Holocaust Literature

An exploration of second-generation publication in Australia

by

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CANDIDATURE DECLARATION

I certify that the thesis entitled *Holocaust Literature: an exploration of second-generation publication in Australia* submitted for the degree of *Master of Arts* is the result of my own work and that where reference is made to the work of others, due acknowledgment is given.

I also certify that any material in the thesis which has been accepted for a degree or diploma by any other university or institution is identified in the text.

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ABSTRACT

Normally we expect the magic of art to intensify, transfigure and elevate actuality. Touch the Holocaust and the flow is reversed (Clendinnen 1998, p. 185).

This dissertation explores the relationships between the second-generation Holocaust writer, the Australian publishing industry and the reading public. It contends that a confluence of elements has made the ‘genre’ of second-generation Holocaust writing publishable in the late 20th century in a way that would not seem obvious from its major themes and the risk-averse publishing strategies increasingly adopted by the multinational conglomerates controlling the Australian industry.

The research explores the nature of connections between writing, publishing and reading Holocaust literature, seeking to answer the following questions: What are the driving forces that compel children of Holocaust survivors to write about their parents’ lives and their own experiences of growing up in a ‘survivor’ family? By what mechanisms are such stories published in an Australian industry dominated by international conglomerates focused on mass-market publishing? How do readers receive and make sense of this material?
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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation explores the relationships between the second-generation Holocaust writer, the Australian publishing industry and the reading public. It contends that a confluence of elements has made the ‘genre’ of second-generation Holocaust writing publishable in the late 20th century in a way that would not seem obvious from its major themes and the risk-averse publishing strategies increasingly adopted by the multinational conglomerates controlling the Australian industry. This research explores the nature of connections between writing, publishing and reading, seeking to answer the following questions: What are the driving forces that compel children of Holocaust survivors to write about their parents’ lives and their own experiences of growing up in a ‘survivor’ family? By what mechanisms are such stories published in an Australian industry dominated by international conglomerates focused on mass-market publishing? Bearing in mind the salutary reminder of historian Inga Clendinnen, that ‘Normally we expect the magic of art to intensify, transfigure and elevate actuality. Touch the Holocaust and the flow is reversed’, rendering art ‘vacuous and drained of authority’ (1998, p. 185), it is difficult to believe in the existence of a popular market that would justify commercial publication. Why, nearing the end of the 20th century, did the multinational companies that dominate the Australian publishing industry begin to publish such apparently unpalatable material? What is it about these stories and/or their authors that generate appeal to readers? How do readers receive and make sense of this material?

It is not the intention of this dissertation to explore in particular detail the nature of the Holocaust or its representation by the generation of eyewitnesses, the survivors. The writings of the foremost amongst them, Elie Wiesel and Primo Levi, however,
provide an important context to the complexities of the discourse that surrounds
Holocaust representation and the sometimes contradictory messages visited upon the
actors foregrounded by the study: the second-generation writers.

The nature of the Holocaust and its meaning to humankind, its uniqueness or
otherwise and its appropriate representation to following generations have formed the
substance of an intellectual discourse spanning more than fifty years. Perceptions of
the Holocaust have altered over time, and changes to the 'collective memory' of the
event owe more to contemporary culture than to any intrinsic details of the Holocaust
itself (Novick 2000; Tal 1996). The Holocaust has been variously described: by Elie
Wiesel as a unique event, 'the ultimate mystery never to be comprehended or
transmitted' (in Novick 2000, p. 211). Primo Levi suggests that it will be remembered
'as the central event, the scourge of this century' (Levi 1989, p. 8), and political
philosopher Hannah Arendt, perhaps most appropriately, labels it as a 'crime against
humanity, perpetrated on the body of the Jewish people' (Arendt 1964, p. 269). In this
sense the Holocaust is important to all humanity, but it is its legacy to what has become
known as the 'second generation', the sons and daughters of Holocaust survivors, that
gives the event particular relevance to this study.

**Writing Holocaust stories**

Second-generation Holocaust survivors are self-defining within the modern literary
culture. Not all children of Holocaust survivors become writers and of those who do,

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1 In the 1920s sociologist Maurice Halbwachs used the term 'collective memory' to describe his
observation that 'present concerns determine what of the past we remember and how we remember it'
(Novick 2000, p. 3). 'Collective memory simplifies; sees events from a single, committed perspective; is
impatient with ambiguities of any kind; reduces events to mythic archetypes' (p. 4). Kali Tal adds to this
definition the idea that such constructs are often the result of manipulation by the dominant forces of
not all focus their writing skills upon stories of the Holocaust or its aftermath. It is those who choose such themes (in the context of this study, Australians Lily Brett, Arnold Zable, Susan Varga, Ramona Koval, Mark Baker, Anna Blay and Diane Armstrong), who make up a coterie of writers labelled in media and critical commentary as the second generation. Importantly, these Australians consider themselves to be real writers, not merely family historians or witnesses to their parents' plight. Writing provides a common experience for this group: it is through writing that they attempt to make sense of their world. Although the particular work that identifies such writers as 'second-generation' focuses on a personal exploration of their family's past and an understanding of their place within that past, subsequent books range more widely, though the themes of migration and survival remain prevalent.

There was no culture of published testimony among survivors who had settled in Australia in the decades following the war. Such publishing has had to await the end of the 20th century when the elderly survivors have been enticed from habitual silence by schemes such as Steven Spielberg's Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation, established in 1993 to videotape oral testimony, and the Melbourne Makor Jewish community library's 'Write your story' project, which has directly assisted elderly members of Melbourne's Jewish community, including many survivors, to publish their memoirs. Recent notable examples of commercial publication by survivors include Abraham Bidderman and Alex Sage. Bidderman self-published The World of My Past, to 'serve as a legacy for future generations' (1995, p. xii), winning the Banjo Award for nonfiction in 1996 and subsequently securing publication by multinational
Sage, who studied English at the Melbourne College of Adult Education for twenty years in order to acquire 'the tools’ to tell his story (2000, p. ix), was eventually published by Harper Collins Publishers.

Australian general readers were introduced to the Holocaust in the 1960s and 1970s through American publications of The Diary of Anne Frank (1954), edited and promoted by her father, and versions of the Holocaust constructed by American bestselling authors, for example, Leon Uris's Exodus (1959) and QBVII (1970). Obviously the migrant experience itself, where recent arrivals struggle to establish themselves in a new country, often working long hours in factories amongst a shared language group, does not facilitate the sharing of stories with a wider community. Also, as Lily Brett (1990b) reminds us in her novel Things Could Be Worse, when recently arrived survivors wished to tell people of their experiences, they were distracted from their purpose by the earlier and assimilated Jewish immigrants who feared the consequences of revelations of difference in an anti-Semitic world. Such silence from the survivor community enhanced perceptions, inaccurately historian Peter Novick argues, that survivors were unwilling to share their experiences and were suffering from ‘repressed memory’ (Novick 2000, pp. 2–3). Far from demonstrating that a lack of published testimony equates with a traumatic experience resulting in repression of memory, Novick posits that Holocaust memorialisation in the immediate decade following the war was not politically appropriate, at least in the American context. The survivors were rendered mute because of the political climate. The cold war had commenced with its focus on anti-communism, requiring the emancipation of Germany as an ally, and a reconfiguring of the genocide of Nazism into the genocide

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2 Bidderman's book also won the National Book Council's inaugural National Award for Biography in 1996 following publication by Random House.
of totalitarianism in order to accommodate the idea of the new enemy, Communism (Novick 2000). Meanwhile, the Australian publishing industry was in its infancy (see Chapter 1). The survivors, like Bidderman and Sage, though always willing to bear witness, were ill-equipped to do so, given the wider political, commercial and cultural agendas that inhibited their ability to transfer their testimony into the public sphere.³

A focus of this study is the mechanism by which what the American polemicist Terrence Des Pres calls the ‘will to bear witness’ (1980, p. 36) is transferred from the generation of the survivors to their children. How did this burden become part of second-generation culture, translating not only into the compulsion to research and record their parents’ histories, to explore through memoir or autobiographical fiction their own personal and Jewish identities, but to engage with the important second part of witness: writing the stories in a manner that engages a reading audience and in turn secures publication? For the children of Holocaust survivors the task of writing about themes associated with Holocaust remembrance involves a reconciliation of their parents’ memories with their own research skills and creative imagination. For although they write ‘of an event not personally experienced’ (Berger 1997, p. 1), a detailed knowledge of their parents’ experiences of that event has become vital to the second generation’s understanding of their personal legacy of the Holocaust. While divining their parents’ stories, they also explore the issues surrounding their own upbringing in a country of migration, and at a very personal level, review the family tensions and secrets that they perceive as having been caused by the Holocaust.

³ Here I use Graeme Turner’s interpretation of Habermas’s ideal concept of the public sphere, as ‘arenas of public discussion and debate’ including ‘government institutions which are publicly funded for the national interest, as well as commercial industries such as the broadcasting media which address the public as an audience but which are controlled by private interests’ (Turner 1999, p. 1).
Answers to the imperative of second-generation writing are found in American writer Helen Epstein’s (1988) discovery of a community sharing a commonality of feeling and her consciousness-raising with others similarly positioned. They are found in the success of Lily Brett’s Holocaust poetry (1986) and collections of stories (1990b; 1991) within the supportive atmosphere of the Melbourne community of Holocaust survivors. They are found in Arnold Zable’s own journey of discovery to Poland in search of his parents’ history and the subsequent publication of his prizewinning Jewels and Ashes in 1991.4 They are found in the public dispute between the Brett sisters, Lily and Doris, about the representation of their mother in Lily’s autobiographical fiction, and in the scandal created when The Hand that Signed the Paper was published in 1994 to critical plaudits and accusations of anti-Semitism. These events, and the publication of other books on similar themes that did not win prizes nor cause controversy have created a consciousness in the minds of readers and, importantly, commissioning editors, that such topics could profitably be explored. Space was created on the shelves in bookshops that has allowed others to follow, propelling the Holocaust—or more correctly its aftermath—into the public sphere. The Australian second generation began questioning their parents and meeting in groups, nationally and internationally, to discuss their similarities and differences. They began recording their parents’ experiences and exploring what it means to be Australian and Jewish at the end of the 20th century. The Holocaust is a significant driver of the second generation. Testimony and memorialisation require publication.

4 Jewels and Ashes received the 1991 National Book Council Lysbeth Cohen Award, the 1991 NSW Ethnic Affairs Commission Award; the 1992 Fellowship of Australian Writers ANA Literature Award; the 1992 Braille Book of the Year Award; and the 1992 Talking Book of the Year Award.
Publishing Holocaust stories

The current Australian publishing scene, largely controlled by the financial strategies and interests of international conglomerates, would appear an unlikely environment within which the second-generation Holocaust writer could achieve publication. Indeed, it is still the rare exception for survivors, like Bidderman and Sage, to achieve commercial publication. Books now form just one small part of the business of companies with quite diversified interests. The profit requirements of the conglomerates privilege the production and sale of large quantities of few titles, that is, they are mass-market focused. The book business is one of small profit margins all along the supply chain (Accenture 2001). Nielsen BookScan Australia figures published in Australian newspapers in any given week confirm that bestselling titles in Australia largely originate overseas.5 How then are books with Holocaust themes published? Despite pessimistic forecasts the Australian book business, as amplified in Chapter 2, is more diverse than that modelled by conglomerate accountants. The Australian publishing offices of multinational conglomerates do in fact have a quota of local titles to fulfill, though such policies are derisively described by academic and publisher Michael Wilding (2000, p. 153) as serving merely as a form of local appeasement. Given that there are simply not enough ‘bestselling’ local titles to be sourced by commissioning editors and publishers to fulfill local budgets, editors must focus on the next best thing: significant niche markets, dictated by the discrete reading habits of communities of interest.

In Australia, the Holocaust legacy has latterly provided one such significant niche. With perhaps the largest survivor community outside Israel, Australia provides a

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5 Such published lists mimic ‘league tables’ in which ‘Bestsellers’ equates with top selling rather than with any specific number of books sold.
supportive base into which the children of survivors can establish themselves as writers on the Holocaust theme. The large and motivated Jewish Holocaust survivor community, particularly in Melbourne, makes a ready initial market for the second-generation writings, as demonstrated in Chapter 6 of this thesis using the writing life of Lily Brett as a case study. The first Australian works by second-generation writers were published by small publishers, such as Scribe Publications and Collins Dove in the 1980s. Historian Susan Rutland describes the late 1980s as having seen a flowering of Jewish cultural and intellectual life previously unknown in the community (1997, p. 397). An increase in Holocaust awareness within the Australian Jewish community saw the opening of Holocaust museums in Sydney and Melbourne as well as the Jewish Museum of Australia in Melbourne. In 1989 the quarterly journal

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6 ‘The Australian Jewish community has, proportionately, the largest number of Holocaust survivors outside Israel, most of them living in Melbourne’ (Bloch 1997).

7 ‘In 1955, it was estimated that in the decade from 1945, the Jewish population in Victoria had increased to 25 658, an increase of 62.1 per cent; in New South Wales to 21 483, an increase of 45.1 per cent ... ’ (Rutland 1997, p. 288). Rutland also confirms that the post-war Jewish migration was related more to family sponsorship than employment opportunities, resulting in predominant urbanisation of the community, and furthermore, that there was positive bias towards Polish Jewish migration by the established Melbourne community (p. 288).


9 Naomi Rosh White’s From Darkness to Light: Surviving the Holocaust was published in 1988. Although White is the daughter of Holocaust survivors, her collection of stories takes a sociological rather than memoirist approach to the lives of survivors (not their descendants) and is thus untypical of Australian second-generation writing. It is of interest that Lily Brett is acknowledged as having provided comments on Rosh White’s draft manuscript, confirming the importance of Brett, even at this early stage in her authorial career, as part of Melbourne’s survivor community.
Generation was established, edited by Mark Baker whose book The Fiftieth Gate forms the basis for the case study in Chapter 5.10

Once a niche becomes established and visible, larger publishers feel emboldened to publish into the niche. Thus we see Brett empowered to move her publishing from Scribe Publications, to University of Queensland Press and finally to Pan Macmillan Australia. Zable has moved from Scribe to Text Publishing—one of only a handful of independent publishing companies operating competitively within the conglomerate-dominated Australian marketplace. Publishers, having decided to acquire works for a niche market, can significantly assist the success of their project by resourcing publicity specifically targeted to manipulate the media and to heighten the profile of their author, as did Harper Collins when publishing Mark Baker's The Fiftieth Gate in 1997.

For the purpose of discussing the configuration of the Australian publishing industry and the business strategies propelling it, second-generation writing may be seen as exemplary of a number of literary and marginal works, or indeed niche markets. I argue, however, that this 'genre' has features that also make it unique, particularly those surrounding the nature of the Holocaust and its memorialisation. The word 'Holocaust' provides its own metaphor, its own shorthand of understanding, requiring little amplification when included in a sales pitch. The Holocaust is a significant event in the minds of most contemporary readers and as such, provides a niche into which books can be commercially published by and for a local community.11 Given time and

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10 The publication of the quarterly journal Generation was welcomed by the Jewish Times of 20 October 1989 as a 'sign that the post-war Australian-born generation of Jewish writers and intellectuals is beginning a more active search for its own distinctive voice' (Rudand 1997, p. 398).

11 Golub and Cohen's survey, What do Australians Know about the Holocaust?, concludes that Australian knowledge of the Holocaust is widespread. 'In addition,' they report, 'a large majority of
support for subsequent books by the local community of interest an author can be marketed to a national and then an international audience, as evidenced by the international success of Lily Brett (see Chapter 6).

**Reading Holocaust stories**

In the sphere of cultural production, the access of readers to books is mediated through the process of commercial publication. The process of publishing books is neither interactive nor responsive to feedback except in a most general retrospective sense. The Australian marketplace is too small to justify market testing prior to publication. In effect, books are published and distributed, and reader response to marketing manipulations, including publicity (see Chapter 2), is awaited while the publishing firm moves on with the next project. The anecdotally observed increasing popularity of memoir as a literary form over recent years has influenced the popularity of Lily Brett, and assisted sales for others of the second-generation because they write memoir, or its near cousin, autobiographical fiction.

There have been few attempts during the recent past to collect empirical information on the reading habits of the Australian population. The 1994 survey data from the

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Australians see the Holocaust as relevant today and thus important to know about. Finally, despite the high visibility of Holocaust denial in Australia, only a small minority of Australians believe it possible that the Holocaust never happened (Golub & Cohen 1994, p. 7). Perhaps not surprisingly, the survey also concluded that educated, older (55 plus) and urban Australian respondents were better informed about the Holocaust than their counterparts, and that men were 'slightly more knowledgeable than women' (p. 5).

12 Of interest here are findings from a survey conducted as part of the Australia Council's research into the book buying habits of Australian households which identified that 34.9 per cent of the survey group were 'interested in this type of book or subject', 22.6 per cent 'were following a particular author/series' and 18.3 per cent purchased books 'recommend by family or friends'. This is compared with 17.3 per cent 'attracted by review or advertisement'. These figures confirm the importance to the publisher and author of the efficacy of 'word of mouth' as a promoter of books (Australia Council 1995, p. 123).
Australia Council’s *Books Who’s Reading them Now* study demonstrated that of Australian titles, biography and autobiography were read second only to fiction (1995, p. 35). This finding helps to explain the acceptance of second-generation Holocaust titles that, as previously mentioned, are categorised as memoir or autobiographical fiction. Only recently, via Nielsen BookScan, has sales-data providing details of transactions between bookshops and book buyers become available on a subscription basis, allowing publishers to reflect on actual data. How useful this data is in reality in an industry that requires publishers and commissioning editors to exhibit the flair of a gambler in order to predict ‘the next big thing’ is a matter for speculation. I suggest that the available data now provides a reasonable map of where the industry has been, but it is still difficult for an individual commissioning editor or publisher to judge with certainty where it is going. Retrospective data, no matter how accurate, encourages publication by hindsight. Reader response to any particular title can be unpredictable. What can be predicted using hindsight, however, is that readers are interested in issues they perceive as affecting them directly.

In the late 20th century, Australians are more knowledgeable about the Holocaust than either the Americans or the British, though less so than the Germans, and ‘a large majority of Australians’ believe that the Holocaust is ‘still relevant today’ deeming ‘knowledge of the Holocaust to be very important’ (Golub & Cohen 1994, p. 2). Such empirical data as exist, coupled with the undeniable fact of the existence of an increasing number of second-generation writers and their commercially published

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13 It is of interest also that the Australia Council’s survey records (p. 35) that males dominate in the reading categories of ‘history’ and ‘other nonfiction’, which may also amplify the findings of Golub and Cohen (1994, p. 5) on differences in Holocaust knowledge between male and female Australians (see footnote No. 11).
books, seem to substantiate the belief that there is a significant niche market receptive to second-generation writing within the wider Australian book market.

**Methodology**

*Holocaust Literature* is a literature-based study drawing also on the writer's personal experience of Australian book publishing. It seeks to elucidate an observed phenomenon of the Australian publishing industry that was not explained by the prevailing attitudes of the market. From the perspective of an industry insider, it seems improbable that conglomerates like Harper Collins or Random House would invest significantly in the publication of local authors writing on as apparently marginalised a theme as the Holocaust. The available evidence, however (measures of which are discussed in Chapter 2), provided by the success of a number of second-generation writers and the publicity campaigns sponsored by their publishing companies, suggests that they did. What was it about these particular books that made them an acceptable financial risk for such companies? Why these authors and why now? This study began as an attempt to satisfy a reader's personal curiosity and a publisher's professional interest.

The research methodology has largely focused on the literature: of the survivor generation, of available critical commentary and on the texts of the second-generation writers themselves. As well, contemporary news and magazine feature articles on the writers and reviews of their works ensure that the subject is viewed through the prism of the published materials on the topic. An historical and cultural context for the Australian publishing industry is provided by a survey of literature that presents a sociological analysis of the publishing industry. In particular works by Australian academics Graeme Turner (1996; 1999), Leigh Dale (1997), Delys Bird et al. (2001)
and Richard Nile (2002), whose writings amplify the relationship between the university and the public sphere with regard to literary criticism, have been useful, as have the publishing memoirs of Hilary McPhee (2001). The thesis is also informed by my personal experience of the Australian publishing industry between 1988 and 2003.

The limited empirical data included in the study has been provided on the basis of published literary and industry sources and from the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Commentary on second-generation literature, in particular the work of American Holocaust scholar Alan Berger (1997), has been used to establish some normative structures within which to discuss the lives and writings of the Australian second generation. The important linkage of the Holocaust and Jewish identity within the secular, multicultural nation state of Australia is explored via the writing of Australian academic Jon Stratton (2000). Drawing more broadly on the work of the Australian second-generation writers for context, particular focus is applied to the careers of Mark Baker, whose commercial reputation was built on the publication of a single book, and Lily Brett, whose reputation has been established gradually over the past twenty years, via multiple publishers and multiple titles.

The definition of literary and popular writing as polar opposites is only possible within specified contexts. Once, the literature taught in university Arts degrees was defined by the established canon of the time. Within the academic institution during the past thirty years, however, literary theory has worked to deconstruct canonicity, ‘uncoupling literary studies from a politics identified with elite taste cultures’ (Turner 1999, p. 7), and this has influenced both the publishing industry and the public sphere. It can be argued that influential writers and critics in the public sphere, as well as many of those who influence editorial decisions in the commercial sphere, were educated during a time when the canon was paramount, and are still influenced by ideas of an
established canon.\textsuperscript{14} Literary and cultural studies, writes Australian academic Leigh Dale, have become 'public property' in a way that other less accessible disciplines (like mathematics) have not. Their future direction, she asserts, foregrounding the link between academe and the public sphere, 'will depend more on this public interface than we might otherwise imagine' (Dale 1997, p. 207). Dale also warns against the validity of assumptions made about the 'effects of “critical theory”' until 'the generation of students who have encountered it come to power in cultural and political spheres' (Dale 1997, p. 208).

The public sphere requires an authoritative measure for good writing not immediately available within the discourse of critical theory. Academic Graeme Turner argues that due to public sphere misconceptions of the language of critical discourse, whereby:

'The death of the author' came to mean that authors did not write books; 'language constructs reality' came to mean there is no reality, and 'aesthetic values are culturally constructed' came to mean (illogically) that absolutely everything is absolutely relative (Turner 1999, p. 9),

the academy has appeared 'self-indulgent and arcane' (Turner 1999, p. 9) and has ceded control of literary credibility to the public sphere.

With literary reputations thus the concern of print media and radio journalists (see Chapters 1 and 2), the industry distinction between literary and popular writing is less clear and this is increasingly apparent in the production values of the books themselves. Australian writers Tim Winton and Peter Carey, for instance, traditionally

\textsuperscript{14} Indeed, this point is argued forcefully by writer Mark Davis in Ganglands: Cultural Elites and the New Generationalism. Writer and broadcaster Phillip Adams' nostalgic lament, 'Instead of being able to read a novel, one must now deconstruct a text' is, according to Davis, exemplary of the attitudes of the 'cultural elites' currently controlling the public sphere (Davis 1999, p. 170).
categorised as literary because of their style, content and use of language, now sell numbers of books that have established them as popular writers, and their titles are packaged and marketed accordingly (see Chapter 2). Where once reviewing literature was the preserve of the literary magazine or broadsheet newspaper, the wide coverage of Mark Baker's *The Fiftieth Gate* (see Chapter 5) demonstrates a change in the marketing of 'literature'. Conversely, popular writers like Bryce Courtenay are desirous of markers of their acceptance as part of the literary establishment, requiring that publishers organise reviews of their books and their inclusion on the programs at writers' festivals.

The traditional division between the novel and nonfiction writing has been conflated by the increasing popularity of memoir as a literary form, assisted, perhaps, by what Dale describes as the 'predominant discourse in the public arena': the discourse of 'individual expression' valorized by 'personal growth' (1997, p. 207). Distinctions too between 'literary', 'genre' and 'popular' now have fluid boundaries. Regardless of whether writers pursue a reflective, philosophical text allowing the reader space for personal meditation, or provide the reader with a neatly packaged reading experience akin to entertainment, the division between literary and popular writing in the late 20th and early 21st centuries is influenced more by market perceptions than writing style. Publishers, not surprisingly, are complicit in the blurring of such boundaries because it suits their aim of increasing the market share for individual titles.

How then can the extensive changes that have taken place over the past twenty years in the public and commercial spheres be understood in a way that accounts for the publication of the books of the second-generation writers by multinational publishers as well as their reception by an audience? A paradigm that supports both the reality of the Australian publishing market and my contentions regarding the publication of
second-generation Holocaust stories must account for the significant niche markets into which publishers can direct books that do not conform with their ideal of mass-market product. In *Cultural Studies and Cultural Value*, John Frow rejects the traditional class-based dichotomy between high and low culture, opting instead for a new model that accommodates the commodification of literature through the perception of high culture, not as the dominant culture tied to the providers of capital, but as a 'pocket within commodity culture' (1995, p. 86). He cites mass education as a causal feature, establishing a 'knowledge class', an 'intelligentsia', converting knowledge into cultural capital in the form of commodity production (Frow 1995, p. 91). Frow's paradigm allows for the existence of significant niche markets, fuelled by common interests that describe the receptive audience for second-generation stories into which editors, required to produce products for the sub-bestselling market, can publish and promote titles. His ideas about the valuing of cultural artifacts within particular regimes of value linked with the (perhaps) temporary social identity of an individual rather than a traditionally understood class position, provides a model for the audiences of niche market works (Frow 1995, p. 145).

*Holocaust Literature* is organised informally into three sections. The historical and cultural context of the Australian book publishing industry is documented in Chapters 1 and 2. The writing compulsion of the Australian second-generation Holocaust writer and the canonical influences that bear upon it are explored in Chapters 3 and 4, and the case studies of the publication of second-generation writers demonstrating differing modes of success are presented in Chapters 5 and 6.
CHAPTER 1

An historical and cultural context to Australian book publishing of the late 20th century

This chapter looks at the sociological phenomena surrounding Australian publishing. Influential in the way the industry functions are Australia's post-colonial status, the size of the market and the practices and structures mandated by the British industry in order to exploit that market. The chapter reviews the historical and cultural contexts in which Australian writing has been published during the twentieth century, including the quest for a national Australian literature, which fuelled the divergence between the creators of literary and popular writing, and the ways in which literature is sponsored and used by elements within society. The significance of the development of culturally-based theories of literary criticism to the teaching of literature in Australian universities, as well as the divergence this effected between the university and the public sphere, are canvassed in an attempt to understand the phenomenon of the celebrity author. Significant also is the traditional model of the divide between 'highbrow' and 'lowlowbrow' audiences that highlights the apparent anomaly of the popular publication of second-generation Holocaust literature in Australia. In attempting to explain the fact of the success of second-generation writing (the evidence for which is tendered in the following case studies of Lily Brett and Mark Raphael Baker), I turn to John Frow's model of myriad significant niches of culture and the valuing of different cultural artifacts within different contexts. Frow (1995) models the space within which the publishing of second-generation Holocaust literature can reasonably succeed.
A British hegemony: distributing books to the ‘colonies’

Historically, British interests have had a significant influence on the Australian bookselling industry. Since Federation, British publishers and booksellers have had agreements (the Net Book Agreement, originally established during a series of reforms to the British book trade in 1900, and its various derivations)\(^{15}\) in place that enabled publishers in the United Kingdom to control the prices and distribution of their titles throughout the English-language territories of the British Empire. This effectively enshrined Australia, along with other colonies and ex-colonies with an English-speaking population, as an ‘export territory’ for United Kingdom originated titles. The United Kingdom export (or distribution) territory also covered titles from the USA for which English publishers had purchased Commonwealth publication rights. The inclusion of Australia as an export territory was significant to the British publishing industry. Australia’s reputation for book reading and buying is formidable. Public intellectual and academic Richard Nile suggests that the ‘voracious book-buying appetite’ of Australians saw them ‘devour’ 25 per cent of ‘all British books marked for export’ by the mid 20\(^{th}\) century (2002, p. 39).

The landing of cheap British books in Australia, ‘where a single ship load of stock was enough to sink even the most enthusiastic of local or nationalist sentiment’ (Nile 2002, p. 38) acted as a disincentive to the establishment of local publishers. They were not entirely locked out by the British cartels, however, and Bookstall, hitherto a book

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\(^{15}\) Under the provisions of the Net Book Agreement, British publishers fixed a minimum retail (net) price for all titles. The bookseller, in turn, accepted a trade discount, normally 33.3 per cent, but for Australian importers this was set at 50 per cent. In addition, Australian booksellers received generous terms of trade from the British publishers, allowing them up to six months to pay for their books. After 1945, however, this indent arrangement ceased and Australian booksellers were required to purchase stock from the Australian branches of the British publishers (Lyons 2001).
retailer, established what was claimed to be the ‘first mass market paperback venture in Australia’ (Nile 2002, p. 85). Angus & Robertson (an established publisher and bookseller since 1888, with its associated printer Halsted Press) followed with its own paperback titles in the 1930s.

With their distribution confined to the local market, the fledgling Australian publishers compensated by using many and diverse sales outlets: books were available at railway stands and kiosks, in specialised branded stores, general bookshops and department stores. To service their varied forms of distribution, local publishers commissioned works on topics familiar to their audience. Based on their retail experience with the imported titles, these new publishers focused on giving readers ‘what they knew’ (crime, thrillers, westerns and romance), as well as indigenous topics that had already proved popular to the local audience: sport, travel, convict history and humour. The ‘Bookstall Series’, for instance, contained titles on ‘horse racing, bush ranging, the Pacific, convict history and backblocks humour’ (Nile 2002, p. 85). Angus & Robertson had success with titles from The Bulletin magazine perennials Henry Lawson and Banjo Patterson—the folk-heroic bushman, ‘both pragmatic and resourceful in the best frontier tradition’ (Lyons 2001, p. xvi)—as well as with Frank Dalby Davison’s Man-Shy, Songs of a Sentimental Bloke by C.J. Dennis, and numerous works by Ion Idriess—tales of adventure in the outback and islands—and cookery titles.

While such enterprise in the face of the British hegemony established the successful careers of a number of writers of popular titles, the burgeoning local publishing industry achieved little for a growing list of aspiring Australian ‘serious’ and ‘socially

16 The publication and printing of local titles was one way in which the erstwhile bookstore kept its printing press viable.
conscious' writers. Writers who attempted 'to deal with modern Australian life ... [could] expect a rough time of it' (Nile 2002, p. 163). With little interest expressed in their work by Australian publishers, Katharine Susannah Prichard, Vance Palmer, Miles Franklin, Marjorie Barnard, Flora Eldershaw, Leonard Mann, Christina Stead, Xavier Herbert and Kylie Tennant joined the growing coterie of Australian literary writers compelled to seek publication abroad.

British publication, however, meant that not only were Australian writers forced to consider the sensibilities of English editors and an English audience, they were severely disadvantaged in their ability to earn an appropriate income.

Though some early writers received a once-off payment for conceding ownership of their copyright to the publisher, authors are more traditionally rewarded for their work through the payment of a royalty on each copy sold. Commonly, this is around ten per cent of the retail price of a particular edition in the original publishing territory. Thus Australian authors, having secured a contract for publication with a British company, received only the lesser export royalty rate for their Australian sales (based on the price received by the exporting publisher, this was probably closer to four per cent of the retail price in the selling territory). Unhappily, these writers received payment based on export sales in what was in fact their 'home' territory. This situation remained a constant of the local publishing industry until the branch offices of the cartels began their own local publishing programs in the 1960s and 1970s.

**Australia writes: a national voice, or commercial expediency?**

While Angus & Robertson had developed a significant Australian publishing program by the mid-twentieth century, their focus was on the 'commercial' end of the market. Writers such as Ion Idriess, who published 38 titles with Angus & Robertson, became
'one of the best-selling novelists of the 1930s and early 1940s' (Nile & Walker 2001a, p. 249). Such writers were successful partly because they were able to function under the pressure of producing a regular supply of titles for their market. Frank Clune, for instance, published over sixty titles between 1933 and the early 1960s (Nile & Walker 2001a, p. 250), while James M. Walsh had authored thirty detective novels before he was thirty-five (Nile 2002, p. 164). Such writers, able to capture the writing fashion of their day, could make a comfortable living.

The serious writers fared less well. Vance Palmer and Katharine Prichard had tried and failed to write 'commercially', finding, as voiced by the disgruntled Leonard Mann, 'that unless the Australian author wrote to a formula there was little chance of ever claiming the elusive Angus & Robertson imprint' (Nile 2002, p. 69). Of interest in this context is that copyright in the works of some of the originally rejected authors—whose British published works, returned as imported stock to the Australian market, allowed them to achieve some familiarity to an Australian audience—was later purchased by Angus & Robertson. By the time Angus & Robertson was absorbed by conglomerate News Limited in the late 1980s, works by writers such as Prichard, Franklin, Mann, Tennant and Stead had become part of a significant and healthy backlist for the company (Nile 2002), alongside the perennial Lawson, Paterson, and children's titles by Norman Lindsay, May Gibbs and Dorothy Wall.

Between the 1920s and 1940s a coterie of disillusioned authors became centred on critics Vance and Nettie Palmer. This influential husband and wife team became the arbiters of a narrow set of literary standards, conceiving of the Australian writer as 'a custodian of the distinctive energies and folk attributes of the pioneering spirit' (Nile & Walker 2001b, p. 11). Reminiscent of the dominant arbiters of literary taste in the United Kingdom at that time, F.R. and Q.D. Leavis, the Palmers believed that 'books
of the right kind might nourish the national spirit, but not all books ... were equipped to serve this function’ (Nile & Walker 2001b, p. 11). ‘Their enduring success’, Nile writes, ‘was to recommend their books and those of their friends to successive generations of Australian readers’ (2002, p. 166). Researcher Debra Adelaide presents a kinder construction, believing that ‘Nettie Palmer’s views transcended her own particular grievances’ (2001, p. 88). As a critic, publicist and book reviewer Palmer understood ‘literary marketing’ and the difficulties of attracting attention to any particular title within the Australian literary milieu which, despite the post-war establishment of local branches of the British companies for the purpose of distributing United Kingdom produced titles, remained substantially unchanged into the 1960s.

Particularly during the first half of the 20th century, literary authors saw their own writing as having an important place in nation building, believing the quest for a national Australian literature to be a prize worth pursuing. Although financial rewards were welcomed, ‘socially conscious writers’, Nile argues, ‘desired the cultural authority to speak on behalf of the nation’, believing ‘they were creating a durable literature while the commercial writers were perishable’ (2002, p. 166). The populists were portrayed as having ‘sold out’ to the dictates of market forces and a wedge was driven between the literary community and popular writers.

This divide survives today, encapsulated in the reviewing practices of the literary pages of broadsheet newspapers and magazines wherein ‘popular’ writers, though rarely reviewed, are almost universally panned by the critics.\(^{17}\) Although commercial principles suggest that the inclusion of popular writers would translate into increased

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\(^{17}\) For example, Simon Hughes concludes a patronising review of Di Morrissey’s *Kimberley Sun*, Bryce Courtenay’s *Matthew Flinders’ Cat* and Colleen McCullough’s *The October Horse* with the comment, ‘Pity about the trees’ (Hughes 2002).
ticket sales, until very recently, similar bias was demonstrated on the programs of literary festivals. Now, festival programs have begun to cater for a more eclectic taste, with cookery authors such as ‘personality chef’ Kylie Kwong included in sessions at the 2004 Melbourne festival. I argue (see Chapter 2), that marketing practices employed by the Australian publishing community are effecting change to public perceptions about the nature of literary and popular Australian writing.

**Fighting back: Australian literature to the world?**

Until 1963, when the local office of Penguin Books published the paperback edition of Randolph Stow’s *To the Islands*, Australia had no significant literary paperback publishing industry. The local publication of Stow’s book demonstrated a new confidence in the publication of literary writers in Australia. Geoffrey Dutton, Penguin Australia’s founding editor, commented that when the Penguin paperback list was established, ‘there was almost no competition in Australian paperbacks’ (Dutton 1996, p. 36). Titles in Angus & Robertson’s Pacific paperback series, he described as ‘downmarket books’ (p. 36). Finally, it appeared that the literary writers were to be given appropriate local market exposure, but despite Penguin Australia’s intention of establishing a local industry sustained by significant exports of Australian originated titles, they were advised by the parent company to publish their edition of Stow ‘without expectation of aid from England’ (Dutton 1996, p. 44). Most books sold locally continued to be purchased from publishers in the United Kingdom, and later from the USA. Instead of exporting books to sustain the local industry, the export commodity continued to be Australian authors.

The Penguin Australia experiment, intended to establish the literary credentials of Australian writers on a worldwide scale, was repeated during the fifteen years of
operation of independent publisher McPhee Gribble. Established in 1975 by Hilary McPhee and Diana Gribble, the company first packaged books for, then co-published with, Penguin before financing their own list and using the comprehensive distribution capability of Penguin Books to reach their Australian audience. McPhee Gribble began during a time when independent publishers were becoming more common in Australia and abroad. McPhee describes the time as an optimistic one, created by 'a seismic shift, a generational changeover that was long overdue' (2001, p. 123), following the establishment of the Australia Council and its significant support from the Whitlam Labor Government. McPhee Gribble commenced with 'an ethos rather than a profit motive, an idea rather than a money-making venture' (McPhee 2001, p. 149), precluding any compromise of editorial and design standards. Their methods are spurned by the Australian divisions of multinational publishers today (as indeed they were at the time), and adherence to these standards has been canvassed by McPhee (2001) as a causal factor in the sale of the company to Penguin Books in November 1989.

Despite the ultimate failure of their attempt to establish an independent Australian firm with international publishing links that would encourage two-way traffic in Australian books, McPhee Gribble established a generation of Australian authors who have found a readership in Australia and abroad. Notable among their successful protégés are Helen Garner and Tim Winton.

The possibility that McPhee was right and that dedication to quality editorial and production values will produce the new 'classics' with a longevity made improbable using the conglomerate financial model (see Chapter 2) is supported by Jason Epstein, former publisher at Random House, New York. He argues that publishing is best engaged in as a cottage industry and it is his belief that the conglomerate model will
not succeed in the long term (Epstein 2001; Thorpe-Bowker 2003a). Indeed, McPhee Gribble’s seemingly irrepressible model is again being pursued by Australian independent, Text Publishing, recently reconfigured as a joint venture with Scottish publisher Canongate. Echoing McPhee, Text’s publisher Michael Heyward believes that the independent publisher’s advantage over the multinationals is one of ‘commitment, time, design, editorial passion, sales vision’ (Steger 2004a).

Yet at the turn of the 21st century most large trade publishers of Australian titles are local subsidiaries of overseas multinationals. The export market for Australian originated titles remains underdeveloped. Australian initiated co-publications, where a financial contribution is provided towards the cost of a local publication by an agreed export order from the international parent company, are rare. The sale of international rights in Australian titles is not generally facilitated by the presence of an international head office. An essential part of buying and selling rights is face-to-face contact between like-minded editors and agents at book fairs such as Frankfurt (for adult titles) and Bologna (for the children’s list). Unsurprisingly, it is much easier to sell books by an author who also has an established profile within an overseas territory, and in some cases the establishment of an overseas market for particular works still requires the author’s relocation abroad.

**The government intervenes: protection strategies for Australian consumers**

The post-war changes that established the local subsidiaries of British publishers as exclusive distributors of imported titles meant that the Australian market was dependent upon the whim of the British to deliver volumes following British publication. Delays quite possibly suited local importers, providing time for United Kingdom readers to ‘trial’ titles and thus facilitate the task of selection for the
antipodean market. The situation, however, did not suit the Australian booksellers, who were pressured by well-informed consumers to make available overseas publications closer to their original publication dates.

Australian legislators have taken an increasingly interventionist role on behalf of Australian booksellers and consumers in order to force overseas published books into the Australian marketplace within prescribed timeframes. In 1991 the Copyright Act was amended: the '30-day rule' was introduced. This legislation confined the time within which exclusive importation of a book was protected under copyright laws to within 30 days of its publication in the home territory. Not surprisingly, booksellers generally supported this initiative. Literary authors, joined by local publishers and other creative industry professionals, protested, fearing the loss of a recognised Australian culture. The dissenters claimed that the new ‘rule’ created the potential for the dumping of cheap or remaindered overseas editions of Australian authors’ books into the Australian market. This practice would not only undermine an author’s income (because, at best, they would be forced to accept only export royalties on such titles), it would act as a disincentive to producing particular Australian content. Authors would be returned to the ‘bad old days’ of considering the offshore audience rather than their local readers (Accenture 2001). The establishment of a vibrant local literary industry, optimistically anticipated during the 1980s (Nile 2002) would be under threat.

The fears of Australian writers and publishers were exacerbated by the Australian Government’s foreshadowing in mid-2000 of its intention to open the Australian market to ‘parallel importation’ of books,18 and more recently by proposals (unresolved

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18 Parallel importation occurs when a book is imported by other than the copyright owner or authorised distributor. In effect this allows publishers, distributors and booksellers to import any edition of a book into Australia without the permission of the copyright holder in this territory.
legislatively as of October 2004) for a Free Trade Agreement with the United States. Australian legislators, in seeming conflict with other policy measures (continuing support for the Australia Council, for example) appear unmoved by arguments supporting the preservation of a unique Australian culture.

The pendulum swings: Australian literature and the teacher critic

The struggles by Australian writers to establish an authentic Australian literary style, to have their work published locally and to engage with an Australian audience were mirrored by struggles within the literary establishment and the institutions of higher education about the nature and worth of Australian literature. While critics from the public sphere sought relief from the ‘cultural cringe’ of subservience to a colonial power (Bird et al. 2001), the university was actively engaged in ‘maintaining an unbroken cultural linkage with England’ for most of the twentieth century (Dale 1997, p. 1). The discourse surrounding the establishment of an Australian literary canon (what should be taught in English courses), the complex dialogue on the teaching of literature and the critical techniques employed to read the text within the university (both amplified below), significantly influenced the Australian publishing scene by the close of the twentieth century.

For most of the century it was impossible to separate the Australian literary culture from its British inheritance. Colonial children and their parents read the same books as their home-country counterparts. From British literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Australians inherited a very British sense of culture, which was reinforced by colonial administrative and university appointments during the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century. Australian academic Leigh Dale, drawing from Pierre Bourdieu’s mediating construct of *habitus*, reiterates that,
‘Writers, critics, teachers, politicians, administrators and media carry out the mission of “defending” the exclusivity and permanence of the world in which we/they live’ (1997, p. 13), and the conservatism engendered by such an alliance has proved to be the case regarding Australian literature. The appointment of English born or educated academics to the chairs of English at Australian teaching institutions continued until the 1970s, when the ‘seismic shift’ that Hilary McPhee (2001) sensed taking place in the public sphere also began to affect the educational institution.

During the early part of the twentieth century, educators affirmed notions enshrined by Matthew Arnold's 1869 publication *Culture and Anarchy*, which equated colonialism with civilisation and ‘culture’ with ‘moral education’ (Dale 1997) and established a British critique to support and promulgate these ideas. Early twentieth century Cambridge critic, F.R. Leavis, ‘the most influential British critic prior to the theory movement’ (Barry 1995 p. 28), eschewed literary theories that placed the text within a political, historical or autobiographical context. The Leavisite critical approach sought meaning from within a given text, believing that the purpose of literature was to educate and to transmit human values. A close reading of the text by a suitably educated person could elicit what must be known for understanding. Not surprisingly, given the strong sense of England as ‘home’ at the time, this liberal humanist approach influenced Australian literary criticism and the teaching of English at university during a significant part of the twentieth century.

An understanding of the text was thus confined to suitably ‘trained’ individuals; a class of critical readers who were in a position to pronounce on the kind of works that would be most suited as an educative tool for the working class. ‘Culture’ was delivered at public lectures under the auspices of the University Extension movement, through which Australian literature occupied a *de facto* place in the university
curriculum, and was introduced to the public through the Commonwealth Literary Fund lectures. An upward mobility of the working class was achieved through assimilation of the culture and taste of the elites from the university and public sphere, who set the cultural agenda and its standard.

Until the mid-1950s, the field of Australian literary criticism and commentary was controlled by writers and critics in the public sphere such as Vance and Nettie Palmer. The control of the literary discourse was of course important to these writer-critics, giving them the opportunity to focus on their own particular agendas surrounding the establishment of the 'national literature' as well as the promotion of their own literary endeavours into the Australian literary 'canon'. The 1950s was a decade, however, when academics became increasingly involved in criticism. The discursive shift from the public to the institutional sphere was important for two reasons. Firstly, it created an alternative to the already present public discourse, and secondly, although university teaching was originally based on the Leavisite critical approach, its influences during the 1970s included the new forms of criticism associated with a methodological approach to literary study. The application of literary theories (structuralist, Marxist, postmodernist, psychoanalytic, deconstructionist, feminist critiques) in textual exposition provided the tertiary institution with an increasingly complex language with which to conduct discourse. One consequence of this change was a shoring up of the position of the academic as 'suitably educated' commentator on literary works and linking the position of teacher with critic.

The establishment of literary theory as an appropriate critical technique in Australia followed somewhat earlier (pre-World War II) trends within the British academy. It was not, however, until an Australian Literature Chair was established at The University of Sydney in 1962 that the serious study of Australian writing became an
officially sanctioned part of the curriculum. The legitimising of the subject increased the tempo of debate about both canon and pedagogical methodology. Due to its late acceptance into the curriculum and the interdisciplinary nature of the new criticisms (in particular the embracing of sociological and anthropological approaches) Australian literature became as much a topic for the newly established Australian Studies departments as for the English departments. The study of Australian literature was promoted within the cultural studies arena; concurrently, its market was enlarged by a coterie of students studying Australian literature in the new courses.

Authority and influence: creating reputations in the public sphere

Government policies, from the free tertiary education introduced by the Whitlam Labor Government of the early 1970s to later policies designed to encourage school retention rates, have processed increasing numbers of students through the post-secondary education system. Those choosing courses in the Humanities, including English and the newer Australian and Cultural studies, have been progressively exposed to the diverse literary theories that move the focus from the text as expositor to the context within which a book is written and read. Dale clarifies the nature of this reading, explaining that it is not the text that is studied ‘but the proper mode of responding to it’ (1997, p. 4). Students are acculturated within a climate of elite values describing the parameters of high and low culture that seem ‘natural’ within the university (Dale 1997, pp. 5–7).

At the conclusion of their undergraduate studies, such students may enter the public sphere associated with the book, newspaper and magazine publishing industries and related professions in the electronic media. Many students bring their high culture aspirations to professions such as editing. As editors they must adapt their trained
responses to accommodate market-place preferences, finding ways to fulfill the
expectations of a market defined by the multinational corporation in whose service the
‘pitching’ of proposals to editorial boards requires linguistic compromise (see Chapter
2). The complexities of theoretical analysis are inappropriate to the publishing
decision-making process. Constrained by such pressures, the subtleties of language,
plot and character are, I suggest, subjugated to a focus on the author. In support of this
argument, I draw attention to Turner’s assertion that literary biography is

the only academic writing about Australian literature that tends towards regarding writers as
cultural products, as personalities, as figures who excite public interest through their
celebrity or notoriety rather than through their specific skills or artistic credentials (1996,
p. 16),

and as such is ‘routinely and respectfully reviewed in the media’ (1996, p. 16), making
it ‘an understandable career move for academics’ unable to convince local publishers
to publish critical works on Australian literature (Turner 1999, p. 10). It is, I suggest,
partly a combination of these factors: the influence of literary theory, the market
requirement for the simplification of the literary publishing decision-making processes
and the academy’s approval of literary biography as acceptable literary form for
academic writing, that combine to move the focus from text to author during the
 commodification processes of a writer’s cultural creation.

With backgrounds in critical and cultural methodology it is hardly surprising that the
new publishing professionals encourage to some degree a shift in the public gaze from
the study of the text to a study of the author and her lifestyle. The creation of a well-
educated, literate coterie of publishing professionals, I hypothesise, has thus been
instrumental in the creation of the concept of the ‘celebrity’ author (see Chapter 2).
As British, and later Australian, literature established its place within the teaching institution, the literary critics, journalists and writers inhabiting the public sphere became increasingly alienated from the academy which had hitherto supported their endeavours through means such as the assistance for professional journals like *Southerly* and *Meanjin*.¹⁹ The resulting dichotomy was due to a number of factors. Profiles generated through university affiliation, and (as in the case of poet A.D. Hope) creative work, provided the critics from academe with unfettered access to the public sphere at the highest levels of visibility: the letters pages and opinion columns of the daily newspapers. Academics establishing their careers in the early 1950s, like G.A. Wilkes and Leonie Kramer, implicitly devalued the work of public sphere critics like the Palmers by their insistence that only Australian writing that could be stylistically situated within British traditions was valuable (Dale 1997, p. 139). Among their favoured writers were Joseph Furphy, A.D. Hope, Patrick White and Martin Boyd.

In a keynote address to the Association for the Study of Australian Literature conference in 1998, Graeme Turner argues that changes to the language of critical discourse have further exacerbated the divide between the university and the public sphere. The traditional elitist definition of literature firmly established in the public sphere ‘was always going to be hard to revise and displace ... with a more subtle and provisional set of definitions without losing some of that legitimacy’ (Turner 1999, p. 7). Turner’s argument describes an interesting set of paradoxes in the late twentieth century. On the one hand the academic critics were advocating a system that would provide a more egalitarian model for the public-sphere perception of literature, but they were being hampered in doing so by the complexities of their theoretical debate and the

¹⁹ University assistance for the literary magazines was provided in the form of office space rather than through direct financial support, thus preserving notions of autonomy (Lyons & Arnold 2001).
technical language accompanying their model. On the other hand public-sphere critics were pursuing the same egalitarian outcomes whilst clinging to their traditional elitist notions of literature. In this case there was no difficulty with the language of literary theory, the complication came from their desire to protect their traditions by the removal rather than the ‘policing of boundaries between the literary and other kinds of writing’ (Turner 1999, p. 8). The pendulum of control established by the teacher critics of the 1950s and 1960s has swung away from the university, and the language used in debates about Australian culture that appear in the broadsheet print media is that of the journalist rather than the academic. As a result, Turner affirms, ‘the academy has lost control of the formation and establishment of literary reputations’ (1999, p. 9). With the public space for literary discourse controlled by a commercial public sphere, publishers see ‘literary reputations as within the grasp of their publicity departments, a desirable product of their promotion and publicity strategies …’ (Turner 1999, p. 9).

The celebrity writer, a product of ‘marketing hype’ unheard of during the McPhee Gribble years, begins to emerge into the public sphere (see Chapter 2).

**Valuing culture: the diverse nature of the popular**

In a review of the historical and cultural factors influencing Australian publishing that culminate in the current situation of fewer (mostly) multinational firms publishing an increasingly narrow range of titles (see Chapter 2), two further issues require exploration. A model of cultural production is required that accommodates the publication of what might otherwise be labelled elite artifacts (literature, and in the case of second-generation Holocaust writing, literature on a topic that would not appear to be focused on entertainment) for a broader market than the elite. As well, this model must account for the reception of such books by its audience.
Relevant to arguments that might establish such models is the publication of Mark Baker's memoir, *The Fiftieth Gate*, discussed in Chapter 5. Baker's memoir describing his survivor family’s Holocaust experience is literary in style, placing it, one could assume, well outside consideration for the large-budget promotional parameters of a mass-market publisher. Yet, Baker's publisher, Harper Collins Publishers Australia, promoted the author as a personality, secured numerous reviews of the book and profiles of the author in media across the spectrum from esoteric to popular, and sold in excess of 20,000 copies on publication (a ‘bestseller’ by Australian standards). An understanding of the commercial success of publications of second-generation Holocaust literature, within which Baker’s title serves as a ‘celebrity’ example, is more subtly complex than can be explained by a marketing strategy alone. For such works to be successfully published the marketing package must reach and appeal specifically to a receptive audience of adequate numbers prepared to purchase the book.

A model for this audience must be sought beyond the more traditional sociological methodology of Bourdieu and others of the post-Marxist schools, who provide for a simple class-based dichotomy of audience (highbrow or popular) for such works. The classification of a book as ‘literature’, and thus with appeal to a suitably educated ‘highbrow’ readership; or ‘popular’, with appeal to the working class, takes no account, for instance, of changes to traditional links between culture and class mediated by the institutions of mass education and mass communication. It is cultural theorist John Frow, I argue, in a departure from the reductionist Marxist critique of class, who hypothesises a new and potentially more useful model for viewing interactions within the publishing supply chain between writer, publisher and reader. In ‘advanced capitalist societies’, Frow writes, the role of the mass media as a conduit for cultural values creates ‘heterogeneous global’ rather than ‘class-specific audiences’,
while mass education encourages the ‘formation of cultural capital’ as opposed to economic capital (Frow 1995, p. 86). Frow perceives the popular ‘as a site of struggle rather than an essential domain’ (1995, p. 14), affirming his opinion that consumption of cultural production is more likely to reflect individual social identity (age, gender, peer group and education) than class. Frow’s new model allows space to embrace the idea of a ready audience of readers for second-generation Holocaust literature. A coterie of readers’ common desire to experience a particular cultural journey, however, may be only one, perhaps transient, marker of their social identity.

Important also, for the purposes of this study, Frow clarifies the nature of the value of culture (as applicable within different regimes), arguing that:

The concept of regime expresses one of the fundamental theses of work in cultural studies: that no object, no text, no cultural practice has an intrinsic or necessary meaning or value or function; and that meaning, value, and function are always the effect of specific (and changing, changeable) social relations and mechanisms of signification (Frow 1995, p. 145).

The notion of regime accommodates the free flow of commodities across cultural boundaries allowing us to consider the different regimes of value surrounding the purchase of the books of second-generation Holocaust survivors. The cultural worth of an artifact, in this case a book, is defined by the context within which it is valued.

Frow’s model of regimes of cultural value helps to explain the reception of different kinds of texts by diverse audiences and the way a book can ‘grow’ its audience. While

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20 The term ‘cultural capital’ is taken from Bourdieu’s idea, modified by Frow, meaning individual ‘competence in cultural codes’. Frow uses the term as the ‘key term of reference for talking about forms of symbolic competence’ (1995, p. 30), pertaining to ‘what one is’ and ‘what it is right to be’ justified on the grounds of ‘distance from need’ and thus control of economic capital, and by the exclusion of others. Thus the distinction between cultural and economic capital is often difficult to discern in practice.

21 ‘Regimes of value are mechanisms that permit the construction and regulation of value-equivalence, and indeed permit cross-cultural mediation’ (Frow 1995, p. 144).
originally scoped by a publisher with a particular audience in mind (and thus with a pre-ordained print run, price and format attached to it) a title can become reclassified from ‘literary’ to ‘popular’ within the publisher’s marketing framework (as was the case during the production of The Fiftieth Gate by Mark Baker, discussed in Chapter 5). When a text valued in one ‘regime’ (the Melbourne community of Holocaust survivors, for instance) is transferred to and establishes value in another (readers of memoir, for example), possibly for quite different qualities than it was valued for in the original regime, that work may increase its audience, becoming ‘popular’ and economically viable for the publisher. Readers from each group will assign their own cultural value to a book despite their disparate social positions. Frow amplifies the relationship between reading and valuing culture, stating that:

every act of reading, and hence every act of ascribing value, is specific to the particular regime that organizes it. Texts and readers are not separable elements with fixed properties but ‘variable functions within a discursively ordered set of relations’, and apparently identical texts and readers will function quite differently within different regimes (Frow 1995, p. 145).

Thus, by identifying classes of culture consumers within the idea of regimes of value, Frow’s model allows a space within which to understand the sales successes of the publication of second-generation Holocaust literature by multinational publishers seeking the rewards commensurate with popular reception of their publications.

**The Australian book business: serendipity and strategies**

At the turn of the 20th century Australia’s developing literary community was small. Book distribution was dominated by British publishers and local writers had limited opportunities for publication, both here and abroad. Whilst local publishing prospects improved, the middle years of the century were dominated by a burgeoning interest in
literary criticism from within the university. What had hitherto been a field for public
endeavour, albeit favouring an elite clique, was reinvented institutionally via the
auspices of the new critical methodology in an effort to codify the teaching of English,
and later Australian, literature.

The adoption of the new critical methods within the institution was significant in its
effect on the Australian literary culture. It led not only to an expanded market for
Australian literature (the institution itself) but, via the efficacy of mass education,
created parallel changes within the public sphere. The cohort of educated students,
conversant with the historicist reading of the literary text, devolved both as readers and
as employees of the book publication industry. The efficacy of this critically literate
coterie in producing change in the methodology of public critical discourse was
minimal, rather I have posited, it produced a climate within the public discursive space
that was receptive to the creation of the celebrity author by publishers’ marketing
departments. This, as demonstrated in Chapters 5 and 6, is conducive to the reader’s
acceptance that a knowledge of the intimate details of the personality and lifestyle of
an author enhances the reading experience.

Parallel with these factors has been a developing alienation between the university
and the public sphere. This has had the effect of privileging the language of the public
sphere over that of the institution, and expanding the influence of the critical space
controlled by journalists and writer critics. Into this newly influential and influencable
arena publishers have been able to introduce their marketable product (Turner 1999).

Although these factors have worked toward the creation and reception of the
writings of the celebrity author as a desirable mass-market product, they have also,
perhaps paradoxically, allowed a space for the publication of literary works represented
in my study by second-generation Holocaust writing (memoir and autobiographical
fiction). The creation of the celebrity author as a marketing tool presupposes a book market that is homogeneous, yet experience proves this not to be the case. It is the very diversity of the book-buying market, the desire of individuals to subscribe to certain forms of social identification and unique ways of valuing culture that provide space for the popular publication of what would otherwise be considered marginal literature.

Case studies in later chapters demonstrate that separating the notion of cultural value from particular social classes (Frow 1995) explains the successful publishing of what is known as second-generation Holocaust literature. These focus in particular on the marketing of Mark Baker's first book *The Fiftieth Gate*, and the more gradual success of Lily Brett's writing career spanning some thirteen books of poetry, fiction and essays over almost twenty years. In order to fully appreciate both the deliberate strategies employed in the establishment of a writing career, as well as the serendipitous nature of book publishing, it is necessary to look in detail at the nature of the contemporary book business in Australia. This subject is covered in the following chapter.
CHAPTER 2
The commodification of Australian writers

Authors write texts. They do not make books. Their work is edited, designed, laid out, illustrated, packaged, priced, formatted and advertised by others responsible for making commercial decisions and targeting specific sections of the reading public (Lyons 2001, p. xv).

In this simple statement, Historian Martyn Lyons encapsulates the dialectic tension surrounding the production of books in an industrial age. From the perspective of their intellectual creators (the writers), books are an art form with an aesthetic basis for their cultural value. Immediately the manuscript is transferred to a publisher, however, it becomes, via the auspices of the mass manufacturing process, a commodity to which an economic value is ascribed. The desire for publication using the traditional supply chain, albeit concurrent with the author's loss of personal control and complicity in the process of commercialisation, appears to be the price writers willingly pay in order to engage with a reading public.

This chapter looks at the way trade books are commissioned, marketed and sold in Australia.\(^\text{22}\) It assesses the kinds of works currently produced by Australian publishers, discusses the factors that influence publishing decisions from editorial, marketing and financial perspectives and speculates about the current state of publishing and what it might mean to authors who write on Holocaust related themes. The information is tendered as background to later case studies that demonstrate two differing modes of

\(^{22}\) Trade books are those sold to consumers through general bookshops, as opposed to works targeting the education industry, which are sold directly or through secondary and tertiary education suppliers.
success (within the conventional publishing supply chain) by second-generation Holocaust writers.

The conglomerate publisher: managing products for a healthy bottom line

The most influential change to Australian publishing that has taken place over the past 20 years has been the change in ownership of most major locally represented publishers. Instead of British book publishers manipulating the market to suit their own distribution ends, transnational conglomerates have become the new owners of the Australian industry. As a result of this change, books now form just one small part of the business of multinational companies with quite diversified interests that are as likely to be American or European-owned as British.

Penguin Books, Harper Collins Publishers, Random House, Pan Macmillan, Hodder Headline and Simon & Schuster all have local publishing divisions with Australian publishing programs. These divisions, however, are part of larger multinational corporations and are managed to provide financial returns to shareholders of parent companies located offshore. Michael Wilding, reminds the industry that these local divisions must ‘work within the conglomerate expectations for profitability’ (2000, p. 153) and in the case of the Australian publishing industry, profits are largely repatriated to firms whose overall business is not book publishing.

The ‘Book Publishers Australian 2000–2001’ survey (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2002) presents a picture of the Australian publishing industry as impeded by declining production and increasing costs. The figures presented exclude educational titles as defined within the survey and, where possible, Australian sales of overseas titles acquired under rights agreements—identified in the survey as worth only five per cent
Despite limitations due to the proliferation of units of measurement (dollars, integers, percentages) the figures convey a useful framework within which to view the industry. A particularly telling figure is the average profit margin of only 4.6%. When the survey is further interrogated it confirms, not surprisingly, that the 20 largest book publishers (based on income from book sales) generated 76% of the total income from book publishing and maintained a 6% profit margin. Though perhaps not a result to delight international boards, it appears healthy compared with ‘other book publishers’ for whom ‘income and expenses were approximately equal, so there was no profit margin’.

The survey includes a rider to the effect that since the previous survey (1999–2000) there have been no ‘statistically significant’ changes to any factors save an increase in average wages per employee, a decrease of 19% in the number of books sold, and a 59% drop in profit margin. With an average profit of 4.6%, increasing expenditure on staff wages, fewer books being sold and falling profits, Australian Bureau of Statistics (2002) suggests an industry in decline.

As discussed in Chapter 1, literary production, although considered an important expression of Australian culture over the past century (at least in the eyes of the professional critics occupying the public sphere), was unable to rely solely on the commercial mechanisms of the private sector for its existence. Although government support for writers has been an historical feature of the Australian industry, according to current indicators, this also is being restructured.

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23 When the Australian publisher acquires the territorial rights to publish a book written by an international author, the Australian edition, accounted for in Australia, boosts the income and profitability of the local list.
Economics, ideology and commercialisation of the public sphere

The publicly funded Commonwealth Literary Fund (CLF) had been established in 1908 for the support of

(a) authors, who by reason of infirmity are unable to support themselves; (b) families of literary men who have died poor; and (c) literary men doing good work, but unable on account of poverty to persist in that work (Nile 2002, p. 219).

Literary women were perhaps considered unlikely to need financial support, or more likely, not considered at all at this time.

The Labor Government of Gough Whitlam established the successor to the CLF in 1973. The Literature Board of the Australia Council provides subsidies in the form of grants to individual authors for manuscript development, mentorships with more experienced authors and editors, and overseas residencies and touring programs that promote Australian writers and their work. Subsidies are also provided to publishers for marketing purposes, as well as in the form of assistance to international publishers to enable translation of Australian works. Funding is provided to assist Australian publishers to attend international book fairs, and to overseas publishers in reciprocal arrangements.24

The funding of writers through the Literature Board has not been without controversy. Richard Nile suggests that the Board was ‘too responsive to external pressures’, both political and social (2002, p. 243). The focus of government patronage has migrated from support for the creation of a national literature (espoused by the CLF), towards ‘a greater concentration of the distinctive Australianness invested in high profile sponsored authors’ (Nile 2002, p. 243). In this way, Nile argues, ‘the

24 A comprehensive guide to grants and subsidies provided for works of Australian literature by The Literature Board of the Australia Council is available at: <www.ozco.gov.au/boards/literature>.
Literature Board was a significant facilitator of the late twentieth century celebrity author' (2002, p. 243). Leigh Dale (1997) is critical of the Literature Board's mid-1990s decision to support the 'journal of ideas' delivered as a supplement with the midweek *Australian* newspaper. Such support, she argues, financially disadvantages more deserving projects, journals and magazines already offering 'regional, theoretical and political diversity in literary and cultural commentary' (1997, p. 205). This grant, however, was indicative of the changing nature of the funding policy of the Board. The funding philosophies of the Literature Board moved in tandem with political thinking during the last quarter century: from support for artistic representatives (individuals or companies of artists) of 'identifiable communities' whose cultural interests were considered worthy of federal assistance, towards a cultural policy that included economic viability as integral to support for the cultural industries (Nile 2002, p. 244).

Graeme Turner similarly contrasts the traditional public involvement (via bipartisan government cultural policies) in the definition of and subsidies for Australian literature with policies of the current conservative government, which he asserts has withdrawn 'from social and cultural policy in general' (1999, p. 4). In doing so the government has surrendered its positive interventionist role in the culture industry to commercial interests. Increasingly, books must compete with other media, particularly film, for subsidy from a decreasingly generous public purse. Turner argues that:

> The national interest and the public good have been reprocessed as entirely economic ideals as the interests of business and the sensitivities of the markets receive the highest priority in government policy ... Although government still funds the Australia Council, the ABC,25 and so on, if we were to scrutinise the manner in which their performance is assessed and how their future funding is to be earned and allocated, we now have to say that we have a thoroughly commercialised public sphere (Turner 1999, p. 6).

25The Australian Broadcasting Corporation.
Further evidence for Turner’s position is presented by the Australia Council’s grant to Penguin Books in 2002, which assisted the company to fund editorial work on ten new novels. This caused much debate in the media at the time. Declining editing standards and whether Australian publishers were adequately fulfilling a perceived role in this area, the plight of first time authors and the over-publication of Australian novels in general were all canvassed, as well, the ethics of a large multinational publisher being publicly sponsored to that extent were questioned (Sullivan 2002b). What was not canvassed, but might have been, was the degree to which this grant was generated by an imperative for the Australia Council to be seen to support the commercial arm of the culture market.

With the ‘language of economics’ having replaced the ‘language of subsidy’ in cultural policy, Nile (2002, p. 244) writes that government interventions now focus on supporting the ‘demand’ side of the equation, sponsoring measures that improve ‘consumption and audience development’ (Nile 2002, p. 244). It is appropriate then to consider the functioning of the commercial operation of the retail sales link in the supply chain, which is one part of the process of demand stimulation. Publicity, another important part of this process, will also be explored.

**The machinations of the Australian book retailing trade**

The local retail book market is dominated by chain bookstores (defined as ‘booksellers with more than three outlets under a common banner’), which, not surprisingly, were the highest revenue earning sales channel for books in Australia in 2000 (Accenture 2001, p. 4). Typically, chain bookstores buy most of their stock at a ‘head office’ level and deal with only a limited number of large publishers. The policy of confining access to only the larger publishers, and the market share generated by multiple outlets,
dictates the extent of pressure that can be applied to publishers when negotiating discounts for bulk stock purchases. Though chain stores do accommodate some regional differences in stock holdings, the responsibility for purchasing on a nationwide basis for most titles is taken by only a few employees. The trend, under such circumstances, of the offering to readers is inclined increasingly towards standardisation. Fewer risks are taken on unusual or experimental titles, or on new writers, due to the imperative to keep turnover increasing to fulfill the demand for increasing profits that meet shareholder expectation.

Australian publishers and booksellers operate on small margins with most of the larger publishers selling their products and arranging distribution of stock from their own resources (Accenture 2001). Smaller publishers make use of the larger publishers to warehouse and distribute their stock. While many small publishers use the few independent distributors to consolidate and represent their range of titles to the trade, it is rare for independent distributors to have access to all the major book chains. The pricing structure for book sales is based on a retail sales price set by the publisher, from which quantity-dependent discounts are offered to supply-chain partners. For instance, 35 to 45 per cent discount for the booksellers and 12 to 15 per cent for the distributor. Discounts to mass-market outlets, which take large quantities of few titles, can exceed 60 per cent. Such a pricing structure makes it difficult for independent bookshops, independent distributors and small publishers to compete effectively with the conglomerates, the chains and the mass marketers.

Mass-market outlets (K-Mart and Target, for example) hold a limited range of bestselling fiction and nonfiction, and focus on discounting and quick turnover. Independent bookstores, which transact a substantial part of the local business, are the 'white knights' for local independent publishers. Theirs is a business built on client
relationships, strong book knowledge and hand selling. This section of the industry frequently complains of undercutting by chain bookstores. Though they stock most bestselling titles, it is difficult for independent bookstores to compete effectively with the chains on titles by celebrity authors because they are unable to command the discounts for bulk purchases of stock available to the chain stores and mass-market outlets that facilitate competitive retail pricing.

Almost unique to the publishing industry, though not to Australian publishing, is the sale or return system. Book retailers are encouraged by a favourable discount structure to purchase quantities of local titles in excess of what conservative management practices might indicate could be sold. If unsold at the end of an agreed period (usually not fewer than three and not more than twelve months) the stock can be returned to the publisher, with freight at the bookseller’s expense. This practice has traditionally been seen as a way of increasing sales. Bookshops can temporarily acquire large numbers of books for display while protected from the financial risk of product ownership. Although overstocking contributes to increased visibility of particular titles and minimises unit print costs, this is scant consolation in an Australian industry that suffers from low overall profit margins. Thirteen per cent of all books were returned in 2001, further loading the industry with the cost of transport and pulping returns or remaindering stock (Accenture 2001).

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26 Book retailers read new titles and recommend them to individual customers whose reading habits they know from past experience.

27 A number of remainder merchants service the Australian publishing industry, purchasing excess or returned stock, literally by weight, for recycling through specialist discount bookstores or for sale as remainders direct to the public via ‘warehouse’ sales.

28 Accenture figures also include the tertiary, school and professional publishing sectors, which are less vulnerable to the vagaries of sale or return and thus dilute overall return rates.
The prospect of better technology-assisted management information systems began with the establishment of data collection agency Nielsen BookScan Australia in 2000. BookScan currently monitors 85 per cent of sales through the Australian book trade (Webster 2004). The collected data, fed back to publishing management, foreshadow the likelihood that returns will be reduced as print runs are more neatly matched to actual demand. Existing technology can provide solutions to inefficiencies in the sale or return system, but it will require an active approach to changing industry-wide practice before the issue of the wastage created by the provision of 'display' quantities is resolved. Through ownership of the bulk of the Australian publishing industry, the conglomerates foster tension between the imperatives of increasing profit margins (requiring reduced costs)\(^\text{29}\) while supporting (at least tacitly) existing market methodology (the sale or return system). Research undertaken by Accenture indicated that a further reduction in returns, to an average of seven per cent, would allow the industry to 'capture an estimated $47 million a year' (2001, p. 16). Yet, neither the Accenture report, nor the 'National Survey of Trade and Non-trade Publishing Organisations' (Freeman & Hawthorne 2002) reveal any sense of commitment on the part of large trade publishers to a change in the status quo. This impasse has the potential to force conglomerate withdrawal from the industry altogether in search of more profitable products and a rationalised marketing system. Jason Epstein, speaking at the Future of the Book Conference in 2003, was confident that through the auspices

\(^{29}\) The Accenture report into the Australian book industry described demand for books as 'highly elastic', meaning sensitive to price increases (Accenture 2001, p. 23). Thus the recommendations for industry rationalisation focused on reducing costs rather than increasing revenue. Of particular concern were the costs associated with distribution (warehousing and returns) (p. 15).
of ‘print-on-demand’, this would be the case (Thorpe-Bowker 2003a, p. 13). Earlier, while not predicting the end of conglomerate involvement in book publishing, Wilding (2000), observed indications of a return to industry diversification in the growing number of independent publishers and through public access to professional self-publishing, facilitated by technologies such as the increasingly commercially viable print-on-demand and short-run printing. Currently, although there has been a minor resurgence in the publishing fortunes of small and independent publishers, with a strong focus on the serious nonfiction market (exemplified by Black Inc., Text Publishing and Scribe), the conglomerates still dominate the Australian industry and to a large extent dictate publishing fashion. For this reason the multinationals still publish the majority of Australian writers, and it is to this section of the industry that writers must turn in search of public recognition for their work.

Writers, editors and products

As much as the naïve first-time author would like to believe it, editors in major publishing houses do not sit in their offices in high expectation of the next bestseller arriving with the morning post. The processes that surround publication are often lengthy, tenuous and frustrating for the writer. The topics for nonfiction titles are often conceived by the commissioning editor or publisher, who then seeks an appropriate writer for the project from among a stable of experts, researching journalists or celebrities (who often require a co-author or ghost writer to bring the project to fruition). Fiction, however, is most often brought to the attention of an editor by a

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30 ‘Print-on-demand’ describes the computer technology that allows the consumer order of a single book to generate the printing of that title. Epstein has been involved in the development of prototype technology that is capable of producing a single finished book in under four minutes (Thorpe-Bowker 2003a, p. 12).
literary agent. If a work does arrive unsolicited at a publishing office, it may be passed to an editorial assistant who will make an assessment about whether it should be included in a particular editorial reading pile\(^{31}\) where it will languish until a more senior person has time to assess its merit for the company’s list.

Literary agents commence the work of classifying the manuscript into a particular genre and for a particular reading audience. The agent must describe the work they are selling in a way that assists the editor to present the concept for the work at an editorial board or review committee where a number of prospective titles is under review concurrently. In many companies this committee includes representatives from the marketing and publicity, sales, design, rights and finance departments and its decision may depend on the power of the rhetoric of a single enthusiastic editor within a few minutes’ time frame. This necessitates a process of classification whereby a magnum opus can be described in a single sentence.

Although the review of a manuscript includes an assessment of the elusive ‘quality’ of the writing, more important are the perceived size of the market for each new title and the potential profitability of each book. An editor needs to convince her peers not only of the literary merit of a work but that the book can be sold in commercially viable quantities that will achieve the company’s prescribed financial targets. Writer Mark Davis (1999) argues that in its rush towards ‘bottom-line publishing’, the industry has abandoned its unique and traditional strength—the lucid, leisurely canvassing of ideas. Publishing, he says,

now strives to be as much like TV, newspapers, magazines and the movies as possible …

The loudest sound in publishing first thing on a Monday morning isn’t that of desks being

\(^{31}\) Commonly called the ‘slush pile’ in the industry.
cleared for the coming week’s innovative and original thinking. It’s the sound of pages turning on a thousand copies of *Who Weekly* (Davis 1999, pp. 145–6).

While his commentary is intended to bring a smile to the lips of fellow publishing insiders, for editors engaged in the production of trade books it is too close to the truth for that smile to be anything other than rueful.

Even prior to a contracted manuscript’s arrival at the publishing house, decisions about marketing and selling the title have been made. Such decisions are significantly influenced by the size of any advance payment to the author against future royalty income. Although the industry standard for an advance is somewhere between one half and two thirds of the royalty income expected to be generated on the first printing, authors with a track record for generating sales or an established agent are likely to receive significantly more. Such payments tend to reinforce the author’s importance to the company, compelling the publisher to use marketing strategies designed to recoup the greater upfront financial investment. A big advance may guarantee the attachment of an exclusive publicist to the book, perhaps paid advertising and significant pre-publication promotion. This may include the provision of advance proof copies for reading by the managers and book buyers of significant bookshops in order to generate interest and that all-important selling tool, ‘word of mouth’. The size of an advance payment has implications for the editorial process as well. Books by such authors will have larger editorial and design budgets.

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32 The size of an advance royalty paid for a work can also influence the marketing strategy, creating a ‘push’ effect into bookshops. Speaking of the American book industry, but applicable on a reduced scale to Australia, Executive Editor at W. W. Norton Robert Weil writes: ‘One of the axioms that now dominate 21st century publishing is that a book’s future sales are largely determined at the time that a book is purchased from an agent, and that any magic that the writer and editor might subsequently perform on the manuscript will have less bearing. The equation is simple: A large advance, at least six figures, is required for a book to be taken seriously’ (Weil 2004).
Major publishers take a formulaic approach to estimating the cost of a new title. The retail price for trade titles is relatively inflexible, falling within a range that is not disadvantageous when the book is displayed on the booksellers' shelves among its peers. The book trade exhibits a distinct nervousness about price, given substantive internal book trade competition as well as the competition from other forms of entertainment. Books are costed as single, stand-alone products with no approved cross-subsidy. Each book proposal is judged on its ability to bear its own production cost and to make a profit. 'Subsidizing', Wilding writes, 'is held to be a thing of the past' (2000, p. 153).

In a conglomerate-controlled market, where the local publishing house must focus on fiscal responsibility and a contribution to parent company shareholder dividends, decisions on cost become paramount and the editorial/publishing staff must defer to the marketing and finance executives. Budgetary considerations, influenced by competitive retail prices, can affect the print run, the book format and production standards. As well, the editorial timetable may be compromised to suit market expediency. Hilary McPhee, former publisher of McPhee Gribble and a past Australia Council chair, raises the issue of 'underdone' first novels being released to bookstores in order to fulfill marketing and financial commitments. This, McPhee (2001) argues, sets up both book and writer for failure. McPhee is adamant that the production of too many poorly written novels damages the reputation of the Australian publishing industry both here and abroad and in an address to the Victorian Society of Editors in 2003 she amplified her concerns. Accountants, who do not understand the editorial process or its importance in producing good books, she said, run publishers. They see only 'good short term results with sexy marketing', causing them to miss the point that only good-quality books will sustain the interest of readers (Society of Editors 2003, p. 2). Jackie
Kent sums up the dilemma for editors in an *Age* article on declining editorial standards: ‘There is a feeling that the quality control side of things is less important, with publishers arguing that spending more time on a book will not make it sell better’ (Sullivan 2002b). With the major publishers using financial modelling based on quick turnover and high-volume sales there appears to be merit in their argument. In reality, however, the perennial tussle over the funding of quality books versus marketing is never resolved, as only a fraction of the titles produced can be the recipient of individually designed, targeted promotion.

Many thousands of new titles are released into Australian bookstores each year, with most major publishers delivering several hundreds of new titles (originated locally and imported) each month. The timing of a title’s release to the book trade can play an important role in the success or failure of a new book. In Australia the primary selling seasons coincide with the gift-giving periods of Christmas, Mothers’ Day and Father’s Day. January in Australia, traditionally a post-Christmas sale period, coincides with the release of blockbuster fiction (recognisable by an extensive number of pages and cheap production) for ‘beach reading’.

Books commissioned as gifts can have spectacular success during appropriate selling seasons, and once a winning formula is established it is repeated by its creator and mimicked by competitors. Intuition and prediction are lesser factors in publishing decisions than hindsight. Unlike novelists, who ‘do not write what they want, they write what they can’ (Smith 2001), the writers of gift titles write to satisfy a particular seasonal market. Gift books must have a broad general appeal, with the look and feel of the book often considered more important to consumers than extensive content. These books are collectible and function as display objects. They offer the enjoyment of browsing rather than an intensive reading experience. Gift titles cannot afford to be
controversial; they must be apprehended as innocuous to a range of prospective recipients. Purchasers need to feel quite comfortable giving a book that they have not read. Over time, when viewed alongside endless sequels and imitators these books tend to appear anodyne.

**Promotions and publicity: a private life in a public sphere**

Fifty-two per cent of the revenue generated by books sold in the Australian domestic market in 2000 was through bookshops: 28 per cent through book chains and 24 per cent through independent booksellers (Accenture 2001, p. 4). Given these figures, it is probably no surprise that publishers direct their publicity efforts towards generating customer traffic into bookshops.

It is the function of the publicist to create an appeal for the book beyond the broadsheet literary pages and the serious review journals, where reviews and author profiles are the traditional promotional methodologies. Thus maximum effort is put into generating extract sales to the glossy magazine supplements of weekend newspapers, book reviews and author profiles in the wider print media, and guest appearances on serious radio and ‘infotainment’ television programs. While book reviews and published extracts focus the consumer’s attention on the book and its content, other methods of publicity, particularly through the mediation of the mass media, turn the audience’s fascinated gaze from the book to its author.

At an increasing proliferation of metropolitan and regional literary festivals readers interact with authors. The author is visible at launches, addresses, readings and panels,

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33 Sections of the book are sold to magazines or newspapers for exclusive publication in single or over multiple issues prior to publication. Extracts, apart from publicising a forthcoming book, also generate income for author and publisher.
becoming an authority on whatever topic may be discussed in their session no matter how tenuous a link this may have to their work. 'Forgotten', Turner suggests, 'is the fact that writers are interesting not so much for what they think but for the fact that what they think is expressed in a specific form, which is itself worthy of close attention’ (1996, p. 9). Authors are required to field questions about their books and their lives, their opinions on events of world significance or trivia. Book sales result, but the most important function of the festival for an author is profile enhancement. Through such mechanisms and the lengthy pre-publicity that takes place in the broadsheet media prior to metropolitan writers' festivals, the author becomes a recognisable celebrity. The personality and presentation of the author is more important for this exercise than the quality of their writing. Daytime television provides an attenuated version of the literary festival panel, with the consumer's questions mediated by a host. Here the writer must learn to encapsulate the character of their work in a few short sentences between product placements. As a result, the selection of literary manuscripts for publication has become biased towards those writers of pleasant appearance who can engage an audience with verbal repartee.

The publishing industry, Turner argues, has become an extension of the supply network for 'institutionally produced gossip' (1996, p. 23), and both Lily Brett and Mark Baker (and their publishers) have benefited through judicious use of this aspect of the media. The rift between sisters Lily and Doris Brett, resulting from what Doris presents as the inaccurate and public exposure of the character of their mother in Lily's writing, has provided a source of continued fascination in the broadsheet news media (see Chapter 6). Mark Baker's publisher orchestrated its own controversy surrounding the publication of his family memoir *The Fiftieth Gate*. Interview questions and responses by Baker, in the form of a press release, canvassed the integrity of Baker's
decision to 'force' his parents to confront their past. The media campaign to sell Baker's book is addressed in Chapter 5.

Successful promotions of individual titles are often linked with television series or the release of films. Harper Collins, which has controlled the distribution rights to the Lord of the Rings trilogy for many years, supplying the Australian market with numerous editions over time, was rewarded by the recent success of Peter Jackson's film adaptation that promoted the books from healthy backlist to movie tie-in. The Harry Potter series of titles is different, however, generating a momentum in volume sales that has created an audience for the subsequent films. When the fifth title in the Harry Potter series was released in July 2003 the occasion itself was orchestrated throughout the English-speaking world as a unique selling opportunity. A publicity campaign, begun six months earlier, was focused on extending recognition of what had become, by the publication of the third title in this series, a recognised brand. Harry Potter, the creation, had become more widely known than his creator J.K. Rowling. The consumer market was targeted through 'news' articles in broadsheet and tabloid presses: 'In 155 sleeps, Harry Potter's fifth book is out' (The Age, 17 January 2003); 'Harry Potter's Phoenix set to send book sales soaring' (The Sun-Herald, 19 January 2003). Bookshops planned 'Harry Potter' parties. Children's and adult hardback versions were released, and retailers wishing to stock the books were required to sign agreements committing themselves to observance of the worldwide embargo prior to the release date. The Australian publisher's participation in this orchestrated publishing phenomenon proved justified when Nielsen BookScan reported Australia's bestselling titles for 2003, with Harry Potter and the Order of Phoenix at number one, having sold 787 720 copies, and nearest rival, Michael Moore's Stupid White Men, selling only 138 996 copies (Steger 2004b).
While publicity functions to enhance the visibility of the author and the book to the reading public, the publisher also uses other tools to enhance the experience of book buying and ownership.

**The aspirational reader and the pleasure of ‘knowing’**

The ability of readers to identify a Penguin published title by its orange and white livery has been replaced by an industry-wide standardisation of design and format that assists readers to classify books by genre. Genre fictions such as science fantasy, romance or detective can easily be differentiated and identified when displayed in the bookshop, as can nonfiction such as self-help, parenting or fitness. A book’s cover image, its format (page size) and extent (the number of pages it contains) provide powerful signals about the particular reading experience a consumer can expect. A publisher seeking to reposition a writer’s works within a wider market may also subvert this expectation. Books that would have been considered ‘literary’ for reasons of content and style a decade earlier are presented in bestselling livery to their marketplace in the late 20th century. Turner exemplifies this phenomenon with Peter Carey’s *Jack Maggs*. ‘The cover design for the paperback edition’, he says, ‘looks exactly like a John Grisham novel, aimed at the airport newsagency’ (Turner 1996, p. 11).

Increasingly, as was the case with Carey’s *True History of the Kelly Gang*, books are given several iterations in an effort to achieve the maximum financial return from each title. Carey’s celebrity status, the importance of this iconic story to an Australian audience combined with the release of a film on the subject (though not based on Carey’s story), encouraged the publisher to release the book in at least five formats following the original publication in 2000. The publisher obviously believes that such
iterations extend the title’s shelf life, reaching purchasers who have not bought an original hardback, for instance, but it is equally possible that through multiple format iteration a title becomes a self-generating collector’s item. Thus the repackaging of books removes them from their primary use, expressed as conveying ‘a voice … a gathering of ideas’ by academic Karen Geiselhart (2001, p. 200), or as a ‘portable and readily accessible marketing package’ by marketer Kit Andrews (2002, p. 36), to become collectible for memorial and display. The enhancement of the visual and tactile nature of the book serves this purpose.

The way a new book looks and feels (the size of its pages, its weight, the smooth texture of a matt-laminated cover or jacket, and even its smell imparted by printers’ ink or glue, or from its board or paper stock) are an important part of any book’s signification to the reader. Knowing this, publishers work, albeit within budgetary constraints, to create tactile, beautiful objects that will encourage browsers to handle them. Penguin publisher Bob Sessions describes the recent fashion for creating sensually pleasurable books as ‘a return to the book as an artefact in its own right’, that reminds people of ‘the joy of books’ (Lancashire 2002, p. 2).

When linked with the author’s visibility at reader’s festivals and book signings, books become positioned as souvenirs, to be read, yes, but also to be taken away and prized as much as signed artifacts as for their content. Martin Flanagan, author of Gould’s Book of Fish, explains: ‘In an era when anyone can download and print text, books have to become something more’ (Lancashire 2002, p. 2). Frow’s ideas on cultural value and ‘the increased integration of the aesthetic in economic production’ (1995, p. 1), linked with his concept (from Bourdieu) of the importance of aspiration in
terms of the social function of culture,\textsuperscript{34} can assist in explaining this use of books. In this sense books become a physical manifestation of 'what one is' and 'what it is right to be' (Frow 1995, p. 30), confirming the cultural value of 'knowing' and engaging with the author.

**The unpredictable valuing of cultural objects**

The structure of the Australian publishing industry, influenced as it must be by the conglomerate requirement for consistent and reliable profits, operates on the premise that larger numbers of fewer titles can be sold to the consumer market if the marketing package is appropriate. This model assumes a popular market for books that is largely homogeneous.

Australian publishers must focus their financial and marketing processes towards satisfying their model of homogenous mass, which requires a consistently accurate prediction of popular taste and a ready supply of 'bestselling' titles to service it. At its extreme this policy focuses title choices on a limited number of local celebrity writers, on purchases of overseas titles already proved in their home markets, and on books that satisfy the impulse purchase and mass gift-giving occasion. There are limitations to such policies. Predictors of success are just that: predictors. When they are based on a publisher's own historical data, assisted perhaps by BookScan sales figures, and at times the anecdotal evidence of writers and other publishers, they rely on hindsight.

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\textsuperscript{34} Bourdieu's argument, being based on an economic metaphor, privileges the owners of capital, who can afford to acquire and thus appreciate forms of culture not associated with need. The distancing from need transposes the argument from one of 'distinctions of class into distinctions of taste' asserting 'the right of a ruling class to legitimate domination over other classes' (Frow 1995, p. 29). Thus, to an extent, aspirants to social advancement derive pleasure (equated with acquisition of cultural capital which Frow [see footnote No. 20] links strongly with economic capital) from the exclusion of others from certain kinds of cultural experience (Frow 1995, p. 30).
This accumulation of hard data and folk wisdom is then extrapolated in order to judge the viability of new book proposals and new authors, leaving publishers with little choice but to follow the predictability of what has gone before. The mass model actually inhibits publishers from discovering the ‘next big thing’ because they must commission books to fit a template of previous successes. Under such restrictions anything genuinely innovative would appear too much of a financial risk.

In an attempt to justify the use of their market paradigm the local publishing arm of overseas-owned conglomerates constructs costing models within which commissioning editors must try to find (bottom) lines of equivalence between the latest American fad diet title (using imported stock from a massive overseas printing) and a first Australian novel. The focus of such models becomes the unit print cost\(^3\) which makes it almost impossible to justify an Australian work that does not fit the popular exemplar.

As discussed in Chapter 1, Frow presents an alternate model that explains a fragmented popular market. Such a model, I believe, portrays a reality not commensurate with the conglomerate model. In the small marketplace serviced by Australian publishers it is important to understand the nature of the popular market and its unpredictable valuing of cultural objects (Frow 1995). If Frow’s is an appropriate model of this market, then predictions, like those by Jason Epstein (Thorpe-Bowker 2003a, p. 13), of the withdrawal of the conglomerates from the publishing industry appear more realistic. While it may provide comfort to conglomerate executives to use marketing models that deliver consistent profit margins, selling books is not akin to selling soap products. As Wilding reminds us: ‘Publishing has always been an

\(^3\) Like most manufacturing industries, and indeed the publisher-bookseller supply chain, cost structures in the printing industry are constructed around volume sales. Therefore the higher the print run ordered by a publishing company the smaller the cost of each unit (book).
accountant's nightmare. There is too much product for neat and efficient marketing' (2000, p. 152). A market model of myriad niches better describes the Australian reality. The model accommodates the successful publishing of second-generation Holocaust writers who find a significant niche audience attracted to their work.

An understanding of the place of second-generation Holocaust writing within the framework of the Australian publishing industry of the late 20th century also requires an understanding of the motivations of the writers themselves. In an attempt to explain why individuals subject themselves to the commodification processes of publication, the focus of this study is transferred from the relationships between writers and their markets and to the motivations of the second-generation writers. Chapter 3 explores the characteristics of exemplary writers in an attempt to profile the Australian second-generation writer and to clarify the driving forces that compel children of Holocaust survivors to write about their parents' lives and their own experiences of growing up in a 'survivor' family.
CHAPTER 3

Inheriting the Holocaust: causal factors of second-generation writing

Second-generation witnesses, the offspring of Jewish Holocaust survivors, have a personal relationship to the Shoah. They inherit the Holocaust as an irreducible part of their Jewish self-identity. But what are these new types of Holocaust witnesses to do with an event not personally experienced? (Berger 1997, p. 1).

This chapter seeks to profile Australian second-generation Holocaust writers. Who are they? How does the Holocaust as an 'irreducible part of their Jewish self-identity' inform their writing? How do they make sense of 'an event not personally experienced'? What effect has their experience of living in a survivor family had on their self-view and their worldview? How do they name their Jewishness? Do they hold characteristics in common?

To explore the nature of the second-generation experience I review the characteristics described by Alan Berger (1997) as held in common by American second-generation writers and speculate about lines of equivalence with the Australian writers. I turn to an early study of the American second generation by journalist Helen Epstein (1988) in search of a broader understanding of the diasporic survivor-family experience. I also canvass the notion that second-generation writing is part of a search for individual and cultural identity, complicated for Jewish people by the particular framing of identity within Australia’s multicultural signifiers (Stratton 2000). In conclusion, I consider the attempts of Melbourne writer and child psychiatrist George

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36 Shoah is the Hebrew word for Holocaust.
Halasz (2002; 2001) to separate his professional and personal selves in order to reconcile his own second-generation experience.

**Berger's metaphor for the second generation**

In his *Children of Job: American Second-generation Witnesses to the Holocaust*, Alan Berger (1997) provides a rare study of American second-generation writing in an attempt to establish a framework for thinking about the defining characteristics of children of Holocaust survivors. His title is taken from the biblical story of Job, which he uses as a metaphor for Holocaust survivor families. He equates the children born to Holocaust survivors with those children born to Job as 'replacement children' following the sudden death of his first family. The story, in which Job must reconcile his relationship with God in order to have his children (and his former riches) miraculously replaced, may seem an odd metaphor in this case. The dead children, of course, are irreplaceable, leaving the new children, innocent of any crime yet occupying an ambiguous place in their parents' esteem: 'Each time they look at me ... it is not me they see' (Berger 1997, p. 5). This ambiguity (expanded upon in the discussion of 'memorial candles' below) is also reflected in the writing of the Australian second generation, and mirrors post-Holocaust attitudes towards Jewish orthodoxy by many survivors and their children. While *Shoah* conferred Jewish identity it could not impose religious belief. 'After Auschwitz,' Berger writes, 'Jews cannot be compelled to accept the covenant. Rather, the Jewish people voluntarily agree to live their lives Jewishly' (p. 84). The idea of living a life 'Jewishly' will also be explored later in the chapter.

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While Berger's religious context may be pertinent to conclusions drawn about American society, with its quite different migratory patterns and identity signifiers, Australia, certainly from the mid-1980s when the second generation began to be published, was largely a secular society.  

Within the second-generation writing itself there are repeated claims of a post-Holocaust loss of religious belief by both survivors and their children. There are exceptions of course. Mark Baker and his family are observant Jews—they believe in God—claiming by way of explanation, 'We're alive aren't we?' (Baker 1997, p. 285). Lily Brett and her family are not religious: 'When I was growing up we never went to synagogue ... I knew nothing about Judaism other than it seemed to kill you' (Brett 1997a, p. 255). Arnold Zable values the cultural aspects of his Jewish heritage but is not religious in an orthodox sense, neither are Susan Varga, Ramona Koval, Anna Rosner Blay or Diane Armstrong, though all strongly identify as 'Jewish'. Despite differences between the survivor communities in Australia and the United States, and my reservations about Berger's theoretical

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38 'The [modern] differentiation of religion from culture, and the progressive secularization of modern life', cultural theorist Jon Stratton (2000) argues, 'has produced the theoretical possibility of being Jewish while not choosing the Judaic religion' (p. 286). There is, I believe, an argument to be made in relation to the differences between the discourse of Holocaust remembrance as it relates to the American and Australian second generations. The American Holocaust discourse takes place within a more overtly religious context. Though not all commentators are believers they must confront the phenomenon as it relates to Holocaust remembrance. Berger's focus on religious metaphors draws extensively upon the writings of Elie Wiesel. Wiesel, despite his Holocaust experience, maintains his religion and has greatly influenced the United States Holocaust remembrance debate. The Australian discourse appears to be of a more secular nature, drawing more heavily on the temporal wisdom of Primo Levi.

39 The survivor communities of Australia and the United States share many similarities, particularly those relating to their almost complete urbanisation. Of significance, however, is the different proportion of Holocaust survivors compared with the wider Jewish population in each country. The Australian survivor community, compared with the Australian Jewish population as a whole, is proportionately much larger than the American (Bloch 1997; Novick 2000, p. 2; Rutland 1997, p. 288). 'After Israel, Australia accepted the second highest number of survivors of the Holocaust on a pro rata population basis. This influx more than doubled the size of Australian Jewry, from 23 553 in 1933 to 48 436 in
assumption of a religious context within which questions of second-generation identity may be resolved, his research provides a valid starting point of comparison with the Australian situation. He describes the effects of the Holocaust on second-generation writers and on the themes they pursue. He canvasses the pursuit of Jewish identity through Holocaust remembrance by the second generation.

Self-healing and the building of a moral society

Berger divides 'second-generation witnesses' into two distinct categories: those who write from the point of view of Jewish particularism and those who favour a universalist approach. 'The dialectical tensions' created between these two strands, he believes, are 'characteristic of biblical and rabbinical thought' (1997, p. 4). Both ideas are based in Jewish theology: particularist expressions are found in the Israelites' separateness, an idea taken (though not exclusively) from Exodus 19:6 of a people expressly chosen by God; while the universalist form comes from a belief that God is a universal deity (Genesis 18:25). These contrasting attitudes, Berger asserts, are expressed in the creative work of second-generation Holocaust survivors:

Those who travel the particularist path put God on trial (din Torah), abandon the Sinai Covenant while seeking to find an adequate alternative, deal with theodicy within a specifically Jewish context, and raise the issue of Jewish-Christian relations. The particularists seek a tikkun atzmi (mending or repair) of self (Berger 1997, p. 4).

Cartoonist Art Spiegelman, author of Maus I and Maus II, is probably the best known of the American writers to an Australian audience. His unique illustrated portrayal of his family's Holocaust experiences represents the Germans as cats, the Poles as pigs and the Jews as mice. Berger categorises Spiegelman as particularist 1945, and 59,343 in 1961' (Rutland 1997, p. 256). The Australian Jewish population was not allowed to exceed 0.5 per cent of the total population and was controlled by the government's strategic migration policy.
because *Maus* explores his attempts to come to terms with the aftermath of the suicide of his mother and his estranged relationship with his father. Of the universalists, and there are fewer of them in Berger’s survey, he says:

Those who travel the second path, that of Jewish universalism, seek to articulate universal lessons emerging from the Holocaust. The universalists do not abandon Jewish specificity, but strive for *tikkun olam*, the moral improvement or repair of the world, and struggle against all forms of prejudice and racism, ranging from anti-Semitism to homophobia. This consists of a mission to build a moral society (Berger 1997, p. 4).

In general, the Australian writers conform to the universalist profile, though in most cases their first books, being autobiographical, may suggest otherwise. Berger names Arnold Zable within the particularist camp. Although his memoir *Jewels and Ashes* does allow such classification, it is evident from the themes of earlier and subsequent works, as well as Zable’s involvement with the causes of Aboriginal reconciliation and refugees, that he is better read as a universalist. There is ambiguity too about any classification of other Australian second-generation writers according to Berger’s model. Though her first novel *The Samovar* is autobiographical, Ramona Koval shares many of the universalist interests of Zable. Mark Baker conforms to the universalist model, dispelling doubt by his adoption of the name ‘Raphael’, translated as ‘an angel of healing’. Lily Brett’s earlier writing conforms to the particularist model, with a consistent focus on self-healing apparent in twelve of her fourteen titles. Her most recent writing, however, demonstrates universalist features (see Chapter 6).

While the specific characteristics of particularism appear to be self-focused and support the idea of a mending of the self in contrast with the universalist desire to articulate universal lessons emerging from the Holocaust that will lead to the moral improvement of society and ‘repair of the world,’ the second-generation survivors hold a number of characteristics in common. They believe that their identity is shaped by
the Holocaust and desire to bear witness to the event. Telling their stories is a way of affirming self-identity as they grope for an understanding of the relationship between themselves, their parents and the Holocaust. Through his exploration of the nature of the writings of the American second generation, Berger (1997) establishes a framework that assists us to understand those influences which are also present in the lives of the Australian second generation.

The characteristics of the second-generation witness

Through a survey of second-generation American literature, and recourse to psychological studies of the children of survivors, Berger fleshes out the character of the second generation. He identifies characteristics that appear to be consistently displayed by the children of survivors as well as common issues that he uses as ‘a basis for detecting trends and tendencies’ (p. 14). Among these issues are:

(1) separation from frequently overprotective parents; (2) the ‘phenomenon of the impossible comparison,’ that is, the feeling that their own problems and lives have less meaning than their parents’; (3) ‘a need to be superachievers’ and thereby somehow undo the trauma of the Shoah; (4) ‘a feeling of loss in terms of a diminished family circle’, and (5) seeking to find a personal mode to express their thoughts about the Holocaust and to ‘ensure continuity with their family’s past.’ I would add to this list a tendency on the part of some second-generation witnesses to achieve a mimesis ... of their parents’ Holocaust experience ... Collectively, there is a desire on the part of the second-generation witness to ‘make sense’ out of the Holocaust (Berger 1997, pp. 14–15).

The characteristics and issues identified by Berger’s study, in the absence of a corresponding Australian work, provide valid criteria for reviewing the Australian


writers of second-generation literature. Given the necessity for authorial compromise during the commodification processes of publication (discussed in Chapter 2), Berger’s categories can usefully assist an exploration of the Australian second-generation writer’s compulsion towards commercial publication. As a result of Shoah, Berger suggests, a resonant response in the child from ‘the impact of incomplete or ... continual mourning on the part of the survivors’ (1997, p. 10), sustains a second-generation desire to make sense of the meaning of the Holocaust in their own lives. Furthermore, he continues:

children of survivors do not obey Marcus Hansen’s sociological law that states the second generation wants to forget what the first generation remembers ... the ‘creative process’ of the second generation is a means of both mourning the dead and expressing their own sense of personal loss (Berger 1997, p. 19).

The idea of inheriting the trauma of their parents, even via subtle and unspoken means, is a common theme in the writing of the Australian second generation. Mark Baker’s early memories are punctuated by his mother’s absences. He recalls ‘an unsettling memory’ from a childhood holiday. ‘We are at Hayman Island, my father, my brother and myself ... Where is my mother? Why have we left her in Melbourne to rest with a girlfriend? (Baker 1997, p. 296). When the family returns to Melbourne, he finds his mother in a hospital bed. He is ‘bitter’, not because he has been lied to but because she has suffered in hospital while they had spent a fortnight ‘buried in sand pits and dressed in tropical T-shirts’ (p. 23). His ability to empathise with his mother’s pain, and to understand her unsettling behaviour, had been compromised by his parents’ ineffectual attempts to protect him from the knowledge of its precipitating event. Lily Brett similarly writes of her mother’s preoccupation ‘with hundreds of dead. Her dead mother and father, her dead brothers and sisters, her dead nieces and nephews, and aunts and uncles’ (1997a, p. 100).
Berger describes survivor offspring as seeing themselves ‘as a direct link with an obliterated past’, causing many to feel impelled to give witness to an event which they had not directly observed (1997, p. 15). The Australian second generation seem compelled to study Holocaust literature, to enter into discussions with their parents and to join self-help groups in an attempt to explore their Jewish identity and what it means to be Jewish post-Holocaust. They demonstrate Berger’s idea of ‘inheritance’ through a desire to pass their familial information on to their own children. In the prologue to her memoir, Sister, Sister, which recounts the Holocaust experiences of her mother (rescued by Oskar Schindler) and her aunt, Anna Blay writes:

This book is not written for those who were there; they don’t need to be reminded. It is for their sons and daughters, and their sons and daughters, and their sons and daughters ... (Blay 1998, p. 11).

Mark Baker intended to write a book that converted his parents’ memories into historical fact. Initially convinced that he was ‘giving them back their memories’, he soon discovered that he was actually taking something for himself. Like Blay, he came to understand that his parents did not need his book, saying of its dedication, ‘It’s to my parents but it’s for my children’ (Stone 1997). Of his children he says, ‘I don’t want to scar them. I want them to remember so they’ll be responsible for the future’ (Paviour 1997). The future he speaks of is part of his ‘universalist’ perspective:

This is a different way to tell my family story. It’s actually the biblical way. The commandment to remember slavery in Egypt is always linked to the theme of social action: memory isn’t about revelling in your own sorrow, but is about empathising with others who are experiencing your slavery today (Harper Collins 1997, p. 4).

Baker requires that his children see beyond his family’s personal trauma, to be motivated to action by the suffering of others.
Berger also reports that second-generation texts raise a number of psychological issues in relationships between survivors and their children: 'separation anxiety, lack of parental respect for boundaries, a dismissiveness of children’s own emotional needs and fear of harming their children' (1997, p. 10). How are children to relate to these parents? Anna Blay’s experience is typical of her generation. ‘There were no words for my family’s loss and the torment they had endured’ (Blay 1998, p. 259). Considered ‘too young to understand’, Anna, like Mark Baker, was protected from her parent’s experiences so that they could ‘get on with their lives’ in their new country. She did not feel protected, however, but grew up believing that she was only ‘acceptable when [she] was happy, successful, achieving’ (p. 259). Any expressions of personal unhappiness, anger or feelings that mirrored her family’s pain triggered, in her parents, ‘too much personal anguish ever to be acknowledged’ (p. 259).

Though protected from the specifics of their parents’ experiences, Blay and her contemporaries suffer the effects of their parents’ emotional trauma from an early age. They suffer a confusion of emotions related to guilt. Guilt because they were unable to alleviate their parents’ suffering; guilt because they are alive when others are not; guilt generated by anger about a parent’s unreasonable response to an ordinary action or request by their child. Some, like Blay, need a space to be ‘bad’. She imagined a second identity, a naughty child free to commit acts such as ‘scribbling on walls, picking flowers from neighbours’ gardens and shouting at grown-ups’ (Blay 1998, p. 48), outside the role to which the real Anna felt constrained.

Lily Brett suffered similar confusion, acting out her fantasies of bad behaviour, creating idealised images of the ‘honourable’ dead relatives and comparing her childish self unfavourably with them. ‘I would have swapped my life with them’, she writes:
I knew they deserved it more than I did. For they were good. They had done nothing to
deserve their fate. And I was bad. I had done nothing to deserve my life. I stole, I forged
signatures, I shoplifted. It was clear to me that I was not grateful for the gift of life that had
been given to me ... I felt separated from the dead by my bad behaviour. And I felt joined to
them by genes and destiny ... I had to live for them. A life worthy of all of them. It was a
huge, overwhelming and impossible task. I felt my failure acutely' (Brett, 1997a, p. 231).

The paradox inherent in Brett’s anguished rhetoric is typical of the confusion
demonstrated in most of her adult writing, and particularly in her poetry where the
rawness of her love-hate relationship with her mother, as representative of the dead, is
most apparent.

While many children have been subjected to accounts of their parents’ ‘suffering’,
using as examples the depression, the deprivations of rationing during the war, or their
struggles of assimilation in a new country, such complaints could be quantified,
discussed and assimilated by the offspring. The Holocaust, however, could not be
countered in that way. Without the ability to dismiss their parents’ complaints, many
children felt under an obligation to live up to their parents’ expectations. The doctor,
lawyer or dentist child has become a cliché of modern Jewish folklore, yet the
survivors who often took menial work upon arrival in their adopted country had
dreams of success and financial security for their children. Within the shadow cast by
the Holocaust, their children felt pressure to comply. Brett’s father, she believed, was
disappointed that she had not studied at university. Her fiction is scattered with
characters whose careers are chosen to placate the desires of a parent. Baker’s mother
‘waltzed around the house’ with his brother’s first-year medical coat, truculently
accusing him twenty years later. ‘You should have finished medicine’ (Baker 1997,
p. 97), when he had followed another career path.
Like others of the second generation, Baker and his brother were frequently made aware of the deprivations experienced by his mother without being given coherent details. His mother’s suffering was compared with the heroines of the literature she loved. ‘If Tolstoy could tell my story ... Anna Karenina would have thrown herself under the train much earlier in the book,’ she says with black humour (p. 98). Yet it is her black depressions that terrorise her son and which he mimics in his own body: ‘The only pain I knew as a child was located deep in my stomach, a sharp dagger which frequently incapacitated me and only disappeared in my adult years after I left home and married’ (Baker 1997, pp. 98–9).

Brett believed that as a small child she had been exposed to knowledge of the horrific detail of her own mother’s life. Like others of the second generation she needed to excuse her mother’s excesses. An overweight Lily explains away her mother’s obsession with being slim as linked to Nazi caricatures of short fat Jews and to the preservation of humanity in the ghetto and camps. ‘Any Jew who was fat was eating the food of someone who was dying of starvation. My mother couldn’t bear greed’ (Brett 1997a, p. 161). A haircut at age 12 from which she ‘emerged a shorn pinhead’ (1997a, p. 166) was mimetic of her mother’s camp experience. Brett, like Baker, sought relief from the unresolved tensions of the relationship by leaving home.

Parental complaints that no one has suffered as they had form such a constant refrain as to become yet another cliché in the telling of second-generation stories. A parent’s pain is not easily dismissed by the second generation, however, when confronted by the knowledge of the Holocaust. Often, the details of a parent’s emotional suffering are only acknowledged through physical suffering. Children experience unspoken tensions through witnessing depression, headaches, isolation and interrupted conversations in foreign languages.
The facts of the Holocaust—gleaned from history books—may only be augmented by interrogation of their parents much later in life. As well, ‘taking pilgrimages to parents’ European birthplaces and to locations of death camps as well as to Israel serve as physical markers of second-generation Holocaust remembrance’ (Berger 1997, p. 3). Such symbolic journeys (often in concert with a parent) form a substantive part of the content of Australian second-generation stories. This is a major theme in the works of Lily Brett (in her works of fiction, poetry and nonfiction), Arnold Zable (Jewels and Ashes), Mark Baker (The Fiftieth Gate), Susan Varga, (Heddy and Me), Diane Armstrong (Mosaic) and Ramona Koval in her novel (The Samovar). Writing appears to have a threefold purpose for the second generation. It preserves the families’ stories for their own children and, through commercial publication, bears witness to the experience of their parents to the wider world. It also assists the writers to salvage their personal identities amidst the confusion of messages transmitted from survivors to their children.

Memorial candles: the emotional burden of being someone else

Part of the emotional burden of the second generation, Berger suggests, can be clarified by the work of Israeli psychotherapist Dina Wardi, who observes that survivors’ children may be viewed as ‘memorial candles’ by their parents (Berger 1997, p. 44). This special signification creates a ‘burden of participating in his parents’ emotional world to a much greater extent than any of his brothers or sisters’ (Berger 1997, p. 192) and can affect the parent–child relationship in two ways. Firstly, children see

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42 According to Orthodox Jewish faith, Yahrzeit is observed each year, using the Hebrew calendar, on the anniversary of a death. Custom dictates that Memorial (Yahrzeit) candles, which will burn for at least 24 hours, are lit the evening Yahrzeit begins. Memorial is also associated with making contributions to charity in memory of the loved one (Drazen 1999).
themselves as 'replacement' children for older siblings who have died during the Holocaust. In her first collection of stories *Things Could be Worse*, for example, sixteen year-old Jack tells Brett's protagonist, Lola, that:

he didn't think he was Mina's real son. He thought the boy in the photograph was Mina's real son. The boy in the photograph was never mentioned in the Zelman house. Jack didn't even know his name (Brett 1990b, p. 189).

As representatives of the dead, the children of survivors may feel a special responsibility for their parent's emotional state. Both Lily Brett and Mark Baker demonstrate this 'special' relationship with their parents, being the one of two siblings who experience the brunt of their parents' (and in particular their mother's) neediness.43

Brett uses the image of the memorial candle in *Too Many Men*. Her protagonist Ruth Rothwax had carried a candle unnecessarily for years when she travelled. In Poland, the night before she discovers that she has an older brother, she lights the candle. A feeling of calmness overcomes her. She dreams, not of lost or hungry babies (experienced in a recurring nightmare), but of a well-nourished baby, prefiguring an understanding, at last, of her mother's demonstrable ambivalence: 'Her own birth, Ruth thought, must have been a nightmare for her mother. Another baby. Another baby to lose' (2000, p. 706).

Secondly, children of survivors demonstrate a belief in the importance of the role of children as an antidote to the legacy of the Holocaust and the death of relatives. Brett

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43 Alan Berger's case studies revealed survivors as flawed parents. Both parents, he suggests, are 'overprotective and remote' and where the novels do discriminate it is the mothers who 'dispense compassion' while the father remains 'emotionally unavailable' to his children (Berger 1997). The Australian experience appears more diverse. Neither Brett nor Baker have aloof fathers, in fact they often intervene to protect or humour their children during moments of conflict with the other parent.
describes her children as 'a symbol of survival' for her parents in a way that she could never be. 'They made my parents happy' (Brett 1997a, p. 290). Elsewhere she speculates that she had her first child at 22 because she was anxious to replace the sons her mother had lost (1997a, p. 4). In the essay collection *In Full View*, Brett delights at discovering familial likeness with dead relatives:

In Israel Spindler’s eyes I could see my mother’s eyes and my eyes. In the future, in a slightly different form, they would appear in my daughter. Israel Spindler’s mouth and cheekbones would turn up in my son (Brett 1997a, p. 222).

Brett uses the idea of seeing dead relatives in the faces of children often in her fictions, suggesting a link with Wardi’s ‘special mission’ of children perceived as memorial candles serving ‘as the link which on the one hand preserves the past and on the other hand joins it to the present and the future’ (Berger 1997, p. 192).

Baker also sees children as important links in the process of knowing the past and ensuring the preservation of this knowledge. He sees purpose in witnessing by second (and third) generation survivors who share a responsibility to ‘shout out in the face of any injustice’ (Harper Collins 1997, p. 4). Berger suggests that some families ascribe to their children ‘near magical powers’ that will negate the devastation and pain of the Holocaust (1997, p. 3). Others know that simply the act of producing children subverts the granting to Hitler of a ‘posthumous victory’ (Novick 2000, p. 7). The survivor’s children struggle to find their own form of identity, requiring answers to questions raised during childhood. For some, the discovery that they are not alone, that there is a community of second-generation witnesses, is the key.

**Sharing common stories**

In her exploration of the lives of a number of children of American and Israeli Holocaust survivors, Helen Epstein (1988) has also attempted to record a set of
common definitive characteristics for the second generation. *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations with Sons and Daughters of Survivors* is part memoir, part a series of case studies and part investigative journalism. Much of Epstein’s insight is echoed in the stories of Australia’s second generation. Epstein describes the importance of knowing of the existence of a peer group with whom she felt she shared a common story, and who could help her to understand ‘the pictures, words, my parent’s glances, becoming loaded with weight’ (1988, p. 13) in reflecting on and trying to articulate what she characterised as her unusual and isolating childhood experience. As the eldest of three children of parents who had escaped post-war Europe she had to cope with her father’s violent moods and her mother’s periodic bouts of deep depression, with few childhood insights into their causes. With maturity, she found herself obsessed with finding an explanation for the dark corners of her childhood and recognised that this might best be done in concert with others who had suffered similar experiences. ‘I set out to find a group of people who, like me, were possessed by a history they had never lived. I wanted to ask them questions, so that I could reach the most elusive part of myself’, writes Epstein (1988, p. 14).

The children of survivors, Epstein discovered, felt different. The children of survivors felt as she did. Furthermore they believed the children of other Jewish migrant groups who were not Holocaust survivors did not feel this difference. Far from accepting the attitude common to their parents, of keeping quiet about their experiences and creating new lives in new countries, these children wanted to explore the issues of their difference. They wanted to understand what had made their childhood different, what had driven their parents’ moods and actions; they wanted to understand themselves as individuals and as part of the community of survivors. These
second-generation Americans actively sought out their parents’ stories in order to find an intersection with their own.

Epstein’s empirical research convinced her that the second-generation survivors developed a unique psychopathology as a result of living in Holocaust survivor families. In support of her theory she cites research by Vivian Rakoff and John Sigal suggesting the ‘children of survivors tended to report greater feelings of alienation than the children in the control group’ (p. 208). Epstein’s conclusion, however, is challenged by Sigal’s explanation of this apparent discrepancy. The differences, he explained, resulted from parental preoccupation. Survivor parents, he found, are an extremely preoccupied group, preoccupied with the unending mourning of the loss of their parents, siblings, etc., and with the various psychological and physical illnesses that have beset them since the war. Because they are so preoccupied, they respond to their children’s normal robust activity and need for control as an interference with this mourning process or as an extra burden imposed on their already taxed resources. As a result, the children become anxious and more disruptive (pp. 208–209).

Tom Kramer, an academic and Convener of the Australian Association of Jewish Holocaust Survivors and Descendants, further discounts Epstein’s view, quoting more recent US opinion that ‘there is no measurable manifestation of psycho-pathology in US children of Holocaust survivors … beyond that of the general American Jewish population’ (2002, p. 120). He raises the proposition that the Holocaust (particularly in families willing to discuss their experiences) has ‘filled a vacuum left by the erosion of Jewish identity’ (p. 120). He suggests that the association of the Holocaust with identity, and indeed with a negative identity (‘Jew Equals Woe’), explains the antagonism of some survivor children to the study of their parents’ past and concludes that such children reject not their Jewish heritage but ‘an identity based on victimization and suffering’ (p. 121). Lily Brett’s ambivalent attitude to her Jewishness
('I knew I was Jewish. We had been punished profoundly for being Jewish' [Brett 1997a, p. 255]), can be partially interpreted through Kramer's insight. Kramer's argument is useful also in understanding the denial by Doris Brett of any intrusion by the Holocaust into the Bretts' family life (see Chapter 6).

Regardless of the conflicting conclusions of Epstein and Kramer, there is little doubt that the writers amongst the second-generation (both in Australia and the USA) see themselves as damaged by their experiences of growing up in the family of Holocaust survivors. Some, like Lily Brett, have used their writing about this experience as a form of therapeutic exploration and self-understanding. Others, like Baker, have recorded their history as a way of using the empathy generated by their own suffering to assist others. 'It doesn't matter if it's Rwanda, or Bosnia, or even just a homeless child, a single starving refugee', he writes (Harper Collins 1997, p. 4). Brett and Baker, as representative of their generation, explore through their books what it means to be Jewish in a post-Holocaust world.

**Identity and the naming of Australian Jewishness**

Although significant opposition was voiced to Jewish post-war immigration, 'more Jews were admitted into Australia after the war than to any other country, per head of population, except Palestine/Israel' (Golvan 1990, p. 2). While many migrant survivors chose assimilation within the wider community, others made efforts to retain a Jewish identity in the new land. Golvan links this with an obligation to remember those who were murdered as well as to a desire for identification with the newly created state of Israel. Australian Jewry took the *Jerusalem Post* on a weekly basis, established the teaching of Hebrew in their schools and strongly supported Jewish cultural activities:
An Australian Jewish play or book is not just of value as play or book but amounts to an event in the life of the community, with audiences supporting the work not merely for its content, but also because of what it represents in communal terms (Golvan 1990, p. 100).

This communal support for Jewish cultural activity has, I believe, had a significant effect on the establishment of the genre of second-generation writing and its publication. In particular, the strong cultural links within Melbourne’s Polish–Jewish community have been instrumental in establishing the careers of the pioneering second-generation writers Lily Brett and Arnold Zable, whose first works were published by Jewish publisher Henry Rosenbloom at Scribe in 1986 and 1991 respectively.

Though most parents had remained silent about their Holocaust experiences, their Australian children chose autobiographical themes for their first literary works. This contrasted with their American peers, whose first creative works, as Berger reminds us, began to appear in the 1980s and were mostly works of poetry or first novels (1997 p. 19). In Australia, Lily Brett and Ramona Koval initially published poetry and novels, but other writers (Armstrong, Baker, Blay, Varga and Zable) chose memoir and biography, using their parents’ stories as a way of exploring their own identity and Jewish culture.

The American second generation ‘writings and films’, Berger observes, ‘comprise a secular Midrash\textsuperscript{44} on post-Auschwitz Jewish identity’ (1997, p. 9). Researching and writing the familial stories provides opportunities for the second generation to explore

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\textsuperscript{44} Midrash is based on a Hebrew word meaning ‘interpretation’ or ‘exegesis’. Though Midrash may refer to an interpretation of a biblical verse it may equally refer to a book that is a compilation of Midrashic teaching. ‘Midrash minimizes the authority of the wording of the text as communication, normal language. It places the focus on the reader and the personal struggle of the reader to reach an acceptable moral application of the text’ (soc.culture.jewish n.d.).
hidden family histories and to alleviate their 'compulsive need to learn about the Holocaust' (Berger 1997, p. 2). With a growing coterie of second-generation writers achieving Australian publication throughout the 1990s, the genre established its own legitimacy. A peer group—other children of survivors who felt as they did, wrote as they did—justified the public expression of what was still considered by many as private business. In the post-modern age, characterised by autonomy and individualism, the second-generation writers have also found comfort in the rituals of Jewish culture as a method for confirming personal identity. The individual compulsion to write sparked by a desire to make sense of the Holocaust experience imperceptibly metamorphosed into a search for Jewish identity in a post-Holocaust world.

The establishment of identity is an especially complex matter for the migrant who is by definition transported from a familiar context into the unknown. Identity can be perceived in a number of ways: religion, race or culture (the latter seemingly the most difficult to define). Although individuals and groups perceive their own identity (self-identify), they are also subject to an imposed identity, nowhere more obvious than in the identity imposed by Hitler on large numbers of secular people who had hitherto considered themselves as German, Polish, Italian, French or Hungarian nationals. Defining Jewish identity in the late 20th century seems more complex than it is to most other migrant peoples. The Jewish diaspora has no common country of origin, race, language or cultural practice. The religious practice of Judaism is not universally shared throughout the Jewish diaspora, especially post-Holocaust. In their countries of post-war reception, nominally Christian and Anglo-Celtic, the Jews were initially allocated religious status.
In Australia the government policy of multiculturalism, established in 1973, has created an identification system that classifies groups based on 'ethnic' identity rather than by their country of birth or their religion. This has made the classification of the Australian Jewish people within the system problematic and has tended to foreground the Holocaust as a unifying factor. Jon Stratton explores matters of Jewish identity in *Coming out Jewish*, concluding that:

The ideology of ethnicity is central to multiculturalism. In order to become an 'ethnic group,' a community has to fulfill a number of criteria. Most importantly, as identified in government pamphlets concerned with multiculturalism, communities should ideally have a single language and a single national origin. Jews have neither. Are they, then, an ethnic group, or perhaps a religious group? In this way the ambivalent status of Jews replays the Enlightenment debates over whether Jews were a religious or a national grouping ... the Holocaust has come to stand in for a national origin, providing Jews with a common reference point outside of Australia (Stratton 2000, p. 220).

Jewish identification within the wider Australian community presents complex issues. In order for Australian Jewry to conform within the framework of Australian multiculturalism, the Holocaust has become the unifying signifier that defines Jewish 'ethnicity'. However, this very conformity creates further problems because the predominant discourse of ethnicity is a discourse of race. 'It is not an irony that the racially motivated Holocaust should be a key source of postmodern Jewish ethnicisation', writes Stratton (2000, p. 244). Jews, Stratton argues, must represent themselves and/or allow themselves to be represented as an ethnic group within the multicultural society, but 'they do so within what is still a fundamentally European-based cultural order. Within this order anti-Semitic racialism remains a possibility that is never too far away' (2000, p. 244). Thus what confers an ethnicity upon Jewishness is also a potential threat to its existence. The Jews, through their only unifying experience, the Holocaust, are granted European status and thus the benefits of
'whiteness', along with other Europeans of previously ambivalent 'white' status such as post-war migrants from Italy and Greece (Stratton 2000). Due to the large number of survivor immigrants and their offspring living in Australia the Holocaust does appear to provide a unifying experience. Though it is by no means a universal experience for Australian Jews there has been significant implicit pressure upon those outside the experience (particularly in the secular Jewish community) to conform to this representation.

Writer and fifth-generation Australian Jew, Andrea Goldsmith, suffered some trepidation when asked to contribute to the anthology of Australian Jewish writing, *Enough Already*, published in 1999. Goldsmith struggles to find an appropriate and personally acceptable identity as an Australian Jew in a society dominated by Holocaust images. Her Jewishness, she explains, made her feel different from other Australians, yet she felt unable to identify with that overwhelming symbol of Jewishness in Australia, the Holocaust. She writes:

Being a Jew inspired guilt, insecurity and fear. The Jew in me required vigilance, the Jew in me required defending. *The Jew in me*, but the wrong sort of Jew. So I set out to repair it, constructing what I believed was the only acceptable identity for a Jew in the aftermath of the Holocaust (Goldsmith 1999, p. 3).

Goldsmith pursued Holocaust images through books, film and personal testimonies, through Auschwitz, Treblinka, Bergen-Belsen, Theresienstadt, Buchenwald, Dachau and the Warsaw ghetto. She made, as well, an obligatory visit to the 'tasteful memorials of prowling guilt that were springing up across Europe' (p. 4), before returning to Australia and revisiting her roots in another fashion. 'Bear witness, Primo Levi said. I had to bear witness and I wasn't even there' (p. 5). She settled in Carlton close to where her grandfather's family had lived when they arrived in Australia. 'I
was collecting memories, I was searching for history, I was trying to construct foundations to what I was increasingly experiencing as an illegitimate life’ (p. 5).

Goldsmith, eclipsed by the ‘canon’ of survivor and second-generation writing, felt obliged to pursue her Jewish identity through the only course she felt was available in the secular society in which she lived. In an attempt to locate for herself a legitimate Australian–Jewish identity she had followed the second-generation pilgrimage.

Given Stratton’s (2000) argument concerning the ambivalent accommodation of Jewish people within Australian multiculturalism, how do second-generation survivors define their identity? For many of their parents a religious Jewish identity lost its meaning, along with their belief in God. Others, prior to migration, had been assimilated into the secular societies within which they lived. Still others had acquired a shifting national identity depending upon the country they lived in and the language they used, however transiently, to survive the war years.

The death camps were places where a conscious attempt was made, deliberately and systematically, to strip individuals of their humanity, their ethics and their lives. ‘One is truly led to think that, in the Third Reich, the best choice, the choice imposed from above, was the one that entailed the greatest amount of affliction, the greatest amount of waste, or physical and moral suffering’ (Levi 1989, p. 96). How could a notion of a personal God (saving one and not another) survive under these circumstances? Primo Levi, an assimilated Italian Jew, was horrified to witness a fellow prisoner praying for deliverance from a ‘selection’:

Can Kuhn fail to realize that next time it will be his turn? Does Kuhn not understand that what has happened today is an abomination, which no propitiatory prayer, no pardon, no expiation by the guilty, which nothing at all in the power of man can ever clean again?

If I was God, I would spit at Kuhn’s prayer (Levi 1987, p. 136).
In later writings, Levi admitted he had felt tempted to ‘seek refuge in prayer’. His explanation for rejecting this course, couched as it is in the language of the believer, seems applicable also to believers under the same circumstances:

A prayer under these conditions would have been not only absurd (what rights could I claim? And from whom?) but blasphemous, obscene, laden with the greatest impiety of which a non-believer is capable. I rejected that temptation: I knew that otherwise were I to survive, I would have to be ashamed of it (Levi 1989, p. 118).

Despite having concluded that ‘if God existed the Holocaust could not have happened’ (Berger 1997, p. 21), the second generation finds significance in the keeping of Jewish rituals. The Shabbat, Pesach and Chanukah, centering on family and the ritualised preparation of food, are imbued with historical significance. ‘Theirs is an applied theology’, Berger explains, ‘whose focus is on deeds, but which the second-generation witnesses connect both to the Holocaust and Jewish history’ (1997, p. 21). This generation, as acknowledged earlier, sees special significance in their children, in the familial line. In defiance of Hitler’s purpose of obliteration, they seek means to preserve for and within their own children a sense of being Jewish.

**In search of the exiled self**

Menachem Z. Rosensaft, Chairperson of the International Network of Children of Jewish Holocaust Survivors, has said that the second generation have a

‘particular sensitivity’ to the war and the Holocaust. Consequently, this generation has a ‘specific duty’ to share its awareness: ‘to ensure that others, Jews and gentiles alike, understand why remembrance of these events is important’ (Berger 1997, p. 8).

The Australian second-generation writers demonstrate, through the acts of writing and publication, an understanding of this special duty, to their children, to themselves and to the world. As adults, they also demonstrate greater understanding and
acceptance of their parents' behaviour, managing as well to reconcile their own feelings of guilt. In writing and owning their stories, this generation comes to terms with their Jewish identification at a time when orthodox religious belief (the foundation of their cultural heritage) has, for most, become impossible through the horror of the Holocaust.

Most writers do not directly deal with the issue of what is transferred from parent to child in survivor families, or the mechanisms of transferral. Generally the second-generation writers accept the transmission of Holocaust trauma, explaining its existence through anecdotal evidence. Most write of the confusion of childhood memories of unexplained parental behaviour, of silence, of feeling excluded from terrible secrets. Anna Blay reflects upon a childhood fantasy of owning a 'silent box' that 'no one around me would open' (1998 p. 92). Perhaps it is no coincidence that Epstein (1988) also imagined the inexplicable secrets of her childhood to be contained within an inaccessible 'box' (p. 9) or that Lily Brett uses the 'buried box' image (containing the secret photograph of an unknown brother) in Too Many Men (2000, p. 698). Brett also documents the tensions created between one sister who feels the traumatic transmission from parent to child (described by Epstein and Berger) and another who denies it: 'My darling sister wasn't in the camp, so why is she being interviewed? My father was in Auschwitz not Golda. He was affected, not Golda' (1991, p. 36). What then causes the disruption between parent and child, and what can explain rifts between siblings as a result of differing perceptions about the effects of the Holocaust within their family?

Australian child psychiatrist, George Halasz, himself of the second generation, has endeavoured to explore the physiological mechanism by which the children of survivors can suffer 'vicariously' from their parents' trauma. Extrapolating from
Daniel Stern's work on the 'ordinary' infant's psychological development in the first fifteen months of life, Halasz develops an hypothesis of the 'exiled self' (of the child of survivors) linked to moments of 'attunement' and 'misattunement' that regulate the emotional attachment patterns between parent and child. He explains that:

Moments of 'misattunement' occur when a care-giver's attention is emotionally uncoupled for a time longer than the child can tolerate. The child's level of increasing anxiety and frustration usually elicits the caregiver's 'reparative' response. For example, the care-giver can return to soothe and 'repair' the distressed infant by making face-to-face contact, exchanging smiles, vocalizing, holding, comforting or caressing until the child 'settles' (Halasz 2001).

It is quite feasible that, with survivors preoccupied by the horror they had seen and suffered, preoccupied, as was Brett's mother by a desperate desire to escape from Germany after the war (1999b), misattunement occurs frequently and is not followed by what Halasz refers to as 'empathetic contact'. Under such circumstances he considers that the disruption induced to the infant's developmental phase may progress to a later dysfunction. Further, Halasz hypothesises, engagement with their parents' lives through memoir and publication, is in fact a confrontation with the misattunement, a way of engaging the restorative phase, a 'return journey' from the child's exiled self. Though this theoretical basis for the transmission of trauma remains unproven, it resonates with the lives of the second generation as described in their memoirs and autobiographical novels.

During the launch of Kathy Grinblat's *Children of the Shadows* (2002), a collection of writings by the Australian second generation to which Halasz was a contributor, he confirmed the reality of issues raised in Berger (1997). Halasz (2002) effectively summarised the feeling of being a second-generation survivor and writer. Halasz's concerns parallel many of the questions raised at the beginning of the chapter and,
indeed, many of the questions to which answers are sought by the second generation through their writing. From his professional persona as a child psychiatrist, Halasz questions his ability to contextualise his personal second-generation experience:

how do I personalize what I professionally know about Holocaust survivor families? A personal view creates a different situation as the ‘other’ becomes the ‘self’. Can I simply transpose others’ experiences to make them mine, or do I have something unique that is ‘mine’? (Halasz 2002).

The survival of their parents, Halasz continues, is an achievement ‘forever beyond [the] reach’ of their children, whose every success must appear ‘mundane’ beside this feat. Yet the children, too, pursue worthwhile goals. Halasz links the pursuit by the second generation of ‘the ghosts in the nursery’ (the genesis of the exiled self) with worthwhile achievement and pays tribute to the adult children who seek repair of the disruption that has occurred through their parents’ preoccupations. The courage of the second generation in exploring the trauma of the past, he writes, is celebrated in Grinblat’s book, which restores voices to the infants who have dared to ‘emerge from beyond the wall of silence’. The mechanisms for their ‘coming out’ have been the research, writing and publishing that provide for both public and private expressions of the reconciliation with the exiled self. They have a story to tell, Halasz claims: ‘It is called “My story”’ (Halasz 2002).

Through an exploration of their own lives within the context of Holocaust remembrance the second generation have confronted their fears and emerged as published writers. In so doing they fulfill a number of imperatives (Berger 1997; Epstein 1988; Stratton 2000): an exploration of personal identity, an act of witness and an affirmation of their culture. In seeking publication, second-generation writers were not only subjected to the commercial pressures of commodification, they are also subjected to the influences of survivor testimony and its critical discourse. The past,
therefore, impinges again upon the second generation’s ability to emerge from their ‘dangerous’ silence, this time by proscribing the limits of acceptable Holocaust representation. The thorough study of Holocaust discourse by children of survivors makes it impossible to evade this pervasive influence, which is the topic of Chapter 4.
Poetic influence is the sense—amazing, agonizing, delighting—of other poets, as felt in the depths of the all-but-perfect solipsist, the potentially strong poet. For the poet is condemned to learn his profoundest yearnings through an awareness of other selves (Bloom 1973, p. 25).

The Anxiety of Influence (1973), Harold Bloom’s account of the ambivalent relationship between poets and their precursors, suggests that all poets are affected by the work of others, in particular by the work of ‘strong’ precursors. The delight of poets in the work of others has both positive and negative aspects. Whilst expanding their repertoire it also possesses the potential to confine them within the influence, forcing emulation of a forebear. Bloom categorises a variety of responses, mostly antithetical to the ‘strong’ poet forerunners, but which readily demonstrate the influence of the strong poet and the anxiety it creates.

The canonisation of Holocaust literature

Bloom’s model provides insights into what has effectively become a ‘sacred’ canon of Holocaust literature established within Western culture, and the influence of this canon on second-generation writers. The rules that govern Holocaust portrayal were established by early survivor writers, such as Elie Wiesel and Primo Levi (first published in English in the 1960s), and supported in academic and public discourse by commentators such as Terrence Des Pres and Bruno Bettelheim, commencing in the 1970s, and Laurence Langer and Shoshana Felman during the 1990s. In the Australian context, writer, historian and public intellectual Robert Manne has assumed this supporting mantle, becoming especially prominent following the Demidenko/Darville
scandal during the mid-1990s (see below). More recently historian Inga Clendinnen, in assuming the role of ‘outsider’, has attempted to objectively redefine an appropriate discursive methodology for Holocaust memorial, in Reading the Holocaust (1998).

The canonisation of Holocaust literature has meant that by explicit (published commentary and critical review) and implicit (familial and community influence perceived as coercion or threat) means, certain kinds of writing about the Holocaust are deemed more appropriate than others by successive commentators: that is, they fall within the prescribed limits attributed to the earliest writers. Though there has been continuing debate about the constitution of an appropriate form of Holocaust testimony and memorial writing, the need to provide such specificity has been demonstrably important to contemporary commentators.

The establishment of a canon of Holocaust literature is inherently problematic. Though controversy accompanies the selection of canonical works for any cultural or educative purpose, a canon is a useful device that provides an agreed set of references around which to encourage critical discourse. In Representing the Holocaust (1994), Dominick LaCapra posits a nexus between investigative and reflective practices (historical research and psychoanalytical theory) as a method for exploring Holocaust representation. The Holocaust, however, defies critical scrutiny. Along with its early literature the event itself has become ‘canonized’, a process that allows certain traumatic events and issues ‘to be avoided, marginalized, repressed or denied’

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45 Novick (2000) suggests that the canonisation of the Holocaust (which he ascribes to the influence of Elie Wiesel) means that it is portrayed as a ‘sacred’ event, resistant to probing in terms other than those framed by good and evil. Canonisation also employs the specifically Christian idea of the redemptive power of suffering.
(LaCapra 1994, p. 23). This, LaCapra continues, ‘forecloses the possibility of mourning, renders impossible a critical engagement with the past, and impedes the recognition of problems (including the return of the repressed)’, creating difficulties for Germans and Jews (though not exclusively) in the postwar period (p. 23). The issues that exemplify LaCapra’s theoretical position include the ‘fracture’ of language, whereby everyday words like ‘hunger’, ‘tiredness’, ‘fear’, ‘pain’ and ‘winter’ took on different meanings within the death camps. Primo Levi writes of the Lager (camp) giving birth to a ‘new, harsh language’ to express the privations suffered by the Häftlings (prisoners) (1987, p. 129). Levi feared survivors would be without an appropriately descriptive language with which to adequately represent their experience to the wider world, forcing them into silence. Also contained within LaCapra’s scenario is the disruption to chronology and memory highlighted by Laurence Langer’s oral testimony project (1995 pp. 16–18), whereby survivors are unable to reconstruct their traumatic experiences in a chronological order. The canonisation of the Holocaust, argues LaCapra, has removed a framework that would support discourse, discouraging critical debate and categorisation, repelling change and re-evaluation. Within the artificiality created by such a vacuum the ‘strong poets’ can inspire and intimidate. ‘[Jean Améry’s] line “No bridge led from death in Auschwitz to Death in Venice” must have been engraved on my memory as nothing less than an epiphany, so often does it recur in my own writing’, explains Langer (1995, p. ix). Robert Manne was similarly influenced by the writings of Primo Levi: ‘Of the many books of such a

46 Here LaCapra engages with the Freudian concepts of ‘melancholia and mourning’ and ‘the return of the repressed’. Coming to terms with the trauma of extreme events involves the work of mourning, but because the traumatic event has been repressed, the victim is caught in a perpetual melancholia, a precursor to, but also inhibitor of, the state of mourning. What is not confronted and worked through within the secure therapeutic space (by a process of mourning) is denied and becomes repressed, returning in dreams or flashbacks.
kind I have read, Levi's *If This Is a Man* strikes me as the wisest, the deepest, the most humane' (Manne 1999b). 47

Due to the difficulties caused by the unrepresentable nature of the Holocaust, survivors and critics have agonised over an appropriate way to keep memory alive for future generations. A major issue has been a fear of the increasing commodification of literary production leading to the 'hollywoodisation' of the Holocaust demonstrated particularly through the mass media. Thus commentators vehemently resisted filmic renditions such as *Sophie's Choice*, *Schindler's List*, and the miniseries *Holocaust* (Langer 1995; Novick 2000) and lauded Claude Lanzmann's 13 hour *Shoah*, which consisted only of eyewitness testimony (Felman 1992b).

**Culture, politics and the codification of Holocaust stories**

Despite the existential difficulties of Holocaust representation, contemporary critics continue to present an ongoing discourse on the formation of the canon of Holocaust literature. Titles by such critics include *The Holocaust and Collective Memory* by Peter Novick (2000) and *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literature of Trauma* by Kalí Tal (1996). Both Novick's and Tal's texts present evidence of the mechanisms by which Holocaust survivors' stories are perceived, influenced and used by dominant cultures. Both writers attest that perceptions of the Holocaust alter over time, and that changes owe more to contemporary culture than to any intrinsic details of the Holocaust itself, and are 'always political' (Tal 1996 p. 247).

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47 Manne was born in Australia to Jewish refugee parents who 'were among those fortunate enough to make their escape from Europe and to be accepted by Australia before the German government decided upon the policy of the extermination of the entire Jewish people' (Manne 2001, p. 1). His grandparents, however, perished in the Holocaust (Manne 1996, p. 106).
Tal seeks to situate herself ‘in opposition to the dominant discourse’ (1996 p. 5), exploring how the effects of trauma on the individual are revised by the political and cultural communities within which the survivor resides. The Holocaust, she argues, has become a metonym, not for the actual series of events that occurred in Germany and the occupied territories before and during World War II, but for the set of symbols that reflect the formal codification of that experience (Tal 1996, p. 6).

The codification of the Holocaust experience, Tal continues, has prescribed a set of literary conventions around the ‘Holocaust text’, establishing a formula that is ‘reproduced in endless recombination to provide us with a steady stream of additions to the genre’ (p. 6). The cultural reception of the Holocaust has become, through repetition, something that now needs no amplification. ‘Drawn from religious terminology and spelled with a capital “H,”’ the term Holocaust is set apart from descriptions of other man-made evils, such as slavery, genocide, and oppression’ (Tal 1996, p. 7), becoming a new kind of precedent against which all future ‘unrepresentable’ events can be named.

In contrast with LaCapra’s ‘return of the repressed’ thesis, Peter Novick (2000) disputes that the Holocaust should be read within a Freudian frame as traumatically ‘repressed material’ only recently reemerging into private (and thus public) consciousness. Novick views the emergence of Holocaust consciousness in the United States during the 1990s via sociologist Maurice Halbwachs’ idea of ‘collective memory’. Rather than consisting of shared historical knowledge, collective memory simplifies, presenting past events from a common ideological perspective, which has the effect of reducing events to ‘mythic archetypes’, almost to slogans. ‘Typically’, Novick writes, ‘a collective memory ... is understood to express some eternal or essential truth about the group—usually tragic’ (2000, p. 4). Like Tal, Novick sees the
visibility of Holocaust remembrance as serving political as well as cultural aims. At various times in Jewish history different views of events have been fashionable. Novick suggests, and while memories surrounding the Exodus from Egypt and the destruction of the Temple have a permanence in Jewish consciousness, other memories, the suicide at Masada for instance, were 'absent from Jewish memory for almost two thousand years' (pp. 4–5), not because of the traumatic nature of such memories, but because of traditional Judaism's focus on survival and scriptural study. In the 20th century, however, a revival of the heroic stand at Masada became relevant to the self-representation of the Zionists, enabling the emergence of a new 'collective memory' (p. 5). Contemporary imperatives dictate what is remembered and how that memory is represented. Novick explains:

Instead of viewing collective memory as the past working its will on the present, Halbwachs explored the way in which present concerns determine what of the past we remember and how we remember it (Novick 2000, p. 3).

Novick argues that during the thirty years following World War II widespread Holocaust remembrance was repressed for reasons peculiar to American foreign policy and the Cold War. He describes the establishment during the 1980s of Holocaust memorials, and the collection of survivor testimony during the 1990s, linking this with a change in foreign policy and a time of relative safety for the Jewish establishment, allowing it to become separately visible within the American community. Directly following the war, support for the founding of the state of Israel was enhanced by Holocaust remembrance. Once Israel was an established fact, there was a distinct focus away from the victim culture that highlighted the powerlessness of Holocaust victims to influence their own destiny, and towards the Israelis who could successfully defend their territory. Following the emergence of Russia as a superpower the focus shifted
from German totalitarianism to Communist totalitarianism. With the requirement for the NATO alliance to balance the communist bloc, it was expedient to welcome the Germans as allies and the Holocaust thus had to be minimised in American public consciousness. The re-emergence of the Holocaust into American consciousness in the 1990s coincided with the end of the cold war and the loss of Soviet superpower status (Novick 2000).

For over fifty years then, the Holocaust has been an object for ideological usage by the dominant culture within which survivors and their offspring live. The politics of the day dictated different visibilities of the Holocaust itself and different representations of its victims. Within the overall objectives prescribed by the dominant culture, the survivors and commentators sought to classify the important features they believed would ultimately define appropriate forms of witness into the future.

**Representing the 'unrepresentable'**

Ideas encompassing portrayal of the Holocaust within the Western literary culture as a 'sacred' event were raised in the 1970s by Terrence Des Pres (a Catholic literary critic) and Bruno Bettelheim (a Jewish survivor and psychoanalyst) in an antagonistic debate conducted over a number of years through books, papers and the public forums of the *New Yorker* and *Social Research* magazines (Tal 1996). Bettelheim took a psychoanalytic approach, requiring the reintegration of survivors into their community, a process of 'humanizing' the survivor by placing their response to trauma within the 'context of normal human response' (Tal 1996, p. 38). Des Pres saw the survivor experience as creating outsiders, 'frozen forever in the role of Hell's witness' (p. 38), for whom the trauma never ends. Both commentators, however, sought to find an appropriate 'model survivor' that would facilitate generalisation from the particular
‘ideal’ to an appropriate portrayal of the universal survivor experience. Although they differed markedly in their choice of the kind of individual experience that could be universalised, and drew quite different conclusions about the acceptable portrayal of the Holocaust, both Bettelheim and Des Pres attest to the fact that some meaning must be attached to survival. Tal explains:

In Des Pres’ model, the survivor is destroyed as an individual, but can serve as a voice that redeems the collective through testimony, changing the moral order. For Bettelheim, conscience is always individual and ‘autonomous,’ and the survivor bears witness to the truth and value of a moral order in which life is not meaningless (Tal 1996, p. 38).

Bettelheim, who claimed his authority as a writer and commentator on Holocaust issues because of his status as a Holocaust survivor and a ‘scientist’, posited that survivor guilt demonstrated ‘a humanity’, indestructible even by the ‘abomination’ of the concentration camp experience. He applied a psychoanalytical approach to his Holocaust writings, claiming that ‘the prisoners’ behavior in the camps followed a model of regression to childlike behaviors and eventual identification with the camp authorities (parent figures)’ (Tal 1996, p. 33). Elsewhere Tal describes him as believing that ‘one must take a firm stand against evil, even if it meant risking one’s life’ (p. 35). Bettleheim required portrayals of the Holocaust to allow good to triumph over evil in some small way, believing that audiences must be allowed to ‘truly embrace goodness’ and ‘to fully reject evil’ in order to avoid a threat to ‘the foundations of our culture’ (p. 35). Des Pres rejected Bettelheim’s survivor status, claiming that his analysis was shaped by an ‘agenda to compare the survivor’s experience with the predicament of modern man in “mass society”’ (Tal 1996, p. 33). Furthermore, Des Pres stated that Bettelheim was ‘interested in recuperating the (Judeo) Christian world view which rests on the principle that “survival in itself, not dedicated to something else” is both meaningless and ignoble’ (p. 33). Des Pres
rejected the psychoanalytic approach with its assumption of symbolic behaviour, 
arguing instead that ‘human behavior in extremity is action stripped of symbolism, 
with only one level of meaning—survival at all costs’ (p. 32). Bettelheim, concluded 
Des Pres, was ‘wrong (and a “false” survivor)’, and that his own preferred archetype, 
Elie Wiesel, is ‘right (and a “true” survivor)’ (p. 44).

Belief in the collective experience of survivors allows Des Pres to envisage Wiesel 
as the ‘voice’ of the survivor, reducing survivors from individuals to a ‘moral type’. 
Des Pres saw the act of survival in itself as meaningful and dissented from 
Bettelheim’s view on the importance of survival being dedicated to a higher calling. 
Des Pres enunciated three principles that he considered constituted ‘respectable study’ 
of the Holocaust:

1. The Holocaust shall be represented, in its totality, as a unique event or special case or 
knight of its own, above or below or apart from history.

2. Representations of the Holocaust shall be as accurate, as exacting, as unfailingly faithful 
as possible to the facts and circumstances of the event itself, without change or manipulation 
for any reason—artistic or literary reasons included.

3. The Holocaust shall be approached as a solemn, or even sacred event, admitting of no 
response that obscures its enormity or dishonors its dead (Tal 1966, pp. 31–2).48

Tal labels Des Pres’ argument for a ‘sacred status’ to survivor testimony as a form of 
‘religious romanticism’. His attempt to ‘mythologize the survivor’ mistakenly assumes 
that a collective survivor experience creates a single survivor voice, whereas the 
opposite might equally be true:

48 Tal provides as a reference for this quote: Terrence Des Pres, 'Holocaust Laughter?' in The Writer into 
since he or she was traumatized as a member of a group, the survivor might have a need to identify with that group experience and to portray his or her experience as representative of the group experience, whether it was or not (Tal 1996, p. 44).

In the 1980s, critic James E. Young, while commenting on the irony that an event without precedent inevitably becomes itself a precedent, nevertheless supported the use of the Holocaust as metaphor, notably defending poet Sylvia Plath's use of Holocaust imagery though she was neither Jewish nor a Holocaust survivor (Tal 1996, pp. 48–9). Young's studies moved the focus from the survivor as testator to the language of testimony that 'absorbs experiences, embodies them, and thus preserves them long after the "authentic witnesses" are gone' (Tal 1996, p. 49). Thus the reader surrenders critical power to 'the representational structure that has been bestowed upon him by the culture' (p. 49).

Lawrence Langer, a contemporary of Young, is influenced by his own study of the Fortunoff Video Archive of Holocaust testimony established by Yale University. He distrusts the use of language advocated by Young, believing that such uses permit inappropriate Holocaust representations. Stories that focus on the triumph of 'the indomitable human spirit', Langer argues, 'do not honour the painful complexities of the victims' narratives' (Langer 1991, p. 2). Langer also disputes Bettelheim's and Des Pres' position that portrayal of a common survivor past was possible, arguing that

Anyone conversant with the thousands of separate testimonies of survivors knows what an uncommon catastrophe it was for each of them, no two of whom feel that their pasts were identical (Langer 1995, p. 183).

Having initially proposed literature as the only vehicle for an appropriate imaginative and stylistic portrayal of the Holocaust to 'gain at least limited access to the ravaged mansion of this catastrophe', Langer gradually began to accommodate 'memoirs, diaries and journals, and especially the videotaped testimonies' within his
version of acceptable Holocaust representation (Langer 1995, p. 7). Had he not 
broadened his opinion about these categories of literary response, he may have limited 
even more severely the market to which such Holocaust literature would be accessible. 
He warns that 'normally the artist is free, and indeed expected, to manipulate reality in 
any way his vision sees fit ... [but] When the Holocaust is the theme, history imposes 
limitations on the supposed flexibility of artistic license' (Langer 1995 p. 75).

Acceptance of Langer's criteria invites speculation of just how Holocaust 
representation is to be accomplished when the milieu within which the Holocaust must 
be portrayed is without redeeming features that could otherwise soothe an audience. 
This becomes pertinent when Langer warns against presenting fictional 'happy 
endings' because they multiply the trauma of the Holocaust survivors, who cannot 
experience a happy ending because they exist in a state of perpetual suffering (Langer 
1995).

Contemporary with Langer and Young was research by Shoshanna Felman and Dori 
Laub. In *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* 
(1992) they describe the reaction of an undergraduate university class to an experience 
of survivor testimony, both written narrative and videotape, which they term 'an 
encounter with the real'. Suddenly, the class becomes 'uprooted and disoriented, and 
profoundly shaken in its anchoring world views and in its commonly held life-
 perspectives' (Felman & Laub 1992, p. xvi). Moving from pedagogy to analysis (the 
individual specialties of the authors) they conclude that the students have suffered a 
dislocation, desiring to talk about the experience but lacking an appropriate language to 
do so. The student's dilemma suggests to the researchers a mimesis of a Holocaust 
 survivor experience (Felman 1992a, p. 51). Tal (1996) describes this project as 
'appropriative', suggesting that 'the survivor's experience has been completely
replaced by the experience of those who come in contact with the survivor’s testimony’ (Tal 1996, pp. 53–4). Felman and Laub, she states, are ‘not writing a critical study’ but ‘bearing witness’ (p. 53). Laub is criticised in particular because he ‘makes no distinction between the primary trauma suffered by the Holocaust survivor and the sort of secondary stress suffered by the testimonial audience’ in his attempt to support his belief in the invincibility and efficacy of the ‘talking cure’ (pp. 56–7). Tal concludes by drawing attention to her own main thesis that Holocaust testimony is used to support the purposes of a particular vested interest in society.

Tal and her contemporaries comment from within the dominant American culture. Without an indigenous culture of published testimony among survivors who had settled in Australia in the decades following the war, the Australian public critical discourse on the Holocaust dates from the mid-1990s. This has left the Australian second-generation writers under the influence of American literature and critical writings.

**Australian influences on second-generation Holocaust writing**

Aside from the different political climate, the desire for assimilation of the post-war migrant population and the lack of a significant local publishing industry prepared to deal with issues of minority interest meant that the discourse of Australian Holocaust representation was largely confined within the Jewish community and to the academy for the four decades after the end of World War II. In 1993, however. Holocaust representation became an issue for media debate when Helen Demidenko won the Vogel Prize for an unpublished first novel by a writer under the age of 35. The media controversy surrounding the publication of *The Hand that Signed the Paper* established Robert Manne as Australia’s most influential commentator on Holocaust representation.
Manne is Professor of Politics at Melbourne’s La Trobe University and an ABC (Australian Broadcasting Corporation) radio and broadsheet media commentator. Manne occupies a privileged position in the Australian public sphere as a public intellectual, having been the editor of the journal *Quadrant* between 1990 and 1997. Manne writes a regular opinion column in Melbourne’s *Age* newspaper, syndicated to the *Sydney Morning Herald*. He is also the author of a number of historical-political books.

In a rare autobiographical moment, extracted from his Alfred Deakin Lecture, Manne mentions his family’s migrant history, providing insight into his current political position. He reveals the nature of his parents’ experience in subtle ways, using language that qualifies the story, and our understanding that he is the son of survivors:

Because I was the son of Jewish refugees and because our home was filled with Central European food and friends and memories and nightmares and because beyond the home my world was so thoroughly a part of British Australia I always felt myself divided in identity—an Australian at home; an outsider in the neighborhood and school ... I experienced no anti-Semitism in my daily life. What I knew about it came from books and from the silences in my home about the Holocaust’ (Manne 2001, p. 4) (my italics).

He need say no more. The words ‘nightmares’ and ‘silences’ and mention later of the reparations paid to his mother ‘on account of the acts of the Nazis’ (p. 4), mean that the reader understands. Manne’s authority as a commentator on Holocaust representation has been established. Later in the article he says, ‘During these [Cold War] years, I had been preoccupied by the crimes of the communist regimes in Europe and Asia, because, I am sure, my political identity had been shaped by the knowledge of the Holocaust’ (p. 4).
Manne describes himself as 'a teenage leftist', but under the influence of Vincent Buckley (a Catholic poet and critic) and Frank Knopfelmacher (a Jewish anti-communist and social scientist) during his university years, he became convinced that the crimes committed by the communist regimes of Stalin and Mao Zedong were comparable in their evil with the crimes of Nazi Germany ... It was clear now that massive criminality was not the monopoly of the extreme racist right (Manne 2001, p. 4).

After the end of the Cold War, Manne's ambivalent adoption of right-wing politics ceased. He was always, after all, a supporter of the practice of multiculturalism and a defender of the welfare state, his right-wing attitudes being based on opposition to totalitarianism. After a self-confessed feeling of 'disorientation' followed by 'immense relief', he was 'released from a prison of the mind' (2001, p. 4) and turned his attention to other issues on the local political scene: republicanism, issues surrounding reconciliation with Australia's indigenous population and the plight of refugees.

The Holocaust remains an ever-present part of Manne's life. His exploration of Holocaust literature confirmed for Manne an admiration of the integrity of writers Primo Levi and Hannah Arendt, who, he acknowledges, 'could peer into the heart of darkness without flinching' (Manne 1999a). This is what Manne requires of works purporting to represent the Holocaust. In his opinion, Roberto Benigni's fairytale representation of the Holocaust in the film Life is Beautiful is not an appropriate vehicle for Holocaust representation, despite wide popular acclaim. Nor is Schindler's List, also popularly acclaimed, because both works portray a 'happy ending'. The idea, canvassed in the writings of Des Pres, Bettelheim and Wiesel, that meaning must be attached to Holocaust survival, often translates in works intended for popular consumption as the need for a happy ending. Manne, however, declares 'the aesthetic
requirements of the fairy tale and the ethical duty to remember the Holocaust truthfully’ to be irreconcilable (Manne 1999b).

Important in the context of this study is Manne’s rebuttal in The Culture of Forgetting (1996) of the ‘facts’ about Jewish Bolsheviks and the Ukrainian famine portrayed in Helen Demidenko/Darville’s The Hand that Signed the Paper (1994). This book established his credentials as a defender of Holocaust memory, rejuvenating his publishing career and consolidating his work with publishers Text Publishing and Morry Schwartz (Black Inc., Bookman and Schwartz Publishing).

Demidenko and Holocaust representation in the Australian public sphere

Although Vogel judge Roger McDonald feared that Demidenko’s book would be perceived as anti-Semitic and urged editorial revisions prior to publication, the brief media attention paid to the winning manuscript focused mainly on the author’s ‘migrant’ background and on her interweaving of fiction with history. The Hand that Signed the Paper was subsequently published by Allen & Unwin (under the terms of the award they must publish the winning entry) in August 1994. Reviews following publication were substantially positive and major controversy did not ensue until June 1995 when the book won Australia’s most prestigious literary prize, the Miles Franklin Award.

Initial response following the awarding of a second literary prize to Demidenko (at this time her fake Ukrainian identity was yet to be publicly revealed), focused on the ethnicity of the author and her unlikely winning of the prize. She was pitted against experienced writers Peter Carey, Jessica Anderson and Tim Winton that year. It was not until Dr Ben Haneman wrote a letter to the editor of the Australian Jewish News on
9 June 1995 that the allegation of anti-Semitism was given serious credence in the media (Jost et al. 1996, p. 34). Journalists and commentators Pamela Bone, Gerard Henderson, Louise Adler, Peter Craven, Helen Daniel, Andrew Riemer, Peter Singer, Ramona Koval, Robert Manne and Helen Demidenko/Darville herself were among many to take sides in the debate which was conducted in the literary pages, editorial columns and opinion pieces of the daily press and on ABC radio and television. Jost et al. summarise the press coverage thus:

Most of the time, newspapers set the agenda. Radio worked as a commentary on the press, with follow-up debates and discussions that expanded on issues raised in press coverage. Helen Demidenko said far more about herself on radio than in any other part of the media. ABC-Radio gave wide coverage to the story, while the commercials barely touched it. There was some television coverage, but it was not a big story on television (Jost et al. 1996, p. 299).

Numerous issues were raised in the media as a result of the publication and awarding of prizes to this first novel. Was the book offensive to the Ukrainian community? Was it, as argued by Gerard Henderson in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 27 June 1995, suggesting that the ‘Jews were primarily responsible for the forced famine which was imposed on Ukrainians by the communist totalitarian rulers in Moscow?’ (Jost et al. 1996, pp. 61–2). If this were true, did it in some way mitigate against the brutality of ignorant peasants’ revenge taking during the Holocaust? Was the book in fact anti-Semitic or was it merely presenting the Holocaust from the perspective of its anti-Semitic characters? Where was the authorial voice in all of this? The media responses peaked briefly as each new revelation about the author and her book was elaborated. By the time Demidenko was awarded a third literary prize, the Association for the Study of Australian Literature Gold Medal, in July, the media was well aware of the contentious nature of the book. In August two new pieces of information added spice
to the story. In the Courier-Mail of 19 August 1995, Demidenko was exposed as Helen Darville, daughter of English migrants. This was quickly followed by allegations of plagiarism against her book, and a subsequent story published by Darville in Republica magazine. The scrutiny of Darville’s works for plagiarism continued and her column in The Courier Mail was terminated in early 1997, when it was revealed that she had appropriated the contents of a column almost entirely from the Internet (Pybus 1997).

In 1996 two books were published about the Demidenko/Darville debate. The Culture of Forgetting by Robert Manne approached The Hand that Signed the Paper as a work of blatant anti-Semitism and historic revisionism. Andrew Riemer, in The Demidenko Debate, assumed the perspective of a literary critic somewhat sympathetic to the plight of the sometimes inept, youthful and confused writer of a first novel. As protagonists, Manne and Riemer were both self-defined second-generation Holocaust survivors. Manne summarises the territory over which the two camps argued:

Those who were repelled by The Hand claimed that their opponents were ignorant of history, insensitive to racism, antisemitism, even the meaning of the Holocaust. Those who supported The Hand, or who were merely repelled by the attacks upon it, thought their opponents insensitive to fiction, culturally censorious, overbearing, politically correct (Manne 1996, p. 2).

Though he was neither a ‘devout nor communal Jew’ (Manne 1996, p. 105), the Holocaust and its representation are central to Manne’s objection to the book. For Manne, the author and her work cannot be separated. Musing on the intensity of his own response to Helen Demidenko, he writes: ‘At the very heart of my being lay the fact of the Holocaust’ (1996, p. 106). Although it had rarely been discussed in his childhood home he had become aware, like others of the second generation, that just a few year before his birth ‘the Germans, the most sophisticated peoples of Europe, had under the cover of war set about a policy of remorseless extermination of the Jewish
people’ (1996, p. 106). Manne’s attitude reflects Des Pres first two principles of ‘respectable Holocaust study’ through his belief that
to explain the Holocaust within a framework of inter-ethnic conflict and to portray it without an unprovoked ideological antisemitism at its heart, amounts in its own way to a form of Holocaust denial (Manne 1996, p. 163).

Similarly, Des Pres’ third principle informs Manne’s concern about the lack of respect Demidenko shows to those who perished in the Holocaust. No writer, he reflects, ‘who understood the meaning of Treblinka could write like this’ (1996, p. 137).

Andrew Riemer argued that the book should be seen as a work of post-modern fiction, lacking, as is common, a sound authorial voice to give moral direction to the story (Riemer 1996). This differentiates the blatantly anti-Semitic voices of Demidenko’s characters from their author, enabling Riemer to critique the work and its milieu in isolation from the writer’s (by then) widely known deceptions. ‘The greatest threat posed by the Demidenko affair’, he writes, ‘has been to literary culture—to what may be termed its immunity or extraterritoriality’ (Riemer 1996, p. 273).

That Manne and Riemer are able to draw such different conclusions about the novel is perhaps not surprising given the starting point of each. One takes the Holocaust as central to his undertaking, the other the centrality and integrity of the literary text. Both books deal with what Riemer calls ‘the line that separates the uncomfortable from the intolerable’, stressing that ‘sanity and decency should demand that an attempt be made to determine where such a line is to be drawn’ (1996, p. 14). Such sentiments foreground not only difficulties surrounding the mythology of the Holocaust as it relates to eyewitness testimony, they also amplify the problematic nature of the study of the perpetrators, whom Inga Clendinnen describes as being ‘placed beyond human
scrutiny’ by both eyewitness writers and Holocaust scholars (1998, p. 96) due to misguided confusion between the nature of ‘understanding’ and ‘justification’.

**A confrontation with the privileging of survivors’ testimony**

Inga Clendinnen reinvigorates arguments about Holocaust representation in *Reading the Holocaust*, published in 1998. She was challenged to write following an encounter with Manne’s *Culture of Forgetting*, which ‘moved and ashamed her’ due to her lack of knowledge about something that ‘mattered and mattered to us all’ (Clendinnen 1998, p. 6). The aim of her book, Clendinnen states, is to dispel

the sickening of imagination and curiosity and the draining of the will which afflicts so many of us when we try to look squarely at the persons and processes implicated in the Holocaust (p. 7).

As a self-proclaimed ‘outsider’, non-Jewish and an historian whose specialty is Mayan and Aztec culture, Clendinnen endeavours to bring objectivity to the task of interpreting what drove the perpetrators to support and facilitate the Nazis’ systematic genocide. She asks:

How did men not previously criminal come to will what they willed, to do what they did? These are the crucial questions to be answered if we are to understand the Holocaust at all. Yet for many committed students these questions remain opaque (p. 98).

She does not succumb to the fear that to understand is to have empathy with the perpetrators espoused by many commentators including Primo Levi (Clendinnen 1998, pp. 95–6).

In assuming an interpretive role, Clendinnen redefines the established hierarchy of the approved witness to the Holocaust, revived during the Demidenko scandal, that confirms the Jewish perspective (especially privileging the survivors and their families) as more valid than the non-Jewish. Not only had both Manne and Riemer felt obliged
to cite their credentials as members of the second generation (Manne 1996, p. 106; Riemer 1996, p. 2) but Demidenko herself, during the notorious 7.30 Report debate with Gerard Henderson, had invoked the Jew/non-Jew demarcation, finding it ‘a little bit worrying when someone who’s not Jewish begins to speak for the Jewish community’ (Jost et al. 1996, p. 70).

In conclusion, Clendinnen states what others had been unable to articulate because of the inextricable linking of understanding with empathy and the fear of inadvertent condoning, that

The shadow of the Holocaust has lengthened with the years. In that shadow, none of us is at home in the world, because now we know the fragility of our content. If we are to see the Gorgon sufficiently steadily to destroy it, we cannot afford to be blinded by reverence or abashed into silence or deflected into a search for reassuring myths. We must do more than register guilt, or grief, or anger, or disgust, because neither reverence for those who suffer nor revulsion from those who inflict the suffering will help us to overcome its power to paralyse, and to see it clearly (1998, p. 205).

Without the central theme of the Holocaust, the controversy surrounding The Hand that Signed the Paper would have remained an argument about issues of literary merit and the deception of the literary establishment. The Holocaust, because of difficulties associated with its very ‘nature’, foregrounds ethical and moral dilemmas, exposes sensitivities and provokes emotions. Speaking generally, and not of the Demidenko novel, Clendinnen says, ‘Normally we expect the magic of art to intensify, transfigure and elevate actuality. Touch the Holocaust and the flow is reversed’ (Clendinnen 1998, p. 185). In trying to represent the Holocaust, art is ‘rendered vacuous and drained of authority’ (p. 185). Words are inadequate and cliché is created in response.

Though acknowledging that historians ‘have much to learn from word-artists created inside and by the camps’, from a Charlotte Delbo, a Tadeusz Borowski or a Primo Levi
Clendinnen seeks to privilege 'secular professional historical writing' above the 'art' of testimonial writing. Historians, she argues, may assume 'the large liberty of speaking for the dead', but only 'under the rule of the discipline' (p. 204). It is the patient, sceptical curiosity of the historian, she adds, that will 'represent the actualities of past experience' (p. 205).

Yet in the book that champions the objectivity of the historian, Clendinnen provides clues to making Holocaust representation new for a continuing audience. The dimensions of the Final Solution, she writes, are too grotesque for human credulity. It is in the reduction to a human scale via the artful creation of the individuals in the stories of writers such as Levi that the 'moral and intellectual energy' is awakened, which will assist readers to begin to understand that the world is never far from disaster. The work then must pass to a new generation who care and can frame the stories of individuals that keep the Holocaust memory alive.

**The influence of Holocaust memorialisation on the second generation**

To second-generation writers the unofficial canon of Holocaust literature, comprising survivor testimony and the discourse that surrounds Holocaust representation, is familiar territory. From the perspective of the canon, they may question their own modes of representation and the acceptability of their own voices as storytellers. Notions of story ownership would resonate forcefully with these writers struggling to untangle the layers of psychopathology that threaten to override any innate ability to make sense of their own story. Certainly, canonical issues have the potential to invalidate or at least influence the writings of the second generation.

The Australian second-generation writers are well informed about the Holocaust. Although the events of their parents' pasts were often concealed during their formative
years, most of the second-generation writers tell their family stories in the form of memoir following extensive research into their parents’ lives, homelands and experience in particular, and into the events of the Holocaust in general. Lily Brett has collected ‘volume after volume of books on the Holocaust … a comprehensive library of Holocaust publications’ (Brett 1997a, p. 269). ‘For years’, Mark Baker writes, ‘I have been studying everyone else’s stories and testimonies … I would read any memoir I could get my hands on’ (Harper Collins 1997, p. 4). Robert Manne ‘studied history in the hope of understanding … the terrible, unchangeable, untreatable wound of the Holocaust’ (Manne 1996, p. 106). Arnold Zable is influenced by Elie Wiesel’s injunction ‘that true tales are meant to be transmitted’ (Zable 2002b, p. 139).

Through familiarity with the body of Holocaust literature, second-generation writers are open to the influences of writers from the Holocaust canon headed by Elie Wiesel and Primo Levi. Both writers enjoin following generations to remember and to give testimony to the Holocaust, while empathising with the difficulty of the task and setting standards for transmission. For Wiesel the Holocaust was a unique event, which could not be visualised by those who had not experienced it. It is, he writes, ‘a sacred mystery, whose secrets were confined to a priesthood of survivors’ (Novick 2000, p. 211). This attitude had the effect of privileging survivor testimony above all other representations. In contrast, Primo Levi is adamant that we, the survivors, are not the true witnesses … This is an uncomfortable notion, of which I have become conscious little by little, reading the memoirs of others and reading mine at a distance of years. We survivors are not only an exiguous but also an anomalous minority: we are those who by their prevarications or abilities or good luck did not touch bottom. Those who did so, those who saw the Gorgon, have not returned to tell about it or have returned mute, but they are the ‘Muslims’, the submerged, the complete witnesses, the ones whose deposition would have a general significance. They are the rule, we the exception (Levi 1989, p. 63).
How then is a second generation to participate appropriately in the evocation of the Holocaust? Wiesel provides some clues through his own writing career. Though he ‘tend[s] to be suspicious of fiction whose theme is Auschwitz’ (Wiesel 1995, p. 364), following the autobiography Night, Wiesel has used both fiction and memoir to bear witness. In The Fifth Son (1986), for example, he wrote in the persona of a child of Holocaust survivors, putting his indelible stamp on the second-generation’s genre.

Questions of imitation also echo within the experience of second-generation writers. ‘[T]he Holocaust is not a thing of the past’, writes George Halasz in his introduction to Blay’s Sister Sister. It exists in the lives of the second generation through the phenomenon of ‘transposition’, explained by Judith Kestenberg49 as a process whereby the children of survivors experience aspects of their parents’ lives. This can include clinical symptoms commensurate with having lived through the Holocaust. They experience ‘a feeling of “it happened to me”’ (Blay 1998, p. 7). This phenomenon helps explain the second-generation’s fascination with experiences mimetic of their parents’. Mark Baker’s desire to put himself in danger by attending a local neo-Nazi branch meeting is but one example of this behaviour. Perhaps too, this phenomenon explains the passionate desire of the second generation for publication. As Wiesel, the survivor, imitates the second generation, so, perhaps, they feel emboldened to imitate him.

The ‘religious romanticism’ identified by Tal (1996) in the arguments of Des Pres resonates in the writings of a number of second-generation writers. Novick reflects upon the ‘un-Jewish’ nature of contemporary Holocaust commemoration, likening the ‘structured pathways of the Holocaust in the major museums’ to the Stations of the

Cross and the ‘fetishized objects on display’ to the relics of Christianity (2000, p. 11). Such uses of Christian concepts seem ill suited to Jewish second-generation writings, yet they gain credence from inferences in the earliest writings of Wiesel (the allusion to the redemptive power of the crucifixion used in Night, [1981, p. 76]) and from Des Pres, and feed a need to attribute meaning to the survivor experience. Lily Brett uses a particularly ‘Christian’ concept of purgatory as a path to redemption in her novel Too Many Men. Mark Baker also uses redemptive imagery in an attempt to gain a form of ‘closure’ as his ‘characters’ enter the gas chamber in The Fiftieth Gate.

It is difficult for the second generation of Holocaust writers to escape the influence of the ‘strong poets’. The first generation commands ‘testify’. The second responds with publication. In an increasingly globalised and commodified publishing arena, it becomes difficult to maintain Berger’s directive that they should not ‘substitute their imagination for their parents’ memory’ (1997, p. 120) in an attempt to portray a survivor experience commensurate with publication for a wider audience. Publication is the subject of Chapter 5, which explores the processes whereby the memoir of an obscure lecturer in Jewish history at Melbourne University was published with unusual success by the Australian office of a multinational conglomerate.
CHAPTER 5

The Fiftieth Gate: a case study in ‘popular’ publishing

On Sunday 6 April 1997, historian Mark Baker’s first non-academic book was launched at Melbourne’s iconic migrant portal, Station Pier. The guest list of over 500 invitees included representatives of most print media organisations. Many journalists interviewed the author on the day, and his photograph was reproduced a week later in the ‘Agenda’ section of The Age newspaper. Baker leans on the railings beside the massive structure of Station Pier. Framed by sea and sky, he is caught glancing pensively over his shoulder past the camera and into the middle distance. He is alone. The day is bleak. Here, the reader is invited to surmise, is a man with much on his mind. In a flash of inspiration the sub-editor has prefaced the accompanying caption, ‘Back to the future’, linking the story with the mass media, film and television.

Baker and his publisher had worked strenuously towards the successful publication of his book, and their tactics appear to have been rewarded. The Fiftieth Gate made its debut as top nonfiction seller on the Melbourne Age’s bestseller list published on 26 April. The Australian Review of Books list followed on 14 May confirming the number one nonfiction title as The Fiftieth Gate. The book subsequently won The NSW Premier’s Literary Award in 1997.

This chapter explores how a lecturer in modern Jewish history at Melbourne University brought a buzz to the Australian literary scene in April 1997 when his memoir, The Fiftieth Gate, was published in Australia by the multinational conglomerate Harper Collins Publishers. Some months prior to the publication of this literary memoir by the then unknown academic, strategies for marketing this unlikely
title as a potential bestseller were conceived by the publishing company. Harper Collins used a proactive approach in order to influence the book’s path through the marketing and sales processes from publisher through bookshop to reader. The child of Polish–Jewish Holocaust survivors, Baker had managed to convince a prestigious Sydney literary agency to accept his first literary manuscript, which was subsequently sold to Harper Collins Publishers. Baker, it would seem, has succeeded against the odds.

**Signposts for bestsellers**

In his study of British and American popular fiction of the 1970s, John Sutherland describes books with the potential to become bestsellers as those driven by publicity, by point-of-sale displays, by author tours and often linked to the release of movies (Sutherland 1981). Such support, he writes, turns books into an economically viable ‘product’ for the originating publisher. Additionally, the books are ‘ideological’, both expressing and feeding certain needs in the reading public by consolidating prejudice, providing comfort and ‘therapy’ whilst offering ‘vicarious rewards and stimulus’ (p. 34). Sutherland’s bestselling writer demonstrates scholarly skill and research capabilities (pp. 137ff), with the aim of making the reader feel ‘educated’ by the experience of reading the novel. Bestselling writers also have the ability to revive history, ‘to [make] a stale cliché fresh again’ (p. 46). The chance of any particular title or work of a particular genre becoming a bestseller, however, Sutherland considered an unpredictable event, with even works of literature making the bestseller lists on occasion (p. 35).

Sutherland (1981) was writing about the construction of the American bestselling novel of the 1970s, when the definition of a bestseller was the achievement of sales in
excess of one hundred thousand copies in hard cover or one million in paperback. He focused on writers who deliberately targeted the bestseller audience. Although Sutherland's research is specific to novels, his categorisation of books and their marketing is nevertheless useful when considering the ways in which the second-generation Holocaust writer Mark Baker and his publisher worked to influence sales of *The Fiftieth Gate*.

In contrast with the American bestsellers of the 1970s, Australia’s best selling local title in 2003, Matthew Reilly’s *Scarecrow*, sold 78 037 copies (Nielsen BookScan Australia 2004). In an industry dominated by the sales success of imported titles and local gift books, locally nurtured literary writers are deemed successful if they sell 3000 copies on release, with as few as 1000 copies being typical for a first novel (Wilding 2000, p. 153). An Australian literary work achieving local release sales of more than twenty thousand copies is almost unheard of, which makes the success of Mark Baker’s *Fiftieth Gate* even more extraordinary.

**Strategies for stimulating media interest in The Fiftieth Gate**

Baker was represented by Hickson & Associates, at that time one of Australia’s leading agents, who would be expected to secure a substantial advance for their client. His manuscript was sold to Harper Collins on the basis of an initial printing of 7500 copies (a significant run for a literary memoir), which is possibly as much a comment on the need to recoup a significant advance payment as it is on the company’s initial confidence in this first-time author’s ability to generate significant sales. To the delight of its backers, the book soon impressed everyone from editorial to marketing. It received a positive response from the Harper Collins sales representatives who enthusiastically passed the word to their clients, the booksellers. Such was the
industry's response to the work, the company began to believe that it had a potential bestseller on its hands, as evidenced by its issue of a press release prior to publication. The release not only described the company's growing confidence in Baker's book; in a radical step for Australian publishing, it discussed the print run publicly, revealing that:

Mark Baker's moving literary biography of his parents' journey to Australia was bought some months ago with an expected first print run of 7500 copies. After proof copies were sent to key booksellers around Australia, overwhelming support for this important book encouraged the publishing house to press the reprint button a month before publication.

Richard Parslow, Harper Collins' Sales and Marketing Director, said, 'From the moment the manuscript arrived at our offices in Pymble, the quality and content of the book was evident. Everyone who picked it up and read it raved about it. Our Sales Representatives have rung to tell us how wonderful they think it is. The Publishing, Sales and Marketing teams were all very taken. Booksellers who have read it in its typescript form have written and telephoned to say how much they enjoyed it. We have decided to print 18 000 copies as a first release' (Harper Collins 1997, p. 1).

In this press release the publisher provided facts that might otherwise be considered confidential, designed to stimulate interest in the book's publication as an unusual event, even as a new (at least to industry insiders) event. The greatly increased first printing, from 7500 to 18 000 copies, of a literary title is tendered as evidence.  

There are several reasons for the success of this book by an unknown (in trade publishing terms) writer. Having the support and negotiating strength of an experienced agent to sell the work no doubt benefited the writer financially, as well as providing the publishing company with the incentive of a significant advance royalty to recoup. This helped generate a climate of excitement within Harper Collins that was  

50 A number of figures for the initial print run have subsequently been published. Felicity Bloch (1997) writes that it was in excess of 20 000 copies, while Richard Guilliat (1997) states it was 22 000. These discrepancies suggest that the print run was further increased following the media release.
successfully conveyed to the wider publishing community. Once a commitment to a large print run seemed possible, marketing strategies of the kind discussed in Chapter 2 were used to consolidate maximum sales into bookshops on publication, and maximum column inches and radio exposure for the book and its author. A press release such as the one issued by Harper Collins, ‘talking up’ the book as a work of significance, a vehicle for quality writing and important content (‘this important book’, ‘the quality and content ... was evident’) and giving details of print runs, is unusual in an industry that has been notoriously guarded about divulging actual figures and where the definition of a ‘bestseller’ depends not on a particular numeric target, but on context and to whom one is talking. Articles, reviews and interviews with and about Baker and his Fiftieth Gate appeared in over twenty-five publications as diverse as the Salvation Army War Cry, the Jewish News and The Bulletin, as well, of course, as in the mainstream review vehicles, The Age, The Australian, the Australian Book Review, The Australian Review of Books, the Courier Mail, The West Australian and The Sydney Morning Herald.

Prior to the book’s publication, endorsement was solicited from Phillip Adams of ABC Radio National and The Australian newspaper. Much was made in the publisher’s publicity campaign of Adams’s praise for the book, which read:

It is an honour to read this magnificent book. Baker does with memory what Rembrandt does with light. He uses it to model, to imagine, to illuminate, to astonish. This is the book that has the dignity and the depth to undo the damage of Demidenko (Harper Collins 1997, p. 1).

His quotation heads the press release as well as appearing on the book as a back-cover blurb. Linking the book’s content to classical themes, Adams suggests a revelatory aspect to the work, ‘to imagine, to illuminate, to astonish’. The blurb by a noted
Australian broadcaster and public intellectual praises the book’s ability to inform the reader while connecting the book to the controversy of the Demidenko scandal.

The link with Demidenko is an obvious one for the Harper Collins publicist to promote. The controversy about that author’s identity and the nature of her book (fact or fiction?), as well as accusations of plagiarism that cost Helen Darville (Demidenko) literary credibility, generated a public engagement with Holocaust history that continued for months (see Chapter 4). The audience before whom the debate was enacted in the broadsheet press and on ABC radio and television (more traditionally considered consumers of high culture) is defined by cultural commentator John Frow (1995) as existing within a subset of commodity culture (see Chapter 1). Not coincidentally, this educated group, seeking cultural identification and capital (see Chapter 2), is also the target audience for second-generation Holocaust literature.

The selection of Adams’s reference to the ability of Baker’s book to ‘undo the damage of Demidenko’ for particular focus links the work inextricably with the moral high ground of Holocaust remembrance. Adams endows the book with the power to undo the damage, described during the controversy as cultural and moral revisionism by Robert Manne (1996), and exemplified by Tom Shapcott’s fears of a ‘new generation which is distant from the Holocaust, who see it as something they want to question, or to challenge or to set aside’ (Manne 1996, p. 133). One might speculate about the nature of the healing process and its importance to the bruised egos of a media duped by the performance of a bogus Ukrainian writer, the same media to whom the press release setting up The Fiftieth Gate as a popular news item was addressed.

Included with the press release were an explanatory statement, ‘Writing The Fiftieth Gate’ by the author, and a two-page primer, ‘An Interview with Mark Baker’. These documents suggest an attempt by the publisher to assist the media to recognise that the
book’s difficult content and self-conscious literary style were accessible to a general audience and worth discussion and review. The Demidenko references remind the Jewish community where their loyalties should lie, and by suggesting a cause célèbre in Holocaust remembrance, seek to engender some sympathetic response from critics for whom the Demidenko imbroglio still rankled. The tactic worked, with reviews almost universally sympathetic to the author. Many reviewers invoked Demidenko as the spectre of Holocaust denial to which The Fiftieth Gate provided an antidote.

In the first attachment to the press release the author provides information designed to prime the media to enable a swift assimilation of the book. This document, entitled ‘Writing The Fiftieth Gate by Mark Baker’, seeks to amplify some of the more obscure references, such as the meaning of the book’s title, as well as Baker’s understanding of his writing process and the reactions of his parents to his research and to the publication. Baker’s piece, like the book it describes, has a circular structure. It begins by explaining that the book’s seemingly obscure title is constructed as a metaphor for understanding the self. The fiftieth gate, Baker writes, ‘is the gate we pass through when we say “I am”’ (Harper Collins 1997, p. 2). Baker acknowledges that he not only seeks the facts about his parents’ experiences, he must know their feelings. He interrogates his parents’ memories. How did his father’s mother (his own grandmother) feel when she was separated from her sons? How did his father, a man who cowers when confronted by an insect, survive Auschwitz? The ‘journey inside [his] parents’ memories’ is not their journey, but his, he proclaims. Baker acknowledges his guilt. He has forced his mother to confront her secrets and now he is exposing her, and them, to public scrutiny. ‘I feel naked, as if I’m staring into a dark mirror’, she complains before consigning Baker’s completed manuscript to a cupboard. Although he provides precious information about his grandfather’s last days in Buchenwald that allow his
father, for the first time, to celebrate *Yahrzeit*, the lighting of a memorial candle, Baker acknowledges that he 'has taken more'. His meticulous research establishes his parents' memories as faulty, and when a birth certificate confirms his father to be two years older than previously believed, Baker receives the truculent response, 'What did time mean to a young boy in Auschwitz?' Baker presents the paradox of the Buchenwald Ball. How could his parents celebrate this annual event with fellow survivors while 'simultaneously burdened with the darkest of memories'?

Baker completes the circle by reintroducing the idea of the fiftieth gate, amplifying the concept as a metaphor that encapsulates 'many dimensions' of his story. He writes fifty years after liberation a story that includes a series of physical gates (the gates of the towns and homes in which his parents had lived in Poland) as well as 'the gates of memory around which this book is constructed'. In the tradition of the Midrashic scholars, Baker then reinterprets the concept to suit his developing theme. For his parents,

the fiftieth gate is ... the one through which my family was led into the gas chambers. For those who survived, there is no escape from this blackness, except by entering the darkness so that ultimately it is possible to emerge on the other side. This book tells of my journey to find the light inside the darkness ... there is no escape from memory ... only different ways to tell the story (Harper Collins 1997, pp. 2-3).

This is a complex set of ideas, with internal contradictions. Those who survive, Baker says, enter the darkness and emerge on the 'other side' (a redemptive metaphor like those used by Elie Wiesel). Yet Baker also seeks to find the 'light inside' the darkness in order to free himself from his parents' torment. The 'light' becomes a point at which Baker, having experienced his parents' stories, can let go of pain (their pain, taken on as his own) by refocusing his energies towards helping others. 'There is no difference between the pain of a Holocaust survivor, and the affliction of a starving
child in Rwanda, or a refugee in search of a space to rest. The pain no longer paralyses me’, he writes (Harper Collins 1997, p. 3).

Having dealt with what he considers to be the controversial and difficult aspects of his story (the bullying of his parents, the ‘stealing’ of their memories), Baker contextualises his book globally and locally, focusing on the genocide in Rwanda, the plight of refugees and the family—the ‘new narrative’ that is built with the telling of family stories to his children. There is much here with which the journalist can conjure a profile and with which readers can identify. From the Holocaust and intergenerational trauma, Baker has constructed a framework for hope.

The second attachment to the press release, ‘An interview with Mark Baker’, contains further information about the book and its author presented in a question and answer format. The author responds to questions by an anonymous interviewer, intended as a primer, perhaps, for the unimaginative or time-stressed reviewer or feature writer. Baker’s researched family history explores issues of memory and family relationships. Memory is altered, revised, Baker suggests, through interrogation. When Baker’s father is forced to remember his school days in Poland he is also confronted with memories, not before discussed with his son, of his young sisters killed in the Holocaust. ‘Do I remember what they liked to play? Do I remember how they looked at me when we were forcibly separated? Did they scream? Did they cry?’ (Harper Collins 1997, p. 4). The fact that his father’s recollections altered with each telling, with one memory building upon another, leads the author to conclude that his book never really ends. The stories, once released, will go on generating different memories and new stories. This, he explains, is why his memoir concludes with the same words with which it begins: ‘It always begins in blackness, until the first light illuminates a hidden fragment of memory’ (Baker 1997 pp. 1 & 316).
In the second attachment to the press release, Baker reinterprets the book’s redemptive metaphor, obviously concerned that it might not be understood without the benefit of a guide. Survivors, he says, exist in the darkness from which there is no escape except through ‘entering the darkness, so that ultimately it’s possible to emerge on the other side, into the light’ (Harper Collins 1997, p. 5). Baker understands this emergence as signified by his parents’ ability to dance, sing and laugh (‘inside the blackness’) at Buchenwald, while being simultaneously and in reality in Melbourne. He believes that to achieve this lightness himself (‘I could also come out laughing’) he must experience his parents’ darkness. ‘You only see the flame because there is darkness all around’, Baker writes (Harper Collins 1997, p. 5), expanding upon his inability to make sense of his own reality without understanding the experiences that have shaped his parents’ realities. He finds his ‘flame’ (empathy for and a desire to help others who suffer) within the ‘darkness’ of his parents’ experience.

The author and publisher ensure through the provision of ancillary documents attached to their press release that journalists are assisted to understand key issues in the book—especially those issues that relate to the story and the author’s motives—that might prove interesting to the reading audience. A number of the issues raised in these documents correspond to those identified in Sutherland’s (1981) description of the bestseller and its intended influence on the reader. Baker’s book, for instance, is well researched and intended to educate; the author is an historian. Comfort may be drawn from the knowledge that the flame is visible because of the darkness, signifying hope for the family beyond the experience of revealing their secrets. Despite his parents’ trauma, in Baker’s telling, the reader experiences a story of the triumph of good over evil, of regeneration over genocide. The story, Baker asserts, is important to the third generation and memory metamorphoses to encompass that need. ‘My parents’
say: “It wasn’t like that.” And my own children, their grandchildren, ask them: “Was it really as you say?” (Harper Collins 1997, p. 3). Issues pertinent to a wider public than Holocaust survivor families are encompassed. The author broadens his understanding of personal pain to include empathy with others who suffer—with the implication that one must assist all survivors of genocide, through the provision of aid perhaps (Baker had established Keshet, a Jewish humanitarian relief organisation, in 1995 in response to the crisis in Rwanda), and offer succour to refugees. Here we gratefully move from the intolerable dimensions of the Holocaust to the manageable and humane dimensions of aid, caring and kindness. The book we understand will provide comfort: it is a corrective to the horror of the Holocaust. A type of closure is implied by the mock interview’s final question: ‘What do you plan to do next?’ (Harper Collins 1997, p. 5). Baker has commenced a novel. He is able to return to ‘normal’ life.

The comprehensive information provided by the publisher to media representatives prior to publication of Baker’s book was intended to assist them to quickly assimilate information about the writer, to answer the difficult questions, to suggest story angles. The publisher wanted the media to engage with Baker as a character in his own story, and indeed, their tactic worked.

The media response to Harper Collins’s tactics

The topics synthesised through the press release and its attachments found their way into review columns and profile articles providing, as was intended, points of identification for the reader. Baker, as presented by the media, is a man not afraid to disclose both good and bad about himself and his family. Family secrets are revealed: imperfections, conflicts and difficult relationships abound in the memoir. While being aware of difficulties inherent in his subject matter, Baker and those associated with the
publication of *The Fiftieth Gate* seek an audience broader than that usually associated with either scholarly memoir or Holocaust memorial. *Sydney Morning Herald* reviewer, Richard Guilliatt, writes of Baker’s success:

Baker himself says the book is not about the Holocaust but about families, an observation that gets to the heart of the book’s remarkable commercial appeal. In digging up his parents’ secrets, Baker sets out on a journey that many middle-aged baby-boomers are contemplating—a journey to reach across the generational divide, to know their parents more intimately before it is too late. He was prompted to write the book after his father underwent heart surgery (Guilliatt 1997).

Baker, the reader is told, has succeeded in creating a book with wide appeal and in particular to Australia’s numerically largest generation, the baby-boomers. Rather than the specificity of the Holocaust, the reader is reminded about the vagaries of illness that can cut short a life at any time, but which Baker’s father has survived.

In her review of *The Fiftieth Gate* for the *Australian Book Review*, Felicity Bloch (1997) makes an initial appeal to the Jewish readership of the magazine. The number of Holocaust survivors living in Australia, ‘proportionately, the largest number of Holocaust survivors outside Israel, most of them living in Melbourne’, she finds significant. She comments on the ageing survivor communities and the importance of recording their stories, emphasising the significance of the work of the second generation. Bloch mentions specifically writers Lily Brett, Arnold Zable and Ramona Koval in this context. For potential readers, Bloch confirms that the Holocaust is again a ‘fashionable’ topic, stressing, no doubt to the delight of the publisher, that although the content is sophisticated and complex, it is pitched towards a more general audience than is perhaps apparent:

Baker’s ‘journey through memory’ is a collage, criss-crossing decades and continents, interweaving voices from the past and present with dreams, documents, and poetry. In case that sounds too arty for popular consumption, I should add that comedy and suspense keep
the reader glued to the page. The intergenerational battle is a perennial source of Jewish humour ... scholarly endnotes provide useful tips for anyone researching Eastern European family histories (Bloch 1997, p. 21).

Bloch conveniently summarises the essential features of *The Fiftieth Gate*. The reader is encouraged to see the book not as an addition to the scholarly material on the Holocaust, nor as further testimony, but as a work that would enlighten and educate whilst entertaining. Through Bloch’s review, the book is associated with ‘popular’ culture. Her readers would be well acquainted with Jewish humour through film and television (Woody Allen, Jerry Seinfeld, Ruby Wax), and the ‘scholarly endnotes’ are presented as a bonus for the amateur genealogist.

**The Fiftieth Gate’s appeal to readers**

The appeal of Baker’s *Fiftieth Gate* to a reading audience can be mapped using various characteristics associated by Sutherland (1981) with bestsellers. Those of particular relevance to this dissertation are the demonstration of authorial scholarship, the book’s provision of therapy and comfort for the reader, the newsworthy nature of writing, and ideas associated with refreshing the ‘stale cliche’. Sutherland (1981) also observes that bestsellers are ‘interfered with’ at an early stage in their production, specifically at the idea stage (p. 31), offering the publisher an opportunity to influence the content of the book, making it more palatable to a wider audience and, he argues, making it less original. Whilst there is no evidence that this was the case with Baker’s manuscript, it is apparent that the press release and attached publicity material were written for a different kind of book than was originally envisaged by the publisher. Baker’s book is not merely accurate historical reportage; it is a narrative story of literary yet popular merit. Baker, Harper Collins wishes the audience to know, is a (real) writer, not simply a family chronicler. His second book, a novel, is already underway. The attributes of
bestselling books conveyed via the press release were largely accepted by the journalists, who explored them in review and during interviews with Baker.

Numerous reviewers mention Baker’s meticulous scholarship and his career as an academic and historian. ‘Their son grew up to earn an Oxford PhD and become a Jewish scholar’ (Guilliatt 1997). ‘A Melbourne academic historian, Baker adroitly reconstructs their [his parents’] story from conversations and interviews supported by a daring use of documentary investigation’ (Gerster 1997). ‘Baker illuminates his parents’ testimonies with primary sources thoughtfully left to us by the perpetrators’ (Coleman 1997). Readers of nonfiction are perceived as requiring well-researched, factual information. This was demonstrated during the Demidendo controversy (Jost et al. 1996), and by the recent removal from sale of Norma Khouri’s *Forbidden Love* when it was discovered that Khouri was deceiving the public about her identity (Knox & Overington 2004). Though they may have benefited from the media hype surrounding the controversy in the short term through sales to the curious, publisher Random House was acutely conscious of the longer-term benefits of credibility in their market. Sutherland (1981) sees credibility as an important facet of the bestselling author’s work practice, feeding the desire of many readers to feel they are being educated through their reading.

*The Fiftieth Gate* is also promoted as a story of intergenerational tensions. Highlighted in the press materials is the family’s conflict during the writing of the book. The fact that Baker does not resile from the implications of his treatment of his parents—implicit in his relentless pursuit of their history is his selfishness in not sparing their feelings—helps engage the reader who can identify with a son’s insistence that this is *his* story and that he must work through his own ‘darkness’ and towards his own ‘light’ in order to be happy. The therapeutic nature of Baker’s project
provides a point of identity with a market acculturated to therapy through media representations. His parents’ obvious suffering (depression, denial and phobias) has impinged upon Baker’s own childhood. In an interview for the *Sydney Morning Herald* he says:

One of the things I’m tapping into is this search by many children, and I guess I’m one of the first to explore so deeply what it means to return to the beginning. What I needed to know was: what was the silence about, what was the sadness about in our household? How could my parents mix sadness and laughter at the same time? (Guilliatt 1997).

The reader sees Baker, the child, struggling to find his own truth and has empathy with his plight.

The publisher also encourages prospective readers to perceive a ‘happy ending’ for this book. The back cover copy proudly proclaims *The Fiftieth Gate* to be ‘A love story and a detective story ... a journey from despair and death towards hope and life; the story of a son who enters his parents’ memories and, inside the darkness, finds light’. The emphasis here is upon the comfort of the reader, through presentation of what Laurence Langer termed a ‘manageable version of the Holocaust’ (1995, p. 9) rather than on the nightmares, or the unresolved nature of Baker’s parents’ grief, for instance.

Harper Collins endeavoured to make their new book ‘newsworthy’ in the literary press and within the industry through the release of hitherto confidential information in their press release. Like later worldwide campaigns surrounding the bookshop release of the Harry Potter stories, the publicity campaign created a frisson around the size of Baker’s print run which was unusual for a first-time literary author in the Australian market. Again, their plan succeeded. *The Australian Book Review* highlights the achievement of ‘this first-time author’s dream run, with over 20 000 copies ... taken up pre-publication, and enthusiastic reviews followed by top ratings in *The Age* best-seller
list’ (Bloch 1997). The Sydney Morning Herald is similarly impressed, running as a lead to their review:

The publishing world has been astonished by the success of The Fiftieth Gate, in which Mark Raphael Baker ... lays bare his parents’ Holocaust secrets. Richard Guilliatt looks at the book’s remarkable commercial appeal (Guilliatt 1997).

Within his review Guilliatt chronicles details of the print run (22 000), the book’s status as a bestseller (a debut at the top of The Age’s list) and the positive response from major booksellers (Angus & Robertson selected the book among their top five orders for the month).

Nor was the reference to Demidenko overlooked. Time Magazine used it in an effort to draw lines of equivalence between the stories, suggesting two very different imaginings of the Holocaust and casting the authors as binary opposites. A disingenuous Demidenko resorts to a ‘fake Ukrainian heritage—and name’. Baker is authentic: ‘My only credential is that I’m a son of these survivors’ (Fitzgerald 1997).

Peter Richardson in his Sunday Age review describes the work as ‘an unanswerable coda to the intellectual dishonesty and moral shallowness that typified the Demidenko affair ... Here is the real news’ (Richardson 1997). Potential readers are reassured that the damage done by the unsettling media debate that surrounded publication of The Hand that Signed the Paper can be healed by this appropriate and genuine voice from the second generation. This was a message with substantial appeal to the large Australian survivor community.

Baker’s writing is made newsworthy by association with big print runs and the Demidenko controversy but, importantly, the book itself has the ability to provide a different kind of Holocaust memorialisation. Sutherland (1981) describes this as making a ‘stale cliché fresh again’ (p. 46). Following the critical debate over
Demidenko’s book, Robert Manne had feared a growing ‘expression of jadedness with the Holocaust’ (Bloch 1996). When David Bernstein was asked to review *The Fiftieth Gate* for the *Australian Jewish News* he was apprehensive about being asked to read ‘yet another worthy, undoubtedly well-written but ultimately—dare I say it—boring addition to Melbourne’s lengthening Holocaust memorial bookshelf’ (Bernstein 1997). The similarly jaded reader may have been inclined to think that not only is the Holocaust an unpalatable topic for a literary subject but, like Bernstein, one which had been repeated many times. Alan Jacobs, former director of the Sydney Jewish Museum responded, ‘Oh God, another Holocaust memoir’, when requested to review the book (Guilliatt 1997). Having read the book, however, these reviewers and others encourage readers to suspend judgment. This book, they enthuse, is different. It has the power to make history new. Richard Guilliatt (1997) quotes Dr Suzanne Rutland, senior lecturer in Jewish studies at the University of Sydney: ‘I have read a lot of Holocaust memoirs ... This book is unique in the way it integrates the present with the past. It really does add a new dimension’. *Herald Sun* reviewer, Zelda Cawthorne is equally enthusiastic: ‘Innumerable words have been written about the Holocaust but *The Fiftieth Gate* provides a unique perspective’ (1997). In explaining the popularity of the book, reviewers directly and indirectly reference the publisher’s prepared material. The publishing success of the book becomes part of the review or feature article generating more interest in the book and its author. This process whereby readers as consumers of culture are inclined towards an object of success, has been described by Frow (1995) as a status marking exercise (see Chapter 2).

**The appropriate use of the sacred**

The influence of the canon of Holocaust literature and the longstanding discourse surrounding the appropriate nature of witness writings, discussed in Chapter 4, is
reflected in the content of a number of the reviews. A high proportion of reviewers of Baker’s book are Jewish writers. Given the nature of the industry and the fact that reviewers are selected because of the expertise they bring to the reviewing task, it is not unusual that this would be so, especially within a society where Jewish identity and the Holocaust are so interlinked. Some reviewers express a degree of discomfort about Baker’s use of narrative fiction to imaginatively fill gaps left in the historical record. David Bernstein in the *Australian Jewish News* gently chides Baker for using a first-person account to describe his paternal grandmother's last moments in the gas chamber. ‘A brave attempt’, writes Bernstein, that fails not through the author’s lack of literary skill, but because ‘of the ultimate intractability of the material. The Holocaust, quite literally, beggars imagination’ (Bernstein 1997). Felicity Bloch finds Baker’s ‘otherworldly symbolism’, exemplified by the ‘Kabbalistic metaphor of redemption’ and the use of gates ‘inscribed with moral texts’, which she considers the author attempts unsuccessfully to invert, to be problematic. The symbolism ‘is most intrusive in Baker’s first-person description of his grandmother Hinda’s journey to Treblinka with her two young daughters’. The dying Hinda is rewarded by ‘an apocalyptic vision of light streaming through the opening gate’. Baker, concludes Bloch, is ‘on dangerous ground’ (Bloch 1997). Quoting the full text of Israeli poet Dan Pagis’ poem ‘Written in Pencil in the Sealed Railway-Car’ 51 (as did Bernstein in his article in the *Jewish News*) from which Baker had taken the final line for his narrative, Bloch concludes, ‘The poignant delicacy and tact of this poem ... is in its obliqueness, its suspension of any closure, knowledge, or belief. It should have made Baker think again’ (Bloch 1997).

51 'here in this carload / i am eve / with abel my son / if you see my other son / cain son of man / tell him that i'. The poem, by Israeli survivor-poet Dan Pagis is from *Points of Departure*, trans. S. Mitchell, Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, 1981 (Baker 1997, p. 333).
Those writers who offer criticism of the style and/or content of the book, however, invariably feel obliged to qualify that criticism. Bernstein’s criticism is tempered by praise: ‘Mark Baker has produced a gem. A brilliant, utterly compelling book …’ Bloch qualifies her review: ‘Holocaust narratives may be so overwhelming that criticism is inhibited. But *The Fiftieth Gate* is good enough to take it’. In *The Bulletin*, Robin Gerster commences his review with the qualification: ‘It is not easy to be critical of a book that revisits the Holocaust from the perspective of Jewish survivors’. Although the book ‘educates and entertains’, Gerster finds Baker’s style annoyingly ‘self-consciousness’, writing, ‘When he speaks with his own voice he is inclined to become the voice of professional Jewishness … But let it also be said that *The Fiftieth Gate* … is a good book as well as a worthy one’ (Gerster 1997).

The sacred nature of the Holocaust, discussed in Chapter 4, and the critical passions unleashed during the Demidenko debate, make representation outside the accepted norms and terminology that largely preserve the ‘mystery’ of survivor experience connect also with Gerster’s reference to ‘professional Jewishness’. Baker has undoubtedly been influenced by earlier commentary and witness. His original intention had been to write using historical research intermingled with his parents’ testimonial memories—a safe approach using two ‘distinct’ voices. Yet his work, it seems, was subverted during the writing to accommodate creative fiction and poetry where the processes of historical research left unsatisfactory gaps in his narrative (Stone 1997).

**Marketing pragmatics with a touch of serendipity**

Mark Baker’s *The Fiftieth Gate* was written at a fortuitous time for its author. He was not the first of the second generation to write a family memoir about the Holocaust experience. Arnold Zable had already published his prize winning *Jewels and Ashes* in

Historical confluences had delivered a receptive reading public, Frow’s ‘pocket of high culture’ situated within the commodity culture of literary production (1995, p. 86), to which the book could be marketed. Although Baker wrote as others of the second generation had done, from a need to make sense of his own story, the book contains a number of features that the publisher could identify as potentially audience broadening. In Australia in the 1990s, younger people of many ethnicities and cultures were becoming increasingly interested in discovering their cultural roots, encouraged by Australia’s policy of multiculturalism and the increasingly exotic mix of migrants, food and customs that had become a visible part of the Australian urban landscape. The interest provided an audience able to identify with a wider search for meaning encompassing Baker’s exploration of his life as a second-generation survivor growing up in a leafy suburban Melbourne.

The Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation, established in 1993 by Steven Spielberg with the aim of videotaping Holocaust survivors’ testimony worldwide, has been actively recording testimony in Australia since 1996 (Jerums 1999). The sense of urgency for recording the past created by the ageing of the survivor community has also inspired the Melbourne Makor Jewish community library’s ‘Write your story’ project, in which members are encouraged to record their memories. The Makor project has resulted in the publication of 40 volumes and two anthologies since its inception in 1998. Other testimonies are archived at the library (Gettler 2004). These projects are indicative of the mood towards conservation of
memory that assisted in the reception of Baker's book, first by the publisher and then by the public.

_The Fiftieth Gate_ is a book reflective of its time. Baker's desire to testify motivates him to bring his work to a larger audience. His association with literary agent Hickson & Associates suggests good connections as well as some notions of the industry's requirements of an author. By combining a personal voice with his research technique and his parents' testimony, he repositions the work within the burgeoning search by Australian (and other) multicultural societies for cultural/ethnic identification. His publisher, having received positive feedback prior to printing that suggested this book could outsell their projections, undertook an extensive publicity campaign to fulfill the vision. This support, as discussed in Chapter 2, is not universally provided to first-time writers. Baker was lucky, but his success was based on more than luck. His book, its content, the writing style, the author himself, appealed first to an experienced agent and then to the editorial staff at Harper Collins. Then, during production, his manuscript generated that indefinable buzz that permeates publishing companies once they believe they are about to release a 'bestseller'. Part of Baker's success was due to the forerunners in this genre who had established and broadened the niche market for second-generation writing. The best known and most prolific of these is Lily Brett, whose writing life is the topic of Chapter 6.
Lily Brett is the earliest, the most prolific and the best known of the Australian second-generation Holocaust writers. Since 1986 she has published six collections of poetry, four novels and three collections of essays. She has won prizes for her poetry and fiction, has achieved international success in Europe and America and has appeared with enough regularity on local lists of bestsellers and in media articles to have established herself as a celebrity author in Australia and Germany.

In comparison with Mark Baker, whose first commercially published title achieved ‘bestseller’ status, Lily Brett’s publishing success has been protracted, reflecting Frow’s (1995) paradigm which links the consumption of cultural production with multiple and changing identities across a number of different social groupings, thus explaining the ability of a book once established in a single niche market to encompass another. Brett effectively demonstrates an understanding of her appeal to her audience. Having established an initial niche market for her Holocaust poetry, she has tailored the content of subsequent books to suit a growing and changing audience. It is this

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52 *The Auschwitz Poems* won the 1987 Victorian Premier’s Award for poetry and was shortlisted for *The Age* Book of the Year. The group of 14 poems from the ‘Poland’ section of *Poland and Other Poems* won the 1986 Mattara Poetry Prize. *After the War* was shortlisted for the 1990 Victorian Premier’s Award for Poetry. *What God Wants* won the 1992 Steele Rudd Award. *Just Like That* won the 1995 NSW Premier’s Award for fiction. *Too Many Men* won the South East Asia and Southern Pacific regional section of the Commonwealth Writers Prize, the Booksellers’ Choice Award and the Ethnic Affairs Commission Award, and was shortlisted for the Miles Franklin prize in 2000.

53 Brett’s books have been published and distributed in America and editions in translation have been published in Germany, Austria and Switzerland.
apparent innate ability to understand and to accommodate her audience's preferences that make her of interest to this study.

While it is clear that Brett began writing to explore the effects of the Holocaust legacy on her family, during a twenty-year career it has been her ability to engage readers of different types, through different genres and with wide-ranging themes that has contributed to her long-term and international success as a writer. Brett has transformed herself from poet of marginal themes to prizewinning and bestselling writer, from the list of a small independent to that of a multinational publisher, from Melbourne to New York, to celebrity status in Germany.

Themes that encapsulate 'personal development' have become an established feature of the book market since the 1980s, mirroring what academic Leigh Dale describes as the 'predominant discourse in the public arena' fuelled by the ""personal growth" that underpinned literary education in schools in the sixties and seventies' (Dale 1997, p. 207). It has been Brett's ability to successfully incorporate the topics of 'personal growth' into her books that has encouraged the continuity and growth of her readership.

Brett has brought 'dysfunctional families' into the public arena and transmitted the benefits of psychoanalysis to her readers. She has described the intimate details of problematic body image and the educational turmoil of a confused sixteen-year-old. She has portrayed sex, love, anger, motherhood and divorce. In her writing she demonstrates the devoted love of her partner and discusses her children's foibles. She has encouraged female readers to engage with ageing and allowed them to see her dealing positively with menopause.
Brett's writing also conveys a strong sense of place, firstly with appeal to Melbourne's Jewish community and later, from New York, the appeal is broadened. Although Brett's earlier titles, both fiction and essays, often portray their second-generation characters as victims, it is the popular appeal of the 'bold person' she writes about in later works (In Full View, 1997a; Too Many Men, 2000; and Between Mexico and Poland, 2002) and 'has become' (Brett 1997a, p. 343), that has made her a bestselling writer and an international success.

This chapter reviews Brett's publishing history and her rise in popularity from the mid-1980s. It highlights particular features of her writing and the literary climate within which it is offered in an attempt to understand her rise from obscure poet to bestselling author.

Beginning writers have limited means of influencing their ultimate success as published authors. Writing talent and a story to tell are fundamental, yet more important is the establishment of a relationship with a publisher prepared to invest in their work and with an ability to imagine a commercial audience for their writing. Once published, writers vie to become one of the few whose works are selectively promoted by the publisher in ways that shift the focus 'from the content of the text to the literary star and the book as product' (Galligan 1999, p. 152). Mark Baker was fortunate to receive such promotion with his first book. Brett had to publish several works, commencing with poetry and working through collections of stories as well as through a series of publishers, before being eligible for the 'star' treatment.

Like Baker, Brett has positioned her writing to take advantage of the serendipitous events (an accident of birth, writing talent and a relocation to New York) that have allowed her to engage with a growing and varied public, and having become a desirable 'property' for a multinational publisher she has acquiesced to the publisher's
marketing mechanisms that seek to create profiles for 'selected' writers. She has changed her genre: slight volumes of collected stories became, over time, more complex novels and nonfiction in popular format. She has also taken advice from her publisher, writing at the suggestion of her Pan Macmillan editor a personal reflection about the fire that destroyed her New York loft (Brett 2002, p. 164) as well as her experience of the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York (Brett 2002, p. 271). She has allowed public access to her private and writing lives, exposed and explained through her collections of essays, the first provocatively called In Full View.

While Brett is prepared to reveal aspects of her private life, confirming the autobiographical nature of her fictions for instance, nonfiction also provides a mechanism whereby she controls what is revealed about her life and how it is revealed. Brett’s essays focus the media towards particular aspects of her life (her personal anxieties and trauma, and her writing) and deflecting their gaze from others (the conflict with her sister Doris, discussed below).

Brett performs well in the role of ‘author as hero’ (Galligan 1999, p. 158). Under an imposing photograph of Rankin and Brett in the Herald Sun intended as promotion for the Melbourne exhibition of Rankin’s paintings, Shaunagh O’Connor writes of the couple:

Holed up in their New York loft, she writes bestsellers and he paints for sellout exhibitions. And they clearly love each other as though they have just awoken from their first night together (O’Connor 2001).

To O’Connor’s audience, the love story is seen to be of as much importance as their art. Furthermore, where once Rankin, the artist, as the more famous of the duo had illustrated his wife’s early works of poetry and stories, Brett, now ‘the celebrity’, assists to promote his ‘elite’ form of the arts.
Holocaust poetry as ‘alternative’ testimony

Brett commenced her publishing career in 1986 with a slim volume of poetry entitled *The Auschwitz Poems*, which reflected (largely) her mother’s experience of the Holocaust. Later, commenting on *The Auschwitz Poems* in her essay ‘The Writing Life’, Brett endeavoured to explain the paradox of Holocaust representation. She states emphatically that it was not her intention to ‘skip over the horror’, however,

> When I wrote *The Auschwitz Poems*, I wanted the book to be read easily. I wanted people to pick it up in a bookshop, glance at the first page, and be halfway through the book before they knew they had begun (Brett 1997a, p. 330).

Brett describes her poems as skeletal and ghost-like (1997a, p. 330). Each line is short, two or three words, prosaic. Each poem occupies only a small proportion of the creamy stock on which it is printed. The titles too are short: ‘To the Left’; ‘Invisible’; ‘Sleep’; ‘Soup’; ‘My Grandmother’; ‘Arriving in Australia’. Holocaust scholar Lawrence Langer lends critical weight to the idea that perhaps the only way any reader can attempt to assimilate (if at all and for any length of time) the horror of the Holocaust experience is in fragmentary form. Confronted ‘face to face with ignorance of the unknown ... we forget endlessly’ (1991, p. 159). Both Brett (1997a; 2002) and Helen Epstein (1988) speak of the impossibility of children of survivors holding the facts associated with their parents’ Holocaust experience in their minds, despite copious study of the subject. In a re-creation of this feeling, Brett’s poetry uses stark, spare words:

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jammed
in
they
held
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their children
high
to
breathe
the last air
the
gas
burst
from the ceiling
hitting
them
first. (‘Children I’, Brett 1986, p. 3.)

Brett provides no metaphor: no interpretation of meaning is necessary. Her poems thus avoid what Langer condemns as ‘The singular inappropriateness of an image of natural beauty, symbolizing good fortune and joy, to describe one’s arrival at Auschwitz [which] underlines the difficulty of finding a vocabulary of comparison for such an incomparable atrocity’ (Langer 1991, p. 19). Brett’s delivery, the visual fragility of the sentence fragments, the lack of textual density, the brevity of the reading experience, partly explain the success of her early poetry.

Also, Brett is the daughter of an established Melbourne Holocaust survivor family. Her sister Doris’s first volume of poetry, The Truth about Unicorns, had been

54 Langer’s remarks are made within the context of his examination and comparison of differences between the written account and filmed oral testimony as methods of recording Holocaust testimony. The written account, he says, requires ‘analogies to initiate the reader into the particularities of their grim world’, creating for literature an impossible challenge. The ‘singular inappropriateness’ of some forms of the literary (simile and metaphor for example) lead to the searchlights of Auschwitz being ‘said to lick the sky like “flaming rainbows.”’ It is this kind of ‘singular inappropriateness of an image of natural beauty’ that Langer condemns (Langer 1991, pp. 18–19) and which Brett avoids.
published in 1984 to critical acclaim.\textsuperscript{55} In the small, somewhat incestuous Australian market for poetry, a previously published sibling could be a useful asset. Following the publication of individual poems in literary journals *Hecate*, *Westerley* and *Overland*, Lily Brett's first collection of Holocaust poetry was published by Henry Rosenbloom,\textsuperscript{56} an independent Melbourne Jewish publisher. As established in Chapter 3, the Melbourne Jewish community felt strongly their duty to support 'an event in the life of the community' (Golvan 1990, p. 100). Brett's poetry, a new act of Holocaust representation, undoubtedly benefited from this support as would Mark Baker's memoir when it was published a decade later. The publication of six collections of poetry, the first two books by a small independent publisher in 1986 and 1987, the last two by a multinational trade publisher Pan Macmillan in 1994 and 1997, is quite an achievement and something of an anomaly in Australian publishing. Few Australian poets can claim such popular success.

It has been well documented both in her published writing and in interviews that Lily Brett is the child of Jewish Holocaust survivors originally from Poland. She was born in Germany and migrated to Australia with her parents in 1948, when she was two years old. Her parents, Rooshka (Rose) Spindler and Moniek (Max) Brajsztajns, had been married in Poland in 1939, just prior to their incarceration in the Lodz ghetto. Separated at Auschwitz, somehow surviving the Nazi killing machine and the

\textsuperscript{55} *The Truth about Unicorns* won the Fellowship of Australian Writers' Anne Elder Poetry Award in 1984, and the Association for the Study of Australian Literature's Mary Gilmore Award for a First Book of Poetry in 1985.

\textsuperscript{56} Scribe Publications, one of Australia's few independent publishers, was founded by Henry Rosenbloom in 1976. Rosenbloom published Lily Brett's first two volumes of poetry as well as Arnold Zable's *Jewels and Ashes*. He specialises in 'quality fiction and serious nonfiction' including topics such as politics, current affairs, biography, history, environmental and social issues, psychology and philosophy (http://www.scribepub.com.au).
dislocation following liberation, the couple was reunited in Germany, later migrating to Australia.

Brett’s early poetry conforms to the pattern apparent in the writings of survivors Primo Levi and Elie Wiesel: the narrow separation between life and death in the camps, the chance nature of surviving ‘selections’ and the importance for survival of otherwise insignificant items: ‘a spoon / meant / good fortune / dignity / and / humanity’ (Brett 1986, p. 15). Although following The Auschwitz Poems her work ceased to foreground the direct experience of the Holocaust, Brett’s writing remained intensely fixed on an exploration of her personal life.

Stories of immigration and family life

Brett’s second and subsequent collections of poetry explore her life and her feelings about her children, her husband and the many manifestations of her anxiety: she is overweight, she suffers panic attacks, she becomes addicted to Valium, and she spends years in psychotherapy and analysis as she struggles to accommodate feelings of rejection and anger, directed towards her mother, alongside her feelings of guilt at not being able to resolve this conflict prior to her mother’s early death. It is the aftermath of the Holocaust, its legacy within her family, which she interrogates in these later writings. Without naming it, Brett portrays the transgenerational effect of the Holocaust discussed by Epstein (1979), by Berger (1997) and by Halasz (2001). In her most recent collection of poetry, Mud in My Tears, Brett writes of her anguish at her mother’s emotional unavailability in the poem ‘For Phoebe’:

I couldn’t laugh / when my mother / brushed me away

go clean up your room / go fix up your hair / go check on your homework

she couldn’t touch me / she couldn’t reach me / she was in Poland

where she was touched / by many people / but not my me (Brett 1997b, p.105.)
Though the Holocaust is implicit only in this poem through imagery associated with words like ‘train tracks’, ‘disposable parents’, ‘a bunk’, ‘a kapo’, a ‘German shepherd’ and ‘Poland’, the reader knows it has changed everything. Brett deals with the machinations of everyday life, with the Holocaust hovering as an explanation for anomalies great and small, the culprit and destroyer of her mother’s emotional responses, the creator of her own anxieties.

* * *

Brett’s writing career commenced when she began work for newly established weekly rock newspaper Go-Set in 1965. Although she had not considered journalism as a career (she was too obsessed with trying to lose weight to consider her future) she found that writing was something that she loved doing, and could do well. Having bluffed her way into the job, Brett made it a success. ‘It never occurred to me to question whether I could write. Everyone at the newspaper [Go-Set] assumed I could and so did I’ (Brett 1997a, p. 317).

Brett’s life changed with her work. She appeared on Australian television and radio. She travelled abroad for Go-Set interviewing ‘everyone who was anyone, really, except for the Beatles’ (1997a, p. 320). She married a man who was tall and blond, describing him as ‘as Aryan as you could get’ (1997a, p. 4), and her first child, a son, was born in London. Brett was elated, writing, ‘I couldn’t believe my luck. I thought our family didn’t have boys. I thought they lost boys’ (1997a, p. 3). Brett’s mother’s four brothers and her first son had perished during the Holocaust and ‘she aborted a small boy, in shame, in Melbourne after the war’ (1997a, p. 3). With hindsight Brett believes her first child was a gift to her mother, writing that ‘I wanted to give her the grandchildren she had never dreamt she’d live to see when she was lying, near-naked, ablaze with
typhoid on the frozen ground at Stuthof, where she was sent after Auschwitz’ (Brett 1997a, p. 4).

Brett met David Rankin when she visited his house to interview his first wife. He opened the door and saw what he later described as ‘this unbelievable, radiant and extraordinary vision’ (O’Connor 2001). They were married in 1980. Rankin shares her obsessive interest in the Holocaust, having been creatively inspired by Primo Levi’s *The Drowned and the Saved* (Cicioni 1995, p. xii). Brett, Rankin and their children relocated to New York in 1989 and her first volumes of fiction, the collections of interconnected stories *Things Could Be Worse* (1990b) and *What God Wants* (1991), were released by the University of Queensland Press (UQP). An independent Australian publisher, UQP has traditionally placed a strong focus on Australian literature and poetry, having published numerous Australian fiction writers including Thea Astley, Peter Carey, Matthew Condon, Geoffrey Dutton, Kate Grenville, Thomas Keneally and Janette Turner Hospital, as well as collections of poetry by Dorothy Porter, Judith Rodriguez and Fay Zwicky among others. Joining this illustrious company is an indication of the profile Brett was beginning to generate on the Australian publishing scene.

Brett’s early fictions, collections of interconnected stories, chronicle the experience of a survivor family and their community of friends in Australia after the war. In these stories Brett explores many of the universal issues faced by migrant survivors and their children as documented by Holocaust scholar Alan Berger: issues of identification with the Holocaust experiences of their parents, of impossible comparisons, of feeling the need to be super-achievers in an attempt to compensate their parents for their own lost childhood and lack of opportunity, and dealing with the mourning associated with their ‘diminished family circle’ (Berger 1997, p. 14).
Brett’s choice of a short story form that creates a disjunction in continuity, where characters and storylines interrelate loosely to form a quasi novel, resonates with the fragmentary nature of her Holocaust poetry. Moments of memory and historical fact are enveloped within cameos of migrant family life. With the publication of her stories, interspersed with further collections of poetry on similar themes, the connection between fiction and family experience became increasingly apparent.

**Liminal identities in fact and fiction**

Many of the characters in both early novels can be identified as multiple ciphers for the Brett family and their experiences. In *Things Could Be Worse* Renia and Josl Bensky are reunited in Germany after the war and migrate to Australia. They discover that the Melbourne assimilated Jewish community fears that the new immigrants will draw attention to themselves, creating problems for the whole community which has begun to feel ‘just like everybody else’ (1990b, p. 3). Renia tries to talk to her friend Frieda about her experience:

‘In concentration camp, I wanted to keep living so I could tell somebody what I saw.’ Frieda interrupted her. ‘Renia darling, it is over now. You are here, safe in Australia. It is best to put those things out of your mind. It is best not to disturb yourself with those thoughts’ (Brett 1990b, pp. 3–4).

Not allowing ‘those things’ to disturb their thoughts is a preoccupation of many of the survivors. Their children, however, want to remember. The book introduces Lola Benksy, rebellious daughter of Renia and Josl. As a child, she fakes illness in order to attract her mother’s attention, resulting in unnecessary surgery. She cooks and eats potato peelings to experience a ‘luxury’ of the Lodz ghetto (p. 118). She marries twice, is overweight, and pursues therapy. She travels to Warsaw in pursuit of her family
history. Her second husband is an artist who adores her: ‘Lola knew that she loved being adored’ (p. 119).

Over the past several decades readers have become familiar with the language used to describe the range of responses to trauma. From the ‘shellshock’ of the First World War to ‘Vietnam veterans syndrome’ to the ‘traumatic stress disorder’ experienced by victims of crime or violent accident, the concepts are known and we understand that a price is to be paid for extreme experience, especially that involving a loss of personal autonomy and control. Readers comfortable with such concepts direct empathy rather than abhorrence or anger toward the tormented Renia Bensky when she attacks her daughter Lola for boiling potato skins (Brett 1990b, p. 118). Simultaneously, they feel compassion for the hapless Lola and her alter-ego Brett. For Brett, the Holocaust provides an overarching background, silently explaining and excusing what would otherwise be seen as unacceptable behaviour by a parent.

The idea of a community based on the shared experience of children of survivors documented by Helen Epstein (1988) is exhibited in particular in What God Wants (1991), where Brett’s central characters are a group of ‘30-something’ children of survivors whose lives are interwoven around the central theme of the experience of survivor families. In her second collection of interlinked stories Brett’s focus is on the second-generation living in relative prosperity and comfort in Melbourne. Again, relationships are dissected and the underlying message—what God wants—is explored. It is as if one chronological story and one character is not sufficient to allow exposure of the minutiae of the aspects Brett needs to explore about her life in these fictions. Questions of Jewish identity, post-Holocaust, are raised when Ruthie Brott agonises about leaving her husband for her lover Abe Lipshitz, finally acknowledging:
It’s a feeling in me that what I’m doing, breaking up two families, is against the essence of Jewishness. And it was because of that same Jewishness that so many people were murdered. And what is that Jewishness? It’s not going to synagogue, or being religious. It’s raising a Jewish family’ (1991, p. 227).

Brott, however, is not Lily Brett, merely a representative of one form of what might have been. For Brott there is no therapy, no second husband. In a parallel story, Esther Schenkler, having been aborted of male twins at sixteen, has her mother’s Auschwitz identification number tattooed on her arm at seventeen. At forty-one, she climbs into the locker at her old school, University High, Melbourne, and commits suicide by swallowing sixty-five Serepax tablets (p. 94). University High School was where Brett received her secondary education. Harry Silver searches for peace with a non-Jewish lover (p. 16). Playwright Rosa Cohen is in analysis, moves to New York with her family and suffers anxiety and guilt feelings following the death of her mother: ‘I thought I had forever to fix things up with her’ (p. 180). Rosa collects second-generation stories for a book she intends to write.

Brett’s fictional characters act out various aspects of the second-generation persona she presents as her own in her nonfiction writing. The reader is invited to consider parallel lives that could reflect her real life under different circumstances. The book contains a strong sense of identification with the Melbourne Jewish community in these stories. Characters make love in an apartment in South Melbourne. They drive along Balaclava Road and Ackland Street, and eat at Scheherezade café in St Kilda. Through these Melbourne Jewish references Brett invites her audience into a familiar world.

These stories and the domestic and psychological issues with which they resonate form the foundation of Brett’s subsequent writings. Certainly it is easy for the reader to forget that Brett is writing fiction in these collections, and this became a contentious
issue for the Brett sisters (see below). The reader’s sense of confusion between fact and fiction is further heightened by the release of Brett’s collection of essays *In Full View* in 1997, confirming for her readers the extent of her frankness in previous novels.

**Tangible success: publishing with a multinational publisher**

*Just Like That*, Brett’s first book published with multinational Pan Macmillan (in 1994), was also the first novel she had written in a continuous narrative from a single point of view, though the book is still anecdotal in structure with a simple plot. The book portrays the life of Esther Zemler as extraordinarily similar to Brett’s own New York existence. *Just Like That* was a breakthrough book for Brett, with at least five printings (1994, 1995, 1996, 1999, 2000). The move to a multinational publisher was propitious and the success of this novel no doubt encouraged the University of Queensland Press to release Brett’s *Collected Stories* (an omnibus edition of *Things Could Be Worse* and *What God Wants*) in 1999.

The novel *Too Many Men* (published by Pan Macmillan in a trade edition in 1999 followed by a smaller format in 2000) represents another departure for Brett. This book is also written as a continuous narrative from only one point of view, but the plot is more complex than in the previous work. Brett’s protagonist is Ruth Rothwax, an Australian living in New York, a single woman divorced three times. Among elements of the paranormal and interactions between Ruth and the ghost of Rudolph Höss, the notorious commandant of Auschwitz, the reader discovers familiar themes. Ruth is the child of Holocaust survivors and travels with her reluctant widowed father to Poland and Auschwitz. A family secret lies literally buried in a box in the Polish soil. Similar imagery is used by both Helen Epstein (1988, p. 9) and Anna Blay (1998 p. 92) to give form to their parents’ secret, unspoken Holocaust experience. The consumption of
food, a new relationship for Ruth’s father, her dreams of lost and stolen babies and the lengthy litany of Ruth’s anxieties combine in what Brett describes as ‘the story of a love between a father and a daughter’ (Brett 2002, p. 371).

Brett uses the ghost of Höss as a device with which to explore for the first time the problematic question of the nature of the Holocaust perpetrators in her writing. Brett’s purpose with Höss reflects Arendt’s conclusion that Adolph Eichmann was not a ‘monster’ (1964, p. 54), and Inga Clendinnen’s contention that ‘habituation’ and the ‘active dissemination of an ideology vested with power to impose its vision on the world’ can transform ‘ordinary men’ into ‘efficient, untroubled killers of helpless civilians’ (Clendinnen 1998, p. 153). ‘My intention’, says Brett, ‘in making Rudolph Höss’s life story part of my novel was to show how ordinary and how human he was ... I wanted to make it harder for people to decide that inhuman acts are carried out by monsters’ (Brett 2002, p. 372). Too Many Men grapples with moral and ethical questions of the complicity of the German and Polish people in the Holocaust and Brett’s own response to this. She allows Ruth to utter scathing comments about the Germans and Poles, yet introduces the ambivalent character of Höss and his complex relationship with Ruth into the novel. For the first time Brett moves her gaze from the consequences of the Holocaust on the families of survivors to questions of Holocaust representation and its importance for future generations.

Although Ruth suffers from many of the anxiety symptoms experienced by previous protagonists, and by Brett herself, she is physically strong: she runs, she lifts weights, as does the now post-fifty Brett. Ruth Rothwax is a woman well informed about the Holocaust, like Brett herself, having read hundreds of books on the Holocaust. Books by survivors. Books by historians. Despite all the books Ruth bought and read, part of her could still not imagine the truth (p. 64).
Presenting Ruth as a resourceful single woman with a considerable income allows Brett to direct the focus of her story away from the familiar domestic scenarios of previous novels. The appeal to a female readership is strong. This book engages with the dilemmas of the late twentieth-century woman, who, though desirous of a relationship, home and family, is disinclined to sacrifice a career and independence to secure it. The reader is able to appreciate something exotic and enticing (at least to other middle-aged women) in the new and very physical weightlifting persona created by Brett.

Brett’s style allows little space for the reader to imagine why Ruth acts or thinks the way she does. Brett is always quick with an explanation, introducing the reader early in the novel to Ruth’s reasoning:

Children of Holocaust survivors found it hard to feel freedom. Ruth had read that many times. They found it difficult to separate from their parents. Difficult to have a life of their own. Difficult to have a life. They had to create obstacles and burdens for themselves. To align themselves with their parents. To experience at least some of the horror. Weighted down with fear, apprehension and depression, they felt free enough to go on (p. 18).

At times Brett’s didactic approach tends to stifle the reader’s independent thought. Brett is aware of a compulsion to explain things, commenting: ‘All my life I have had a need to make myself understood clearly. I have over-explained every explanation … I can’t make things clear enough’ (1997a, pp. 325–6). Like her poetry, Brett’s fiction and nonfiction requires little work on the part of the reader except empathy, and this is elicited via sentimentality rather than through the complexities of metaphor and self-reflection.

Sentiment is important to Brett. As an eight-year-old she invented sad stories in order to make her peers cry (1997a, p. 333). As an adult she is moved by funerals ‘as a sign of caring’ and feels ‘winded if there are not overt expressions of grief’, wishing to
rewrite eulogies, 'to reorder the words to allow people to weep' (1997a, p 334).

Describing the reunion between the fictional versions of her parents after the war Brett writes: 'When Renia kissed Josl, he wept. She knew that he understood something. She didn't know what' (Brett 1990b, p. 2). Weeping, explains sociologist Franco Moretti, is an infantile reaction to distress, 'a way of distracting us from the sight of what has upset us' (1983, p. 179). The tears obscure what we would rather not see.

An appropriate literary response has of course been problematic to all writers choosing Holocaust representation as their purpose. Yet within Brett's work are contradictory tensions. Writing quite deliberately in response to the fact that 'very few people were moved by what happened to [her] parents and to all the other Jews' (Brett 1997a, p 333), she allows Moretti's 'curtain [that] drops between us and the world' (1983, p. 179), the response of tears, to obscure the full horror. Paradoxically, the veil of tears allows Brett's words to be 'enjoyed' as autobiographical fiction while repudiating the 'potential for knowledge' originally created by 'placing us in the presence of pain' (Moretti 1983, p. 181). Extrapolating from Moretti's point, the removal of sentimentality from Brett's writing may teach the lessons of the Holocaust more effectively—but would not engender as wide an audience.

Though her self-confessed didacticism has the potential to irritate readers, Brett's facility with language and self-deprecating humour lend an engaging quality to her works. Publication by multinational publisher Pan Macmillan ensures that Brett is profiled and reviewed frequently. This support, demonstrated through the publication of six titles in seven years provides further confirmation of Brett's position as a desirable property for Australian publishers.
The author at work: Brett’s engagement with her audience

In *Between Mexico and Poland*, Brett’s most recent collection of essays published in 2002, the reader not only understands why Brett writes (discussed at length in *In Full View*) but her writing process itself is revealed. The characters and plotlines are created before her readers’ eyes as if Brett seeks the approval or assistance of her audience. The reader is introduced to Pearl Poyas and is invited to agonise with Brett about Pearl’s age: ‘forty-two or fifty-two’ (2002, p. 3). Later we share the author’s surprise when Pearl metamorphoses into the dynamic Ruth Rothwax. ‘I think she arrived when I wasn’t looking’, writes Brett. ‘One day I meant to write Pearl and I wrote Ruth’ (2002, p. 441). In effect the reader is being provided with a preview of Brett’s next novel which will again showcase Ruth Rothwax and the popular character of her father, Edek, described by one reviewer as ‘Brett’s great fictional achievement’ (Chimonyo 1999).

Readers enjoy familiarity. In the case of fiction this is achieved by the creation of series, using the same characters and repetitive plotlines. In *Between Mexico and Poland* Brett’s readers are assured that they may await her next novel with confident expectation. ‘The plot and characters are vintage Lily Brett’, Brophy (1999, p. 27) confirms when reviewing *Too Many Men*, and this appears to be what her readers require. Publishers’ sales attest to the value of series creation.57

In *Between Mexico and Poland* Brett reveals herself for the first time as a commentator on problems beyond her personal anxieties. Here she engages with

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57 The *Books: Who’s Reading them Now?* survey confirms that of respondents who had bought books in the previous week, 22.6% had done so because they were ‘following a particular author or series’. This was second only to the other major category, ‘interested in this type of book/subject’ at 34.9% (Australia Council, 1995 p. 29).
concrete disasters: the fire in her New York loft, the terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre on 11 September 2001 and its aftermath. She also admits her own difficulty in differentiating fact from her fiction, confessing, ‘I wrote myself into the scene of his [Höss’s] death, the scene of his hanging, in Too Many Men. I didn’t actually write myself into it, I put poor Ruth Rothwax there’ (Brett 2002, pp. 426–7). Lily Brett has so successfully blurred the lines between her fiction and memoirs her readers believe that her fiction is memoir, yet she provides them with clues to the way she is to be read. As a child, she says, she invented stories: of relatives who did not exist, of the poverty in which her family existed. She invented ‘illnesses and afflictions’ and even the fact that she could swim (Brett 1997a, p. 153).

Brett’s confessional nonfiction invites a sense of intimacy with her readers, and reviewers demonstrate the effectiveness of this invitation. Cath Kenneally represents a wide readership, gushing in The Weekend Australian: ‘Lily and I haven’t met, but I feel we’re intimates’ (1999). With such close relationships between fiction and life it is not surprising that readers, reviewers and critics are confused about the nature of Brett’s autobiographical fiction. Other manifestations of this confusion have led to a very public dispute between the sisters Doris and Lily Brett concerning the portrayal of their mother in the public sphere, the details of which are briefly summarised below.

The Brett sisters’ disputed past

Doris Brett, born in Melbourne, is four years younger than her sister Lily. The Holocaust, she writes (Brett D. 2001), was rarely mentioned in their family home. The dispute between the Brett sisters, resulting from what Doris experienced as the

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* In their entry under ‘Lily Brett’, the editors of the Oxford Companion to Australian Literature confused Brett’s mother Rose with her fictional creation, stating that ‘Lily’s mother (Renia Bensky)’ was ‘the dominating figure’ of both stories and poems (Wilde et al. 1994, p. 117).
inaccurate and very public exposure of the character of their mother in Lily’s writing, was initiated, according to Doris, following the publication of Lily’s *Poland and Other Poems* in 1987. In response to a review that described her mother as ‘erratic, [and] verbally violent’ (Brett D. 2001, p. 172), Doris wrote to the *Australian Jewish News* defending her mother’s character. Following the publication of this letter the sisters rarely communicated and Doris writes that her father, whilst privately acknowledging her version of events as ‘true’, has publicly supported Lily’s version (Brett D. 2001). Over a decade later, in 2000, *The Bulletin* published an interview with Lily in which Rose was described as a ‘tyrannical mother’, and again Doris felt impelled to correct the public record (Brett D. 2001 pp. 364ff). The following week *The Bulletin* also published a letter from Max Brett that stated: ‘My daughter Lily speaks and writes the truth’ (Brett D. 2001, p. 380). Lily has refused to comment publicly; indeed she rarely mentions the existence of a sister in her fictions and essays. The dispute has assumed the status of publishing industry ‘folklore’ since the first correspondence with the *Australian Jewish News* and might have remained so had not Doris published her contrary memoir *Eating the Underworld* in 2001, in which she states that the sisters’ estrangement, though exacerbated by the published letters, had commenced during their childhood. Rose Brett was not the tyrannical bully portrayed in Lily’s writing, it was Lily herself who was a ‘demanding’ and ‘volatile’ daughter and sibling (2001 p. 12). Doris believes that her family (Lily and Max) had colluded to silence her version of her mother, whom she portrays as a woman devoted to her two girls, able to ‘create an atmosphere of peace and calm around her’ (Brett D. 2001, p. 11).

When *Eating the Underworld* was published by Random House Australia the Brett’s family dispute became a page one news story. *The Age* ran a feature under the heading ‘A literary feud born of family trauma’ (Kissane 2001) on 17 September. In this article
Karen Kissane sets out the positions of both sisters and their father regarding the
dispute and draws comparisons with other prominent literary feuds. She solicits expert
opinion on the likelihood that both daughters could honestly hold diametrically
opposed beliefs about their childhood, and the 'morality of using material that you
share with other people' (p.10). What is of interest in the context of the publishing
industry is that a family matter, a matter of gossip in the industry, was considered by
the Age's news editor as appropriate front-page news in Melbourne's daily broadsheet
newspaper.

Graeme Turner suggests that it is difficult for any individual to manipulate the 'self
serving' media to their own purpose (Turner 1996, p. 29). In exchange for the career-
enhancing benefit of publicity, writers who have gained 'celebrity' status are subjected
to unwanted intrusion and scrutiny. Furthermore, Turner asserts, the media no longer
engages in 'championing' the cause of Australian literary production as was once the
case, having decided that its interests lie in the 'politics', 'personalities', and 'ethical
disputes' rather than in the cultural significance of literature (1996, p. 6). In essence,
authors are subjected to the 'feature profile' instead of a review of their work.

Certainly, this is has been the case with Lily Brett's recent titles and has continued
with the release of Doris Brett's *Eating the Underworld* when, rather than reviewing
the book, the media highlighted the contradictory nature of the sisters' stories and both
sisters were subjected to an investigative feature about their different views of their
childhood experience.

News coverage, however, serves the publisher's cause as well or better than review
coverage. More people will read a news item than will seek out the special book pages
within the paper, and the revelatory nature of Doris's memoir, as well as Lily Brett's
public silence, only serves to keep the topic on the media agenda and to whet the
public appetite for the next instalment: perhaps a new book from Lily Brett that might provide more clues to the ‘truth’.

Aside from her public silence regarding her relationship with her sister (which from a publisher’s point of view might be seen as a shrewd manipulation of the media, a delay of the final dénouement, a continuation of the story), Lily Brett has been remarkably judicious in her use of the media. Brett has managed, especially since joining the list of Pan Macmillan, to procure favourable coverage on the release of each new title in Australia. Like many celebrity expatriates, having established her base in New York, she is feted with large headlines, large photographs and prominent treatment in the ‘magazine’ sections of Australian broadsheets at the release of each new title.

The media, however, and through them the public, is not only interested in Brett’s new books and her New York lifestyle, her growing relationship with the German people is under scrutiny as well. In circumstances similar to Brett’s ‘expert’ status as an eye-witness to the 9/11 attacks on New York, her ‘survivor’ status gives her an authenticating voice in the German–Jewish reconciliation process that makes her newsworthy. Brett’s article ‘Surviving Germany’, which describes her first book tour to her birthplace, was published as the front cover feature of The Age’s Saturday Extra in 1999, and journalist Simon Mann joined a second tour documenting Brett’s interactions with her German audience in ‘Breaking the Wall of Silence’ in The Age in 2001. Despite the fact that Brett is on a promotional tour for her books, the focus of these articles is on Brett’s relationships with her German audience and her contribution to the reconciliation process, rather than on the books and their content.
Brett’s reception in Germany: a sentimental journey

Lily Brett’s works maintain a popular following in Germany. Most of her books have been published in German translation. Indeed, her second nonfiction title, *New York* (2001), was originally written as a series of columns for the German newspaper *Die Zeit*. Her popularity in Germany, I believe, is linked to the theme of reconciliation with the past begun in German literature during the 1990s. A movement of younger Germans writers, of whom Bernhard Schlink (*The Reader*, 1998) is representative, sought to fathom the secrets of their parents’ past in much the same way as the Holocaust survivors’ children had done.

Brett first toured Germany in 1998 following the release of the German edition of her novel *Just Like That* and has returned on several occasions for promotional readings. She is popular with both young and middle-aged Germans who value the spirit of reconciliation in her more recent writings (*New York*, *Too Many Men* and *From Mexico to Poland*) and, importantly, feel they experience a sense of reconciliation from participation in her public performances. Her father and mother, she particularly points out at such events, regarded Germany as a cultured country and are mystified about how it could have ‘turned barbarous’ (Brett 1999b, p. 1). Middle-aged adults cry with Brett during readings and younger people confess that her books allow them to commence a dialogue with their parents about the Holocaust. Brett focuses on the similarities between the second-generation survivors and the children of the generation of the perpetrators. She finds common ground in the ‘wall of silence’ constructed around the Holocaust by the parents of each group (Mann 2001). The public outpouring of emotion described by Brett in conversation with Age journalist Simon Mann (2001) is markedly similar to the reception of the American television
miniseries *Holocaust* when first broadcast on German television in January 1979. Academics Andrei Markovits and Rebecca Hayden report that

The two main themes were total disbelief and shock as to how such atrocities could happen anywhere, but especially in a country of such high civilization as Germany... Many people wept and appeared to have a need to talk to anyone about their experiences, their shame, their horror... Many callers insisted that because of the show, they were able to talk about World War II for the first time with their families (Markovits & Hayden 1980, p. 63).

Nearly twenty years later, a new generation of German youth who had ‘condemned [their] parents to shame, even if the only charge [they] could bring was that after 1945 they had tolerated the perpetrators in their midst’ (Schlink 1997, p. 90), has found the writing of Brett and her presence a catalyst for openness about the Holocaust. Brett’s characterisation of herself as a victim has altered. Through assimilating a wider view of humanity, she has become a commentator on world events and the facilitator of German intergenerational reconciliation, of German-Jewish reconciliation. Through her publicly demonstrated learned tolerance, Brett appears to provide a way for German youth to come to terms with their past. The perpetrators were not unique, not monsters, she asserts, and she needed to demonstrate this through her books. ‘I grew up’, she writes,

understanding the enormous danger of deciding that someone else was not quite like you. That someone else because of their skin colour or their language, or their religious beliefs or their sexual orientation, was not quite human. Rudolph Höss and thousands of other men and women of that era were not monsters. They had just decided that the humans they were disposing of were not fully human (2002, pp. 372-3).

Unlike their parents’ generation, represented by writers such as Wiesel and Levi, who are unable to conceive of their tormentors in terms of humanity, the second-generation writers have found ways to write stories that explore the subtleties and ambiguity of human nature, providing their own unique testimony of the Holocaust
whilst pursuing the ‘tikkun olam, the moral improvement or repair of the world’ (Berger 1997, p. 4). Brett is exemplary of this generation. As her writing has emerged from poetry to stories to essay and fiction, so her personal position on the Holocaust has evolved. Where once she could be classified within Berger’s category of the particularist, focused on personal healing, more recent books, commencing with Too Many Men, demonstrate that she has begun to focus outwards, embracing the idea of the pain of others, embracing the youth of Germany in a way that was not possible for the previous generation (the survivor) writers to contemplate. This remarkable track record of metamorphoses, a seeming innate ability to captivate wider audiences, to broaden her appeal beyond the boundaries of Holocaust testimony, to write to popular themes, to be of the populace, has made Lily Brett a desirable property indeed for a multinational publisher.
CONCLUSION

Of writing, publishing and reading Holocaust stories

The concern of *Holocaust Literature: an exploration of second-generation publishing in Australia* has been the elucidation of influences on a particular group of writers, publishers and readers that explain the publication of second-generation Holocaust writing by mass-market focused conglomerate publishers on the cusp of the 21st century. This self-selecting group of writers pursues publication within a contemporary publishing environment that would initially appear unsympathetic to the content of their memoirs and novels on both commercial and aesthetic grounds.

Closer scrutiny, however, reveals that the nature of the mass market is not, as presupposed by conglomerate publishing models, a homogenous unit requiring an 'ideal' bestselling book able to cater to a single popular taste. It is, as described by Frow (1995), a heterogeneity constructed of myriad niches, whose consumption of cultural production reflects social identity rather than class. Furthermore, Frow suggests that the coherent maintenance of such social identities only exists within 'the constant process of their reformation' (Frow 1995, p. 12), allowing the possibility for any individual to have multiple identities across a number of social groupings, thereby explaining not only the different valuing of a cultural artifact within diverse social groupings but the transfer of such value from one group to another. With this paradigm, Frow rejects the traditional, simplistic, class-based dichotomy between high and low culture in favour of a market model that allows for the growth of niche market publications into commercial successes.

Frow's model describes a process through which a book published with a particular readership in mind (those interested in Holocaust memorialisation, for instance) is read
by others for different reasons (an interest in memoir, perhaps), thus accommodating
the success of niche market writers and explaining the establishment of successful
careers by a number of Australian writers of the second generation. Most notable of
such writers is Lily Brett, who commenced her career with niche publisher Scribe and
after almost twenty years claims ‘bestselling’ status with Pan Macmillan. The gradual
development of Brett’s success has meant that her career has followed a more
traditional developmental trajectory than the apparently ‘instant’ success of Mark
Baker. Yet without the demonstrated ability of Brett and the early second-generation
writers to establish and consolidate their niche, and to extend the reach of their writing
into other niches, Baker’s work would not have been recognised as a potential category
achiever.

Frow also comments on the effects of mass-media interventions, which he suggests
eourage the formation of ‘audiences that cross the borders of classes, ethnic groups,
genders, and indeed nations’ (1995, p. 145). This observation supports my argument
about the appropriation and development of emerging sub-bestseller niche markets by
the conglomerates. When a prospect established through the auspices of a small
publisher is identified, the conglomerate works with its mass-media links and its range
of promotional tools to give the new product mass-media placement. The outcome (if
the strategy is successful) is that commercially acceptable books and bestselling
authors will be created during the process. Mark Baker’s publishing success is
indicative of such practices within modern conglomerate publishing.

Second-generation Holocaust writing, although exemplary of a number of niche
markets that can be targeted for commercial success by publishers and editors, has, I
argue, features that make it uniquely valuable as a study within the context of the
Australian publishing industry. Second-generation writers form an identifiable group,
growing in popularity with mainstream publishers throughout the 1990s. The Australian second-generation writers write to make sense of their world. They write in search of individual identity, which requires an exploration of their upbringing in an adopted country as well as the very personal, often traumatic, family tensions and secrets that they ascribe to the legacy of the Holocaust (Berger 1997; Epstein 1988). They write in response to the eyewitness dictum to 'bear witness' (Levi 1987, 1989; Wiesel 1995), submitting to the necessary commodification processes of publication to bring their literary creation to a receptive audience. They write to make sense of their cultural identity, their Jewishness, in a secular, multicultural Australia where they construct identities based on ritual and Jewish custom and the celebration of family life. However, it is the Holocaust rather than Judaism that drives the identity-building process for these Jews (Stratton 2000).

The presence of a significant proportion of Holocaust survivors within the larger culturally supportive Melbourne Jewish community (Goivan 1990; Rutland 1997) has provided an initial audience to which forms of Holocaust memorialisation, such as second-generation writing, are acceptable. This support is demonstrable and specific. Doris Brett, for example, had published critically acclaimed poetry (though not on Holocaust themes) prior to the release of her sister Lily's *Auschwitz Poems* in 1986, but it was Lily who received the community support to become not only a more prolific poet, but to gain bestselling status with later novels and nonfiction writings.

While almost 60 years have elapsed since the end of World War II, the Holocaust continues to maintain an important place in the Australian public consciousness (Golub & Cohen 1994), generating public interest and debate. Alongside the burgeoning publications of the second generation during the 1990s, an Australian critical and historical discourse began to focus on the Holocaust (Clendinnen 1998; Jost et al.
This discourse, published in books, magazine articles and newspapers, has ensured the preservation of evidence in the public domain from which to seek information, formulate hypotheses and draw conclusions.

Other factors external to the local publishing industry continue to contribute to the prominence of the Jewish people and of the Holocaust as a symbol of their unity and identification in the public sphere. The continuing hostilities in the Middle East, in particular the territorial dispute between Israelis and Palestinians and the ramifications of this conflict upon world politics, highlights (for example, through the letters and opinion pages of local broadsheets) the importance to the Australian Jewish community of invoking Holocaust remembrance for its part in the justification of the existence of the State of Israel as a Jewish homeland.

The Holocaust's status as a unique event in the modern history of humankind (Levi 1987, p. 391) and thus as a metaphor for unprecedented events (LaCapra 1994; Tal 1996) has meant that the imagery associated with the Holocaust (whereby the Holocaust becomes its own metaphor) permeates public discourse surrounding second-generation writing, effectively simplifying and standardising perceptions of content and making the job of pitching a book's story to an editorial selection board, a sales meeting or a bookseller, easier. Also, as demonstrated in the reviews of both Brett and Baker's works, it creates a sympathetic climate for review.

Although the argument of this thesis may appear to support the view that second-generation writers impose considered, disciplined and long-term planning on their careers in order to achieve their goal of publication, to assume such premeditation would be to vastly overrate the ability of an author or even a publisher to control the underlying unpredictability of the marketplace. The writers submit with varying degrees of enthusiasm to the commodification process of book manufacture and
distribution because this secures publication and a readership. As always, serendipity and intermittent acts of opportunism by individuals affect the careers of these Australian authors.

The act of bearing witness provides an important justification for second-generation writers: witness to the world and to their own children (Baker 1997, Blay 1998). It is to this maturing cohort, the third generation of Holocaust survivors, that their parents and grandparents look for continuation of Holocaust memorialisation (and effectively the passing of judgment upon their own efforts). Programs like ‘The March of the Living’, whereby third-generation survivors participate in escorted tours of Poland in an attempt to understand and claim their ‘heritage’, are controversial. The opinion of survivors is divided about this form of Holocaust memorialisation. Some see the ‘March’ as an appropriative act, an attempt by the third generation to associate themselves with an experience not their own, while other survivors participate as ‘guides’, believing the ‘March’ to be educative and a form of honouring the dead. Issues foregrounded by the passing of the generation of witnesses, such as the necessity for future Holocaust memorialisation and the form this may take, the ownership and reliability of memory and the connection of the Holocaust with universal Jewish identification in the 21st century are areas that offer further opportunities for research. Prominent also in the survivor community are issues of intergenerational reconciliation (Halasz 2002; 2001) with parallel issues within the German community that will, I suspect, also have ramifications for the third generation.

50 ‘Claiming the memory’, aired on ABC television’s Compass on 14 November 2004, followed the journey of a group of Australian Jewish teenagers (some of whom were of the third generation) taking part in ‘The March of the Living’ for the first time.
Niche markets in a post-conglomerate world?

If, as suggested in Chapter 2, the outlook for the continued maintenance of conglomerate entities in the Australian publishing industry is pessimistic, how might the industry be configured in the future? The industry has been reluctant to pursue radical change, despite government assistance towards industry reform in the form of research funding to the value of $48 million targeting book production. This funding, provided under the Enhanced Printing Industry Competitiveness Scheme (EPICS) grants as part of the Book Industry Assistance Package (Vines 2001), has been instrumental in encouraging such research as has been undertaken in recent years.

Change, unrelated to government intervention, is currently underway in the form of a new generation of small independent publishers: Text, Black Inc./Bookman/ Schwartz Publishing and the perennial Scribe, mimicking, perhaps, the establishment of publishers such as McPhee Gribble, Greenhouse and Dove Communications in the 1970s and 1980s. 60 This new generation of publishers, significantly, is generally less reliant on profits generated directly through publishing to fund new projects than were their predecessors or the conglomerates. Text Publishing has been supported by the cash-rich magazine business of Text Media, though more recently, following the sale of the magazines to newspaper producer Fairfax, has entered into partnership with Scottish publisher Canongate (Steger 2004a). Morry Schwartz's Pan Urban Corporation supports the growing range of serious nonfiction titles of Black Inc., Bookman and Schwartz. Scribe has survived for almost three decades using financial successes like the recent bestselling Shantaram to fund more marginal projects. Whether the achievement of such publishers is merely part of the cyclical nature of

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60 Of this group, Scribe Publications is the one still operating independently.
success and failure in the limited market of Australian publishing will become apparent in time.

Recent research into Australian publishing also funded under the EPICS grant scheme, has focused on changes to the industry wrought by digital technology (Cope & Mason 2001), notably on new creation and distribution methods (electronic text delivered to hand-held reading devices or computer desktops) or into print-on-demand, the electronically generated ordering of as few as a single book, printed and bound in response to single orders and shipped to individual customers.

Despite a proliferation of online booksellers since the late 1990s, Australian consumers resist the Internet as a medium for local book purchases when other methods exist (bookshops and telephone generated orders, for instance). Conversely, they expect the Internet to provide free access to information and free download facilities. The electronic medium is not ideal for all reading experiences: while facilitating research and text search, it impedes the reading of narrative text. Production and distribution models premised on the popularity of shared music files distributed via the Internet do not take into account the fact that music appeals to the auditory senses, whereas, the tactile appeal of books is strong, requiring a physical form that stimulates the brain through the senses of sight, touch and smell.

Currently, major publishers envisage the benefits of short-run digital printing for backlist maintenance without accepting its potential for the cost-effective reduction of inventory management (Thorpe-Bowker 2003a, p.15). Short-run digital printing (print-on-demand as it has become known in the industry) has the potential to rationalise the large warehouse operations of the conglomerate publishers. Smaller, more frequent print runs utilising digital printing technologies allow publishers to accommodate the trend towards ‘just in time’ inventory management practices as opposed to the current
practice of ‘just in case’ inventory management (Cope & Mason 2001, p. 56). The increased unit cost of the printed books can be offset against the commensurate reduction in warehousing costs.

Researchers Bellemy et al. identify a new generation of readers ‘familiar with text that is technologically mediated, through their experiences with on-line chat, reading and writing e-mail, and reading and writing text-based short messages’ (2001, p. 123). While these readers may accept the limitations of electronic rendering, thereby changing the way the world defines a book, indications are that incremental changes to the current system will remain the norm. Large publishers (perhaps not conglomerates, but multinational companies solely engaged in publishing) producing titles for the major selling seasons will operate alongside independent publishers who will experiment with new genres, authors and niches, while also striving to publish mainstream titles. The industry will also accommodate a small component of Internet-facilitated publishing, limited to academic and professional journal publishers and the self-publisher.

While the ramifications of digitisation and the Internet as a means of publication remain a useful future direction for research, the opportunity presented by the EPICS funding is unlikely to recur in the short to medium term. Incentives for the university sector to engage in such research may be encouraged by the requirement within the appointment and promotion processes of the university to demonstrate performance based on research quantum and publication points. Conglomerate ownership has created increased pressures on scholarly publishing. Like trade authors, academics find fewer opportunities for commercial publication by major scholarly publishers. The processes of digitization, the use of the Internet as a dissemination tool and the availability of short-run digital print all promise change that should benefit the
publication prospects of academics. Thus the university, with appropriate research expertise and a vested interest in the continuation of affordable scholarly book and journal publishing, may collaborate with industry to explore the possibilities for future directions in Australian publishing.
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