out the reasons for the reluctance to critically engage with this perspective.

distance, an evocative dialogue and profound interrelation with that which went before, similar to the interdependence of the modern and the postmodern.

In different ways and to different degrees, the material under consideration here is an aesthetic transposition of the legacy of perpetration across lines of generation and space.[6] Both Seiffert, the British author, and Shortland, the Australian director, share temporal distance, a mediated proximity, as well as an affective immediacy to the Holocaust. Seiffert feels connected to this history through her family. According to the blurb on the Man Booker Prize website, she was born in Birmingham in 1971 as "the daughter of a German mother and an Australian father. [Since she] was bullied at school for being a 'Nazi,' […] she had a strong sense as a child that being German meant being bad" ("Rachel Seiffert"). Shortland feels connected by marriage; she was born in Australia in 1968 and is married to the South African director and producer Tony Kravitz whose family escaped the Holocaust. In an interview about "the long road to Lore" the director notes, "one of the also incredible things is my husband's family are German Jews and we used his family photographs [. . .], so the film is also really intimate to me about my husband's survival, his family's survival" (Saito). What comes into play, then, for both artists is their particular "implication" in a history they did not experience personally yet to which they are deeply connected, illustrating among other things the *telescopage* of the local and the global I referred to earlier, a fact that is reflected in their memory work.[7]

Fundamentally resting on belatedness, that is, a temporal connection informed by both emotional proximity and relative temporal distance to events never experienced firsthand, both text and film are centered on the perspective of a pubescent girl and her siblings implicated in a perpetrator culture. More specifically, both text and film raise the question whether representations of young adults in recent memory work can serve as critical interventions that both complicate and enrich the future of the past across time, generations, and the victim-perpetrator dichotomy. What epistemological insights can be gained from the perspective of witnesses who face historical events that impact them considerably, yet are beyond their full comprehension? Equally relevant are questions raised by Rothberg in his study on multi-directional memory, such as: "what kind of responsible agent is the child? What kind of relationship do children have to the deeds and suffering of their parents? What does it mean to suggest that larger social dramas of violence and retribution can be allegorized through the deeds of children and the familial inheritance of those deeds?" (292). While these are the larger questions that tie the works under consideration to issues currently raised in critical memory studies, they cannot be addressed in one short essay. Hence I shall limit this inquiry to the question of whether, and to what degree, Seiffert's and Shortland's memory works provide thoughtful, if not critical, interventions in potentially apologetic uses of the child or juvenile witness. More specifically, do their representations of a protagonist raised as the daughter of an SS-officer father and a Hitler-loyal mother (she is a young teenager in the text and around 15

[6] Werner Bohleber's study "Das Fortwirken des Nationalsozialismus in der zweiten und dritten Generation" was one of the first to examine the long lasting effects of National Socialism for the second and third generation. In a more recent publication Schwab explores transgenerational trauma further.

[7] Pascale Bos has asked the important question of how "our different positionalities as Americans, Germans, Non-Jews, and Jews (with or without familial connection to the Holocaust) come into play in our engagement with the subject." What does this mean in my case, a German born into this legacy, who lives in the United States and married a Jewish man whose family was displaced by the Holocaust? (50f.)

in the film)[8] address the pitfall of what Marianne Hirsch (borrowing Kaja Silverman's terminology) has called "idiopathic identification," by which she means an uncritical and inadvertent identification with the witness as victim that conflates self and other?[9]

Both text and film open with an arrival and a departure. Lore's father, member of the SS, arrives unexpectedly in the middle of the night to move the family to a farm house in order to await the end of the war and what Lore assumes to be the *Endsieg*. Yet instead, both parents get arrested and the five children need to find their way to their grandmother in Hamburg on their own. Their picaresque journey across a devastated country is also a journey within that radically refutes all their familiar childhood coordinates. Needless to say, Lore's identity as the daughter of a Nazi officer is challenged by everything she experiences, sees, and hears. Not only is she forced to lie in order to reach their destination, but she is confused about the overt hostility they encounter as children of Nazi-loyal parents. Their journey becomes even more complicated when they meet Tomas, whose papers identify him as a Jewish survivor of Buchenwald and who temporarily "adopts" them as his siblings and leads them North. Yet he is not who he says he is. He confesses that he "took" the papers from a dead man, a complication that turns the tattoo on his arm into an indexical trace that leads nowhere. While crossing the Russian zone, one of the twin bothers is shot dead; yet without time for mourning, they flee onwards, eventually making it to Hamburg. As the children settle into a routine at their grandmother's, Tomas stays in one of the numerous ruins, until one day he disappears, leaving behind the papers of the Jewish man, who had long been killed and whose identity he had assumed to ease movement. In contrast to the text, in the film version he leaves them earlier while on the train to Hamburg.

The text modulates tropes of fairy tales on both the plot level and the register of voice. Parental abandonment that forces the children to leave the family home, various encounters with both villains and helpers in the "woods," and an eventual arrival at a temporary home that marks the first entry into adulthood are stock elements of fairy tales. It is also written in the 'flat voice' of this genre as established by the Brothers Grimm. While the narrating voice is restrained and sober, dialogues are lean and interior monologues kept to a minimum. In other words, the characters remain one-dimensional and do not offer psychological depth. This way, the reader is kept at an impassive distance to the characters, even though we know of Lore's inner struggles through the obvious plot twists and occasional inner monologues. Yet in contrast to the relentless simplicity of the classic fairy tale that relies on clear-cut narrative patterns to address social slights and that ultimately seeks to reestablish order and justice along with social ascendance, no redeeming symmetry is established at the end of this tale. The simple and obvious truth the children used to live by has collapsed into a confusing ambivalence. Lore "can't keep pace with the questions, can't keep track of her lies" (82). Yet, in fact the initial 'innocence' of the main character is contested even before she is sent to guide

[8] The issue of making Lore slightly older in the film and playing up the sexual undercurrent in her attraction to Tomas, the Jewish man they meet on their way to Hamburg, is complex and puzzling at the same time. This change allowed the filmmaker to accentuate the attraction to the 'forbidden' and maybe in a larger sense also the 'negative Symbiose' between the German and the Jewish population. For a careful reading of the role of Tomas, see Kapczynski.

[9] This issue is addressed by Ulrike Jureit as the configuration of "gefühlte Opfer" in the larger context of German and European memory re-configurations.

her siblings to her grandmother's house. In preparation for their departure, Lore helps her mother burn incriminating evidence. "Lore works through the morning, watching their clothes and papers burn, balancing logs around the chimney to dry for later. The photo album burns badly at first, too thick and full for the flames to catch hold. The blue linen cover browns and curls and Lore's eyes dry in the heat from the open stove" (57). She helps her mother destroy evidence of the family's Nazi loyalty, and thus helps to rearrange the "family album." This act constitutes the premise of Lore's subject-position. Helping her mother implicates Lore in a history of perpetration she does not know about yet is forced to confront while traveling across a devastated country. Her journey chronicles the experience of the effects of German history as violence and violation while now and then brushing against who caused this suffering, a cause she struggles to understand. Ultimately, Lore is forced to face questions about her father, questions about the Nazi terror she knew nothing about yet which nonetheless literally 'stick to her' as the daughter of a perpetrator. When the children come to a village square they see photos of concentration camp victims. "The pictures are of skeletons. Lore can see that now, pulling her hands back, tugging her sleeves down over her glue-damp palms. […] Lore holds her breath, looks away, sees the next picture: hair and skin and breasts. She takes a step back, trapped by the wall of the crowd" (76f). This juvenile witness, though clueless, is framed, even 'trapped' by a greater collective, implicated without being able to make sense of it and gladly accepting speculations that the photographic evidence is fake, just "staged" by the Americans (127). But when she repeats this rumor to women on the tram in Hamburg, she is harshly rebuked: "They're Jews. Lore flushes. The dark-haired woman is angry. 'Look at them. They're not acting, they're dead' (146). The "[p]ictures of men in uniform. Clear-eyed portraits: SS, SA, Gestapo" make her realize that the soldiers pointing guns "wear Vati's uniform." (146).[10] This sudden realization that her father may be a murderer is a common motif in material focused on child witnesses of catastrophic events. Typically, the first recognition of a larger collective framework outside the family sphere marks the end of 'childhood innocence' and the entry into history.[11] Lore first buries photos of her father and later, in sync with widespread post-war denial, destroys the trace of the Jewish man whose photos and papers Tomas had left behind,[12] in effect murdering the victim a second time: "The charred edges fold over the thin face in the photo, and when they fall away again the dead man is gone" (151). Clearly, Lore may no longer be called an innocent bystander after she buries evidence about her perpetrator father or the murder of this man. Yet what kind of subject-position can we, then, attribute to a juvenile who is following the cues she is given, first by her parents and then by her environment without fully grasping their import?

Does this text, written with considerable generational and spatial distance to the events described, address the limitations and oscillations of the victim-perpetrator binary? Does it carve out a more nuanced position of the implicated subject? Can we call this critical memory work? Does Seiffert's text create a narrative space that, instead of framing the

[10] The role of photographs is prominent in this triptych as evident in the title and play has been subject of numerous articles. See for instance Horstkotte.

[11] *Au revoir les enfants* (Louis Malle 1987) and *Peppermint Frieden* (Marianne Rosenbaum 1983) are just two examples.

[12] The photos used for this scene in the film belong to Shortland's mother in law, in effect establishing an intimacy with and indexical trace of the perpetration committed.

reader in a decisive way, moves him or her "through fantasy identification with the perpetration as well as with victimhood," as Susannah Radstone has asked of critical memory work? (qtd. in Crownshaw 61). For sure, the "flatness" of the narrative voice consistently maintains a 'strange' distance to the characters. This voice neither posits nor denies the kind of "absolute innocence that art attributes to its subjects" and thus neither invites nor hinders an escape into "fantasies of over-identification or rescue" (Crownshaw 76). Seiffert's representation of this young witness certainly complicates easy identification, we never get under her skin so to speak, but the manner and the degree to which this text invites a reading critical of the victim-perpetrator binary is different in comparison to the film.[13]

How, then, does Shortland's cinematic version address this question? In her study of *The Child in Film*, Karen Lury observes that film is eminently well suited to portray moments of transgression, impossibility, and paradoxical fluidity. She notes that the child on screen offers a witness that has affective awareness yet no clear understanding or insight. She writes, "The child figure does not, or cannot provide authority on the facts of war, yet the representation of its experience as visceral, as of and on the body, demonstrates how the interweaving of history, memory, and witness can be powerfully affective" (7). In other words, the lens of the child witness offers the spectator an intimate brush with history based on affect without presenting insights based on the facts. In this sense the child witness evokes the figuration of postmemory as a connection to the past that is not based on factual recollection but rather on imagination and projection, and shaped by affect. In *Lore*, this kind of affective intimacy with history relies first and foremost on a particular cinematography. The characters are presented in a force field of proximity and distance, a dynamic articulated by a hand held camera that prefers extreme and often blurry close-ups. Instead of offering more detail, the close-ups make objects appear strange when coming too close—and the camera often does come too close—in effect dissolving legibility and rebuking our curiosity. In addition, rotational shots mimic a world inverted with mistrust and uncertainty but also a world seen through the follies and playfulness of youth. Yet other shots quote the visual language and appropriation of folklore by National Socialism (particularly when framing nature). Predominantly, however, the visual register evokes irresolution between the children and the world at large. The opening sequence, for instance, ends with Lore looking out from the intimacy of her bath and conveys a sense of confined or limiting domesticity. She is trapped (visually by the wet curtain) in a liminal space between inside and outside, not yet able to grasp but maybe dimly anticipating that her ideological stance will be challenged and contested in the weeks to come.

But how does this kind of cinematography capture the particular contours of a child or juvenile witness? If we agree with Lury that the experiences of children or young adults can be labeled "narcissistic, fragmented, temporally chaotic, often contextless" and as such run "counter to the demands of history, which construct an omniscient and chronological perspective" (110), Shortland's camera work does indeed mimic a sense of fragmentation, and exposes chaotic, violent details that for the children remain

[13] In an article scheduled for publication dedicated solely to Seiffert's text, I describe the critical impetus of Seiffert's work in more detail and argue that the 'bare description' employed does trace how the children are implicated in a history beyond their full understanding. For more, see "Lore or the Implicated Witness: Rachel Seiffert's Postmemory Work" in the forthcoming conference proceedings.

contextless. In such a manner the film manages to capture how the protagonists are caught in the suspension of time and meaning, moments that perfectly encapsulate the time period represented. Furthermore, while we get to take a close look at them, we do not get to look in. On the one hand, the camera takes great care to present meticulous and detailed depictions of the children's actions, while on the other hand we are denied access to the inner life of the protagonists. Again and again, the camera invites intimacy with the young protagonists, studying them carefully and exposing them relentlessly. Their puzzled, pained, surprised, or often just vacant gazes invoke their alienation and confusion but also their easy adjustment to the strange and violent world around them (the latter is true especially with respect to the younger siblings). Yet our desire to identify with Lore's confusion and vulnerability is undermined, if not rebuked, by moments that depict her open hostility towards Tomas, a hostility that is clearly driven by internalized anti-Semitic sentiments. Ultimately, this kind of camera work captures the 'difference' of this juvenile witness along with her perpetrator perspective as a tension between distance and proximity, a tension that invites close scrutiny yet nonetheless resists identificatory intimacy with the character.

This kind of ambivalence created by the visual register is echoed by a plot choreography that in many ways departs from the text. Aside from the fact that the protagonist in the film is slightly older than in the original text, the viewer is at once drawn in and kept at a distance in a more pronounced fashion. As mentioned before, we are first introduced to Lore in the privacy of her bath and see her excitedly greet her father in her nightgown, leaving her *Bund deutscher Mädel* uniform behind. This depiction of Lore as a vulnerable young adolescent corresponds to one of the last frames where we witness her waking up in a pristine bed at her grandmother's and slowly donning her mother's elegant bathrobe and slip. The camera lingers on the act of slipping on the elegant garments and takes great care to show her bruised 'travel legs.' These bruises contrast sharply with her mother's delicate gown, a gown that links her to her mother and thus to a history of perpetration she has not even begun to understand yet that 'frames' her nonetheless.

In further contrast to the text, the cinematic choreography relies on a pronounced symmetry between beginning and ending. The film opens with Lore taking a bath and slides from the intimacy of the steam-filled bathroom into a close-up of the cold cement ground just outside the house where Liesl, Lore's younger sister, is hopscotching. While not in the same frame, the siblings are nonetheless connected through their backwards-counting voices. Liesl's voice is slightly out of sync with Lore's, thus echoing the older sister's counting of comb strokes. This opening shot establishes the firm connection of the sisters and suggests both a languid domesticity and the contentment of childhood that extend beyond the walls of the family home. Yet their 'count-down,' a motif that is repeated during their travel, as well as the fact that Lore is standing with her back to the spectator looking out the window into the dark anticipates the irreversible shattering of this childhood bubble. Liesl's naked feet playfully traversing the hard ground marked with chalk squares provocatively contrast with the close-up at the end of the film, a close-up of the children's feet sinking into the marshy soft ground around their grandmother's house that marks both the end of an arduous journey and the end of play. One could easily argue that these symmetries create a narrative arc that collapses the 'innocence' of childhood into an adolescence marked by trauma and by doing so slips into the realm of

apologetic nostalgia by articulating lost innocence. No doubt, we do witness the change from the immaculate body of a pubescent girl in her bath to the bruised body of a young woman who is marked by her arduous experiences (both within and without). We have been witness to a journey that starts out on firm childhood footing and ends in the quicksand of postwar reality. Yet we also witness how Lore loses her 'innocence' and becomes implicated in murder. As she tries to seduce the owner of a boat in order for them to cross a river Tomas uses this moment of distraction to kill the man. The camera remains intently trained on Lore's gaze, reflecting the act of violence committed by Tomas in her eyes. Charged by desire, curiosity, as well as attraction and repulsion, her gaze is firmly focused on Tomas, underscoring their ambivalent connection based on sentiments that oscillate between attraction and repulsion. This moment leads to her desperate (and biblical question), "Was haben wir getan?" and marks the crossing of the line between victim and perpetrator. At this point it becomes clear that the seemingly disparate subject-positions of victim and perpetrator can flip quickly, that they easily reside hand in hand and resist binary reduction or fixations. Importantly, Shortland's cinematography does not settle this fluid interchange between 'innocent victim' and 'calculating perpetrator' but instead articulates their proximity and instability. This underscores a position of implication that effectively counters the apologetic arc suggested by the plot symmetries outlined above.

Let me close by asking whether and how this film complicates the trope of 'childhood innocence' commonly used in cinema to convey an emotional immediacy to problematic historical moments from the perspective of the victim. At once familiar and strange, close and remote, childhood indicates an over-determined site in our personal and collective memories. In aesthetic representations, childhood signifies a potent threshold to our personal, social, and historical identity; it is an imaginary site reconfigured retrospectively by unresolved adult anxieties and desires. This way, childhood resurfaces as a constellation of non-synchronicity that Benjamin has so aptly called "Bilder, die wir nie sahen, ehe wir uns ihrer erinnerten" (1064). Benjamin's elegant capturing of a temporal paradox expresses that any turn to the past that relies on a child witness is a projection premised on knowledge of the future, and as such is propelled by asynchronicities. His rephrasing of childhood memories underscores the fact that the images of childhood only emerge in retrospect. They only become visible—in fact they only come into existence—when we evoke them as adults, i.e., long after we experienced their immediacy. With respect to cinema this means that, on the one hand, the child in film works as a palimpsest in reverse, a seemingly un-inscribed 'virginal' surface representing a past that already contains the contours of the future still to come. On the other hand, as Hirsch has pointed out, images or voices of children trigger an affective stance, touching our own childhood-self and thus inviting the kind of "idiopathic identification" that relies on the child as an "unexamined emblem of vulnerability and innocence" (167). One could argue that these cinematic projections work in analogy to the use of the female body in surrealist art—as a "cryptogram," to speak with the art critic Norman Bryson. What Bryson observed for the body of woman in surrealist art can be transposed to the effect of children in film. Cinematic memory work mobilizes the child as a "symptom" that "stands permanently on the threshold of symbolization but cannot cross over; it is a cyphered message, on the verge of passing into signification and culture yet permanently held back, as a bodily cryptogram" (221). Understanding the

aesthetically reconfigured child along these contours, as a "bodily cryptogram," underscores that childhood inevitably resurfaces as the effect of indeterminate but powerful adult projections, fantasies, and desires. As a "cryptogram," it is conceived in close proximity to projections about the 'natural' or 'primitive' world. In fact, as Henry Jenkins points out in his introduction to *The Children's Culture Reader,* in the collective imagination the child resides in a space beyond historical specificity or change, "outside the culture, precisely so that we can use it to regulate cultural hierarchies […] the innocent child is a myth, in Roland Barthes's sense of the word, a figure that transforms culture into nature" (15). In that sense, as an effect of an ideology that posits a particular perception as unchangeable as nature itself, the child gains its particular presence and gravitas in cinematic work. He or she represents a cryptic and ahistorical projection of a past that never was yet crystallizes as an image that 'we never saw until we remembered.'

In contrast to this ahistorical projection, Shortland's representation of a juvenile witness to events beyond her comprehension is firmly located in a specific historical moment. We witness a particular female childhood shaped by the end of the war in the spring of 1945. Instead of eclipsing factual specificity, the film underlines a particular moment in history. Furthermore, Shortland presents Lore as a vulnerable subject but does not release her into historical innocence. Rather, she underscores a subject-position that contains elements of both victimization and perpetration and in this way articulates transgenerational implication. In fact, both text and film present the protagonist as an implicated subject, challenging us to rethink the very possibility of an innocent subject position in history along the intersections of individual experience and transgenerational collective legacy. However, text and film differ with respect to the degree to which this kind of implication of a young witness in a history is expressed. The camera can and does exploit the gaze of seemingly 'innocent' protagonists and counters it with a plot choreography that suspends this impression of innocence. Shortland's film relies on a cinematography that refuses to limit the stance of its protagonist to intuitive, if insightful, perceptions that nonetheless lack a fundamental understanding of the larger historical context. Rather, the epistemological edge of the film relies on two effects constituted in tension with each other. On the one hand, Shortland effectively mobilizes the gaze of an adolescent on the threshold to adulthood, as well as those of her much younger siblings, in a way that returns the viewer to history with great immediacy and contiguity. On the other hand, visual and plot choreography counter this identificatory and potentially apologetic stance with moments of ideological contamination and implication. Forced to contend with childhood projections as "Bilder, die wir nie sahen, ehe wir uns erinnerten," we are at once drawn in and kept at bay, facing a constellation of irresolution and implication that resolutely refutes the escapist turn to 'childhood innocence.' In that sense, Shortland's representation of her main witnesses is a decidedly critical intervention that both complicates and enriches the future of the past across time, generations, and facile binaries.

Both Seiffert's text and Shortland's film underscore that the aesthetically reconfigured child/juvenile witness does not afford insights about childhood as a developmental stage long left behind and 'overcome'—the telling term *bewältigt* suggests the forcefulness needed to accomplish this. Rather, in correspondence to Freud's conception of the subject as fundamentally determined by unresolved tensions between the past and the present, the voice and the gaze of the child articulate retrospective fantasies about problematic

moments of the past that inform a collective sense of identity in the present. In her seminal study "The Case of Peter Pan or the Impossibility of Children's Fiction," Jacqueline Rose reminds us to what degree Freud understood "that childhood is something we continue to be *implicated in* and which is simply never left behind. Childhood *persists*—this is the opposite, note, from the reductive idea of a regression to childhood, most often associated with Freud. It persists as something we endlessly rework in our attempt to build an image of our own history" (12). Yet in Seiffert's and Shortland's work it persists as a rich epistemological perspective that complicates, if not refutes, the foreshortening of a child's perspective in support of commonly accepted apologetic discourses.

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