Schizophrenic Collective Consciousness
As Represented in Contemporary Drama and Fiction

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By

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DEDICATION

This is dedicated to Lorraine, my mentor and friend, without whom I would not have discovered "how to talk about how we talk about memory."

IN MEMORIAM

Dr. Lorraine A. Brown
1929-2010

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABSTRACT

SCHIZOPHRENIC COLLECTIVE CONSCIOUSNESS
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How do societies begin to reconcile the schizophrenic "before" and "after" worlds experienced in the aftermath of severe social and political change? Literature of war and revolution suggests in a powerful way that it is the dynamic act of storytelling—the writing and rewriting of history—that represents a society's ability to move forward. This thesis analyzes dramatic and narrative representations of schizophrenic collective consciousness during revolution and war in contemporary works. The split nature of a postwar consciousness becomes evident in Caryl Churchill's *Mad Forest* (1990), and *The Hospital at the Time of the Revolution* (1972), Haruki Murakami's *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* (1994), and Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005). Between these authors, trauma in the latter half of the twentieth century is explored through French-colonial Algerian, post-communist Romanian, and World War II German, Japanese and American societies. The theoretical framework through which

the primary texts are analyzed draws heavily from social psychology studies of collective memory and trauma theory, as well as postmodern rhetoric that explores the individual's place in a fragmented, war-torn society, and the relationship between time and space in identity formation.

1. Introduction

"Everything we encounter involves an act of interpretation on our part. And this doesn't just apply to what we encounter in books, but to what we respond to in life. Oh, we live comfortably because we create these sacred domains in our head where **we believe that we have a specific history, a certain set of experiences. We believe that our memories keep us in direct touch with what has happened. But memory never puts us in touch with anything directly; it's always interpretive, reductive, a complicated compression of information.**"

~Mark Z. Danielewski, interview (*emphasis added*)

While memories may not keep us in touch with "what has happened," they do keep us in direct touch with what is *happening*. The construction of a personal narrative is a dynamic, ongoing process that is inextricably linked with the construction of a collective history. It is the interpretive nature of this complicated compression of information, as novelist Danielewski suggests, that transforms individual memories into a cohesive narrative. When "factual" historical accounts in monographs, journalism or textbooks fail to fairly convey the story, where better to turn than to tell stories about our stories? The narratives of everyday life in peace time are multilayered enough on their own, but once the trauma of revolution or war comes into play, the compression of information becomes further complicated to a severe degree. The literature created by individuals experiencing or witnessing political upheaval records the emotional and psychological disorientation caused by massive and abrupt change. Revolutionary change, usually characterized by a

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series of traumatic events, imposes shifts in cultural and social ideology, which often

dislocates a previously held central identity. While societies endure this change as a

shared experience, the nature of traumatic events creates circumstances in which

individuals experience confusion, isolation, and an intensely felt absence of unity with

one another.

Literature has the unique ability to represent these shared and individual

experiences simultaneously. Drama and fiction can create a dialogue that promotes

communication through action and reaction to traumatic events during revolution and

war. Caryl Churchill's *Mad Forest* (1990), and *The Hospital at the Time of the

Revolution* (1972), Haruki Murakami's *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* (1994), and

Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005), document the

existence of a "schizophrenic collective consciousness," a concept that I will presently

define. This postwar consciousness plagues nations experiencing severe social, political,

and cultural change and further demonstrates the fragmented isolation that affects both

the oppressed and the oppressor, the individual and the society as a whole.

While social psychology studies of collective memory and trauma theory will be

central to my analysis of the primary texts, I will first turn to a philosophy of language I

find particularly relevant to dissecting the schizophrenic nature of postwar consciousness.

In his essay "Discourse in the Novel," Mikhail Bakhtin states that all utterances are

"stratified into languages that are socio-ideological: languages of social groups,

languages of generations," and further defines his famous concept of heteroglossia as

"*another's speech in another's language,*" which constitutes a special type of "*double-*

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voiced discourse… a concentrated dialogue of two voices, two world views, two languages" (*The Dialogic Imagination* 271-2; 324-5). In other words, every sentence or phrase you utter will have traces of what makes you who you are: where your parents came from, how you were educated, why you make the subconscious decision to use formal or conversational speech depending on your audience—the list goes on.

In literature, the added dynamic of the author writing a character imposes yet another dimension of discourse. While Bakhtin suggests the "second voice" is authorial intention refracted in a character's speech, I believe that particular temporal and cultural contexts, such as the conditions of war or revolution, demand attention to the second voice within a single character. In Anne Nesbet's analysis of *Berlin Alexanderplatz,* a novel in which "madness is at all times an undercurrent," she invokes Bakhtin when describing the "schizophrenic many-voicedness (or "schizoglossia")" of the prose (125). The "two voices, two world views, two languages" of heteroglossia are further complicated by the schism, or split, of the schizophrenia Nesbet details. This concept seems to suggest an inherently problematic attempt to identify two voices; rather, multiple voices are identified, but none of those voices feels singularly distinct from the other. I will adopt the term schizoglossia in order to explore the ways it can aptly describe narrative as well as dramatic techniques in socially and politically charged literature.

Through schizoglossic dialogue between characters, Churchill, Murakami and Foer attempt to write a "true history" wherein both dominant culture and marginalized people are equally represented through a collection of individual experiences. During

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revolution, disconnect between intentions, desires, actions, and perceived reality results in a schizophrenic collective consciousness. All members of society, through their fearful paranoia in isolation, are united in their common internal conflict to reconcile this disconnection with reality. A multi-voiced approach to storytelling creates a complex representation of the confusion, paranoia, and fear that occur during revolution. I will define collective consciousness here as a shared state of being actively aware of a political and social environment. As readers may register this political aspect of consciousness with Frederick Jameson, I will clarify that this is distinct from Jameson's political unconscious, which is passive in its awareness: the underlying principle of the political unconscious is the act of repression of a complicated history. During political upheaval, the collective consciousness is plagued by schizophrenia—contradictory qualities or attitudes (Merriam-Webster)—in a disorienting way. The Romanian, French-Algerian, Japanese, German and American societies represented in these works experience cognitive dissonance, a psychological conflict resulting from incongruous beliefs and attitudes held simultaneously (Merriam-Webster). Fear of the dominant opposition forces the individual to mask his or her political beliefs and engenders a cyclical struggle to remain loyal to one's cause while avoiding persecution or detection.

Caryl Churchill translates politically tumultuous histories from the language of the dominant culture to that of marginalized people with schizoglossic dialogue through the medium of theater. She abandons a totalizing schema for a fragmented representation of events. Through the staging of what she calls a "democratic history," Churchill gives voice to individuals from multiple ethnicities, political affiliations, and generations. She

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traveled to Bucharest to gather first-hand data for scripting *Mad Forest* (1990)*,* which

relates the events surrounding the 1989 Romanian overthrow of Communist dictator

Ceausescu. Romania was the only Eastern Bloc country to overthrow its government

violently or to execute its leaders. Characters in this play range from Romanian peasants

to Ceausescu's secret police, the Securitate officers.

Churchill's *The Hospital at the Time of the Revolution* (1972) takes place in

French-colonial Algeria in 1956, five years prior to Algerian independence. It portrays

events and characters based on Dr. Frantz Fanon's observations of his psychiatric ward

patients, who included both Algerian patriots and the French officers who tortured them.

Through schizoglossic dialogue Churchill demonstrates that, whether in Communist

Romania or French-colonial Algeria, the conditions of life in wartime or revolutionary

upheaval result in a schizophrenic collective consciousness that penetrates all members of

society.

Haruki Murakami's *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* (1994) oscillates between a

contemporary narrative and stories of pre-Second World War Japan that address

Manchurian war crimes (1932-45). In an exploration of what happens to cultural memory

when Japan is held accountable for atrocities committed against Chinese soldiers in

WWII, multi-voiced storytelling bridges generation gaps and examines the long-term

psychological effects of war and change. The central narrator experiences the memories

of the generation before him through letters from and dialogue with war veterans. A

particularly interesting commentary on memory construction becomes apparent in this

novel as the same horrific incidents are accounted for in present time, through a singular

retrospective view, and through interaction between characters in the form of storytelling. The severe degree to which the narrator is affected by the war veterans' stories exemplifies the concept of postmemory, which will be discussed at length in chapter five.

Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005) was one of the first novels to incorporate the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, as a major theme. Narrated partially by a boy, Oskar, whose father was killed in the attacks, and partially by the boy's paternal grandparents, Foer's novel offers intriguing parallels between 9/11 and the United States Army Air Corps and Royal Air Force bombing of Dresden in World War II. Oskar's grandparents, who lived in Germany at the time of the fire bombings, experienced permanent psychological trauma. Their narratives are fragmented and express the isolation and disorientation they felt, and continue to feel, as individuals in a society experiencing a traumatic event again in 2001. In addition to the three narrators, the sentiments and experiences of many New York residents are voiced through Oskar's journey throughout the city to find information about his father. Foer makes a powerful statement about the community, or lack thereof, when his 10-year-old protagonist seeks the comfort of strangers whom he normally would never have met. Foer's novel is structurally similar—narratively and thematically—to Murakami's *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*; thus, transcendence of the generation gap also aids in Foer's depiction of parallel societies during traumatic events.

These authors voice severe political change or traumatic events through two models: the family unit, and society as a whole, which is represented by an un-named body of characters. The former examines the ways in which cognitive dissonance

infiltrates intimate familial relationships, while the latter examines this phenomenon in the broader context of society as a whole. The authors name the characters in the family unit so that the audience or reader can identify with and follow their stories, but they are not necessarily the central characters. Nor is the body of un-named characters central to the stories. Rather, both models function as equal parts in an unbiased representation of all parties involved in political and social upheaval. While the individual characters' experiences stand alone, they are significant for their contribution to the story as a whole. I propose that careful analysis of themes of isolation and loss of identity, as well as narrative style and point of view in Churchill's dramas and Murakami and Foer's fiction, with special attention to historical, socio-political, and cultural context, will demonstrate the undeniable existence of schizophrenic collective consciousness and its effects on both the individual and society during revolutionary political change. Analysis of the primary texts demands a complex theoretical framework based on social psychology studies of collective memory and trauma theory, which will be discussed in chapter two.

2. From Collective Memory to Collective Consciousness

"It is so short and jumbled and jangled…because **there is nothing intelligent to say about a massacre**. **Everybody is supposed to be dead, to never say anything or want anything ever again.** Everything is supposed to be very quiet after a massacre, and it always is, except for the birds.
And what do the birds say? **All there is to say about a massacre, things like Poo-tee-weet**?"

~ Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse-five* (*emphasis added*)

How do we go about finding the words to talk about a traumatic event? Before this question can be answered, we have to ask another question: how do we begin to acknowledge the fact that we *must* talk about a traumatic event in order to move on? The collective part of collective memory necessarily involves a dynamic interaction between individuals and individual memories. The individual memories must be woven into a coherent story before they can be interwoven with other narratives. This is not to say that a clear, cohesive story ever exists singularly, for the individual or the collective; rather, the *process* of creating a narrative is what lends cohesion to the memories of traumatized peoples.

A work that will not be discussed in this project directly, but that is no less relevant thematically to this study, is Haruki Murakami's *Underground,* which presents stories of "journalistic literature," compiling individual experiences of both victims and cult members from the 1995 Aum Shinrikyo sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway.

Murakami follows the interview transcriptions with an essay wherein he briefly explores the role of narrative in singular and collective identities:

> If you lose your ego, you lose the thread of that narrative you call your Self. Humans, however, can't live very long without some sense of a continuing story. Such stories go beyond the limited rational system (or the systematic rationality) with which you surround yourself; they are crucial keys to sharing time-experience with others.
>
> Now a narrative is a story, not logic, nor ethics, nor philosophy. It is a dream you keep having, whether you realize it or not. Just as surely as you breathe, you go on ceaselessly dreaming your story. And in these stories you wear two faces. You are simultaneously subject and object. You are the whole and you are a part. You are real and you are shadow. "Storyteller" and at the same time "character." It is through such multilayering of roles in our stories that we heal the loneliness of being an isolated individual in the world. (231)

The emphasis on a continuing story and on the double role one plays in constructing that continuing story speak to the fundamental quality of dynamic interaction between individual and collective narratives that result in a collective consciousness. The individual's role in a story constantly oscillates between finite character and infinitely developing storyteller; a character may remain static in a single iteration of the story in a single moment in time, but the actions of that same character turned storyteller create

new iterations that have been, and will continue to be, influenced by the collective. Thus, the individual plays the role of both participant and observer in his or her own story.

In order to fully comprehend collective consciousness—the lens through which I propose to study narratives of political upheaval—an understanding of collective memory is necessary. Social psychology provides the most substantial foundation for discerning the meaning and value of collective memory in my analysis because it encompasses my central focus: the mental and emotional factors governing the human mind of the individual as it relates to and interacts with society. At the forefront of social psychological studies in collective memory, Maurice Halbwachs, in his work *On Collective Memory*, states, "it is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories" (38). The localization of memories is of distinct import to my study because the restriction of particular conceptions of the past to specific spatial and temporal locations creates the circumstances under which multiple memories of the same event can exist; whether these memories coexist peacefully or remain in constant conflict with one another will be discussed at length.

Conjecturing on the nature of remembering as an act of reliving the past, Halbwachs further suggests,

> If the past recurs, it seems of little importance to know whether it does so in my consciousness or in the consciousness of others...various capacities for memory aid each other and are of mutual assistance to each other. But what we call the collective framework of memory would then be only the

result, or sum, or combination of individual recollections of many

members of the same society. (Halbwachs 39)

It is this framework that implies a working relationship between individuals and the

formation of their own identities in relation to society. Halbwachs' use of the specific

terms "result" and "sum" supports a view of collective memory that employs some sort of

formal equation. These many parts make a whole, but are each of those parts equal, and

what does it mean for the whole if they are incongruous?

In a more recent work, *Voices of Collective Remembering,* James V. Wertsch

postulates the importance of considering the dynamic action of creating memories.

Incorporating Bakhtin's analysis of the "trio of characters," in which the effects of the

dramatic utterance depend equally on the speaker, the listener, and the "voice" or

"voices" within the utterance, Wertsch explains the ways in which Bakhtin's orientation

"puts a strong emphasis on process, or action, hence… preference for the term

'remembering' rather than 'memory.' Instead of talking about memories that we 'have,'

the emphasis is on remembering as something we do…" (Wertsch 17), which is

consistent with Bakhtin's understanding that voice is best understood in terms of a

speaking consciousness.

Wertsch also distinguishes between strong and distributed notions of collective

memory: the strong version of collective memory assumes that some sort of collective

mind or consciousness exists above and beyond all the minds of the individuals in the

collective, which he states is a difficult position to defend, and rarely manifests outside of

the context of fanatical religion or science fiction. However, the distributed version of

collective memory assumes that a representation of the past is distributed among members of a collective, but not because of the existence of a collective mind in any strong sense; rather, for example, a family may construct a narrative of past events by piecing together what the mother saw, what the son heard, etc. (Wertsch 21). Within the theory of distributed collective memory, there are three accepted categories. The simplest version of distributed collective memory can be termed "homogeneous," and posits that all members of a group share the same representation of the past, which Wertsch clarifies seldom exists. A second form of distributed collective memory can be termed "complementary," wherein it is assumed that different members of a group have different perspectives and remember different things, but these exist in a coordinated system of complementary pieces (Wertsch 23). While the notion of varied perspectives of the same event is a necessary element of my study, the level of coordination suggested here could not be applicable in a study of schizophrenic collective consciousness.

However, a third form of distributed collective memory, according to Wertsch, involves "contested distribution." As in the case of complementary distribution, different perspectives are inherent to this, but they do not function together in a cooperative or reciprocal fashion. Instead,

> they exist in a system of opposition and contestation…similar to John Bodner's "public memory" (1991)…Competition and conflict characterize this sort of representation of the past. Instead of involving multiple perspectives that overlap or complement one another, the focus is on how these perspectives compete with or contradict one another. Indeed, in

some cases, one perspective is designed specifically to rebut another.

(Wertsch 24)

Contested distribution, in this sense, focuses on conflict within the collective memory of the group: different members of the same society may adopt different versions of the same event depending upon their social, cultural, or economic position within the group. Perhaps it is prudent here to consider that collective memory—as it is understood to be an ongoing action—is distinct from history, if we call History what we see recorded as factual, unchanging records of the past. Collective memory is less of a record and more of an act of rehearsing our understanding of the past. Conflict is an inherent part of that rehearsal. Wertsch's contested distribution does not, however, specify whether a conflict arises within a single individual, but rather that the conflict exists between individuals with opposing views. It is useful here to review Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia, briefly discussed in chapter one, and how it may pertain directly to the notion of contested distribution in collective memories of political upheaval.

Bakhtin's concept of dialogism also applies to these ideas of collective memory when he argued that because each individual utterance responds to preceding utterances, speech becomes polyphonic. Each utterance is always a response to what came before it, even if what came before is not readily apparent. At any given historical moment, each generation at each social level has its own language, as does each age group, profession, and so forth. These languages provide specific points of reference that interact dialogically.

According to Bakhtin, these different voices or points of view should be represented in subtly different languages that are identifiable in terms of the close relationship between content, ideological orientation, style, compositional structure, and even speech setting (*Speech Genres* 60). People can communicate with each other because we are able to identify and understand these multiple perspectives, or ''voices,'' that are necessarily present in any speech event and, according to Bakhtin, in the speech of any one individual (Smith 253-4).

Andrea Smith, in her article, "Heteroglossia, 'common sense,' and social memory," analyzes the internally contradictory narratives of former settlers of Algeria and the ways in which these forms of "popular memory" can be viewed as Bakhtinian heteroglossia. She employs research in cognitive anthropology and psychology to confirm that it is not uncommon for individuals to retain multiple conflicting viewpoints simultaneously. Returning to the root of "common sense" as it refers to popular memory, Smith states:

> Because scholars so often associate popular memory with Gramscian ''common sense,'' it is worthwhile to return to the source of these ideas. ''Common sense'' for Gramsci was an unreflected and largely unconscious conception of the world shared by the ''mass of people'' (325). Subaltern thought, he felt, was ''not critical and coherent but disjointed and episodic,'' the result of the uncritical accretion of any number of ''principles'' and ''prejudices'' from previous and current eras (Gramsci 324). (Smith 252)

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The compounded effect of these "principles and prejudices," from both past and present, works to create a social memory that is necessarily episodic, or only loosely connected, thus creating the circumstances for a split, or schizophrenic, comprehension of those memories. Emphasis on subaltern thought, here, suggests that oppressed sectors of society experience a higher degree of this disjointed social memory than do privileged sectors that act as oppressors.

Presenting a discourse-centered approach to ethnography, Smith delves into the dichotomous voices of French-colonial Algeria: the dominant voice suggests that assimilation was complete for both peoples of direct French descent and immigrants from other European origins. The individualized voice that emerged from settler narratives revealed the massive obstacle ethnicity imposed on non-French settlers in the process of assimilation. Smith responds that "one might argue then that audience plays the most prominent role and that the official voice should be viewed as the 'public transcript,' that which is presented in the open interaction between subordinates and dominant groups, whereas the contrasting voice represents a 'hidden transcript,' that which takes place 'off-stage,' away from direct observation of those in power" (Scott 2, 4 as qtd. in Smith 261). This language calls attention to the public and private spheres in which memories are recorded, and furthers the supposition of social memory, or remembering, as a dynamic action, and in this instance, a performative action dependent upon audience.

Smith's records of settler narratives reveal a conflicted memory identical to the sentiments expressed in Caryl Churchill's *The Hospital at the Time of the Revolution*, which will be discussed in chapters three and four:

The official vision of the past does not represent colonial Algeria as all

colonists experienced it, and, thus, it exists alongside contrasting views,

rooted in people's life experiences. Because the narrative of the past that

the elderly settlers have learned from others does not correspond with

what they have learned in their own lives, a kind of conversational

cognitive dissonance develops. (Smith 262)

The circumstances under which cognitive dissonance on a large scale develops involve

the existence of this dominant "official vision." It seems that the narratives Smith

recorded demonstrate the desire of settlers to adopt this officially accepted vision of

assimilation; however, the further individuals delved into their stories, the further

removed they became from the ideal version. Smith observes, "In recounting their

stories…speakers sometimes presented clues, such as the use of ethnicity as a primary

social category…These clues within the standard official narratives alert listeners to the

existence of another, quite contrasting, representation of the same past" (257). This

implies that the individuals may not even be aware of their efforts to present "official"

social memory as dominant within their recollections as individuals.

In line with Wertsch's preference for the dynamic term "remembering" rather

than "memory," Smith states, "social memory is not static but involves an ongoing and

actively constructed set of views on the past, each view engaged by, and reflected back

on, the other" (Smith 263). In this process, memories are in fact malleable and able to

adapt to a variety of perceived social realities. While this phenomenon can certainly be

observed in what could be called "normal" daily life, it is heightened in times of political

upheaval that necessarily involve both oppressed and oppressive forces. What happens when individuals experience the same event, but then produce different verbal recollections of that event? Is it possible—or even desirable—to compile conflicting accounts of the event into a single memory in order to understand what happened?

The answer to these questions lies in the root of cognitive dissonance and its contribution to the existence of a schizophrenic collective consciousness. Smith confirms that

> Advances in cognitive anthropology and psychological studies of individual memory formation suggest no reason to assume that individuals connect the various approaches to, and discourses about, the past into some coherent whole. Instead, different schemas may be stored differently in different parts of the brain, and one can expect that people may simultaneously maintain multiple distinct, even irreconcilable, notions about past events and their meanings. These insights also suggest that incoherence may be a more generalized phenomenon and not limited to one subgroup or class of society. (Smith 265)

The latter part of this statement is crucial to my argument in that the type of incoherent, episodic memory associated with subaltern or oppressed peoples can, indeed, be an equal reality for the oppressive group (via government, ethnicity, or some other category) that perpetuates the dominant "official" social memory. How, then, do we move from collective memory to collective consciousness?

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Navigation between past events and present rehearsals of those events involves a degree of mediation between recollecting and interpreting. The two are inextricably linked in the *act* of interpretation: the "facts" of an event may be standardized in an official report of what happened, but the moment interpretation of those facts is relayed from two distinct voices (possibly from within the same individual), the paths diverge. Marianne Hirsch, in her article "The Generation of Postmemory," suggests that the term "postmemory" describes the relationship of the second generation to powerful, often traumatic, experiences that preceded their births but that were nevertheless transmitted to them so deeply as to seem to constitute memories in their own right. Her focus on remembrance of the Holocaust and the family as a space for transmission of these memories is particularly relevant to the ways in which I will focus on second generation relationships in Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* as well as Churchill's *Mad Forest*. First, an understanding of postmemory and its related terminology can illuminate the purpose of studying this relationship.

Hirsch reviews similar terms and their progression toward a cohesive understanding of what it means to use postmemory as the framework through which to study dynamically evolving memories, acknowledging the ideas of a "syndrome" of belatedness or "post-ness" and how it has been variously termed "absent memory" (Fine 1988), "inherited memory," "belated memory," "prosthetic memory" (Lury 1998, Landsberg 2004), …"vicarious witnessing" (Zeitlin 1998), "received history" (Young 1997), and "postmemory," (Hirsch 105). She anticipates many of the controversial assumptions about such terms:

that descendants of survivors (of victims as well as of perpetrators) of

massive traumatic events connect so deeply to the previous generation's

remembrances of the past that they need to call that connection memory

and thus that, in certain extreme circumstances, memory can be

transmitted to those who were not actually there to live an event. At the

same time—so it is assumed—this received memory is distinct from the

recall of contemporary witnesses and participants. Hence the insistence on

"post" or "after" and the many qualifying adjectives that try to define both

a specifically inter- and trans-generational act of transfer and the resonant

aftereffects of trauma. If this sounds like a contradiction, it is, indeed, one,

and I believe it is inherent to this phenomenon. (Hirsch 106)

While the case for whether or not one generation can literally experience, or inherit, the

memories of the previous generation is difficult to prove, the concept that one

generation's traumatic experiences can strongly affect the following generation is nearly

universally accepted. Focusing on the family unit, it becomes clear that traumatic

memories, whether suppressed or openly discussed, become a part of the older

generation's identity, thus affecting the people that they become in relation to the

younger generation.

The younger generation may be just as conflicted when it comes to defining their

identity as the older generation who actually experienced the traumatic event. Celia Lury,

in *Prosthetic Culture: Photography, memory and identity*, notes the ways in which the

current generation forms its identity and its "implications for contemporary

understandings of agency, responsibility, the allocation of guilt, blame and virtue, the ascription of rights to the individual (and the exclusion of some people from this identity), and for recognitions of belonging, collective identification and exclusion" (2). Similarly, Dena Elisabeth Eber and Arthur G. Neal, in *Memory and Representation: Constructed Truths*, *and Competing Realities*, point out, "The selective and arbitrary character of memory in everyday life stands in contrast to the imprinting that occurs under conditions of crisis and trauma…The lingering consequences of trauma require that we conceptually modify our usual way of looking at memory and representation" (174). In order to establish an identity of the self, the components that make up that self, including heritage and family history, must somehow synchronize past and present events, as well as varied understandings or interpretations of those events.

If memory, or postmemory, is to be transmitted across generations, then the medium through which it travels is necessarily representative or symbolic in some way. Eber and Neal state, "The linkage of memory with representation provides the raw material for the construction of both personal and collective identities," and in concordance with Smith believe that "audience becomes the primary determinant of the content of what is produced" (10). Thus, multiple realities can be produced because they are perceived differently by not only different people, but also within the same individual. If postmemory functions in the ways Hirsch proposes, then it is possible that a member of the younger generation will experience internal conflict with the inherited memories and the current perception of the world.

Furthermore, because "orientations towards numerous aspects of social life are likely to vary according to historical circumstances and reflect different viewpoints according to age and generation level…generations are now foremost among the divisions within the social system and thus a primary source for the pluralization of life-worlds" (Eber and Neal 177). This pluralization supports the existence of a schizophrenic collective awareness of these multiple life-worlds, or worlds in which the beliefs and understandings of different generations struggle within the individual.

A focus on "the intersections of personal biography with historical events" presents a working foundation in which the individual's conception of his or her own history can be studied along side the collective, or official, understanding of that history as it is interpreted by the population as a whole. Eber and Neal observe:

> The task of the individual is to find his or her place within the broader scheme of human affairs. A primary task of a nation is that of reworking data from the past, processing many levels of truth and reality, in order to shape a contemporary identity. The task of shaping a collective identity is embedded in the work of mass entertainment, in news journalism, in the educational system, in the creative arts, and in the work of all those specialists who are exploring the limitations and prospects of the world in which we live. These people present, or *re-present*, memories depicting many levels of truth that spar and compete with our perceptions of reality, and thus our aggregate selves. (178)

Reworking or re-presenting data from the past suggests a dynamic and deliberate action to adapt previously held interpretations of the past to fit into a new "history" that can cater to the societal needs of the present. Those needs must depend upon current social and political markers within society. Do these markers evolve with each generation, or do they consistently fluctuate even within generations?

This is directly related to the way memory is used in terms of an active creation of both a past and, ultimately, a present understanding of shared experience. David Middleton and Steven D. Brown, in *The Social Psychology of Experience: Studies in Remembering and Forgetting,* clarify the distinction between popular conceptions of memory and what memory constitutes in a social psychological sense: "We place memory at the center of lived experience—not as the storehouse of that experience, but, instead, as a relational process at the intersection of different durations of living. To approach remembering and forgetting in this way is to deliberately blur the boundaries between the individual and the collective," (1). It is precisely this blurring of boundaries between the individual and the collective that yields a schizophrenic consciousness: if individuals can place themselves neither within a collective "official" history, nor outside in an alternative history, then where does their identity as a part of their culture exist?

Eber and Neal say that "the realities of the past take on several meanings through our current perceptions of them," and further emphasize the integral role of representation, via language, in memory formation: "While our language separates time dimensions into past, present, and future, our experience tends to unify them as we reflect on the character of societal events…The past becomes a form of selective memory, since

the factual details of what happened in history often are neither known nor knowable" (9). The concept of selective memory reasserts itself in both standard traumatic memory studies as well as in the unconventional exploration of "postmemory." Memories can be selective in terms of the individual's desire to actively block certain aspects of a traumatic event, or, as related to inherited memory, in terms of the previous generation's desire to block trauma from their children.

Specific to the family unit, "multiple representations of the past circulate in the same community, even within the same family, because individuals learn and process memories differently and independently and because societies are heterogeneous. One can assume that with careful attention to narrative style, content, and form, distinct memory sources or schemata and their degree of integration will be identifiable," (Smith 263). It is especially through narrative structure that this integration of multiple realities into a collective consciousness can be discerned. The family unit will be a central focus in Part One: Drama, not because the family is any more important or central to these particular plays than in other dramas, but rather because the family unit is the most private, personal microcosm in which to prove the existence of schizophrenic collective consciousness. Within two revolutionary societies in the latter half of the twentieth century, the individualized family will serve as a point of access to the collective consciousness of society as a whole.

Part I. Drama

Schizophrenic Collective Consciousness During Revolution:

Caryl Churchill's *Mad Forest* and *The Hospital at the Time of the Revolution*

3. Cyclic Repression and the Family

"…she and everyone younger had every right to blame him and everyone older for every unnatural tragedy that befell them; just as she, even in her grief, was to blame for every man-made misery that landed on her kid sister and on all other children behind her. Someone had to do something sometime. **Every victim was a culprit, every culprit a victim, and somebody had to stand up sometime to try to break the lousy chain of inherited habit that was imperiling them all**."

~Joseph Heller, *Catch-22*, (*emphasis added)*

If every victim is a culprit, and every culprit a victim, the comfortable ideology

separating "good" from "evil" in oppressive regimes disintegrates, resulting in a

schizophrenic understanding of each side of the conflict. Schizoglossic dialogue between

characters, as discussed in chapter one, on the stage can most accurately represent the

internal conflict and disorientation of individuals experiencing revolution. *Mad Forest*

chronicles the period before, during and after the overthrow of the dictator in 1989, and

The Hospital at the Time of the Revolution depicts the political climate near the end of the

Algerian Revolution in the late 1950s. In both plays, the family unit is juxtaposed with

unnamed individuals from society as a whole, rendering a microcosm in which to view

the large-scale effects of revolution on a collective identity.

Churchill voices revolution through two models: the family unit, and society as a

whole, represented by an un-named body of characters. The former examines the ways in

which cognitive dissonance infiltrates intimate familial relationships, while the latter

examines this phenomenon in the broader context of society as a whole. Churchill names the characters in the family unit so that the audience can identify with and follow their stories: however, they are not the central characters. Nor is the body of un-named characters central to the play. Both models function as equal parts in an unbiased representation of all parties involved in political upheaval. While the individual characters' experiences stand alone, they are significant for their contribution to the story as a whole.

Following the desired goal of Brecht's epic structure, Churchill does not allow the audience to focus on plot or character, but rather on the message of the play; however, she does not employ the epic structure to achieve this goal. Amelia Howe Kritzer, in *The Plays of Caryl Churchill: Theater of Empowerment,* notes that while Churchill incorporated Brechtian devices into her process and experimentation of earlier plays, later ones call attention to her differences in critical attitude towards his ideas (84), as evidenced by the structures of *Mad Forest* and *Hospital*. Donna Soto-Morettini, in her article "Revolution and the Fatally Clever Smile: Caryl Churchill's *Mad Forest,*" suggests that, "Churchill abandons the Enlightenment universal of Brecht's prescription for a fragmented particularism that better accommodates the complexity she means to convey" (116). The Enlightenment universal that advocates man's rational ability to understand the structure of the world cannot apply to Churchill's representation of revolution. Reinforcing neither meta-narratives of progress, nor the ideas of reason, the plays inhabit a post-Enlightenment sphere (Soto-Morettini 116) wherein there is no rational justification or solution for the questions posed. Churchill seeks to identify, not

to answer, the questions that arise in the horrific living conditions of wartime through the juxtaposition of the microcosm of the family unit and the macrocosm of society as a whole.

Critics have already noted Churchill's attention to not only revolutionary events, but also, perhaps more importantly, the aftermath of revolution. Christina Olga Kiebuzinska, in "Caryl Churchill's *Mad Forest*: Examining Postrevolutionary Disillusionment," recognizes that the spontaneous events of the Romanian revolution were unexplored in relation to the well-documented events of the overthrow of other Communist regimes in East European countries like Poland, Czechoslovakia, and East Germany; therefore, "Romania's political and economic situation remained a dense, impenetrable forest" (231). In *Mad Forest*, Churchill examines characters' psychology at a critical time in Romania's history. Ileana Orlich, in "Mad Voices in the Forest: Caryl Churchill's Configurations of Women in Pre-Post Communist Romania," suggests that Churchill assumes the language of observer to represent the political oppression of the Ceausescu era and the uncertainty that followed the revolution of December 22, 1989 (216). *Mad Forest* represents a community of ordinary, oppressed Romanians and takes aim at the brutal dictatorship, economic difficulties, and patriarchal values that shaped the period.

In order to gain first-hand accounts of life under this oppression, Churchill, director Mark Wing-Davey, and a group of ten graduate students went to Bucharest to work collaboratively with students at the Romanian Caragiale Institute of Theater and Cinema to write the script. Through their method of interviewing people out on the street,

they accomplish a dialogue with community, a "democratic history" (Orlich 216). Wing-Davey echoes Churchill's point of view that the play "isn't a documentary," and "the phrasebook sentences that open each of the scenes are there as reminders that this is simply a partial view; it's not the truth" (Kiebuzinska 232). Each scene begins with a company member announcing a simple phrase, first in Romanian, then in English, and once again in Romanian. The broken language used here may demonstrate broken communication not only within society, but also outside of it: the understanding of the revolution abroad was problematic for many years afterward. To return to the broken communication within the society, Soto-Morettini suggests that this diary construct demonstrates a synchronicity of events: a revolution and play about revolution happening at once. The action of the play, despite political upheaval, focuses on the small vicissitudes of family life; the "micropolitics" of the everyday contribute to the meaning of Churchill's play (106). It is through these micropolitics that Churchill examines the family unit's response to revolution.

The family unit represents the intimate degree to which schizophrenia penetrates society during the process of socio-political change. Churchill's approach is characterized by a marked absence of any direct portrayal of political events. Instead, she focuses on the predicaments and power relations that affect the everyday life of ordinary families (Kiebuzinska 241). Churchill bookends *Mad Forest* with acts concerning the lives of the poor Vladu family, who is out of favor with Ceausescu's regime, and the affluent Antonescu family, who is politically correct. The Securitate are constantly listening in on the family members both in the home and out in public. Intimacy in relationships is

undermined by fear of being overheard (Kiebuzinska 238). Any suspicion of associating with a person who opposes the regime is cause for punishment. Churchill chooses her representative families in order to address what it means to both oppose the regime and be opposed by it. The Vladu family, on the brink of starvation, suffers job demotions because their daughter plans to marry an American. The Antonescus keep their jobs because they are careful to avoid opposition. Conflict arises when Flavia and Mihai Antonescu forbid their son Radu to marry Florina Vladu. I will later analyze these relationships to interpret the role of the family unit in Churchill's commentary on Romanian revolutionary society.

Moving from Romania to Algeria, Churchill finds an equally disturbing dominant culture. The action of *The Hospital at the Time of the Revolution* takes place at Blida-Joinville Hospital around 1956, just five years prior to independence from more than 100 years of French-colonial rule. In Iris Lavell's article, "Caryl Churchill's *The Hospital at the Time of the Revolution*: Algerian Decolonization (Re)viewed in a Protean Contemporary Context," she suggests that Churchill addresses acts of terrorism as part of a continuum of oppression and retaliation, the dynamic of which reveals pathological behavior in both the colonized and the colonizer (76). The psychiatric department, headed by Dr. Fanon, treats both Algerian revolutionaries and French colonials, "creating an ideal situation in which the broader social turbulence can be played out in the microcosm of the hospital" (Lavell 79). Churchill drew from both Fanon's observations in *The Wretched of the Earth* and R.D. Laing's psychological studies in *Sanity, Madness and the*

Family to write characters who would represent the familial-psychological perspectives of colonization.

While Fanon has few lines in relation to his patients, he remains the focal point of the play. It is actually his silence that attracts audience attention, usually in a haunting way. As Lavell suggests, "Fanon is accorded the strategically 'invisible,' almost omniscient, position of surveillance, subjectivity, and authority, so that the audience is encouraged to identify with his point of view" (80). Although Fanon identifies more with the Algerian patriots than with the French officers, it is important to note that as a native of the French Caribbean island Martinique, Fanon is truly an outsider to both parties.

The family unit in this play is composed of characters named only Monsieur, Madame, and their teenage daughter Françoise. Monsieur is a high-ranking French officer and responsible for the interrogation of numerous Algerian patriots. Conflict has arisen because the parents believe their daughter, who is aware of the torture that happens in the empty wing of their home, to be schizophrenic. While the adults are clearly in denial, the teenage daughter refuses to submit to lies. Churchill has drawn the family as the center of colonial society and a primary indicator of the society's health. Here the family is highly secretive, abusive, contradictory, and in denial (Lavell 85). As discussed in chapter two, Andrea Smith's analysis of the internally contradictory narratives of former settlers of Algeria confirms that it is not uncommon for individuals to retain multiple conflicting viewpoints simultaneously, resulting in cognitive dissonance (262). *Hospital* truly captures the schizoglossic dialogue found in Smith's interviews with actual Algerian settlers, both the oppressors and the oppressed. I will later analyze this concept

as it manifests in the family unit—the relationship between Monsieur, Madame, and Françoise—to interpret Churchill's commentary on French-Algerian revolutionary society.

Denial is a common response to the cognitive dissonance that arises during revolution. When the distinction between reality and fantasy blurs through paranoia in the individual fighting oppression, it can be easiest to deny the existence of the situation at hand. The Antonescu family in *Mad Forest* has lived their life through politically correct conversations that Soto-Morettini refers to as "meta-dialogues" (107). A "correct" conversation is conducted on top of the real, unspoken business. This forced communication proves that "Ceausescu's brand of wholesale repression engendered a kind of schizophrenia that operated effectively in both private and public spheres" (Soto-Morettini 107). The Antonescus must maintain the same level of communication in public and private, and are forced to act as though this communication is authentic.

As a schoolteacher, Flavia plays an integral role in the regime's indoctrination process. Educators are forced to teach exactly what Ceausescu dictates. The penalty for straying from orders would be not only loss of job, but also permanent persecution. Flavia is noted in the stage direction to speak "loudly and confidently to her pupils" when she teaches the lesson beginning, "Today we are going to learn about a life dedicated to the happiness of the people and noble ideas of socialism," and ending with "the great personality of Comrade Nicolae Ceausescu" (110-11). The severity of these lies is appalling, but Flavia does not have the authority to fight them. While she perpetuated their injustice, "Ceausescu's regime became visibly antidemocratic, indifferent to the

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suffering, the cold, the lack of food, the fear of police, the perpetual uncertainties, or the threatened destruction of whole villages in the name of massive projects of expansion and glorification" (Kiebuzinska 244). Radu is aware of the social conditions that his mother supports in the school system, but is also aware of his limited communication within the regime.

It is unclear which group will come to power in the chaotic aftermath of the revolution. After years of endorsing misinformation to save her family, Flavia may now be persecuted for supporting the dictatorship. Both she and Radu are fearful and confused when their heated conversation takes place:

FLAVIA: Do you want me to lose my job?

RADU: If you deserve to.

FLAVIA *slaps* RADU.

Silence.

RADU: Do you remember once when I came home from school and asked if you loved Elena Ceausescu?

FLAVIA: I don't remember, no. When was that?

RADU: And you said yes. I was seven.

FLAVIA: No, I don't remember.

Pause.

But you can see why somebody would say what they had to say

to protect you.

RADU: I've always remembered that.

FLAVIA: I don't remember.

RADU: No, you wouldn't.

> *Pause.*

FLAVIA: Why are you saying this, Radu? Are you making it up? You're manipulating me to make me feel bad. I told you the truth about plenty of things.

RADU: I don't remember.

FLAVIA: No, you wouldn't.

> *Silence.*

<div align="center">(159)</div>

The familial relationship has been irreversibly tainted by the cognitive dissonance of revolution. Even the rhythm of the dialogue is uncomfortable, filled with silence and pauses. Flavia finds that the daily communication within the family is hopelessly damaged by "years of stifling the schizophrenic gap between words and meaning during the dictatorship" (Soto-Morettini 112). Not only have the Antonescus lost the ability to recall reality, but they have also lost the ability to carry on an honest, comfortable conversation. Since the characters are unable to verify the reality of the events, suspicion filters down to the most intimate level and begins to surround all familial relationships (Kiebuzinska 253). The confusion between fact and fiction has penetrated the family unit so deeply that it has affected the mother-son relationship. They are not united against an evil oppressor, but isolated from each other in a perpetual state of schizophrenia.

In Algeria, denial permeates the family unit as well. Monsieur and Madame reveal the sick degree of their denial through their attempts to have their daughter committed. After Françoise clearly states that she hears screams coming from the people being tortured by her father in her home, Madame responds "That's right, it's all your horrid dreams, the screams are all in your head" (114). The mother's actions perpetuate the daughter's schizophrenic confusion, while the daughter's actions push the mother further into a confused state of denial. In *Sanity, Madness and the Family,* R.D. Laing states:

> Not the individual, but the family is the unit of illness: family needs clinician's services to "cure" it: family (or even society at large) is now a sort of hyperorganism, with a physiology and pathology, that can be well or ill: it is more a system of values than an instrument of knowledge. (9)

The family unit in French-colonial Algeria suffers through their collective schizophrenia. Each member denies claims of the others, instilling a complete lack of trust or unity in their relationship. Laing's findings suggest that society's schizophrenia perpetuates through intimate relationships. If this life style is the norm at home, it will carry through to public work or school environments. The schizophrenic collective consciousness exists cyclically in the denial, fear, and paranoia of intense familial relationships.

The women in the family exhibit denial and schizophrenia in direct response to the actions of the patriarchal father figure. The torturing involved in Monsieur's work as French interrogator affects his family as much as it affects him. While in the process of convincing Fanon that their daughter must be committed, Monsieur and Madame reveal the ill effects of this lifestyle:

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MADAME: You can't tell who people are. You can't tell where it's safe

to step. I don't know how Françoise is still alive, it's more than she

deserves. How can I possibly sleep when we live in such danger?

MONSIEUR: My wife exaggerates the disturbances.

MADAME: I know of course they're only temporary.

MONSIEUR: There is no war and no revolution.

MADAME: I never suggested—

MONSIEUR: Except for isolated incidents the whole thing is completely

under control. Particularly in my own area. And indeed everywhere. I'm

not saying I don't have to be constantly on the alert to spot trouble before

it can start. But I do, so that the danger is minimal, in fact in our area

there's none at all.

(109-10)

Monsieur's gross misrepresentation of the political turmoil suggests both his own denial

and his schizophrenic view of his role in the oppression. While both his wife and

daughter have revealed his practice of torturing Algerian patriots, Monsieur does not

register his offense to Fanon. The "trouble" that Monsieur refers to is clearly Algerian

retaliation, but he blatantly denies that the revolution is happening.

Monsieur reiterates the point most important to him, which is that he is a man in

control of his environment. According to him, the native people are not pursuing justice

in a revolution, but causing trouble as criminals. Churchill shows that the colonizer's

rejections of labels such as war and revolution in favor of criminality are strategically

employed to maintain political supremacy (Lavell 90). Above all, Monsieur seems in denial of his own confidence and understanding of self. This becomes further evident when he breaks down in a later visit with Fanon:

> MONSIEUR: You, yourself, Doctor, have risen above your race. But for the most part, they must be beaten because they resist us and go on resisting us however hard we force—and what about us? Our lives? Aren't we to live? I was born here, do you see? What will become of me when I have to go? What will I be? I don't want to go. (*He cries.*)
>
> MADAME: Take no notice.
>
> (138)

Monsieur defines his identity through his profession as an officer and admits that he will lose all sense of identity if he is relieved of this position. In the same way that Monsieur denied his wife's complaints about the horrors of war, Madame denies his. She essentially instructs Fanon to join in their denial, ignoring the outburst of insecurity and honesty in exchange for confirmation of more lies. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon writes, "For colonialism has not simply depersonalized the colonized. The very structure of society has been depersonalized on a collective level. A colonized people is thus reduced to a collection of individuals who owe their very existence to the presence of the colonizer" (219-20). This is true of not only the colonized people, but also the colonizers who owe their existence to their own nation's oppressive presence, as in Monsieur's case.

Just as the parents of the family unit experience schizophrenia, so do the children, or young adults. As the younger generation, they have been indoctrinated from birth and

may not understand the reality of the situation in which they live. In *Mad Forest,* Radu did not understand the necessity of his mother's actions. Now that he is grown and submerged in the political turmoil, he is unsure of his own actions. He knows that the oppression and suffering of the people at the will of the dictator is wrong, but the consequences of rebellion compromise his actions. Radu is in public, in line to buy meat, when he demonstrates a schizophrenic consciousness through his actions:

> RADU *whispers loudly.*
>
> RADU: Down with Ceausescu.
>
> > *The woman in front of him starts to look round, then pretends she hasn't heard and casually steps slightly away from* RADU.
> > *Two people towards the head of the queue look round and* RADU *looks round as if wondering who spoke. They go on queuing.*
>
> > (111)

While Radu will accuse his mother of not standing up for her beliefs, he cannot himself overcome the fear that restrains them both from acting. The actions of the other Romanians in the queue demonstrate the collective schizophrenia of their society. Each person was intrigued by the audacity of a fellow commoner to blaspheme in public. Their interest may have been piqued by both curiosity to identify the rebellious individual and a respect for the courage displayed in the act. The act was not, however, courageous. In *Mad Forest* silence discloses that which cannot be uttered: "the fear, paranoia, secret life, and schizophrenia of everyday life" (Kiebuzinska 249). Radu sheepishly cowered away

from his beliefs, camouflaging himself within the line of submissive, confused, helpless citizens in silence.

The confusion and helplessness continues to penetrate society post-revolution. The enthusiasm for liberty is short-lived because future leadership is jeopardized. In the uncertainty of political dominance, Radu and his bride-to-be Florina express their conflict with and attachment to familiar ways, despite how inhumane they might have been:

> RADU: Iliescu's going to get in because the workers and peasants are
>
> stupid.
>
> *Pause.*
>
> Not stupid, but they don't think. They don't have the information.
>
> *Pause.*
>
> I don't mean your family in particular.
>
> FLORINA: You're a snob like your father. You'd have joined the party.
>
> RADU: Wouldn't you?
>
> *Silence.*
>
> *He touches her face.*
>
> FLORINA: I used to feel free then.
>
> RADU: You can't have.
>
> FLORINA: I don't now and I'm in a panic.
>
> RADU: It's because the front tricked us…
>
> (153)

In the wake of Ceausescu's overthrow, the People's Salvation Front organized and attempted to gain power. The front was, as Radu claims, a trick because it was composed entirely of former Communist officials and was not for "the people" at all. Churchill's play presents the confusion, repetition, and "inevitability of being lost among the 'isms' and their variations that proliferated due to the collapse of an established order" (Kiebuzinska 232). Despite the desire to be free from oppression—now that they are supposedly free to shout "Down with Ceausescu" in public—Romanians are still not liberated from the psychological damage of years under the regime. The response to change, whether positive or negative, engenders panic.

Radu concedes to Florina's accusation that he would have followed in his father's footsteps because he, like his father, believes in sacrificing fruitless moral ideals for his own survival. He does not understand the history of which he is now a part. Kiebuzinska notes:

> Since the young characters in Churchill's play grew up entirely under Ceausescu's mythmaking institutional structures, they have no sense of past history. In fact, Churchill's characters appear to suffer from collective amnesia regarding the truth of the past. False memories may lead to the writing of history as a triumphant one, or as a story of resistance leading to liberation, or as a memory lapse erasing Romania's role in World War II and fort-odd years of Communism. Consequently, in the rewriting of history, blame can be placed on various causalities such as the *nomenklatura*, informers, Soviet domination, minority populations such as

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the Hungarians or the gypsies, and the plots of bordering nations such as

Hungary. As a result, the real events in Romanian history such as the

Holocaust are still forbidden topics, and revisionist historians are hard at

work rewriting history, depicting a new version of Antonescu as a national

hero. (239-40)

Following this interpretation of a youth without a history, Radu's stance in the above

scene contradicts his earlier self-righteous attack on his mother for adopting the same

standard. Romania's youth suffer from the schizophrenic desire to be like and unlike their

parents simultaneously. Kiebuzinska suggests a cyclical oppression wherein the new

leader, Antonescu, will replace Ceausescu not only in power, but also in the lies that have

plagued this culture, and will continue to distort the truth. The fear and confusion of

Radu's generation will filter into the generation after him, with no complete record of the

truth.

There is no record of the truth in Françoise's family in *Hospital* either. Because

her parents are in denial about the roles they play in Algerian oppression, Françoise has

no source of trustworthy authority. Whenever she speaks truthfully about her

observations and what she knows to be reality, her parents dismiss her as psychotic. In

reference to torture techniques commonly used, Françoise uses language that alarms her

parents in the presence of Fanon:

FRANÇOISE: What does he do, fuck you with a bottle? Pump soapy

water up your arse? I can keep my mouth shut. I know who he loves and

who he kills and who he's going to kill now. But you can't kill me because

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I was never born. There's no girl by that name here. You can do what you

like, but she won't speak.

MADAME: I just can't listen to such language. It makes me feel quite ill.

MONSIEUR: Take her out of my sight, Doctor. Please, take her away.

(114)

The parents respond with disgust to their daughter's verbalization of reality. Françoise's

"madness" enables her to say what cannot be safely said in the context of family secrecy

(Lavell 87). She speaks outside of the parameters of language deemed appropriate for an

upper-class female, in addition to speaking outside of what her parents regard as

permissible. Françoise's ability to speak or not to speak is initially manipulated by her

parents, mirroring the torture interrogation process (Lavell 87). The evidence of a

schizophrenic consciousness is pronounced in this family where each member

experiences constant contradictory thoughts and actions in themselves and in relation to

one another.

Françoise makes multiple attempts to tell the truth, but she is always countered by

denial that is best encompassed in Monsieur's statement that, "Anyone who's a member

of our family is scrupulously truthful and honest and Françoise knows that" (110). He

states this directly after professing that the war is non-existent. Lavell suggests, "this

places her [Françoise] in a position of extreme vulnerability, where she is unable to

distinguish the boundary between self and other, and the boundary between sanctuary and

prison" (88). For Françoise, everything that had previously defined her world has proven

to be unstable and unreliable.

Madame explains to Fanon that she made a beautiful dress for her daughter to wear for company, but when friends arrived, Françoise came downstairs completely naked and sat in a chair staring blankly. In the closing lines of *Hospital*, Françoise shares with Fanon her honest beliefs concerning what has happened to her:

> FRANÇOISE: The dress looked very pretty but underneath I was rotting away. Bit by bit I was disappearing. The dress is walking about with no one inside it. I undo the buttons and put my hand in. Under the dress I can't find where I am. So when I take it off, there's nobody there. They can't see Françoise because she was taken off upstairs and nobody came downstairs into the room. My mother made that dress to kill me. It ate me away. That was a poison dress I put on.
>
> (146)

Françoise alternates between first and third person when referring to herself now, indicating her loss of a unified identity. This madness is her only defense against the horrors she experiences. Monsieur and Madame strive to live peacefully in denial of reality. The ability to simultaneously hold two contradictory beliefs without the inconvenience of cognitive dissonance, that is to have the ability *not* to reason, is seen as desirable within the unstable colonial context. Thus, "Françoise's resistance to losing the ability to reason is, ironically, contextually, interpreted as a loss of reason" (Lavell 87). Françoise further rejected the dress because it symbolized colonial extravagance: her desire to uphold moral standards conflicts with what she is told to believe, leaving her helplessly schizophrenic in her understanding of her world and herself.

4. As if You're the Only One Telling What Happened: Revolutionary Society

"Individuals partly define themselves by their own traits, but also by those groups to which they belong, as well as by their historical circumstances…History defines us just as we define history. **As our identities and cultures evolve over time, we tacitly reconstruct our histories. By the same token, these new collectively defined historical memories help to provide identities for succeeding generations."**

~James Pennebaker, *Collective Memory of Political Events* (*emphasis added*)

The experiences of individuals during traumatic events feel immediately isolating; it is only after time has passed that collectively defined historical memories become a point of reference through which individuals connect. A process of individual storytelling—each person defining his or her story without external influence—must take place before the narrative can be woven together. In order to study this process, I will now move from the family unit to Churchill's second model: society as a whole, represented by a body of un-named characters. Peter Malekin and Ralph Yarrow, in their book *Consciousness, Literature, and Theater* state, "the aim of narrative is to offer access to an extended form of meaning through the mediums of time, patterning, and structural and rhythmic ordering" (111). Churchill's construction of time is unconventional and disorienting. The events are not recounted as an unbroken narrative line, but as a collage of related fragments (Kiebuzinska 233), suggesting the fragmented view of events that the people collectively maintain. This scattered pattern in her portrayal of revolution requires the

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audience to piece the events together as logically as possible. By demanding active, intellectual engagement, Churchill attempts to empower audiences to participate in the process of reclaiming their own history. Her plays challenge the idea that existing representations of history—even those with the legitimacy of factuality—be regarded as sealed records not amenable to change in the present (Kritzer 84).

The structure of her dialogue empowers the people with authority, while at the same time the rhythm marks their speech as uncertain, filled with "silence" and "pauses." Churchill's plays function structurally, as well as thematically, to stimulate re-examination of past and present from the viewpoint of marginalized groups in traditional historical accounts (Kritzer 85). Her democratic history is designed to raise questions about not only the events examined, but also the ways in which those events are portrayed. A characteristic of Churchill's plays is that "representation of events is valid only when it *opens up a space for reflection on the difficulty or impossibility of representation, and hence interpretation*" (Kiebuzinska 233, *emphasis added*). Through schizoglossic dialogue, Churchill demonstrates the complexity of thousands of individuals through several typical characters: stories are specific, but still representative of the experiences of society as a whole insofar as they create dialogue between the individual and the collective about the misrepresentation of history.

For the script of *Mad Forest,* conflicting reports offered by ordinary people, whom Churchill and her Bucharest Workshop Group interviewed out on the streets, "offer an ingenious staging of a revolution performed through speaking. Street witnesses become a living representation of Churchill's 'democratic history,' which de-authorizes

Churchill's voice" (Orlich 224-5), placing authority with the subject, rather than the author of the play. The conflict expressed in the multi-voiced narrative implies Churchill's central point: the impossibility of definitive solutions during political upheaval.

The middle section of *Mad Forest* consists of multiple Romanian citizens, named by their professions, such that, "*Each behaves as if the others are not there and each is the only one telling what happened*" (123). The scene displays snapshots of each person's life at the time of Ceausescu's overthrow:

> DOCTOR: On my way home in the afternoon there was a woman crying because she lost her handbag, the other woman comfort her saying, "It could be worse, people were crushed and lost their shoes, don't cry for such a small thing."
>
> SECURITATE: Claudiu Bras, I am an officer in Securitate. In everything I did I think I was right, including the 21. I went to military high school because I like uniforms…On December 21 I am taking the pulse of the street in plain clothes with a walkie-talkie hidden.
>
> (125)

The juxtaposition of a doctor for the people and an officer for the regime focuses on the individuals that compose these major groups. The Doctor's observation of commoners responding to the atrocities places the audience in the street with them in an ordinary moment, evoking sympathy for the trauma that they experience. Churchill does not denote good and evil in her representation of revolution.

She gives voice to the Securitate officer, making him an individual who believed what he was doing was right. The scene continues:

> PAINTER: When we heard shooting we went out, and we stayed near the Intercontinental Hotel till nearly midnight. I had an empty soul. I didn't know who I was.
>
> FLOWERSELLER: My husband come home scared, he has seen dead people. I say him please not to go out again because the children.
>
> GIRL STUDENT: I sat up till four in the morning. I wanted to go out, but my father had locked the door and hidden the key.
>
> STUDENT 1: At four in the morning I telephoned my mother and tell her peoples are being killed.
>
> (127-28)

Each person experiences the fear of uncertainty and the anxiety of helplessness. Noting what each of the students was doing at exactly four in the morning suggests a unity within their isolation. They were both concerned with seeking human contact, Girl Student wanting to be a part of what was happening on the street, and Student 1 wanting to be connected to his mother in some way. Despite their confusion and fear, it is as if the only way to understand what was happening to them was through connection to other human beings. The Painter blatantly states that he does not know who he is, as he has been completely disoriented by the revolution. The human connection by which he may have defined himself is no longer tangible; therefore, his concept of self is empty. The husband who has witnessed the horrors does not speak here, but rather his wife, the

Flowerseller, voices his connection to family. Every individual has been affected by the regime in some way. *Mad Forest* examines the "complexity of dismantling a long-reigning hegemony of paranoia and double-think," suggesting that history is unknowable (Soto-Morettini 115). While isolated in terror, they are all united in their uncertainty.

James Pennebaker, Dario Paez and Bernard Rime in their study *Collective Memory of Political Events: Social Psychological Perspectives*, discuss the implications of this isolation and silence in political upheaval:

> **A silent event is one where people actively avoid talking about a major shared upheaval. This failure to talk can be imposed by a repressive government** following a coup or other authoritarian institution such as a religion. By the same token, **an event can be considered so guilt worthy or shameful that most affected people refuse to talk about it**…in many ways, silent events may be the most potent in the development of collective memories… (10, *emphasis added*)

Transitioning from collective memories of the past, or the construction of those memories, and the ongoing collective consciousness of the present, it would seem that this observation is relevant to the characters portrayed in Churchill's play.

As demonstrated by several individuals from different professions and different stages in life, the desire to share the different ways in which the experience was lived is too strong to remain in silence forever. Furthermore,

> Emotionally charged events about which people actively avoid talking will continue to affect individuals by increasing their rate of thinking and

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dreaming about the events. **Political repression of speech about an occurrence, then, will have the unintended consequence of consolidating collective memories associated with the repressed event.**

(Pennebaker 17, *emphasis added*)

To "consolidate" collective memories seems to imply a process of reconstructing events such that they become an acknowledged truth, whether publicly or privately, that the society can then rely on in terms of how they view themselves before and after the traumatic event. This is equally as relevant during revolution in Romania as it is in Algeria.

The patients in Fanon's Algerian psychiatric ward also experience the terror and uncertainty of a collective schizophrenia engendered by revolution. Churchill suggests this effect as common to any person subjected to conditions of an oppressed society. Lavell notes that the title alone, *The Hospital at the Time of the Revolution*, "emphasizes universality and Churchill uses generic, anonymous names for most of the characters" (86). As in *Mad Forest*, Churchill gives voice to both the oppressors and the oppressed. The Police Inspector represents the slew of men in Monsieur's line of work as an interrogator. The three Algerian patriots—named only patients A, B, and C—represent the multitude of psychological conditions that come in response to torture and living under constant persecution. While the Police Inspector and the Algerian patients never exchange dialogue, their interaction through Fanon implies the complete disconnect between cultures. However, they all experience schizophrenic cognitive dissonance.

After the Police Inspector has confided in Fanon that he has taken to beating his

wife and child because he cannot separate his home life from his work life of torturing,

he asks for a solution:

> FANON: I think in your case we can single out your work and if you're
>
> asking me to cure you I recommend you to ask to be transferred to some
>
> other branch of police work.
>
> INSP.: That's nonsense. There's no way of evading that kind of duty.
>
> You're as good as saying I'd have to leave the force altogether.
>
> FANON: Yes, I would recommend that.
>
> INSP.: You can't say that. It's not a possibility at all. You'll have to find
>
> some other solution. What am I if I'm not a policeman? I've always been a
>
> policeman. You're asking something out of the question.
>
> FANON: I can give you sedatives to help you sleep. I can give you
>
> tranquilizers during the day.
>
> INSP.: You've been doing that already and I don't mean I'm not grateful
>
> but it's just not good enough. I want to be back in tip top condition and
>
> lead a normal life.
>
> FANON: I'll renew your prescription.
>
> INSP.: It's no joke having nightmares like I do. It's easy enough for you,
>
> Doctor, sitting here doing your job. Your job doesn't make you ill.
>
> (144)

The Police Inspector blatantly asks Fanon for drugs to appease his cognitive dissonance.

He wants to eliminate his ability to reason in order to go on torturing other human beings

(the people with whom Fanon identifies) and lead a peaceful life at the same time. He, like Monsieur, defines himself by his profession. This man would prefer to maintain his concept of social identity than to attain a solution to the violence he perpetuates in his own home. Fanon's few omniscient words are disturbing, but his silence is the most unnerving after the Inspector comments that his job doesn't make him ill. Churchill suggests with this character that the evil oppressors view themselves not as ruthless, but as conflicted in their ignorance. The Inspector represents the schizophrenia that results from actions "justified" in wartime.

The Algerian patriots are equally as disturbed by their actions, which are only deemed acceptable during wartime. Patient A suffers perpetual guilt from the lives lost in an explosion from a bomb he planted in a French café. He discovers that his wife was also secretly a patriot when she dies while carrying grenades for the cause. He confides that:

> A: What I would say to her is, all that time when you never asked me where I'd been I wished you would. We'd eat together without saying anything because there was nothing we wanted to say except the things we couldn't. [After the bomb went off] I tried to overcome the dizziness long enough to kill myself, but I wasn't so successful as usual and I fainted too soon.
>
> (126-7)

Fanon writes in his observations that "our actions never cease to haunt us" (*Wretched* 185). This nameless patient represents the guilt and confusion in acting for a political

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cause during revolution. He became isolated from his own wife, unable to sacrifice the cause for their intimacy. His schizophrenic consciousness developed out of his inability to reconcile killing innocent French-colonials in the name of punishing the oppressive officers who wronged his people. Now, he can no longer reconcile his concept of self with the paranoid man he has become in the psychiatric ward. Patient A illustrates the strife of thousands of Algerian patriots who must avoid answering to their sense of reason for the sake of defending their home and people.

William Demestes, in *Staging Consciousness,* states that, "the implicit rhythms and patterns that underlie explicit reality are the very things that theater and its multivalent languages of the stage capture" (92). Churchill stages revolution in such a way as to employ a language of multiple meanings through multiple voices. She finds the naturally inferred rhythm and pattern of the need for human connection underneath the reality of inauthentic communication. The medium of theater provides a forum for exchange between audience and actors in a process to not simply recreate historical events, but to create and unmask a new interpretation of those events.

Post-revolution in *Mad Forest*, Flavia says "I'm going to write a true history, Florina, so we'll know exactly what happened" (170). Through schizoglossic dialogue, Churchill attempts to write a "true history" wherein both dominant culture and marginalized people are equally represented through a collection of individual experiences. During revolution, a disconnect between intentions, desires, actions, and perceived reality results in a schizophrenic collective consciousness. While often unaware, individuals simultaneously express the language of "two voices, two world

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views" that rage irreparably against one another. Both oppressors and the oppressed, through their fearful paranoia in isolation, are united in their common internal conflict to reconcile this disconnect. By questioning the representation of this consciousness on the stage, Churchill effectively claims a "democratic history" for the peoples of oppressed nations.

The schizophrenic nature of an ongoing attempt to reconcile conflicting views on one's place in a war-torn society persist in transition from collective memories to collective consciousness. Whether individuals are aware of their state of inner conflict, or remain detached from even their own desire to make sense of their place in society, the isolation and paranoia of revolution transcend generations. I will continue to analyze these thematic and narrative concepts of storytelling—and story repression—in part two of this project concerning contemporary fiction. I will also note here that the theoretical framework that has been central thus far will move to the periphery in part two: not only are the primary fiction texts too recent to have acquired a body of scholarship as extensive as that available on the dramas discussed, but the dialogue that has developed about Foer and Murakami tends to focus on style in a comparative nature, rather than on the thematic content relevant to the concept of schizophrenic collective consciousness.

Part II. Fiction

Schizophrenic Collective Consciousness During War:

Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* and

Haruki Murakami's *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*

5. Postmemory and the (In)ability to Tell Stories

"The effects of World War II have been profound in shaping the national identities of the defeated nations. Both Germany and Japan were required to struggle with the evil and banality of their conduct during the war. In Germany, a separation is frequently made between 'the Nazis' and 'the Germans' in discussions of the atrocities of the war…Japan was also faced with the problem of dealing with a difficult and traumatic past. The scope of the atrocities committed by the Japanese army in the countries it occupied included not only inhumane medical experiments on thousands of captives, but also the brutal slaying of about 15 million Chinese civilians. At the end of the war, the people of each country drew a sigh of relief as they began the challenge of rebuilding a seriously damaged infrastructure and a seriously damaged national identity."

~Arthur Neale, *National Trauma and Collective Memory*

The traumatized national identities of which Neale speaks are continuously engaging in a process of building and rebuilding what was lost during the war. This process naturally carries on through generations via the concept of postmemory, discussed in chapter one, described as the relationship of the second generation to powerful, often traumatic, experiences that preceded their births but that were nevertheless transmitted to them so deeply as to seem to constitute memories in their own right (Hirsch "The Generation of Postmemory"). The complex nature of this concept demands serious consideration of how the second generation interacts with and understands not only the experiences of the previous generation, but also their connection to that generation in the present. American novelist Jonathan Safran Foer, in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005), and Japanese novelist and self-proclaimed literary journalist Haruki Murakami, in *The Wind-*

Up Bird Chronicle (1997), explore these questions. Murakami writes about Manchurian war crimes in World War II and present-day Japan, while Foer writes about the fire bombings of Dresden in Word War II and present-day New York City. Parallel stories of trauma in each work form the foundation of these explorations through the vehicle of storytelling, especially in the form of letter writing.

A survivor of Dresden in present-day New York City, the grandmother of Foer's novel begins to recollect her past through letters to her grandson, nine-year-old Oskar. The collection of these letters that runs throughout the narrative is entitled "My Feelings," suggesting that this may be the first concrete place that she has considered "her feelings" since the war. She recalls her childhood:

> I went to my grandmother, your great-great grandmother, and asked her to write a letter…I hardly knew her. I didn't have any interest in knowing her. **I have no need for the past, I thought, like a child**. **I did not consider that the past might have a need for me**…I had a letter from everyone I knew. I laid them out on my bedroom floor, and organized them by what they shared. **One hundred letters**. I was always moving them around, **trying to make connections. I wanted to understand.**
> (Foer 78-9 *emphasis added*)

Early in *Extremely Loud*, this letter about letters underscores the theme of the quest for "connections" that only seem possible to draw through storytelling. While the narrative centers on Oskar and his grandparents, the deliberate mention of the great-great grandmother demonstrates active consideration of the past and "why [the past] might

have a need" for the present. The juxtaposition of the childlike, naïve lack of interest in her elders and the wise observation in her retrospective statement on her place in a bigger story evoke the type of generational persistence that lies at the root of postmemory.

Similarly, Murakami's protagonist directly addresses a youthful, naïve indifference to the past as it contrasts with a deepened awareness of and desire for understanding of the previous generation. Toru Okada explains his relation to Corporal Oishi Honda, who had been stationed in Manchuria during World War II. Toru met Mr. Honda in his capacity as a clairvoyant through his wife's parents, who believed their marriage needed traditional spiritual counseling. Rather than marital advice, Mr. Honda always shared graphic war stories, on which Toru speculates:

> All his stories were interesting, even thrilling, but as with anything else, you hear them seven or eight times and they tend to lose some of their luster…It was like watching an old Kurosawa movie from the very front row of a run-down theater. Neither of us could hear much of anything for a while after we left his house… Eventually, we forgot about Mr. Honda, just as most busy young people tend to forget about most old people… (Murakami 53-4)

This description of Mr. Honda's stories involves a notion of entertainment above all else. Rather than curiosity or genuine interest, the narrator seems to view the serious stories as novelties that were created purely to impress him. Like a child, he finds them "thrilling" for their action, but after a while they feel like reruns, as evidenced by the comparison to an old Kurosawa movie. The deliberate choice to recall this director is especially

interesting because it further posits a gap between current-day youth and their understanding of the past. Mr. Honda's very real experience in war is likened to the image of the courageous Japanese warrior depicted in all of Kurosawa's films, and the fact that even this glorious image is paired with the old "run-down theater" implies that the narrator cannot conceive of this history as anything but an outdated form of entertainment.

Despite this disregard for the past demonstrated early in the narrative, Toru develops an interest that borders on obsession with Mr. Honda's stories of the Battle of Nomonhan the more he becomes isolated from his own society. Another war veteran is introduced when Mr. Honda dies: Lieutenant Tokutaro Mamiya was stationed in Manchuria and survived a deadly mission with Corporal Honda in Outer Mongolia during the war. Honda asked Mamiya to distribute his keepsakes, one of which was willed to Toru, the narrator. They meet under these pretenses for the first time:

> "If you wouldn't mind," I said, after some time had passed, "**I would very much like to hear the story** of how you and Mr. Honda came to know each other." I genuinely wanted to know what kind of man Mr. Honda had been before I met him.
>
> "That story might be a long one," he said.
>
> "I don't mind," I said…
>
> "I've never told it to anyone. And I'm quite certain that Mr. Honda never told it to anyone, either. The reason I say that is that we…made a

pact…to keep this one thing secret. But Mr. Honda is dead now. I'm the
only one left. It wouldn't hurt anyone if I told."

And so Lieutenant Mamiya began to tell me his story.

(Murakami 133-4, *emphasis added*)

Toru's boredom with the old man's war stories seems to have evaporated as he becomes

interested in Honda's experiences as a person, rather than as an entertaining relic.

Murakami introduces an element of suspense here, because this story has never been told

before, but the greater significance of Lieutenant Mamiya's story seems to be in the act of

sharing with an interested individual from the second generation. The effect this story has

on Toru and his sense of a schizophrenic consciousness as it relates to postmemory will

be discussed at length in chapter five. The weight of the final sentence of Toru's

narration, which directly precedes "Lieutenant Mamiya's Long Story," told in two parts

(Murakami 135-72), effectively prepares the reader for a monumental occurrence or

turning point in *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*.

The importance of storytelling and the reverence with which it is held manifests

itself in similar language in Foer's novel. Interestingly, the role of storyteller and listener

is reversed in this instance, with the youth, Oskar Schell, sharing his experience with his

grandfather, Oskar Schell, Sr., who no longer speaks and has "yes" tattooed on the palm

of his left hand (whose relevance will become apparent below). For many complicated

reasons that will be explained later, Oskar and his grandfather have never met. In a

moment of desperation, Oskar chooses to share his most personal experiences with a

complete stranger whom he believes is renting a room in his grandmother's apartment:

"What's your story?' I asked. "What's my story?" "Yeah, what's

your story?" He wrote, "**I don't know what my story is.**"

…I asked the renter, **"Can I tell you my story?"**

He opened his left hand.

So I put my story into it. (Foer 238, *emphasis added*)

The weight and finality of the last sentence here echoes the sentiment Toru expresses

when he is on the verge of learning Lieutenant Mamiya's story. In this case, the need for

the story to be told seems just as great—Oskar and Mamiya, despite having vastly

different stories, experience the same severe degree of necessity to share them—but a

dynamic element is added by the listener in *Extremely Loud*. Oskar's grandfather, a

survivor of Dresden like the grandmother, claims that he does not know his story.

In the midst of a narrative where stories and storytelling equate to the process of

identity formation, the lack of a story reveals the lack of an essential identity. Oskar

Schell, Sr. obviously has a story—a disturbing and complicated one, at that—but what is

emphasized here is his inability to articulate it, literally, in verbal form, the way young

Oskar can. The desire to know and share stories coupled with the inability to do so, as a

result of literal linguistic deterioration or psychological breakdown, is at the heart of the

schizophrenic collective consciousness exhibited in all characters from multiple

generations in these novels.

The root of the schizophrenic postwar consciousness is trauma, which while

experienced collectively, results in a culture of isolation and detachment. Jeffery

Alexander, in *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, states "cultural trauma occurs

when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways" (1). The horrendous events of World War II have undoubtedly left indelible marks upon the consciousness of Oskar Schell, Sr.'s generation: Foer's writing of both grandparents' experiences in the fire bombings of Dresden explore this. The future identities of which Alexander writes can be seen in the ways the grandparents exist and interact in present-day New York City; irrevocable damage and change can be interpreted in both literal and symbolic ways via Schell, Sr.'s rapid loss of ability to communicate because he sees himself as forever divided between the self before and the self after Dresden.

Written storytelling dominates his representation in *Extremely Loud*, and Schell, Sr.'s story is actually revealed through letters to his son (protagonist Oskar's father, who was killed in the terrorist attacks of September Eleventh). One such letter details the literal process of losing verbal communication:

> To my unborn child: I haven't always been silent, I used to talk and talk and talk and talk, I couldn't keep my mouth shut, **the silence overtook me like a cancer**, it was one of my first meals in America, I tried to tell the waiter… "And" was the next word I lost, probably because it was so close to her name, what a simple word to say, what a profound word to lose, I had to say "ampersand," which sounded ridiculous, but there it is, "I'd like a coffee ampersand something sweet," nobody would choose to be like that. "Want" was a word I lost early on, which is not to say that I stopped

wanting things—I wanted things more—**I just stopped being able to**

express the want…I lost "shame," the verb and the noun in the same

moment. (Foer 16, *emphasis added*)

Schell, Sr. feels compelled to offer an explanation, almost a confession, for why he is the

way he is now. He speaks of himself in terms of who he used to be—talkative, socially

well adjusted, content—as distinctly different, even opposite, of who he is now. It is

necessary to question to whom he is making the confession: the letter is literally

addressed to his unborn child. Perhaps he intended for his child to receive the letters one

day because he wanted his child to know about his or her father. Perhaps he never

intended to send the letters, which might suggest that he was telling his story for himself.

He realized that in order for his story to be told, to be preserved, it must exist in written

form; hence, the story starts with an explanation for why the story is not—cannot—be

verbally shared.

This silence of which he speaks is described as an insidious terminal illness. In

three short, consecutive clauses—"I couldn't keep my mouth shut, the silence overtook

me like a cancer, it was one of my first meals in America"—Foer illustrates the

catastrophic sequence of events that lead Schell, Sr. to this point in his life. He was living

a normal life anxious with the normal concerns of any youth; the war happened,

specifically his experience in the fire bombing of Dresden, and "indelible marks"

changed his identity in "fundamental and irrevocable ways" (Alexander); and he came to

America as the self who had survived Dresden, a completely different self than the one

who lived before, as an outsider trying to rebuild or relocate his identity. He is describing

the most basic act of trying to get a meal when this disease emerges, demonstrating that

he must adapt and find new ways to function as a normal human being. It is in the final

clause that we see the reasons why the inability to communicate invaded like a cancer:

his attempts to reconcile this self with his prewar self failed, and this failure would appear

to be completely out of his control. He even tries to justify the lack of control when he

claims, "nobody would choose to be like that." In the same instance, he further reveals

how he feels about his condition by stating his loss of "shame," (the verb and the noun, in

case the reader was confused), cementing the idea that this letter is a confession. The fact

that he "stopped being able to express want" poses several questions: how long has he

been living this way, and has he been able to express, or share, his story before now? Are

others experiencing reactions to trauma in the same way?

       Thus far we have seen evidence of the extreme isolation and detachment of

individual postwar consciousness, but what about it proves this schizophrenic

consciousness is collective? In one sense, by simply demonstrating conflicting

viewpoints within multiple characters—Murakami's elderly war veterans and the youth

who interact with them, and the multiple generations of a single family in Foer's novel—

it would seem these authors are representing a greater whole in the microcosms of these

characters' lives (not unlike Caryl Churchill's dramatization of revolution). Broad,

overarching concepts aside, the collective nature of postwar schizophrenic consciousness

is occasionally directly alluded to within instances in which characters actively

contemplate how, or if, they fit into a greater whole.

To return to Schell, Sr.'s letter, we see focused consideration of the individual's place in postwar society:

> "I" was the last word I was able to speak aloud, which is a terrible thing, but there it is…I wanted to pull the thread, unravel the scarf of my silence and start again from the beginning, but instead I said "I." I know **I'm not alone in this disease**, you hear the old people in the street and some of them are moaning, "Ay yay yay," but some of them are **clinging to their last word, "I,"** they're saying, because they're desperate, it's not a complaint it's a prayer, and then **I lost "I" and my silence was complete**. (Foer 17, *emphasis added*)

The final line is haunting in its implications for what becomes of trauma survivors: the loss of "I", or central identity, equates to complete silence, suggesting conversely that silence, or the inability to tell your story, effectively obliterates your identity. The silence is again referenced as a physical affliction that has invaded the body, but this time it has taken on the qualities of a contagious plague. Not only the narrator, but also "old people in the street" contract this silencing disease. The casual mention of this phenomenon makes it seem as if this is a common occurrence. The "you" addressed when he writes "you hear them" is likely not the child to whom he writes, but rather a collective "you," or anyone he might meet in a coffee shop. The old people losing the "I" are just something with which you, or anyone else, must be familiar. It almost takes on a magical realism quality. Foer conveys the disturbing reality of postwar society in unrealistic terms

because only this type of depiction can be truly representative of the psychological trauma experienced.

The "desperation" Schell, Sr. observes in others' "prayers" to retain the "I," the sense of self, is something he believes all people in the street have experienced, or will experience after trying to reconcile pre and post war identities. In discussing cultural trauma and collective identity, Alexander comments on the type of group to which I believe Schell, Sr. belongs: "insofar as they identify the cause of trauma, and thereby assume such moral responsibility, members of collectivities define their solitary relationships in ways that, in principle, allow them to share the sufferings of others" (1). An element of community exists insofar as individuals such as Schell, Sr., believe they are not alone. It is furthermore important to note that, "traumatic feelings and perceptions…come not only from the originating event but from the anxiety of keeping it repressed" (Alexander 5). The schizophrenic nature of a collective postwar consciousness results largely from the conflict that arises when individuals believe they are part of a greater experience but cannot connect with others in their society in any way.

In addition to the literal linguistic deterioration discussed above, the inability to share stories results in psychological breakdown. I believe this "breakdown" occurs when a traumatized individual is physically capable of sharing, or communicating, with others, but because the traumatic experience has been so scarring, he or she is not psychologically capable of communication. Murakami renders a specific example of this detachment through Mamiya's storytelling. In response to Toru's request to hear the rest of the story, Mamiya shares the point at which he was separated from Honda:

He was wounded in the battle for Nomonhan and sent home, while I

remained in Manchuria until the end of the war, after which I was sent to

Siberia…he seemed to avoid talking about what had happened to us at the

Khalkha River, and I myself was not too eager to discuss it. For both of us,

it had simply become too enormous an experience. We shared it by

not talking about it. Does this make any sense? (Murakami 171, *emphasis*

added)

The enormous experience of which Mamiya speaks refers, I believe, to two specific

understandings of his time with Honda: the horrific events (including witnessing a man

being skinned alive) during the concentrated period of time under which the secret

mission was carried out, as well as the greater experience of the war—being permanently

separated from their former selves—as a whole. Murakami also effectively uses

Mamiya's story about the fates of Honda and himself to represent the fate of millions of

Japanese: one was sent home wounded and the other imprisoned in a concentration camp

in Siberia for many years. Naturally, the experiences of which Mamiya speaks are

overwhelming and have left enormous indelible marks on any remaining sense of

identity. What is particularly interesting in this passage is the concept that "it" was

"shared" between two individuals through the very repression of that "it." As

demonstrated in Alexander's observation, trauma and anxiety persist through continual

repression; yet, Mamiya suggests that this clearly damaging act of repression is, in fact,

somehow part of the healing act of sharing. Therein lies another piece of the complex

puzzle that is schizophrenic collective consciousness.

This contradiction is expressed throughout Foer's novel, with continual emphasis on the process of storytelling through the characters' active awareness of their stories. When Oskar's grandmother and grandfather are reunited in New York City seven years after Dresden, the grandmother recalls that, "I did not need to tell him my story, but I needed to listen to his…We had everything to say to each other, but no ways to say it" (Foer 81). At this point, Schell, Sr.'s linguistic deterioration is complete (he has "lost the 'I' and [his] silence is complete"), so he communicates by writing a new short phrase on each page of a blank notebook, frequently referencing back to the most appropriate phrase he already wrote for responses once he runs out of space. The role of storyteller and listener is important to note in this instance: while the grandmother does need to share her story through letters to Oskar, she specifically does not need to share it with her (at this point in the narrative) future husband and father of her child. The "need" she has to listen to his story, however, echoes the desire she expressed as a child to suddenly have letters from her great-grandmother and others in her life. Listening, rather than telling, is more crucial to her process of connecting when she is first reunited with someone who experienced the fire bombings of Dresden and who is now isolated in New York City. They are isolated by their past, by their language, and by their inability to share the past. Do they "share" the enormous experience by "not talking about it," as Mamiya claimed, or is not talking about it entirely detrimental to them?

These questions can be explored through much of the grandmother's observations on her conversation with Schell, Sr.:

He wrote that he had not made a sculpture in America.

Why not?

I haven't been able to.

Why not?

We never talked about the past.

…I would tell him I would do whatever he needed.

We would drink coffee.

We would never talk about the past." (Foer 82-3, *emphasis added*)

The opening comment of this passage is another indicator of the schizophrenic break between a pre and post war self. In Dresden, Schell, Sr., nearly defined his entire being by his desire to be an artist, an accomplished sculptor. His postwar self in America not only does not want to sculpt, but seems utterly incapable of doing so: "I haven't been able to" implies that he has, in fact, tried but failed. After experiencing so much destruction, he can no longer create. When the grandmother asks him "why," he cannot create a story to explain the "why" either. Every question is met with silence, hence the inability to ever talk about the past. Foer again juxtaposes seemingly mundane parts of everyday life, such as drinking coffee, with clearly significant attempts to confront the very "it" that haunts the day-to-day task of continuing to live with repressed trauma. The above passage is taken from their first meeting in New York, but the pattern dominates their marriage: "It was terrible. All of the things we couldn't share. The room was filled with conversations we weren't having" (Foer 278), the grandmother says after years of trying to have a life together. The element of repression almost becomes a character in

and of itself here because it seems to be a tangible thing; rather than silence existing as a lack of sound, it is a presence filling a room.

This schizophrenic repression, or desire to share and being unable to do so, is further explained through Schell, Sr.'s account of the same first meeting in New York. In a letter entitled "Why I'm Not Where You Are" (Foer 208), he writes to the son he has never met:

> When your mother found me in the bakery on Broadway, **I wanted to tell her everything, maybe if I'd been able to, we could have lived differently**, maybe I'd be there with you now instead of here. Maybe if I had said, "I lost a baby," if I'd said, "I'm so afraid of losing something I love that I refuse to love anything," **maybe that would have made the impossible possible. Maybe, but I couldn't do it, I had buried too much too deeply inside me**… (Foer 216, *emphasis added*)

He goes as far as to blatantly attribute the destruction of his normal life not to the traumatic event, but rather to the repression of that event. The baby he refers to is a child he would have had with the grandmother's sister, Anna, in Dresden (the story he tells about Anna and the actual fire bombings will be discussed later). It seems that both literal linguistic deterioration and psychological breakdown are responsible for Schell, Sr.'s inability to "live differently," such that one may have been the cause of the other and vice versa: the traumatic event caused him to lose his verbal communication, and his loss of verbal communication led directly to the failing of any communication whatsoever, even in written form. Despite the fact that he failed to communicate with his wife, he is able, to

a certain extent, to communicate an explanation for the destruction in this letter to his son.

In other parts of the text, it is evident that the traumatic event itself was, or is, equally as damaging as the resulting repression. Schell, Sr., begins the letter from which the above passage was taken, by explaining to his child—the child he left and has never met—that he writes him a letter every day. While the passage above focuses on what he could have said, the letter actually begins with a more definitive statement of the same theme: "Sometimes I think if I could tell you what happened to me that night, I could leave that night behind me, maybe I could come home to you, but **that night has no beginning or end, it started before I was born and it's still happening**" (Foer 208, *emphasis added*). He still begins with the "if this, then this" equation, but here the disturbing finality of the traumatic event and its damage leaves no room for "what ifs." The single night to which he literally refers is the night Dresden was bombed, the night which he and the grandmother refer to repeatedly throughout the novel as "the night I lost everything" (Foer 80, 313). The belief that this night, despite its definitive aftermath, has no definitive starting or ending point further posits the idea that individuals in war have an underlying sense of a greater crisis, a greater event of which they are only a small part. He says this thing, the animosity and hate and perpetual shame and pain that make war, is not just Dresden: it existed before his normal life, before his birth, and even more significantly, it still exists now. The traumatic aftermath of the event carries the event forward into perpetual existence. Just as poetry is believed to be capable of eternalizing its subject in beauty, fictionalized representations of war are capable of eternalizing the

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ugliness of human nature. These are the thoughts with which Schell, Sr., lives every day,

and they can only be expressed in letters to a reader who will never read them. This

isolated condition, this state of living, seems to epitomize the meaning of a schizophrenic

postwar consciousness.

While I have delineated two categories—linguistic deterioration and

psychological breakdown—it should be obvious that such neat distinctions cannot exist

in complete separation in this study; rather, they are inextricably linked, each somehow a

consequence of the other. Linguistic deterioration as a major symptom of this postwar

identity persists through generations, from storyteller to listener or reader. Mamiya

continues his story about his experiences in Siberia through a series of letters to the

narrator (the letters themselves will be discussed at length in chapter five). In response to

Mamiya's attempts to share his story, Toru realizes:

> Lieutenant Mamiya's letter moved my heart in strange ways, but to my
>
> mind it brought only vague and distant images. Lieutenant Mamiya was a
>
> man I could trust and accept, and I could also accept as fact those things
>
> that he declared to be facts. But **the very concept of fact or truth had**
>
> **little power** to persuade me just then. **What most moved me in his letter**
>
> **was the sense of frustration that permeated the lieutenant's words:**
>
> **the frustration of never quite being able to depict or explain anything**
>
> **to his full satisfaction**. (Murakami 210, *emphasis added*)

Likely a result of years of repression, now that Mamiya is actively attempting to tell his

story, the quality of frustration is what speaks the loudest to Toru. When Toru reads

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Mamiya's war experiences, they cannot be all that different to him than the war stories Honda once shared with him (the ones that reminded him of an old Kurosawa film).

In the trajectory of the novel, it is clear that Toru transitioned from nonchalant indifference to passionate curiosity when it comes to the lives and experiences of the previous generation. Despite this active interest, he still finds the images of Mamiya's stories to be "vague and distant." It would seem that this reaction surprises the narrator himself, as he significantly points out that "fact or truth," or a singular understanding of reality, are of little importance. When he says that they couldn't persuade him "just then," I take that particular moment to represent the irony of his ongoing quest to learn the facts, or reality, of what has happened in the past, as well as what is happening to him in the present. In the end, the most vivid impressions come from abstract conceptions of what it feels like to have lived Mamiya's experiences, and, ultimately, what it feels like to be unable to communicate those experiences.

6. Schizophrenic Consciousness in "Before and After Worlds"

Schizophrenia: long-term mental disorder of a type involving a **breakdown in the relation between thought, emotion, and behavior**, leading to faulty perception, inappropriate actions and feelings, **withdrawal from reality and personal relationships** into fantasy and delusion, and a sense of **mental fragmentation**.
• (in general use) a mentality or approach characterized by inconsistent or **contradictory elements**.
DERIVATIVES
schizophrenic |-ˈfrenik| adjective & noun
ORIGIN early 20th cent.: modern Latin, from Greek *skhizein 'to split'* + *phrēn 'mind.'*

~Merriam-Webster (emphasis added)

The postwar inability to communicate results in a symbolic split between the desire to escape the past and the undeniable connection to that past. To return to *Extremely Loud*, this split originates with the grandmother's first meeting with Schell, Sr., wherein she observes that, "his spine curved. In Dresden he was a giant" (Foer 174). A greater physical presence is associated with the "before world" of her childhood in Dresden, while a physically broken or diminished presence now represents the "after world" of her adulthood in New York City. In attempts to reconcile this split, the couple simultaneously acknowledges and ignores the trauma of their past.

These attempts come in the form of borders, or physical divisions, of their living space. Schell, Sr. describes the process in a letter to his son:

> [We] started marking off areas in the apartment as "Nothing Places," in
>
> which one could be assured of complete privacy…**one could temporarily**

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cease to exist…a good place to disappear in…the side of the door that faced the guest room was Nothing, the side that faced the hallway was Something, the knob connecting them was neither Something nor Nothing…we were trying to make our lives easier, trying, with all of our rules, to make life effortless. But **a friction began to arise between Nothing and Something, in the morning the Nothing vase cast a Something shadow, like the memory of someone you've lost**, what can you say about that. (Foer 110, *emphasis added*)

The very concept of a "Nothing Place" suggests a schizophrenic desire to live and not to exist at the same time. The process of designating Something and Nothing places occurs after the couple has stopped using German, after they have stopped discussing Schell, Sr.'s art and sculpture, after they have agreed not to have children: in this "after world" the final recourse is to stop having to exist, or communicate with one another in any way. As Schell, Sr. states, the goal of this process was to make life "easier." When a "friction" arises, they are forced to confront the foolish belief that life after their traumatic experiences could be easy, or effortless. While they intend for the Nothing and Something places to act as tangible, concrete divisions of space, it is rather the temporal division that becomes more deeply symbolic.

The desire to split one's self from a past and a present time truly demonstrates the schizophrenic nature of a postwar consciousness. Tension exists between a time of peace and a time of war because the individuals who lived through trauma have never escaped its effects in the present. This is particularly evident through Schell, Sr.'s observation that

the "Nothing vase" could cast a "Something shadow, like the memory of someone you've lost," as if to demonstrate the impossibility of separating lives from before and after the war. A shadow is something insubstantial and fleeting, but at the same time it has a dominating physical appearance. The shadow in this instance derives its presence by obstructing the path of light in a Something place; the shadow, or trauma, will forever obstruct the ability to live "easily," just as the memories of those lost will forever dominate the lives of those who go on.

Shadows in temporal and spatial divides similarly permeate before and after worlds in *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*. In a literal sense, this divide is introduced through Lieutenant Mamiya's horrific experience in the war mission through which he met Corporal Honda, discussed in chapter four, wherein Mongolian soldiers throw him down a well in the middle of the desert after he witnessed his commanding officer being skinned alive. Mamiya describes his experience down the well to Toru in great detail:

> My mind was fully conscious, but there was something wrong with the connection between my mind and my body…I lay still, enduring the pain. Before I knew it, tears were streaming down my cheeks—tears of pain and, even more, tears of despair. I don't think you will ever be able to understand what it is like—the utter loneliness, the feeling of desperation—to be abandoned in a deep well in the middle of the desert at the edge of the world, overcome with intense pain in total darkness. I went so far as to regret that the Mongolian noncom had not simply shot me and gotten it over with. If I had been killed that way, at least they would have

been aware of my death. If I died here, however, it would be a truly lonely

death, a death of no concern to anyone, a silent death. (Murakami 164)

In retrospect, Mamiya is able to describe the way he felt for the brief time he spent in the

well with greater specificity than he is able to recount the entire rest of his life after the

war. Murakami's deliberate thematic choice here runs throughout the novel: in a narrative

primarily concerned with locating connections between generations and the postwar

consciousness that dominates them, the physical and psychological split implied by the

divide between the isolated darkness of a well and the all encompassing light (and life)

beyond that well is quite direct. It is certainly more literal than the "Something and

Nothing places" of Foer's novel, yet it carries the same symbolic meaning. The role of

darkness and light are equally as pronounced in Mamiya's story.

Perhaps the most central part of Mamiya's storytelling is the turning point that

revolves around his life before and after the light appears in the darkness of the well:

But at one point something happened that I would never have imagined.

The light of the sun shot down from the opening of the well like some

kind of revelation…The well was filled with brilliant light. A flood of

light. The brightness was almost stifling: I could hardly breathe. The

darkness and cold were swept away in a moment…Even the pain I was

feeling seemed to be blessed by the light of the sun…**As long as I**

remained in the light, I was able to forget about my fear and pain and

despair. I sat in the dazzling light in blank amazement. Then the light

disappeared as suddenly as it had come…no doubt, because of the angles

involved, this was all the sun could manage to shine straight down to the

bottom of the hole in any single day…**the true meaning of life resided in**

that light that lasted for however many seconds it was, and I felt I *ought*

to die right then and there…in a place where I should have died, and at a

time when I should have died, I had been unable to die. It was not that I

would not die: I *could not* die. (Murakami 166-7)

Literally acting as the only source of nourishment under these circumstances, the sunlight

down the well profoundly affects Mamiya in the actual time he spends there. Given that

he is telling this story decades after the event, however, the psychological effects of the

way in which he interpreted the meaning of that light seem to dominate in a much

stronger way. In a traumatic time half way between life and death, Mamiya fixates on the

"true meaning of life" as directly connected to, or defined by, the element of light.

Further background information to clarify his understanding of the concept that he

"could not die" is the prophecy that Honda shared with him the night before the attack on

the river bank: Mamiya would be the only member of the mission to survive and return to

Japan (Murakami 162). Mamiya somehow felt that the prognostication had been

validated when he survived the well. Despite the fascinating nature of the story, he

apologizes for taking so much of Toru's time, "This has turned into a very long story, but

what I wanted to convey to you was my feeling that **real life may have ended for me**

deep in that well in the desert in Mongolia" (Murakami 170, *emphasis added*), but still

feels it is important to pass on his experiences to someone of the following generation.

He further delineates the permanent distinction between a before and an after world: "I

burned up the very core of my life, until there was nothing left…**no matter what I have experienced since then, I ceased to feel anything** in the bottom of my heart. Even in the face of those monstrous Soviet tank units, even when I lost this left hand of mine, even in the hellish Soviet internment camps, a kind of numbness was all I felt" (Murakami 170, *emphasis added*). It would seem that the experience described in this mission, and the experiences in the "hellish Soviet internment camps" could be said to be equally horrific or traumatizing, yet Mamiya specifically refers to the light in the well as his turning point. If he had first survived the internment camps, would a single moment from that experience have stood out as the demarcation between his life before and after the trauma? Or is there something truly unique and irreversible about the light in the well that makes the chronology of events irrelevant?

Murakami's narrative suggests the latter: something about the light and dark necessarily epitomizes the two different worlds, and more importantly, the two different selves of which Mamiya speaks. Greater evidence for why Mamiya justifies his belief in the power of the light resides in the rest of this story—the story that includes his return to Japan—and how his two lives are definitively split:

> I came back to Japan, having lost my hand and twelve precious years. By the time I arrived in Hiroshima, my parents and sister were long since dead. They had put my little sister to work in a factory, which was where she was when the bomb fell. My father was on his way to see her at the time, and he, too, lost his life. The shock sent my mother to her deathbed; she finally passed away in 1947. As I told you earlier, the girl to whom I

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had been secretly engaged was now married to another man, and she had

given birth to two children. In the cemetery, I found my own grave. There

was nothing left for me. I felt truly empty, and knew that I should not have

come back there. (Murakami 170)

Mamiya's experience returning home after the war is representative of millions of others.

In addition to losing his entire family, the fact that he "found his own grave" confirms

that not only has he been made to feel isolated from his society, but that his society has

also removed him, and many other veterans, from it. The collective nature of this postwar

consciousness becomes visible through many interrelated stories like Mamiya's; they are

related in their experience of similar events, as well in their isolation through those

events. Mamiya seeks to tell his story despite how complicated and frustrating it is to

truly convey his understanding of that story.

Similarly, because the grandmother in Foer's novel cannot communicate in a

world of Something and Nothing places, she attempts to commit her story to paper: "I hit

the space bar again and again and again. **My life story was spaces**…We made safe

places in the apartment where you could go and not exist" (Foer 176, *emphasis added*). In

her letters to her grandson, she is capable of describing her childhood in stunning detail,

but when she transitions to during and after the war, she finds no words for her life story.

It is particularly interesting that she does not state a lack, or absence, of a life story;

rather, the story exists in spaces. Her interstitial existence in daily life in New York is

inextricably linked to the actual demarcations of her former life before the war, as well as

what she wants (but will never have) from her life and her husband after the war. Schell,

Sr. expresses an identical sentiment in his letter to his son: "**She saw through the shell of me** into the center of me…the center of me followed her, but I was left with the shell of me" (Foer 113, *emphasis added*). The idea of a shell, or an empty space, penetrates his daily life as well as his understanding of his own identity as a whole. The mother of his child is able to recognize a part of himself, the part from before the bombings, that he can no longer locate; despite this, he can, in fact, locate what he believes to have left—the only thing he has left—after the traumatic experience. The postwar "shell" of life is the very thing that impedes his ability to communicate in this "after" world.

The demarcation between Something and Nothing, light and dark, before and after the war, is equally evident in all stages of these narratives: before the war, during the war, immediately after the war, and finally in the attempts to live daily life decades after, as mentioned in the Foer novel above. The concept of the "shell" of a life appears with comparable import in the rest of Mamiya's story as well:

> I hardly remember what my life has been like since then. I became a social studies teacher and taught geography and history in high school, but I was not, in the true sense of the word, alive. I simply performed the mundane tasks that were handed to me, one after another. I never had one real friend, no human ties with the students in my charge. I never loved anyone. I no longer knew what it meant to love another person. I would close my eyes and see Yamamoto being skinned alive…I also had dreams of myself slowly rotting away, alive, in the bottom of the well. **Sometimes it seemed to me that that was what had really happened and that my**

life here was the dream…After returning to Japan, I lived like an empty shell. Living like an empty shell is not really living, no matter how many years it may go on. **The heart and flesh of an empty shell give birth to nothing more than the life of an empty shell**. This is what I hope to have made clear to you, Mr. Okada. (Murakami 171, *emphasis added*)

While Schell, Sr., seems to have gone a step further than Mamiya and made a human connection, that connection is so complicated that each man finds himself in this shell of an existence anyway. It is interesting that Mamiya became an educator; this profession is arguably one in which human connection is more prevalent than in most, yet he is unable (or unwilling?) to reach out to anyone in all those years. There are many professions in which human connections are a relevant aspect, but the choice to become a teacher seems further indicative of the need to communicate with the following generation.

Additional evidence of the importance Mamiya places on connection with the second generation—besides choosing Toru as the recipient of his story, rather than a fellow veteran—is the specific language he uses in describing the shell, which gives "birth to nothing more than the life of an empty shell." The juxtaposition of "life" and "empty shell" suggests the contradictory nature of Foer's "Something…casting a Nothing shadow," in the desire or tendency to simultaneously exist and not exist at the same time. The deliberate choice to describe the continuance of this existence as giving "birth" further supports the idea that this sort of trauma perpetuates indefinitely; the empty shell of a life can, and will, transcend generations.

Hirsch's concept of postmemory is again called to mind: in her more extreme definition, the second generation literally inherits the memories or experiences of the previous one. If one could read that concept into the *Wind-Up Bird*, the role of the narrator, Toru, having an inexplicable desire to descend into his own well is quite supportive in its suggestion that traumatic aftermath does persist through generations in more than a symbolic way. In the darkness of the well, Toru explains his concept of reality: "I felt strangely detached, as if trying to leap from one moving vehicle to another that was moving at a different speed. **I existed in the empty space between the two**, a vacant house…I could do nothing (I *needed* to do nothing) about it" (Murakami 368, *emphasis added*). He echoes the desperate deliberation of Mamiya's speech in his "need" to do nothing, or absolute inability to do something. Thematically, the interstitial space between two things—perhaps between Toru's life before and after his awareness of the war stories—becomes a tangible entity, rather than an absence of life or existence, just as in the lives of Mamiya and the grandparents in *Extremely Loud*. Has Toru been so influenced by the stories he has heard that he now identifies more closely with the past from which those stories come than with his own present reality?

From the darkness of the bottom of the well, he considers the role of the rest of society in his distinct divide between before and after worlds:

> They are vaguely defined "people," and I used to be a nameless one among them. **Accepting and accepted, they live with one another beneath that light**, and whether it lasts forever or for a moment, there must be a kind of closeness while they are enveloped in the light. **I am no**

longer one of them, however. They are up there, on the face of the earth; I

am down here, in the bottom of a well. **They possess the light, while I am**

in the process of losing it. Sometimes I feel that I may never find my way

back to that world, that **I may never again be able to feel the peace of**

being enveloped in that light… (Murakami 392, *emphasis added*)

Toru has not personally experienced the horrific war crimes of Mamiya's stories, or the

devastating fire bombings of Schell, Sr.'s stories, but he demonstrates the same level of

detachment from society. While Murakami's novel employs some conventions of

detective pulp fiction to form the foundations of its plot, the moments of contemplation

between plot connections are what convey the central meaning of the narrative. I believe

Toru's understanding of the separation between the world in the well and the world above

the well represent more than just an overactive imagination sparked by graphic war

stories.

Postmemory as memories that are literally inherited by the second generation is

an elusive concept to grasp; however, postmemory as the dominating presence of a

cultural or societal past in the daily lives of the present generation is an easily accepted

concept. The human connection between the narrator and Mamiya (despite Mamiya's

claim that he is incapable of making a connection) clearly demonstrates that traumatic

events and their aftermath filter uncontrollably into the lives of those around the

individuals who initially experienced them. As discussed in chapter four, it is the power

of the story, or storytelling, that makes this connection possible. To return to what

Alexander states in *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity,* "traumatic feelings and

perceptions, then, come not only from the originating event but from the anxiety of keeping it repressed" (5). Mamiya was unable to connect to another human being until he was able to share his story.

Now that Toru is isolated and cannot share his story, which is an extension of Mamiya's, he finds himself permanently separated from the all-enveloping light shared by a society from which he is detached in the darkness of the well. He further explains this detachment:

> But as I dig the soft earth in the bottom of the well with the rubber sole of my tennis shoe, scenes from the surface of the earth grow ever more distant. The sense of reality subsides bit by bit, and the closeness of the well comes to envelop me in its place…**the place accepts me, and I accept the place…the break between "people" and me is now total**…This is like a confession of faith. I mean to show "them" that I am trying to accept the darkness in its entirety. (Murakami 392, *emphasis added*)

Conceptions of truth and reality in war or in postwar society also dominate both novels. Toru actively considers tangibles such as the rubber soles of his shoes while he acknowledges the images of the earth above becoming more and more unfocused. He possesses a willful interest to separate himself from society, rather than letting it happen out of his control, as Mamiya seemed to do after the war. In an earlier trip down the well, Toru is less concerned with being able to define a split: "little by little, the word 'here' seems to split in two inside me. I am *here*, but I am also *here*. Both seem equally real to

me" (Murakami 369). Some sort of schizophrenic split exists in each instance, but in the later one it seems that Toru finds his reality cut off from society to be "more real" than the reality of which he was previously a part.

Identifying truth and reality is just as important to the characters who experienced war, yet they have to do it in different ways than Toru, as they are experiencing the traumatic event first hand. A dominant part of being able to share traumatic experiences is being able to convey the utter confusion and disorientation endured when expectations about reality do not match up with reality. In another letter to his son entitled "Why I'm not where you are 4/12/78" (Foer 208), Schell, Sr. recounts his story of the fire bombing of Dresden. He speaks of the grandmother's sister, Anna, with whom he would have had a child, and presumably a happy life, had it not been for the war: "I kissed her stomach, that was the last time I ever saw her. At 9:30 that night, the air-raid sirens sounded, everyone went to the shelters, but no one hurried, we were use [sic] to the alarms, we assumed they were false, why would anyone want to bomb Dresden?" (Foer 210). In some ways, society became "use[d] to" conditions of war, but there was never any way to prepare for the actual event itself.

His question is not addressed to his son, but rather it is offered up as a question for the whole of humanity: why would anyone want to destroy a center of creation— creation of life, art, culture—even in war time? The confusion continues to exist long after the event has occurred because answers will never be given. All these years later, he has no closure of any kind; rather, he is left with the same questions he asked on the very day of the bombing.

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Much like the grandmother, Schell, Sr. can only share his story in the confines of a letter from which he never expects a reply. His personal account of the bombing is documented in great detail:

> One hundred planes…like whales through water…I was alone on the street…walls lifted from the floors…orange and blue explosions, violet and white, **I later read that the first bombing lasted less than half an hour, but it felt like days and weeks, like the world was going to end**, the bombing stopped as matter of factly as it had began, "Are you OK?" "Are you OK?" We ran out of the cellar, which was flooded with yellow-gray smoke, **we didn't recognize anything**…that was the last time I saw my parents…**birds with their wings on fire sang from the telephone wires over which desperate calls traveled**…dead and dying people were trampled, I walked over an old man, I walked over children, **everyone was losing everyone**, the bombs were like a waterfall, I ran through the streets, from cellar to cellar, and saw terrible things… (Foer 210-11, *emphasis added*)

In the midst of a narrative where life exists in the spaces between other things, the short time span ("less than half an hour") of the traumatic event perpetually exists in a period of what felt like "weeks." The moment he describes is not a space between, but rather the defining boundary line of all other interstitial moments and their existence. Just as Mamiya was severed from his parents and sweetheart, so too was Schell, Sr., in this instance, and he will forever live in the time "after," which is defined by that instance.

The sense of chaos and desperation is also strong in this passage, such that he believes "everyone was losing everyone" and becoming isolated together.

This contradictory, or schizophrenic, experience of isolated chaos and ordered unity permeates the fates of those who survived after the attack:

> Because there were so many bodies, and because so many of the bodies had been destroyed there was never a list of the dead, **thousands of people were left to suffer hope**. When I had thought I was dying at the base of the Loschwitz Bridge, there was a single thought in my head: *Keep thinking*. **Thinking would keep me alive. But now I am alive, and thinking is killing me…how only hours before I lost everything, I had everything**. (Foer 215, *emphasis added*)

Possibly the most repeated phrase in the novel, "before I lost everything," originates from this single experience. This is the starting point for the before and after worlds which the survivors inhabit in their daily lives; worlds which they cannot escape, despite active attempts to exist in Nothing places. When Schell, Sr. states, "thousands of people were left to suffer hope," he speaks not only of the days and weeks following the bombing, but also of the decades and lifetimes thereafter. I believe the very nature of a schizophrenic postwar consciousness is directly related to the juxtaposed concepts of suffering and hope. When something like hope, something that in dire situations serves as a final recourse for survival, is experienced only through suffering, then it seems only natural for an irreparable psychological split to occur within the individual trying to reconcile these concepts in order to live.

7. Conclusion

"**The form in which we think of the past is increasingly memory without borders rather than national history within borders.** Modernity has brought with it a very real compression of time and space. But in the register of imaginaries, it has also expanded our horizons of time and space beyond the local, the national, and even the international."

~Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*
(*emphasis added*)

While the texts studied in this project vary across geographical and temporal locations, national and international borders, and generational boundaries, they all exemplify contemporary authors working to question those boundaries and the ways in which they are defined. I find it necessary here to return to the foundations of collective memory discussed in chapter two. Paul Connerton, in his landmark study, *How Societies Remember*, observes, "We need to distinguish *social memory* from a more specific practice that is best termed the activity of *historical reconstruction*. Knowledge of all human activities in the past is possible only through a knowledge of their traces" (13). The "traces" of which Connerton speaks appear in multifaceted forms during revolution and war in the works of Churchill, Murakami and Foer. Arguably, the process of "historical reconstruction" is ongoing in our daily lives; discussion in personal conversation, journalism, political dialogue, films and certainly literature. The traces through which we reconstruct history are found most dominantly, however, in the people

with whom we share our stories. Storytelling as a powerful medium for survival is a dominant theme in all the primary works discussed in this study, and it is through the stories that we realize a split, or schizophrenic, postwar consciousness shared by multiple sides of conflict and that transcend generations in permanent traumatic aftermath.

A character from Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* who did not appear explicitly, but rather indirectly, in this study as the focal point through which the main narrator's stories, or letters, were directed serves another purpose, which I will discuss here briefly. As the grandson of Dresden firebombing survivors and the son of a victim of the September Eleventh terrorist attacks, Oscar has been imbued with a deep sense of tragedy, uncertainty and isolation. When other children bring comparably trivial things for show and tell, Oscar brings a documentary on Hiroshima and the atomic bomb in which a man who lost his daughter says:

> That is what death is like. **It doesn't matter what uniforms the soldiers are wearing. It doesn't matter how good the weapons are. I thought if everyone could see what I saw, we would never have war anymore**.
>
> (Foer 189, *emphasis added*)

This definitive yet simple statement follows a horrific description of the destruction and death witnessed after the bomb was dropped. The placement of this passage in a narrative largely concerned with the aftermath of the Dresden bombing is certainly deliberate and understandable. It is the context in which it appears that seems curious: why place discussion of this type of trauma in a grade-school classroom when it already appears throughout the text in letters from Oskar's grandparents who actually lived through such

an event? To return to the concept of postmemory one final time, I believe that Foer seeks to incorporate this type of narrative into the stories of three generations in the novel because the second, and in this case third, generation does, in fact, experience the trauma from the war. Post, or after, memories do not need to be interpreted as literal events that the following generations believe they have experienced; rather, the fact that their parents and grandparents are forever changed, changed utterly, means that they cannot escape that change either. The schizophrenic nature of this postwar consciousness exists through an inability to reconcile pure simple truths, such as "if everyone could see this, we wouldn't have war anymore," with the reality of events in war.

This same sentiment is expressed throughout Murakami's *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, and has been discussed at length in chapters five and six, although a minor character has yet to be mentioned in this study. A member of the mission on which Lieutenant Mamiya and Corporal Honda met, Sergeant Hamano appears briefly in the narrative. He is killed in the attack on the Khalka River, but the night before he philosophizes with Mamiya about the purpose and reasoning (or lack thereof) behind being in the war:

> I don't mind fighting…I'm a soldier. And **I don't mind dying in battle for my country, because that's my job. But this war we're fighting now, Lieutenant—well, it's just not right. It's not a real war**, with a battle line where you face the enemy and fight to the finish…the Chinese take their uniforms off and mix with the civilian population, and we don't even know who the enemy *is*. So then we kill a lot of innocent people in

the name of flushing out "renegades" or "remnant troops," and we commandeer provisions…It's wrong, Lieutenant. We did some terrible things in Nanking…We threw dozens of people into a well and dropped hand grenades in after them. Some of the things we did I couldn't bring myself to talk about. I'm telling you, Lieutenant, **this is one war that doesn't have any Righteous Cause. It's just two sides killing each other**. And the ones who get stepped on are the poor farmers, the ones without politics or ideology…I can't believe that killing these people for no reason at all is going to do Japan one bit of good. (Murakami 143, *emphasis added*)

The purity and simplicity of the final lines of this speech echo the tone of the documentary lines quoted in Foer's novel: no good can come from war. Despite this purity in intention and understanding, the fact that Hamano mentions horrific war atrocities that he, himself, committed creates a sense of confusion and disorientation. If all sides of conflict are perpetuating evil, but somehow believe that they are doing good, then how can sense ever be made of war, the kind of sense implied in these retrospective ponderings? The concept of a "real war" is also intriguing in this monologue. Schizophrenia results from an inability to locate or define reality, and in this case, to locate and define boundaries of war. Hamano suggests that there is such thing as a "real war" with clearly demarcated enemy lines; or rather, he believes this to be the case, and is disillusioned when he cannot identify such boundaries in his own life. Thus, he must deem this reality a fake, or not real, war in order to continue doing his "job" and survive.

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The concept of identifying oneself with one's job, especially as a soldier, appeared in all major works discussed, and in each instance suggested that people do believe certain acts of war are justified when they are performing duties. Reconciling past traumatic events within a society with a present society that would prefer to forget them is part of any political or social conflict. Dario Paez, Nekane Basabe and Jose Luis Gonzalez, in their article "Social Processes and Collective Memory: A Cross-Cultural Approach to Remembering Political Events," state "Collective memory is inextricably linked to social identity…collective memory is essentially a reconstruction of the past, which adapts the image of ancient facts to the needs of the present moment" (169). The need to adapt the "image" of the past to the "needs of the present moment" encompasses the actions of the second generation in both Churchill plays as well as both works of fiction discussed.

The children or young adults of French-colonial Algeria and post-communist Romania are unable to accept their parents' roles in the dominant regimes during and after revolution. As discussed in chapter four, post-revolution in *Mad Forest*, Flavia says, "I'm going to write a true history, Florina, so we'll know exactly what happened" (170). The concepts of truth and reality during and after political upheaval are elusive at best, detrimental to a national identity at worst. In the process of reconstructing history through the "traces," how is one to discern the truth from the deception in cataloguing a story that "truthfully" represents all sides of the conflict? Each author in this study suggests in some way that an authorized truth is not only unreliable or impossible to obtain, but also that it is not even desirable; rather, a perpetually developing dynamic truth can be the only

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productive goal in reconciling a schizophrenic split in one's understanding of war and

revolution. In his study of collective memory, Pennebaker perceives, "Ultimately, the

importance and interest of collective memories is that they persist for years or even

generations" (11). It is through the persistence of these memories—their persistence

through time and generations—that a collective consciousness develops. The value of

Churchill, Murakami and Foer's works manifests in a subjective exploration of what it

means to exist during and beyond traumatic political events, and the ways in which the

resulting social upheaval leaves permanent traces on our society.

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