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The Holocaust Trauma and Recovery:

The Second Generation in *Second Hand Smoke*

《二手烟》中犹太大屠杀幸存者后代的创伤与痊愈

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Abstract

This thesis, taking the trauma study theory to analyze Thane Rosenbaum's novel *Second Hand Smoke*, aims to uncover the Nazi Holocaust's impact on the survivors' offspring and exploring their struggle in inheriting the family legacy. Trauma studies cover such fields as psychology, sociology, history and literature, focusing on the unexpected and non-normative events' influence on people's life. Individuals who experienced these traumatic events may suffer from the post-traumatic stress disorder. The influence can also be transferred to their children through unconscious and/or conscious parenting behaviors and family environment.

Thane Rosenbaum (1960-) is a contemporary Jewish American novelist who belongs to the second generation, the children of Holocaust survivors. His first full length novel *Second Hand Smoke* tells the life story of the half-brothers, Duncan and Isaac, who are the children of survivors, centering on their trauma and recovery. The title indicates the literal smoke of the Nazi crematoria as well as metaphorical smoke to which the offspring of survivors are exposed with equally toxic effects. This novel provides a full picture of the lives of the Holocaust survivors and their children, and the trauma transgeneration and comparison are the key themes.

The thesis is composed of five parts including an introduction and a conclusion. In the introduction, an overview of second generation literature in general and a summary of the Holocaust trauma study are done to provide background information for the following analysis.

The first chapter reviews trauma study, introduces trauma's definition and symptoms, and explores the way of recovery. From Pierre Janet and Sigmund Freud, to contemporary trauma theorists Caroling Garland, Judith Herman and Cathy Caruth, the trauma etiology and nature are not unanimous in their works. A synthesized understanding of trauma is that trauma is mainly psychological; anyone can be traumatized when the traumatic events are so overwhelming that one cannot fully grasp their meaning. The traumatized people usually suffer from post-trauma distress disorder. Furthermore, the studies on transgeneration effects in Holocaust families are

illustrated to introduce the trauma's impact on the second generation and transmission mechanism.

The second chapter discusses trauma's origin and influence on both the survivors and their children. The first generation in *Second Hand Smoke* includes Mila Katz, Yankee Katz and Keller Borowski. The multiple separations, losses of families, humiliations and suffering forced upon them by the Holocaust disrupt their life values and psychological needs, form the trauma in them. Their post-Holocaust lives are shadowed by the post-trauma stress disorder syndromes. As parents, their behaviors, especially Mila's, transfer the trauma to the second generation, Duncan Katz and Isaac Borowski. Living in different countries, the half-brothers suffer from the second hand trauma. Duncan inherits the family past and parents' identity as his, which leads to his career and marriage failure. Although Isaac finds a different way to live with the family legacy, his life is shadowed by Mila's abandonment.

The third chapter analyses the recovery process of the brothers. Duncan's recovery starts as his active searching for redemption after the multiple failures in life. Coming to Poland provides him the repair opportunity. Through learning from his brother, Duncan establishes a sense of security and control of himself. Visiting the death camp where his mother Mila has been imprisoned, Duncan constructs his own experience of the Holocaust and separates his identity from his parents'. From Duncan, Isaac's curiosity about their mother Mila is satisfied and his pursuit for family is completed.

The thesis comes to the conclusion that the Holocaust experience not only has great influences on the survivors but also impacts the life of their offspring. The second generation struggles to translate the family legacy into constructive actions. Through the life of Duncan and Isaac, Thane Rosenbaum suggests that redemption lies in remembering, accepting and mourning the past.

Key Words: Thane Rosenbaum; trauma; recovery

摘要

本文应用创伤研究理论分析西恩·罗森鲍姆的小说《二手烟》，旨在揭示纳粹大屠杀对幸存者后代的心理和生活的影响，探讨他们在继承家庭文化精神遗产过程中的创伤挣扎和痊愈。创伤研究着重于分析突发的非正常事件对人类生活造成的影响，涉及心理学，社会学，历史学和文学等领域。经历创伤事件的个体可能会在日后生活中遭受创伤后压力症。他们的创伤会通过有意或无意的言语，行为和由此形成的家庭氛围传递给下一代。

当代美国犹太小说家西恩·罗森鲍姆是大屠杀幸存者的后代。他的长篇小说《二手烟》讲述了幸存者后代邓肯和艾萨克的不同创伤和痊愈之旅。小说的标题既指纳粹集中营焚化场的烟雾，又暗喻幸存者后代们也在遭受这种毒气的影响。小说以创伤后遗症和其传递性为主题，展示了两代人的生活 and 困扰，深刻揭示了这场人类历史上的空前浩劫对人们生活的长期影响和制约。

本文由五部分组成。绪论部分简述幸存者后代文学和大屠杀创伤研究。

第一章介绍有关创伤研究的发展状况，综述西方创伤理论家的一些主要思想，探讨创伤的实质和可能的治疗方法和过程。从心理学家皮埃尔·让内、西格蒙德·弗洛伊德到当代创伤研究学者卡罗琳·格兰德、茱蒂斯·赫尔门和凯西卡鲁斯，学术界并未对创伤的病理和性质形成完全统一的看法。当代创伤学认为创伤主要是心理问题，创伤事件干扰个体已有的认知导致创伤。受害者常会患上创伤后压力症。本章也专门介绍了大屠杀幸存者家庭中创伤跨代相传的方式和影响。

第二章讨论小说中幸存者以及他们的后代的创伤来源和症状。米拉，扬基和凯勒都是大屠杀的幸存者。这场浩劫带给他们的恐怖经历使他们原有的价值观、正常意识和认知机制遭到破坏，形成心理创伤。他们战后生活在大屠杀的阴影之中。作为父母，他们的行为又将创伤传递给后代。分别住在美国和波兰的同母异父兄弟邓肯和艾萨克都不同程度地受到了创伤的影响。邓肯继承了家庭的过去和

父母身份，失去了自我，导致了婚姻和工作的失败。虽然兄长艾萨克以不同的方式对待家庭精神遗产，但是他的生活笼罩在被母亲抛弃的阴影之中。

第三章分析两兄弟的痊愈过程。邓肯的痊愈始于生活中多重失败之后的主动寻求救赎。波兰之旅给了他修复自身的机会。通过学习艾萨克的内心平衡法，邓肯建立了安全感和对自身的控制力。和兄长共赴母亲米拉曾在的集中营使他构建了自己的大屠杀经历，从父母身份中分离出自我。同时，艾萨克得知了母亲的生活经历，追寻家庭的愿望得到了满足。

本文结论部分对全文的分析做出总结。大屠杀经历不仅对幸存者自身有着很大的影响力，同时也制约着他们的后代的生活。在不断的矛盾挣扎之中，第二代学会接受过去，试图将家庭的创伤遗产转化为积极的行为。通过讲述两兄弟的生活经历，西恩·罗森鲍姆强调了幸存者后代在精神和文化上铭记，接受和缅怀家族过去的重要性。

关键词：西恩·罗森鲍姆；创伤；痊愈

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Introduction

What occurred during the Holocaust seems too horrible to imagine. For many years following the end of World War II, survivors were very hesitant to speak of the experience related to the Holocaust.

Since the 1960s novelists and literary critics started to turn their attention to the manifold implication of the Holocaust. *Night* (1969) by Elie Wiesel, *Survival in Auschwitz: The Nazi Assault on Humanity* (1961) by Primo Levi, *The Lost Childhood: A Memoir* (1989) by Yehuda Nir and *Upon the Head of a Goat: A Childhood in Hungary 1939-44* (1981) by Aranka Siegel are written by the survivors based on their life during the Holocaust. *Night* tells of Wiesel's teenage experiences at various Nazi camps. This emotional, imaginative, and thought-provoking memoir deals with the issues of survival, loss, death, and faith. In *The Lost Childhood*, Nir tells the story of his life from 1939 to 1945. At the age of nine, he experienced the German invasion of Poland. During the years following the invasion, Nir and his family endured many hardships and survived by obtaining false identity papers. The story of this brave and determined family touches on the themes of identity and loss.

With the passage of time, the second generation that grew up in the survivor families started to interpret the Holocaust from their own perspectives. Although they haven't experienced the Holocaust themselves, they are in close contact with the living witnesses and are greatly influenced by the *Shoah*. The appearance of two books: *Living after the Holocaust: Reflection by Children of Survivors in America* (1979), edited by Lucy Y. Steinitz and David M. Szony, and Helen Epstein's *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations with Sons and Daughters of Survivors* (1979), initially brought public attention to the second generation. *Living after the Holocaust* is a rich collection of fiction, poetry, conversations and studies that reflect the Holocaust's continuing impact on the lives of its survivors and their children. Epstein interviews the survivor families in four countries located on three continents, and

provides detailed descriptions of the second generation's feelings and lives in *Children of the Holocaust*.

The second generation's works usually express protest or rebellion against a world that at first condoned the death camps and has by now largely forgotten them, the searching for post-Auschwitz identity and a *tikkun* (repair) of the self. With the stories' background in 1960s America, Thomas Fienmann's *Damaged Goods* and Barbara Finkelstein's *Summer Long-a-Coming* indicate the protests against American involvement in Vietnam and rebellion against establishment forms of religion and government. Art Spiegelman's *Maus* illustrates the complexity of inheriting memory and "the pain of a contemporary son of Job who assumes the ethnic and psychic legacy of Auschwitz" (Alan Berger, 1997: 37). The Canadian author J.J. Steinfeld's short-story volumes, *Dancing at the Club* and *Forms of Captivity and Escape* address a variety of second-generation issues, including revenge, feelings of guilt, and the continuing effect of anti-Semitism. Thane Rosenbaum's triptych, *Elijah Visible* (1996), *Second Hand Smoke* (1999), and *The Golems of Gotham* (2002), portrays the post-Holocaust world from the vantage point of the children of survivors.

Thane Rosenbaum was born on 8 January 1960 in Washington Heights, New York, the only child of Norman and Betty Rosenbaum. His father was a retired lawyer and his mother a homemaker. Both his parents were survivors of the Nazi death camps: his mother had been in Majdanek, his father in Auschwitz and other camps. When he was around nine years old, his parents moved the family to Miami, Florida. His parents rarely mentioned their Holocaust experience. For Rosenbaum, the silence turned out to be a wellspring of creativity, and the gaps left by the untold stories stimulated his urge to write fiction.

Rosenbaum earned his B.A. in English and philosophy from the University of Florida in 1981 and went on to finish an M.P.A. at Columbia University in 1983. Then he accepted a scholarship to law school at the University of Miami. Despite his success as an attorney, Rosenbaum was unhappy, and he eventually left the firm to become a full-time writer of fiction. He does not write directly about the Holocaust, but rather about its effect on the second generation. His novels and short stories raise

complex issues of moral philosophy, the transmission of Holocaust memories from generation to generation, the situation of American Jewish life, and the possibility of faith in the post-Holocaust world.

In 1996, Rosenbaum published a novel-in-stories, *Elijah Visible*. The book received the 1996 Edward Lewis Wallant Award for Jewish American fiction. *Elijah Visible* contains nine interlinked short stories, and centers around the young, yuppie Manhattan lawyer Adam Posner, whose name suggests the possibility of new beginnings embodied in the members of the second generation. In each tale, a different version of Posner is presented, each reborn with his own post-Holocaust legacy and his own way of coming to terms with it. The result of this approach is a multifaceted picture of the ways in which the offspring of survivors navigate the post-Holocaust world. Themes of loss, mourning, and paralysis feature in each of the nine stories.

Rosenbaum's first full-length novel, *Second Hand Smoke*, was published in 1999. The title indicates the literal smoke of the Nazi crematoria as well as metaphorical smoke to which the sons and daughters of survivors are exposed with equally toxic effect. The book tells the tale of Duncan Katz of Miami and New York, the son of Holocaust survivors, a lawyer who has made his living tracking Nazi criminals. Duncan is trained by his mother, Mila, who found no joy in him, and who takes from the death camps her survival strategies but not her humanity. The story weaves back and forth in time from Duncan's *bris* (circumcision) to his mother's graveside, from his own failed marriage to his lost career. Mila's story unfolds as she is dying of cancer, telling her life story to the three nurses who care for her. Of her many secrets, the one that matters most is the son she left behind in Poland and what she did to him. Duncan's finding of his brother Isaac catalyzes his own life in a surreal encounter with neo-Nazis at Birkenau.

The Golems of Gotham features the Jewish mythical archetype the Golem, molded from mud and brought to life with prayer and ritual. Many years have passed since Oliver Levin - a bestselling mystery writer and a lifetime sufferer from blocked emotions - has given any thought to his parents, Holocaust survivors who committed

suicide. But now, after years of uninterrupted literary output, Oliver Levin finds himself blocked as a writer, too. Oliver's fourteen-year-old daughter, Ariel, sets out to free her father from his demons by summoning the ghosts of his parents, but, along the way, the ghosts of Primo Levi, Jerzy Kosinski, and Paul Celan, among others. In this novel Rosenbaum deals with rescue and repair, the role and responsibility of the artist in history, the preservation of memory, and the moral questions that surround representation of the Holocaust and its aftermath, not least the dangers inherent in trivializing or forgetting.

The study of the Holocaust impact is not only limited in literature. Over the past decades, psychological, social and historical researchers have attempted to understand not only the Holocaust's effects on the victims themselves but also the transgenerational transmission of trauma on the children of the survivors (Abrams 1999; Baider et al. 2000; Bergmann and Jacovy 1982; Gottschalk 2003; Levitt 2004; Mendelssohn 2008; Napoli 1999; Scharf 2007; Shofar 2001; Weiss 2000; Wilson et al. 1988; Yehuda 1998). Researches conducted in the United States, Canada, Israel, and elsewhere suggest that survivors' offspring show particular psychological difference compared with their peers (James Berger 1997; Hass 1990; Prince 1985; Sigal and Weinfeld 1989; Wardi 1992).

It was found that members of the traumatized generation deposit aspects of themselves related to the trauma into their children (Levitt 2004; Lifton 1988; Prince 1985; Scharf 2007; Shofar 2001). Trauma transmission can be direct and indirect, through the parents' behaviors and family customs (Kellerman 1999; Weiss 2000). The children of Holocaust survivors are likely to be infected by the posttraumatic stress disorder from their parents (Napoli, 1999; Schmeidler 1998; Yehuda 1998) Mendelssohn (2008) emphasizes the importance of the feeling of guilt, shame in the trauma transmission. Barider's (2000) research shows the second generation's physical vulnerability to severe diseases.

This thesis applies the psychological research on trauma to Thane Rosenbaum's novel *Second Hand Smoke*, and provides a systematic analysis of the major characters' life under the theme of trauma transgeneration effect and recovery.

Chapter One introduces trauma's definition and symptoms, and explores the way of recovery. The studies on transgeneration effects in Holocaust families are illustrated to provide a theoretical framework for further analysis.

Chapter Two discusses trauma's origin and influence on both the survivors and their children. The first generation in *Second Hand Smoke* includes Mila Katz, Yankee Katz and Keller Borowski. Their trauma directly comes from the horrible experience in the Holocaust. Their post-Holocaust lives are shadowed by the Post-trauma Stress Disorder syndromes. As parents, their behaviors gradually transfer the trauma to the second generation, Duncan Katz and Isaac Borowski. Living in different countries, the half-brothers suffer from the second hand trauma.

Chapter Three analyses the recovery process of the brothers. Duncan comes to Poland to meet Isaac. Through learning from his brother and experiencing the unreal Holocaust, Duncan constructs his own image of the Holocaust and separates his identity from his parents. From Duncan, Isaac's curiosity about their mother Mila is satisfied and his pursuit for family history is completed.

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