

## Chapter 6

# 'The History, the Papers, Let Me See It!' Compensation Processes: The Second Generation between Archive Truth and Family Speculations<sup>1</sup>

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### Prologue: The Recent Holocaust Compensation Procedure in Austria

Well timed in 1995, on the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Second Republic, the National Fund of the Republic of Austria for Victims of National Socialism was established. Since then more than 31,000 survivors of Austrian origin and/or living in Austria in 1938 have applied to the National Fund for a symbolic lump sum payment of around 7,000 US dollars. This general gesture was followed by more specific action towards a closer investigation of the past, reflecting a new political awareness in Austria of the wrong-doings in history; and the consequence of a global movement towards acknowledging the 'guilt of nations' (Barkan 2000) and initiating a new 'politics of regret' (Olick 2007). This was triggered by global developments such as the 'Swiss Nazi Gold Bank' affair, the class action lawsuits in the US against German and Austrian firms, and the new focus on art theft, initiated in Austria by the confiscation of Schiele paintings from an Austrian collector on display in the Museum of Modern Art in New York (1998) because of dubious ownership. Since the end of the Cold War, like several other European countries, Austria has developed new policies to engage publicly with difficult historical pasts, such as the Holocaust. Financial compensation is just one of the means of dealing with those legacies. Other means include an active policy of public remembrance, the resolution of an Art Restitution Law

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(1998) for returning former stolen art objects from public collections in Austria, and the establishment of a Historical Commission (1998–2003), documenting the huge scale of property transfer implemented by the Nazis (together with banks and insurance companies). Further initiatives included are the researching of what had been ignored in the post-war era,<sup>2</sup> producing facts, figures and percentages for what still needs to be achieved and thus forming the basis for new political action.<sup>3</sup> In 2000, the Reconciliation Fund was established, providing lump sum payments to former forced labourers from Eastern Europe. These labourers had been ignored until the 1990s,<sup>4</sup> the Reconciliation Fund was followed by the General Settlement Fund in 2001, in which the material losses of Holocaust victims were specifically calculated on an individual basis, including a lump sum payment for the loss of household goods, withdrawn tenancy rights and personal valuables disbursed with 8.6 euros.

Advertisements entitled 'Who Has Been a Victim of National Socialism?' were published worldwide in newspapers and magazines, inviting former victims of National Socialism, and this time also addressing their heirs, to make claims in Austria. This was a very ambitious attempt to individualize victim stories and to compensate for what had been stolen on an individual basis, based upon a detailed questionnaire. The respondent was asked to fill in different categories, such as education, bank accounts, mortgages, stocks, bonds, businesses, insurance policies, immovable and movable property. However, 60 years after the war, knowledge about belongings is rarely that detailed, especially when people of the war generation are no longer living. It was therefore necessary for the staff of the Fund to perform extensive research in the archives. Owing to the length of archive procedures and the complexities of the legal and administrative systems, for example, acknowledgement of heirs as applicants, it took almost a decade to deal with more than 20,000 applications. After some advance payments in 2006, the last of the closing payments were still being made in 2010 and some procedures are still in the concluding phase.

As a historian I have been working in the *General Settlement Fund* (2006–2008), researching the historical data of applicants. To learn more about the

2 In short, Austria passed seven laws for restitution, a law for the welfare of victims, laws regarding personal belongings, life insurance policies, or unrightfully collected discriminatory taxes, compensation regulations in the National Insurance Act, and three funds for support. But the laws were restrictive, had short deadlines, were not systematic and bewildering owing to the competency of various institutions (Jablonek et al. 2003, 424f).

3 The results are presented in 49 volumes, summarized in a final report: Jablonek et al. 2003. Cf <http://www.boehrlau-verlag.com/histkom/>

4 Similarly as members of other victim-groups such as Roma and Sintis, victims of euthanasia and sterilization, homosexuals and deserters from the German Wehrmacht.

consequences of such action to the concerned, I started a three-generation research, interviewing applicants and their families in several countries about their experiences of this compensation procedure and its significance for them. All interviewees were contacted through the Austrian embassies, Jewish communities, and other institutions which deal indirectly with post-war effects or via 'snowballing'; my involvement in the GSF is generally not known to them, as it would influence the interviews in terms of expectations. This project, called *The Afterlife of Restitution*, covers about 60 trans-generational interviews, conducted between 2007 and 2009 by the author in Austria, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. This chapter will give voice to some typical experiences and expectations from members of later generations.

### The Case of Katarina E. and her Family

The possibility of claiming monetary compensation for material losses as a victim of National Socialism often came as a surprise to many thousands of individuals, survivors and/or to their descendants, and raised ambivalent emotions:

[My father] didn't live long enough to see any compensation whatsoever. We, his heirs are waiting every day to receive some positive news from the General Settlement Fund in Austria. I'm sure it is happy for those people who are still living [but] there must be hundreds of elderly "victims" than cannot enjoy anything. [...] I know that there is a lot of investigation and legal work behind every application, but please consider my work; I and many people need the compensation as we have never had anything, for treatment, education for ourselves and family. My father "left" the country with nothing, worked hard, and left this world without [...] even a small amount, of what they stole from him and our family. I think I can speak for everyone who has fulfilled an application some years ago and still hasn't got any answer or payment where the "victims" already have passed away. (8.9.2005)

This letter, emphasizing the crucial factor of time, is addressed to Hannah Lessing, the General Secretary of the Austrian *General Settlement Fund*. The person writing, Katarina E., is in her late 40s (born in 1963), married and living with family in Sweden.<sup>5</sup> Her paternal grandparents lived in Vienna, and both were

5 I am grateful to Katarina E. and her family members for contributing to this research, and to deliver insight into private correspondence, documents and their compensation file. Every quote without further reference is from my interviews, conducted in 2008 in Vienna and in the Netherlands. All of my interviewees are quoted anonymously to protect their privacy.

killed in concentration camps, as was her great-grandmother. Her father was sent as a 12-year-old to Sweden in 1940 and died there in 2000. He did not like to talk about the Austrian past, of which he knew very little. When he became ill, she began to dig in the family past: 'I did it only for family research; the restitution came along, because I didn't know about it.'

Katarina's experiences with the recent Austrian compensation arrangements will be described in this chapter as a case study, as they are characteristic of a family in which the past was silenced, and where she as a member of the second generation (the post-war born generation) became preoccupied with her family history in order to verify the facts. As we will see, this desire makes certain demands on the compensation procedure. Following her correspondence with the *General Settlement Fund* over the last ten years will give some insight into the formalities and complexities of the procedures, and we will see how individual memory is confounded by legal procedures and archival documents. We will find out more about the meaning of compensation, by integrating statements from interviews I did with Katarina and some family members: her cousins Karen and Walter, his daughters Lotte and Nienke and his father Bob. By interviewing children and grandchildren of Jewish Holocaust survivors I experienced a phenomenon which Marianne Hirsch has called 'post-memory' (Hirsch 2008), namely, how remembrance of past events affects those who have not experienced those events themselves. We know from the extensive literature on the Holocaust,<sup>6</sup> that loss and pain have a strong imaginary presence in the mind of the descendants, creating expectations, desires, but also mechanisms of dissociation. How such thoughts about the past shape expectations regarding compensation payments will be explored in this chapter, showing how those imaginations have some truth for the individuals beyond archival evidence; a fact which one might also need to be more aware of in the practice of compensation procedures. Analyzing the interplay between legal compensation practice and the individual ways of remembering and coping with the past, will give new insights into the dynamics triggered by such compensation policies within survivor families.

### The Process of a Claim

For Katarina, the family past in Austria was for very long time a 'forbidden subject'; thus, she talked with her sister only 'behind our father's back':

<sup>6</sup> The relationship between survivor experience and second generation imagination is richly portrayed. Cf. works from Elie Wiesel, Helen Epstein, Alan L. Berger, Marianne Hirsch, Leo Spitzer, Dominick LaCapra, Dori Laub et al.

My father stayed with his mother in Vienna as long as possible, and he got out in 1940 [...] I think it was through the Red Cross, but she couldn't get out herself [...] then he came to Southern Sweden and Ilse [his older step-sister, escaped in 1938] was in Stockholm at that time, she was working as a nanny. And my father came to a priest, I think, and he was brought up there. And then he...well... he was actually baptized and confirmation in Christianity, so I mean, they had to change identity, totally. And then he lived there and worked very, very hard as a farmer boy, they took him, and he was delivering groceries, and he had a really tough life. And then he met our mother [...] My father was stateless until 1955/56, then he regained his Austrian membership and 1969 he became a Swede; and suddenly we were switched also. [...]

Our father, like everyone else, denied the background; they were hiding it, the background. But 1999 I started to do family research because our father was getting ill, so I went on internet, on *Jewish Gen* on an American website, and asked if anyone knows anything about our grandparents, and actually I got relatives [she laughs], like this. They answered; they thought that our family was gone for 60 years. [...] I found the contacts with relatives in Israel, in England, the United States, everywhere. [...] We are living in Sweden, we are not that informed. When you are in America you get this information all the time, you have a big huge Jewish community, but in Sweden we are already estranged somewhere up in the North.

Around 2000, Katarina E. became aware of the existence of some compensation procedures in Austria via her relatives in the United States: 'The Americans helped her ('having done this, having done that'), as well as the Austrian Embassy in Stockholm, 'we did copies and copies, and sent them in.' So she filled in the application of the *National Fund* (NF) and of the *General Settlement Fund* (GSF) for her father:

He said, "good luck with it my children". He didn't have high thoughts from Austria. [...] So I filled in the application with his signature, I helped him out, but he didn't get it in time. He died too early to receive the 7,000.- too [the lump-sum payment from the NF]. [...] We applied [also] for the *Pflegegeld* [nursing allowance], and well, he died in July 2000 and we received the money in August 2000, so he never saw it. So that was the most tragic. Because it was his first money and he never got anything. [...] And as my father had died we had to do it again, in our names. It has been so complicated!

As heir, she again filled in the application to the *GSF*, as this Fund was also open to descendants. The only informant on the past at that time was her aunt Ilse, her father's half-sister, who lived in the Netherlands and who talked about

the past as little as her father. Only shortly before she died, she shared some of her memories: 'She realized she was running out of time; then she was opening up.' After her aunt died in early 2003 it became clear from her papers that she had made in the past a claim on a life insurance policy of her father, who was interned in Dachau in 1938/39, and later deported (to Zamość); as was his wife (to Stutthof) and his mother (to Auschwitz). Katarina began to wonder if her aunt had received any payments, and if so, why her father had not received anything at that time. That was the moment where she became suspicious, asking herself who in the family had in the past claimed for what, and who of the heirs were now claiming for whom, and who was actually able to make a valid claim.

She contacted *The International Commission on Holocaust Era Insurance Claims* (ICHEIC) to get further information and heard that the GSF in Vienna had taken over this responsibility. In September 2003 she received the first letter from the Fund explaining the long waiting time. A year later, Katarina wrote to the General Secretary, the above quoted letter, reminding her that a year had passed by, and that she was still 'waiting every day to receive some positive news' (8.9.2004).

Two weeks later she sent some new details to the person in charge. In-between she had discovered that her aunt's inquiry regarding her father's insurance policy had been removed from the Austrian *Versicherungsgesellschaft* in 1999, arguing that it had been paid out in 1939, and she asked the GSF to 'help us as fast as possible with some answers' (27.9.2004). In response she received a formal email regarding the status of the proceedings, repeated one year later in 2005. During this year she spent a few days in Vienna, together with her sister, following the family trails: First they visited the places where their grandparents had lived, in the 6th and 13th districts. Both properties had been owned by the family in the 1930s and the sisters are particularly curious as to what happened to them:

One is in Auhofstrasse, ten minutes from Schönbrunn. It has eleven apartments, our whole family was living there, it was from our grand grandfather [...] We had [also] a big house in the Hirschengasse, close to Mariahilferstrasse, but that, I think, was taken down, because it was very bad, so something new was built in the 70s but the ground must have been valuable. [...] It was our grandmother's private house [...] About Hirschengasse we don't know anything.

What she knew from her father was that there had been a sort of former compensation procedure, but she only vaguely remembered what her father had told her and he himself gave no details. Those she hoped to find via the compensation procedure:

He said that he had received something for one of the houses, but we were so young, so we don't remember. He said it was wreck; it was...nothing to have the house. So he took all that he received, we don't know how much it was and for which house. There are no papers.

From the GSF she knew that some of the documents regarding the restitution procedures after the war were destroyed, but she wanted to see for herself. In the Austrian public record office in Vienna she could see the original note, that there had been a compensation procedure in the 1950s, but no further details: 'He [the archivist] just said the file is destroyed; it does not exist anymore. So, "good-bye" ... we don't know.' Those documents – like many others – were physically destroyed in the 1980s owing to a shortage of space. In her further research she could not find out more about the houses, but about insurance policies of nearby relatives, which she sent to the Fund. The response explained that this amendment, as it addresses a new historical person, would mean, from a legal point of view, starting a new claim, which most likely would be rejected. So she withdrew, as it was promised that she would receive her decision soon.

### The Decision in 2006

In December 2006 Katarina received the decision, explaining on eight pages the compensation she was entitled to receive. After the legal procedure and the possibilities of review are explained, the inheritance-share of the applicant is calculated as all claims are divided up between the heirs according to the inheritance law. Therefore the family situation is briefly described, focused on the relatedness, it does not mention any personal stories. There one could read in detail: Katarina was entitled to receive some compensation for an insurance policy after her grandfather Egon G. – exactly three years after she had first discovered evidence of this policy in her aunt's papers. Now she received her father's share.<sup>7</sup>

Compensation for losses in occupation was dismissed because her grandfather was registered as a house owner, which is not qualified as occupation according to the GSF-law. For her grandmother Nelly G. she received compensation for movable property and household goods, not for her loss of occupation, as she was renting out apartments in her own house, which again did not qualify. The claims regarding the two family houses were both dismissed, because the claims had already been 'finally settled by an Austria court or administrative authorities'. Also the claim regarding the bank credits was dismissed because the applicant

<sup>7</sup> The policy is valued at US\$42.640 in total, her share, with US\$13.325 paid out, was about 15 percent. (Decision 2006)

had already received some payments from the Bank-Austria-Settlement. This agreement, in 2000, enabled survivors and heirs to claim outstanding bank accounts, securities or saving books.<sup>8</sup>

Katarina did receive some compensation for her father, Walter G., for his loss of education, as he had to leave school, and for her great-grandmother Florentine Z. regarding movable property, stocks, and bank credits, all mentioned in her property declaration of 1938. Each of these categories was individually calculated, and then the separate sums were counted together, accumulating to a definite amount; however, followed immediately by a warning: 'The total payment will only be a percentage of the value now assigned', approaching on average between 13 to 18 percent (Decision 2006: 7).<sup>9</sup> The reason for this was the limited budget of the *GSF*. In the 2001 Washington Agreement, a fixed sum of 210 million US dollars was negotiated. However, we now know that the claims amount to a total of approximately 1.5 billion US dollars. Consequently, each applicant received only a fraction of his or her claim.<sup>10</sup> This left Katarina with "very mixed feelings". She not only longs to know the real value of the house at the time but also to be compensated for it:

A lump sum is ok as we have the answer now, but of course we also want to know exactly. [...] I mean, it's a house in Hietzing, ten minutes from Schönbrunn, I wonder how much money it would be worth [...] The history, the papers, let me see it!

In this respect she thought she received too little information in the letters as in the decision:

It's very short, it does not leave any much to the imagination, I mean, it does not tell me everything; my father's education zig [umpteen] thousands, ääh... [she uttered a brief embarrassed laugh].<sup>11</sup> [...] But as said before, it is not the money-issue the most important, the most important for us is what happened to the houses? We don't know anything what happened. They say it was restituted

<sup>8</sup> For more information about various initiatives from the Austrian side, see: <http://www.claimscon.org/>.

<sup>9</sup> The claim value of her share amounts to US\$28.788 in the claims-based procedure and US\$6.141 in the equity-based procedure. (Decision 2006) For the calculation modus, background information and the public reports of the NF and GSF, cf. <http://www.en.nationalfonds.org/>.

<sup>10</sup> To be precise: This amounts to 10.56 percent in the claims-based process, 20.74 percent for insurance policies and 17.16 percent in the equity-based process.

<sup>11</sup> The loss of education was valued with US\$12.283, her share, with US\$6.141 paid out, was about 15 percent of the amount (Decision 2006).

in the 50s, but the documents are destroyed. How can they say it is restituted, because we don't have seen anything, no proofs [...] not about that what actually happened, we got written down where things happened, and says which owner had the house, but that's it. [...] Yes, the land registers, but no more, it doesn't say who got it [the money], that is something for the historians. [...] I don't care about the money; I want to see *who* got the money, if there was anyone at all. Because we don't think that anybody got the thing. We have asked our cousins in the US, Eric's children, they didn't get anything, Ilse didn't get anything, or father couldn't get anything himself, so we don't know.

Katarina was disappointed to see no further details in the decision about the procedures regarding the two family houses in the 1950s. She called the *GSF* for more detailed information regarding the exact percentage of her share and received less than satisfactory answers. The day after this she emailed further questions. A day later she called again, complaining about some errors in the decision: They accidentally 'put in a woman who did not belong to our family' and therefore miscalculated the inheritance share; she found herself some proof for her grandfather's profession (salesman), a legitimate one in terms of the *GSF*-law; and she called the post-war restitution procedures unjust and asked them to reconsider. Finally she was asked to hand in the reclamations written for the record.

This was one of the many moments where Katarina contacted her cousins in the Netherlands. Since the beginning she had been the manager of all the information regarding newly-found documents and knew the status of the procedure. This time she asked them to reject the decision and sent an explanatory email, filled with details and statistics, calculating the inheritance shares anew as both families were the heirs of the Viennese house, which belonged to their common grandmother. At this point things became complicated and apparently also very difficult, and Katarina decided to contact a well-known lawyer Randy Schoenberg (who had managed the restitution of Klimt paintings to the Altmann family) and asked him for support. As she informed me later:

[I thought] actually it is down to a lawyer to confront them, because the decision is ready, it's ready to be decided, it's hanging in the air and we don't know why. They say our case is so complicated, it is, it is very complicated. (8.10.2008)

He referred her to the Jewish community in Vienna. People there helped her to put together an appeal, arguing that 'any post-war settlement or decision regarding these two real estate properties must have constituted an extreme injustice' (24.1.2007). From the moment a lawyer was involved, Katarina's cousin had the feeling that the case was progressing, at least this was Karen's impression, who, like her brother Walter, was convinced that the Austrian state

delayed the proceedings deliberately. After reconsidering the newly supplied material, the *GSF* decided to reopen the case.

From that point on, Katarina and the Jewish community asked about the state of affairs on a monthly basis. In July the Jewish community offered to research new documents, as their client Katarina was asking for more and more details. Meanwhile Katarina kept the *GSF* posted with new material, such as the property declaration of the people who bought her family's house in 1938: the *Vermögensentziehung-Anmeldungsverordnung* (VEAV). Owing to a law in May 1945, all those who made property transactions in Austria after 1938 had to fill in a VEAV; the new owners ('Aryanisers') had to report, the injured could report. Katarina hoped it would help to calculate the value of the former family home. At the end of 2007 she asked once again for an update, this time more forcefully, explaining her impatience through being severely ill and requesting an acceleration of proceedings. The length of bureaucracy annoyed her increasingly, as she explains later in the interview:

When you call them it's very bureaucratic, you have to write, writing, you have to wait weeks to get something back and ... It takes so long time. We are talking about seven years now! And I told them I am ill, I have breast cancer, and I told them that it is for me a hurry to see what happened, but they don't care, it takes time. I have communicated, communicated via email, several times, many, many times, asking them, begging them to hurry up and then I was once again sick last year, and then I called, exaggerating and asking them when is the next meeting [of the commission committee], when is the next meeting. Now, the last meeting was in April and we still haven't heard anything. [...] I just want to see if they have something to show us.

In the summer of 2008, she again spent some days with her sister in Vienna, staying in the district where their father grew up in the 1930s, 'as close as possible to "our house"'. They tried to find the place where their father went to school, to locate him in his environment and to place him in a social structure; they visited family graves at the cemetery and the Judenplatz, the place of a memorial to Austrian Holocaust victims, appreciating its existence not so much as a site of memory, rather as a site visited by like-minded people:

It is like you have..., you want to go to some spots were you can actually meet Jews, to meet your own... We are only half but it is our people; at least, at least. It pleased me that there are mostly Americans down here at the Jewish places, probably relatives, who originated from Austria. It's like imagination comes long, and I think, wow, I wonder where are they living. It's like being around with family.

This 'ritual of pilgrimage' is described by the historian Alan L. Berger as an attempt in the second generation 'to familiarize themselves with the "landscape of memory"' (Berger 2006: 108). To relate memory to such physical spaces is obviously more fulfilling than to visit the *GSF* to discuss their case:

We were talking about going to the parliament or to the *GSF*. But we are too shy... you have to make an appointment, we have no contact person; I think we had two or three persons involved, they don't keep you updated. I don't know who it is for us now.

Although they had regular contact with the Funds by letter or phone, they felt inhibited. It might have been related to their anger, expressed in the interview:

Today, if you ask me today, I say it's useless. If they had done it in 2001 when they started out, in a rush, then it would admit excuse; but today people are laughing, it takes too long time. They don't get anything. Now it is very quiet, you don't hear about it, you don't talk about it. Because people say, I don't care anymore, it takes too long time. When I talk to my relatives in the States, Rudolf, who actually is 80; he says... he doesn't like Austria at all. It's like hatred, they take the money and... [clicking her fingers]. I think he got something now, for the first time.

### The Revised Decision in 2008

A few days later back home she received the *revised decision* from the *GSF*, in which they calculated the shares anew, the profession of the grandfather,<sup>12</sup> the lost household goods of her grandmother, and in particular, reconsidered the circumstances of the restitution of the family houses.<sup>13</sup> A historian at the *GSF* had found new documents,<sup>14</sup> showing the way in which the Restitution Commission in 1951 had dealt with the family house. They denied restitution to the descendants because, as quoted in the new decision, 'the sales contract was made already in December 1937, and that therefore the transfer of the property would have taken place even if the National Socialists had not come into power in March 1938.' And further: 'Since the court files, except for the final decision,

<sup>12</sup> The loss of occupation was valued with 49,135 US\$, her share with 12,795 US\$, paid out was about 15 percent of the amount (Decision 2008).

<sup>13</sup> The claim value of her share amounts to 26,431 US\$ in the claims-based procedure and 61,451 US\$ in the equity-based procedure (Decision 2008).

<sup>14</sup> VEAV 13th district, C 85 regarding Erich Z., including the following decisions: 60 RK 86/50, 60 RK 1247/48-27, and 60 RK 77/50-16.

do not exist anymore, the Claims Committee cannot regard the decision as extremely unjust. However, it awards compensation for the purchase price insofar as it did not come to the free disposal of the injured owners in 1938/39' (Decision 2008: 3).

This time the *GSF* awarded some compensation for the purchased price, as Katarina's family had never received the money from the sales contract, as after 1938 all money belonging to Jewish people was kept in frozen accounts (*Sperrkonten*). Here the decision refers implicitly to the detailed knowledge established by the Historical Commission about the deprivation of property after 1938. However fair this decision might seem from the perspective of an historian, legally speaking it was possible only because they discovered a procedural error in administering the estate in those earlier procedures of the 1950s (namely how the possessions of the 'disappeared' had been managed). This allowed the *GSF* to reconsider the case, although it had already been treated by a former court, and although it could not be proved that the decision back then was extremely unjust, owing to a lack of documents. This is just one of the many background details of a legal procedure which are not documented in the decision, but which in fact were responsible for the long procedure, and also for the fact that the concession on the purchase price could be made.

What Katarina realized immediately was that some historical details were different than in her papers and in her memory. She became so upset that she overlooked the new concessions, and is disappointed that her claim regarding the house has been dismissed again. Only later, with the help of *GSF* employees, Katarina realized that the claimed compensation for the house was granted, albeit in an unexpected category, in 'other losses' instead of in 'immovable property'. Nevertheless she reported to me her discontent:

According to the *GSF* sold in December 1937. The papers I have say that Auhofstrasse was sold in January 1939. I know for sure that my grandparents also lived in their house in 1938 [...] I don't have the strength to deal with this anymore. (15.7.08)

Seeing some incorrect facts in a formal decision causes emotional upheaval; as she knows so little about the family, these few facts she knows (or thinks she knows) are far more important. Her knowledge is rooted in a sales contract from January 1939, which one can find in the files, but also in family letters. A letter from her grandfather to his daughter (her aunt) shows that in 1939 the sale is still an ongoing process:

As Mom wrote to me last week, the approval to sell the house has finally been given; however lately there have been other numerous and time-consuming

formalities necessary for the final completion of such undertakings. One has to have a lot of patience. (26.7.1939)

Here it becomes apparent that owing to new legislation and formalities put into practice with the annexation (*Anschluss*) of Austria to the Third Reich in March 1938, the sale was not completed before 1939. In the archive documents we find references to two sale contracts, one in November 1938 and one in January 1939. The house belonged to four family members – Katarina's aunt Ilse G. (Walter's mother), her grandmother Nelly G., her great-uncle Erich Z., and her great-grandmother Florentine Z. – those parts were thus sold at two different times.

The *GSF* did not refer to these purchase contracts. They used (and quoted) the same reasoning as the Restitution Commission in the 1950s. This was based on the conviction that there had been previous talks and agreements on the sale – based on a letter from 17 December 1937, in which Katarina's grandmother Nelly G. bindingly promised the sale to an interested purchaser Johann R.. Later, the family discovered additional information in a letter from 1955 from Katarina's great-uncle Erich, a co-owner of the house, who had been exiled to Montreal in the 1930s:

As you know we have the law suit in Vienna for the return of the house in the Auhofstrasse. I am enclosing here a copy of the judgment which explains the matter. It is hard to find anywhere else but in Vienna such a bunch of crooked witnesses. I did not pay the lawyer's bill because I found the way he handled our affair was pitifully bad. There must have been a power of Attorney signed by myself in the Notary's papers which would carry the correct date. It was also easy to prove and known to Dr. Baumann [curator in absence for his mother Nelly G. and grandmother Flora Z.] that my consent to the sale was given only in 1938. (Erich Z., 19.7.1955)

He reports in this letter to his niece Ilse that his claim for restitution in the post-war years had been dismissed, complaining about 'a bunch of crooked witnesses', about his 'bad' lawyer, and insisting that the case had been mishandled. He argued that he had given his consent to the sale only in 1938, which would mean that they would have been legitimized for restitution. From today's perspective, whether the former family house was sold in 1937 or 1938 makes no difference to the *GSF*. As it was privately owned on 17 January 2001 (the date of the Washington Agreement), restitution was not an option: according to *GSF* law, only property in public ownership (of the Federal Republic, the city of Vienna, or the federal states) is eligible for restitution. However, since in both cases (1937/38), the family most likely had not received the purchase price, compensation has been paid.

The other family property, Hirschengasse, which had belonged to Katarina's grandmother, had already been part of such a restitution procedure in the 1950s. Here the decision says:

Due to a settlement of Walter G. [anonymized], the applicant's father, with Josef R. and Maria R. on the 6th of May 1963, no compensation can be paid for the loss of the immovable property. [...] The Claims Committee has no reason to believe that the settlement was inadequate in the sense of Sect. 20.1 General Settlement Fund Law. (2008: 4)

The decision refers explicitly to the above mentioned *GSF* law saying that if a piece of real estate was subject of a claim that was previously decided by an Austrian administrative body a restitution or compensation was not possible again, unless it could be proved that the former procedure was 'extremely unjust'. But this is precisely what Katarina wants to know more about:

We know that the family who bought it in 1938, they still own it; the third generation or so. [...] It was bought from Josef and Maria R....[...] We cannot go to the R.s and say "get out", because they have it now for three generations. [...] We don't know if Maria and Josef R. paid it from their own pocket or if it was from Austrian government; that is something for the historians to find it out. [...] If you look at it, they got...they got money and they took it, confiscated the money and put it into the banks. That is where Austria, the government is involved, that should be restituted. You don't have to have the house back, but I mean the money which was confiscated should be calculated up to the value and be given back.

When reading the decision for her some important facts are still missing; particularly that the settlement of her father is not described in more detail: 'In the decision from the *GSF* they are telling us that our father got something, [...] but no evidence, no figures, nothing; just telling us that somebody had something.' Only after she asked them to send these documents, was she able to look at the documents which record the efforts made by the Restitution Commission in the 1950s to contact her father and also the exact amount her father had received in a settlement in 1963.

What had happened? A restitution procedure was started in 1950, initiated by a curator in absence, later taken over by a Collection Agency, which claimed heirless or not yet claimed Jewish property which had been confiscated during National Socialism. According to the State Treaty of Austria in 1955, all property that formerly belonged to the German Reich passed to the Republic of Austria. The Collection Agencies, established in 1957, claimed those properties in order to use them for collective purposes,

namely to divide the means they had collected among victims of National Socialism. But before making a claim they had to contact potential heirs and act on their behalf (Werner and Wladika 2004). Thus since 1950 a Restitution Commission was writing letters to Walter G. in Sweden, asking him to join the proceedings. He did not respond for a long time, only in 1961, explaining his long silence with his lack of money and his fear of being asked to pay for the restoration of his family house in Vienna. He entered the proceedings and received finally 100,000 Schilling (€7,270) for withdrawing the restitution claim.<sup>15</sup> Finally, seeing the documents, Katarina had to acknowledge that her father had himself signed the settlement with the new owners in 1963, the same year in which Katarina was born. She responded:

Very interesting reading. Although, thinking about how we lived, I actually don't think my father accepted any money, because in those days it would have been a fortune. (18.2.2009)

It seems that this fact is hard for her to accept as she cannot remember having felt any of this "fortune" in her childhood. The notion that he turned down the offer deliberately: does it provide a moral explanation in order to avoid accusing her father, that he deprived her of this fortune or home? After all she made his choice to ignore the past and downplay its role responsible for having deprived her of roots and background:

He said we exaggerate the religion, and there are no archives; and you know G. [the anonymized family name], that's like ... no luxurious, it is a common name, you will not find anyone. The first time when I went to Vienna, I think I was around 18, we went up to the camping and I put up my passport; they said: "Where is your *von*?" "What?", I said. "Whether you are a *von* G., or you are Jewish." You are Hapsburg or you are Jewish. [...] So our father was just telling us lies. Don't dig in the past. Don't touch it.

To have to acknowledge that her father accepted this deal in the 1960s, that he had a choice and made a choice, in a way to get closure on the past, is perhaps hard to accept.

After having received the explanations and some copies of the original documents, it is easier for her to acknowledge the decision; especially after having received the preliminary payment 'in time', still being healthy enough to make a trip to visit family in the Netherlands. In our correspondence she summarized the last few years:

<sup>15</sup> RK 75/1961, Town- and Federal archive of Vienna. One could say vaguely that this sum in 1963 was equivalent with about the value of two cars.

I might be the youngest of us cousins but I have been struggling for years, since 1999, to do family research and to find out what really has happened with this family and its belongings. [...] Ordering papers from archives and being myself in the archive in 2005 has been a hard work but it was worth every hour as we did not have any background. You see it's not only that our family actually was killed and robbed. Our background was stolen too and that is something that every family hit by war has to struggle with. Our children [...] have been dealing with this and are very much informed, because nothing will be left in the dark anymore. Still, the *GSF* has done very extended and hard work in our case [...]. Thanks to our appeal we actually found out more background. (18.2.2009)

Here, one realizes, the compensation claim has not only to satisfy a longing for acknowledgment, but also for identity; a situation of many applicants whose parents experienced exile. Like Katarina, they search for lost family members, gather documents from all over and regularly update the family tree on the internet. Katarina's Dutch cousin also composed a collection of private letters, another cousin in the US hired a translator to translate them into English, and Katarina herself translated them into Swedish to 'save' the 'treasure' for her children, and she hoped that she 'will soon learn how my father got out' (6.2.2009). In the summer of 2009 Katarina received notification of the final payment from the *GSF*, and she immediately wrote me with some enthusiasm:

I was so happy to read that it will be a final distribution from the *GSF* as I am seriously ill. I am supposed to leave with my daughter to see my long lost relatives in USA and also visit the Holocaust Museum in Washington which is such a big dream for me. (24.7.2009)

On her return she dedicated more time to family research, this time on her maternal family branch in the Tyrol. A year later, when we had contact again due to the publication of this study, she concluded with some resignation: 'My research that I started eleven years ago has really paid out in finding relatives even though Austria was not willing with money.' (3.6.2010)

### Historical Facts versus Speculations

Katerina had been successful in the sense that her claims had been acknowledged and she had received more information about the past. Still it seems that the payments or the procedure had not satisfied her completely: the following day, she sent me Article 26 of the Austrian State Treaty from 1955, recording

Austria's obligation for restitution. She commented that even after 55 years, Austria had not fulfilled the obligation, adding:

All the Austrian programs to give back were based on procedure where the applicant makes claims. Therefore Austria benefited from exterminating families where there was no one left able to make claims. The Austrian government has data in its Archive of all expropriated property. (4.6.2010)

Historically speaking there have been several initiatives over the decades dealing with heirless property in favor of NS-Victims or the Jewish Communities; like the above-mentioned Collection Agencies in the 1950s, or the Mauerbach Benefit Sale in 1996, which sold looted art on behalf of the Austrian Jewish Community and needy victims; but all those initiatives had their shortcomings. Katarina's criticism might not, historically, be absolutely true, but psychologically it most certainly is, as she still feels ill-treated or disadvantaged. It seems that the long held ignorance of the Austrians in dealing with their past is still influencing the way the recent compensation is experienced and evaluated by her. Because, when asked in 2008, if she registered positive changes in recent years, she responded:

Yes, well, actually, when the restitution came along I think it started to change a bit. But it is a sad issue that it did not happen just like this [finger snip as gesture]. Now people forget that they actually are doing it, once a while there comes a newsletter, now they have to hurry up because the victims are dying [...] The problem is, the Fund it too small. And people know it. But it is not about us, actually. It is about elderly people who should have had pensions and help, in the 50s. It feels a little bit too late. We write on behalf of someone who paid a price, we didn't pay the price. We had a good life and they are already dead who needed it. [...] I think we are fighting because of the fairness, we are fighting just for that, I think. We are fighting to get the honor back; I think we fight for....They should pay! They did wrong, they should pay. The honor-thing... [...] They did not apologize, not good enough.

Two years later, looking back on the interview and the compensation procedure, she wrote to me:

This is what we all feel, all refugees from Austria, all victims and sons and daughters of the murdered and robbed ancestors. As one once said to me when I asked about our specific case "we are all in the same boat, accept the offer from Austria or leave it". That is what we had to choose from. So with a long nose, we accepted once more in History the unfair treatment of the Jewish people. (4.6.2010)

Here one sees how discontent and disappointment about the compensation – or rather about Austria – is expressed repeatedly, as well as ambivalent feelings: Compensation aims to acknowledge sufferings of the past; but at the same time the gesture itself causes suffering, as it revives and reproduces feelings of being treated unfairly.

Katarina's cousin Walter in the Netherlands partly shares her anger. Like her, he took over the application after his mother died in 2003. When interviewed, the process of claiming was at that time not yet closed:

If you ask me truly it still upsets me, I still think it's a shame, they got away with it. [...] What is probably hurting most, that it was denied so long and that they needed to be squeezed until they were willing to do something, it was not by heart. They had to have a gun under the head before doing anything.

He knows little about Austria. His mother Ilse told him little about the past, as it would have revealed strong emotions, which was unusual in his family. As secretly as she has dealt with the issues of the past, she has dealt with the lump-sum payment, which she received from the National Fund in 1995. He heard about it only after his mother had received it. She used it in a particular way, which is still remembered within the family:

My mother was able to take a lot of personal stuff to Sweden. I can show you the case, because we have it here, a huge suitcase. She was also able to take some of the family jewelry [...]. In the 80s my parents' house was burgled and all the jewels were stolen – terrible! When she had the \$7,000, she bought new jewels. That's what she did.

Instead of sharing those memories verbally, she dealt with the memory in a more symbolic way; in the same way as when she visited Austria with her family for camping holidays. Most of the tragic side of the family history came, for Walter R. and his daughters, out of the above-mentioned suitcase, after their (grand)mother had died: Besides bed sheets, and a traditional Austrian costume, there were also papers saying that she was trying to get some compensation for the house, for insurance policies or bank accounts in the 1960s. But as her son explained: 'She wasn't helped at all, they said, it's settled, it has been paid, no documents.' And he described her reaction: 'The reaction was in the style: They are still Nazis, they cover up the past, they just don't want to be fair.' Here one has the feeling that he also described his own emotions. It was the same when he expressed the thoughts she might have had about the recent lump-sum payment: 'She was very happy with it, but it was still a bargain.' And about the recent individual compensation: 'Well, she would have said: "Good, so now they suffer a little bit more."' He phrases his own opinion similarly:

The sum, it's tip-money, it's nothing, it's almost a shame. Although it is good that it happens, at least it is something. They could also, say, write you a letter: We feel terrible for you, goodbye. They did a little bit more, they give a little economic compensation, they went on their knees a little bit; on that perspective it's good. But I would have understood if they paid only to the victims, on the other hand they dragged the whole thing so long, and they were forced by American legislation, they were forced, strangled, but they delayed and delayed and delayed as much as they could, so in that perspective it is good that we squeeze out everything that is possible; as much as possible.

To ask descendants what their (grand)parents might have thought about the compensation is not primarily aimed at getting to know their (grand)parent's but their own attitudes and how they see their (grand)parents. Katarina also reported her father's opinion about the recent compensation:

He said, good luck with it, my children. He didn't have high thoughts from Austria. He only went back to Austria once, when he turned 50, he went directly to his house, and then to Grinzing; but Austria was for him too much pain, I think.

And later on, she repeated: 'His life was ruined, and he said, if I can do this for you children, I am glad to do it, then good luck.' She gave the impression that he did not believe in this gesture at all, and did it only to please his daughters. When I asked her if it would have made a difference for him if there had been restitution from Austria earlier on, the categorical answer was 'No'. Asked if he had expected something from Austria, her equally categorical answer was 'Never'. She showed her father and herself, by the way she rephrased his attitude, as unforgiving. Similarly she described her aunt's attitude towards restitution: 'I talked to her. She was also laughing; it is a big joke. If you... They talk about ten percent of the value of 70 years ago; it's like throwing sand in the eyes'. She underlined her aunt's rejection, and her own demands: 'If calculating with ten percent of the value of that time, then you have to 'calculate it up', until today.'

It is Katarina's engagement which brought to light many little details of their joint past. The 'hobby-historian', she is called by her Dutch cousins. When she called from Sweden, passing on some new information, the shared family past in Austria then became a topic at the Dutch kitchen table, thereby reaching the third generation. Walter's teenage daughter saw the effect of this research on her father:

For my dad, on the one side he would be glad if he gets to know other stories, on the other hand these are no easy stories, the more you know is not always better. I think he wants to know everything as much as possible even though it might be painful for him. [...] For my dad I think it's more about the stories and all the memories [...] a fuller picture of what has happened.

From her aunt she felt her desire to keep tales and facts alive enforced by her illness: 'because every day can be her last day, that is why she wants to keep in touch and make sure that all memories are shared, so nothing gets lost.' (Lotte R.) This quasi-religious significance of getting to know everything that happened is a well-known phenomenon in the vast Holocaust literature on the second generation (Berger 2006: 107). But here in a compensation procedure one sees that each new finding triggers new questions, which wait to be answered: After the war, to initiate the restitution procedures, the death of the murdered grandparents needed to be confirmed. So who declared their death, the relatives or the authorities? Who was involved in the compensation procedures? How to prove that people really received some money and if it was a 'fair' amount? To what extent can you find the story of a sale in an historical land register? Why are some documents incomplete or no longer available?

All these open-ended questions create speculations. Therefore the compensation procedure is loaded with expectations of filling in memory- and knowledge-gaps. They demand full knowledge from themselves and from the institutions, triggered by the belief that it maybe would ease their pain or even put an end to it. As Katarina put it: 'It would be so interesting, I mean we are speculating, making up stories, we don't know anything if it is true or half-truth, so I mean if we can put an end to this.' She formulated explicitly her hope regarding the compensation procedure, to put an end to all the speculation going on in her family about the past: about the bourgeois life before 1938 in Vienna ('a nanny and probably a gardener, and trips to Yugoslavia; they had everything'), but also about the post-war restitution, suspecting that one family member might have received compensation for it all, without letting the others know:

The suspicion is, when grandmother knew that she was trapped in Vienna, what did she do with the money, the bank accounts? Did she give it to [her father's uncle] Eric? Did he transport it via Switzerland? Where did it go? The rumor in the family is that they paid 50,000 Swiss Francs to get their mother out of Auschwitz. 50,000 Swiss Francs during the war must have been a fortune. [...] He tried it but he didn't get her out. Listen – that is only rumour. [...] I think everyone is so suspicious, because everyone thinks the other got something, I think that is also one reason why my father and Ilse never talked about it; because she thought he has the millions, and he thought she has the millions, and Eric... They didn't want to take the subject up in the open. We are guessing, probably, and they knew the uncle's way of living, owning factories all over the world, a totally different life.

Those rumors, although labeled as such, are still alive in the family, just because no documents have been found that prove that black is white. But rumors also have their functions: If one could prove that somebody else had received

'the millions', that somebody else had secretly claimed the compensation for the entire family fortune, that could at least explain why one family branch in the US had a better start after the war and did so well, whereas oneself did only fairly well. The fact that this family branch had already emigrated in the 1930s to Montreal and were textile manufacturers beforehand is left aside, only mentioning that during the war there were high hopes that they would succeed in getting their relatives out of Austria.

That such huge amounts were involved in the past is, for Katarina, taken for granted: 'We talk about nine million *Kronen* [crowns], we talk about ten percent ...I don't know, we talk about millions, and we talk about ten percent, so it's maybe one or two million.' Such expectations are nurtured by all the details listed in the property declaration of her grandmother, but also by photos seen from that time. It was not only her father who thought that she maybe has too many expectations regarding the past, 'exaggerating' the religion, the luxury, the origin. Aunt Ilse's husband Bob, when showing me the family albums, said smiling: 'They think there were millions...'. This irony is signalling and creating some distance, although he was much closer to the time. He has personal memories of the post-war years, when his wife tried to get some compensation in Austria, instructed by an Austrian refugee group in Sweden. He remembered several small payments in the 1950/60s, which gave his wife some 'own money', although little when compared to the 'richness' of her family. Some money came from the Austrian government, some from a 'discovered bank account', and he emphasized how special it was at that time to have some foreign currency.<sup>16</sup> He also possesses the earlier-mentioned letter from uncle Erich from 1955 about the dismissed restitution-claim.

Bob's son Walter was not very surprised at finding this document in his father's papers. Somehow it represented his own feeling that for a long time Austrian authorities had no wish to be fair. He was, however, astonished when his father said that his mother had some money in Austria in the 1950s or 1960s, which they used for vacations in Austria. He heard this story for the first time; and obviously it does not fit his image of Austria as a country that needed decades to take some responsibility for the Nazi horrors. More familiar to him is when his father highlighted his wife's talents and her family background and what she could have achieved without the war.

16 This might have been money from the Hilfsfonds (1956), which was established to support those who were no longer living in Austria with a one-time lump sum payment and from which Ilse R. has received some money (Act 36.098 (N 50), Austrian State Archive). Whether she has also received some money from the Abgeltungsfonds (1961), which compensated shares, bank accounts, life insurance policies or unrightfully collected discriminatory taxes (as registered in the property declaration), is not clear from the present documents.

When talking about her lost potential, the grandfather uses many 'if and when' phrases (*'was wäre wenn'*), the same type of reasoning as his children. To talk about compensation invites talking in conjunctives, invites imagining different realities; maybe this is one of the difficulties with compensation; it invites not only Walter R. to compare and to 'dream':

[The compensation] has no relation whatsoever with the stolen value of the things, it is just a bandage, it is just...of course, if the capital which my mother's family owned, if my mother had got the fair share – let's dream – that would have been an enormous amount, then it would have been different, then we would have had the benefit of it too, at the end – but that hasn't happened. My mother would not have been in Holland, as she would have had the money, she wouldn't have been in Sweden and not have met my father, and we would not be there...so that's just dreaming.

Did those imaginations about the past – the lost millions, the lost possibilities – and the reality of silencing the past shape the expectations regarding compensation payments?

In Katarina's family hiding one's history is still a main narrative by members of the second generation. They criticize their parents for it, but have themselves internalized it, when saying 'That's how we learnt it: hiding, hiding, hiding', or when expressing their reluctance even today to make their Austrian or Jewish origin visible in public:

Even in Sweden you didn't tell anyone that you have a Jewish background, you don't talk about it either. [...] My friends, neighbours maybe, you shouldn't go out and tell anybody that you are half-Jewish, there is hatred ... we have Nazis 70 kilometers from our homes. There is a lot of Anti-Semitism brewing up; it comes along with bad times. [...] We live next to a Jehovah, we make jokes about it: We have to put a fence around us. (Katarina E.)

Also, in the Netherlands the compensation issue is not a topic for the broader public. Although there has been a Dutch Fund similar to the Austrian National Funds:<sup>17</sup> 'It does not touch the normal people', explained Walter R. and it seems to remind him of having an outsider status; whereas his children belong to those who have not been touched by the issue. They know about World War II and its effects in general and on the family, but the payment of compensation for

17 The foundation MAROR (2000–2004) was an initiative of the Dutch government, insurance companies and the stock exchange, as consequence of acknowledging their dubious role after World War II; offering a gesture lump-sum compensation to Dutch Holocaust-victims (about 10.200 US-\$) and Jewish organizations.

some of those material losses to the next generation they find a strange idea, because today one does not feel those losses anymore: 'I feel no burden by the past; therefore I am not legitimate to receive anything.' (Nienke R.) She and her sister both feel no restraints in talking about their family's past, nevertheless they use some of their parents' rhetoric: 'For my generation it is so hard to imagine all these things for all those years...I just imagine how awful it was. That's why I understand why they don't talk about it, because it was so awful.' (Lotte R.) She is aware of this silencing of the past, and accepts it; whereas her father hasn't. So she is rather surprised by her father's emotions caused by the interview. How unusual for him such a conversation about the past is, he described himself when he compared the interview with a meeting with Israeli business partners: 'That is an instant understanding, you don't have to hide anything; there is some trust immediately. [...] You don't need to hide anything – as with you.'

He welcomed the opportunity to counter this discomforting silence, and the interest in his person, in the emotions and 'the story behind' the financial compensation, which he considered as 'something technical', an impersonal gesture. Nevertheless, its effects on his family were quite personal: The confrontation with historical details forced a communication process within the family and brought family history back to the younger generations. It offered a re-discovery of family history and the possibility to address certain speculations and hurtful issues within the family; but mainly because Katarina focused on the details and demanded a more detailed response.

However, having described this dialogue over the last decade, showing to what extent family memory has created strong imaginations over the past, easily overruling fact-based knowledge from the archives, one can ask how much use individually-calculated compensation payments have 60 years after the war. What Alessandro Portelli has stated as an important feature of Oral History, that "'wrong" statements are still psychologically "true"', and that this truth may be 'equally as important as factually reliable accounts' (Portelli 1992, 51), is a special challenge for individually calculated compensation payments: they confront archive knowledge with remembered knowledge. From this perspective, compensation procedures are often disappointing, because their findings do not correspond to personal memories, which mean that they challenge the family memory. Katarina wanted to see an end to those 'speculations'; nevertheless it is hard for her to believe in the documents stating that her father had received some compensation, as this does not correspond to her private feelings.

### The 'Angry Generation'

Following the whole process of a claim we can see the confusions created by the procedure, when information is partial or contradictory; which is inevitably

followed by new questions. How often did Katarina call or send letters to receive additional information? This forced inquiry and the anger, which we find with many other applicants from the second generation (Immler 2012), easily evokes an impression of a demanding and persistent person, whereas in the interview you encounter a person mainly asking for information. What is experienced by members of the GSF as an expression of anger and interest in the money-issue<sup>18</sup> is also a strategy to obtain extra information, and a way to involve oneself in the process, to make the person behind the application visible. But was this strategy successful?

In the end Katarina did manage to receive extra information and even to get a revised decision, but her (and her cousin's) feelings that her family was and is treated unjustly is mentioned again and again; rhetorically preferring to blame Austria as a collective ('They got away with it', 'They did not apologize', 'They delayed' etc.). Do we see here the limits of a legal and bureaucratic procedure in erasing disappointments of the past, or do we see the limits of reconciliation as such? Did Austria promise too much by aiming at individual acknowledgement; does individual compensation create the illusion of offering full knowledge and compensation, and are therefore the results the more unsatisfying? Do we see here the unsatisfactory nature of compensation as such, or does this discontent of the 'angry generation', as I would like to call the second generation in regard to the compensation procedures, have more to do with the nature of family memory?

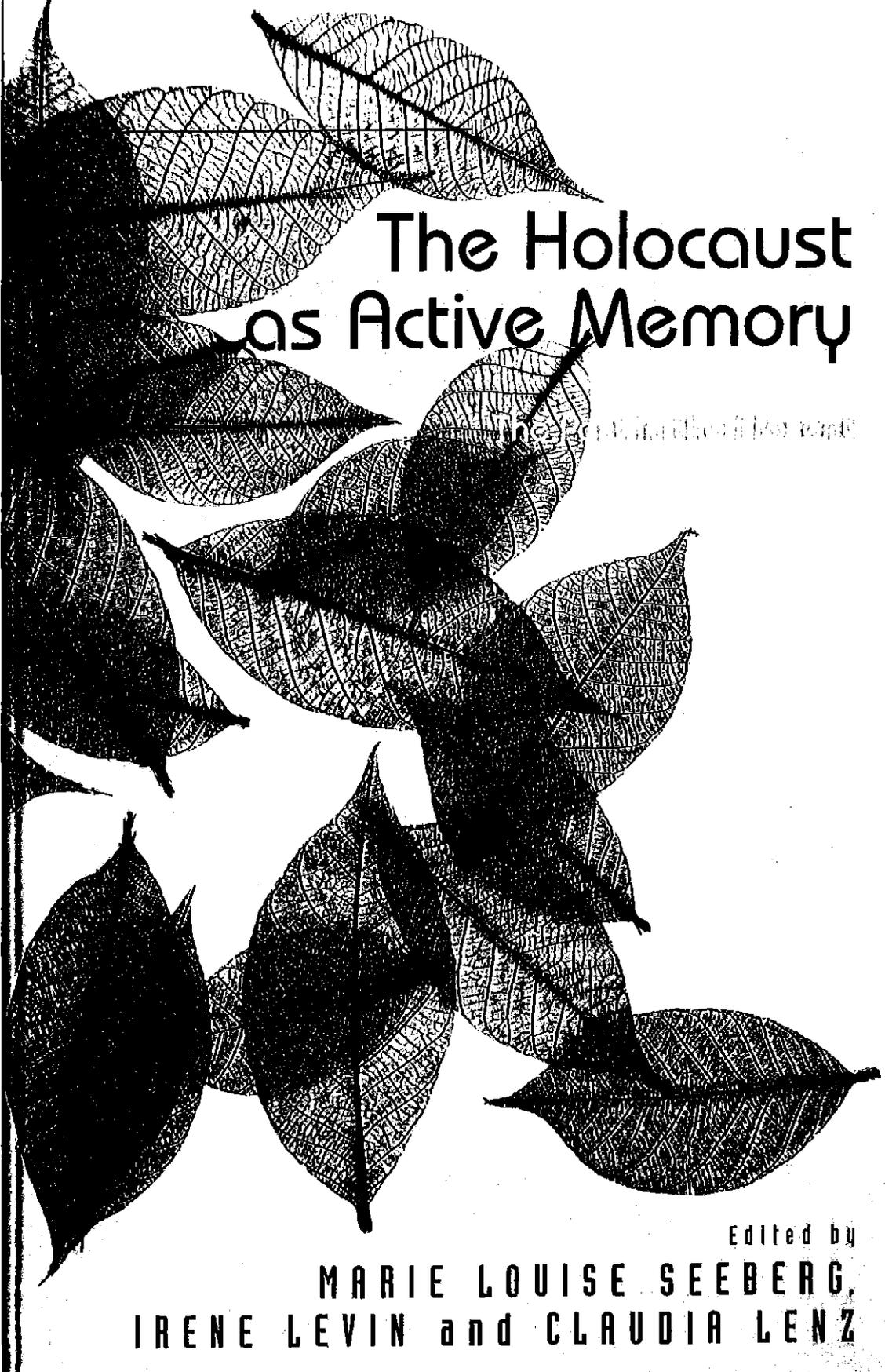
In these dialogues about compensation one can see that members of the second generation repeat and echo their parents' (imagined) feelings of discontent. One could ask whether we cannot see here also a specific dynamic between family memory and compensation practice, namely that the intergenerational relationships do not allow being satisfied with whatever procedure. Maybe we can call this articulated dissatisfaction about compensation, with Marianne Hirsch, a specific 'familial trope', a typical semantic or rhetoric figure of Holocaust representation in the 'post-memory generation'. Hirsch emphasized that this generation especially, which has no personal memory, 'needs precisely such familiar and familial tropes to rely on' (Hirsch 2008: 124f.). Those 'familial tropes' arise from an overlap of public images and private accounts, as it were some form of 'living connections' (104) between past and present, and between generations. From this perspective the shown trans-generational *narratives of discontent* refer maybe less to (hard negotiated) facts, but serve to strengthen the connection between the generations. Thus, being critical about the compensation might be also an existential element in the constitution of family memory regarding the Holocaust. To be more aware of this specific dynamic within the family memory and the power of

18 Cf. interviews of the author with 10 employees of the GSF in 2008/2009.

imaginings could help understanding of the various expectations and desires which individual compensation payments cause, and their pitfalls.

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