

Cartographies of Memory: Trauma, Migration, and Spatial Identity in Second-Generation Holocaust and Partition Narratives (1947–2025)

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1. Abstract

This paper delves into the intertwined experiences of collective trauma, migration, and spatial identity as reflected in second-generation narratives stemming from two of the twentieth century's most catastrophic events: the Holocaust and the Partition of India in 1947. Utilizing an interdisciplinary approach that incorporates trauma studies, memory studies, postcolonial theory, and cultural geography, this article follows the development of second-generation literature, oral accounts, and multimedia works from the immediate aftermath of the Partition to contemporary expressions extending into the early twenty-first century (2025). By concentrating on "cartographies of memory," the research investigates how inherited trauma and displacement are spatially encoded, negotiated, and reimagined across diasporic, psychological, and geopolitical landscapes. Although the Holocaust and Partition are historically and culturally distinct, they share significant dislocations—forced migrations, fragmented communities, and disputed geographies—that have influenced subsequent generations. Second-generation narratives frequently confront the tension between inherited silence and the necessity for expression, creating memory maps that reconfigure familial histories through imagination, storytelling, art, and movement. These narratives reveal how spatial identity is constructed through memory, loss, nostalgia, and resistance. This article synthesizes existing literature, conducts a comparative analysis of key

texts across various forms (literary, cinematic, oral history), and highlights themes such as return and belonging, borderland identities, memory as spatial practice, and the ethics of testamentary inheritance. Methodologically, it combines qualitative textual analysis with narrative cartography—mapping reasoned connections between narrative structures and spatial imaginaries. Findings indicate that second-generation narrators use spatial metaphors and geographies—homes, ruins, borderlands, migration routes—to grapple with trauma and reconstruct identity. The comparative aspect underscores shared strategies as well as unique cultural nuances in Jewish and South Asian diasporic practices. The article concludes that these cartographies of memory do not merely preserve the past; they transform personal and collective identities, enabling new ethical modes of engagement with the legacies of violence and loss.

2. Keywords

Maps of Memory, Narratives from the Second Generation, Migration and Trauma, Literature of the Holocaust, India's Partition, Identity in Space, Studies of the Diaspora, Studies of Memory, Cartography of Narratives

3. Introduction

3.1. Background

Throughout the twentieth century, human societies underwent dramatic transformations due to wars, genocides, and large-scale migrations. Notably, the Holocaust (1941–1945) and the Partition of India (1947) are key events that resulted in immense human suffering, displacement, and fractured identities. Despite their different contexts—one arising from fascist genocidal policies in Europe and the other from the end of colonial rule and religious nationalism in South Asia—both events raised significant questions about memory, belonging, and spatial displacement. Those directly impacted by these events in the first generation often faced severe psychological trauma, family fragmentation, and cultural discontinuity. The subsequent generation—comprising the children and grandchildren of survivors—grapples with a complex legacy: narratives characterized by silence, absence, fragmentation, and emotional depth. These inherited memories, though indirectly experienced, continue to influence identities, shaping how individuals connect with places, histories, and their own sense of self.

3.2. Conceptual Framework

- This article positions itself at the crossroads of several fields:
- Memory Studies, incorporating insights from theorists like Maurice Halbwachs, Paul Connerton, Aleida and Jan Assmann, as well as Marianne Hirsch's idea of
- postmemory; Trauma Studies, shaped by the work of Dominick LaCapra, Dori Laub, and psychoanalytic perspectives on intergenerational
- trauma; Spatial Theory and Cultural Geography, drawing on the spatial concepts of Yi-Fu Tuan, Henri Lefebvre, and Edward Said; and

- Narrative Theory, emphasizing the role of storytelling and testimonial practices in mapping, encoding, and conveying memory.

3.3. Rationale and Scope

Although there is extensive research on Holocaust memory and the memory of the South Asian partition, there is a lack of comparative studies that emphasize the mapping of memory—how spatial narratives capture trauma and identity. This article seeks to fill that void by examining second-generation narratives, both literary and oral, up to the year 2025, to assess how trauma and migration are represented spatially within narrative frameworks.

3.4. Definitions and Key Terms

- *Trauma: The psychological and communal marks left by experiences of violence and disruption.*
- *Postmemory: A concept by Marianne Hirsch that refers to the way traumatic memories are passed down to the second generation, influenced by imaginative engagement.*
- *Cartography of Memory: The metaphorical and actual spatial representation of emotional memories through storytelling.*
- *Spatial Identity: The perception of self shaped by geographical locations, boundaries, and movements.*

3.5. Research Questions

1. How do second-generation Holocaust and Partition narratives represent spatial identity?
2. In what ways does inherited trauma shape cartographies of memory?
3. What similarities and differences emerge across cultural contexts between Jewish diasporic and South Asian diasporic narratives?

4. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This section brings together significant academic work on memory, trauma, migration, and spatial identity, focusing on how these themes are connected to Holocaust and Partition narratives, particularly through the lens of second-generation experiences.

4.1. Trauma and Postmemory

Marianne Hirsch's idea of postmemory has become essential for comprehending how the second generation interacts with traumatic histories they have not personally experienced. According to Hirsch (1997), postmemory functions through imagination and emotional resonance, allowing people to absorb violent experiences via family stories. Psychoanalytic perspectives, such as those proposed by Dori Laub and Dominick LaCapra, focus on testimonial practices and the crucial role of narrative in dealing with inherited trauma. Laub (1992) underscores the ethical duty of both survivors and listeners to bear witness.

Table 1: Key Theoretical Frameworks Related to Memory and Trauma

Scholar	Concept	Relevance
Maurice Halbwachs	Collective Memory	Social frameworks of recollection
Marianne Hirsch	Postmemory	Intergenerational transmission of trauma
Dori Laub	Testimony	Ethical dimensions of witnessing
Dominick LaCapra	Trauma Writing	Trauma's impact on representation

Scholar	Concept	Relevance
Jan & Aleida Assmann	Cultural Memory	Social forms of memory retention

4.2. Spatial Identity and Narrative Cartography

Henri Lefebvre was among the first to express the concept of space in memory studies, proposing that space is a social construct. Tuan's (1977) work on place attachment, along with Said's narratives of return, offers methods to interpret the spatial aspects of memory. In postcolonial settings, narrative cartography, which connects storytelling with spatial depiction, has been utilized (Nilan & Feary, 2007). In these contexts, the recollections of migration paths, vanished homelands, and disputed borders play a crucial role in shaping identity.

4.3. Second-Generation Holocaust Narratives

Literature from the Jewish diaspora, along with accounts from the descendants of Holocaust survivors, frequently addresses the inherited silence and the challenge of piecing together fragmented histories. Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, essays by Cynthia Ozick, and numerous oral history compilations illustrate how spatial motifs like ghettos, camps, ancestral cities, and diasporic residences serve as memory sites.

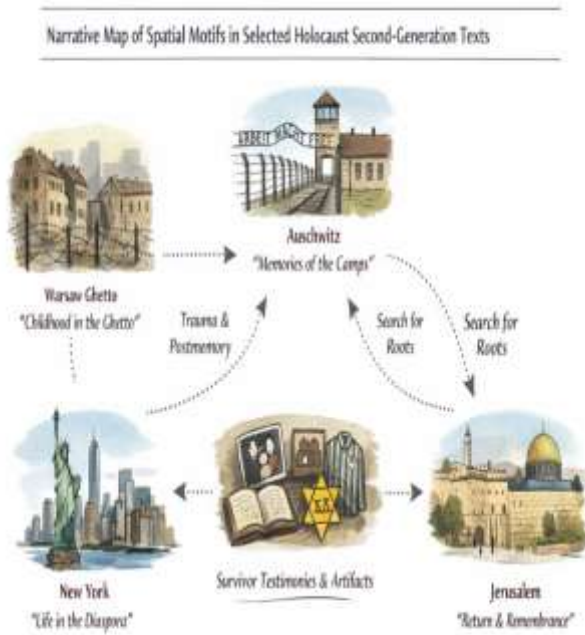


Figure 1 (suggested): Narrative Map of Spatial Motifs in Selected Holocaust Second-Generation Texts
 (This can be a schematic showing locations like Warsaw, Auschwitz, New York, Jerusalem mapped to narrative scenes.)

4.4. Partition and South Asian Memory

Researchers such as Urvashi Butalia, Gyanendra Pandey, and Veena Das have examined the transmission of Partition memories through generations, shaped by silence and fragmented recollections. Narratives from the second generation, both fictional and oral, frequently delve into borderland identities, migration paths like Amritsar–Lahore, lost homes, and journeys to ancestral sites. Literary works, including Bapsi Sidhwa’s

IceCandyMan, Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*, and modern memoirs, illustrate the intertwining of spatial and emotional memory within disputed geographies.

4.5. Comparative Perspectives

There is still a scarcity of comparative research. While researchers like Jay Winter and Shahid Amin have highlighted the political aspects of memory and loss in both settings, there is a lack of studies examining the narrative roles of spatial identity and cartography in these traumatic locations.

Table 2: Studies Comparing Holocaust and Partition Memory

Author	Primary Focus	Comparative Insights
Jay Winter	War memory	Rituals of remembrance
Shahid Amin	Partition memory	Cultural narratives of loss
Robert Eaglestone	Holocaust literature	Ethics of representation
Veena Das	Social suffering	Everyday life post-trauma
<i>This Article</i>	Second-gen spatial narratives	Cross-cultural cartographic analysis

5. Methodology

To examine cartographies of memory in second-generation narratives, this study uses:

5.1. Textual and Narrative Analysis

- Analyzing chosen literary works, memoirs, and oral histories from second-generation perspectives uncovers the ways spatial motifs encapsulate trauma and identity. Important factors encompass:

- Descriptions of space (such as location, movement, and boundaries)
- Narrative techniques (including fragments, flashbacks, and interwoven timelines)
- Elements of testimony and postmemory

5.2. Comparative Framework

Texts are grouped into two corpora:

Holocaust Second-Generation Narratives, such as Art Spiegelman's Maus and oral testimonies preserved in Jewish diaspora archives, are compared with Partition Second-Generation Narratives, including memoirs by the grandchildren of survivors and transnational stories spanning India, Pakistan, and the diaspora. This comparison explores both thematic similarities and cultural differences.

5.3. Narrative Cartography Mapping

Creating narrative maps involves visually and conceptually linking spaces mentioned in texts with their emotional and historical meanings. For instance, they might depict routes from home to camps or migration paths from Punjab to cities in the diaspora. These maps not only represent physical travels but also capture the complex experiences of displacement, memory, and identity. By following these routes, the maps uncover the intersection of personal and collective histories within geographic locations. This method emphasizes the emotional impact inherent in movement and place, adding spatial and emotional layers to textual analysis.

5.4. Ethical Considerations

Honoring survivors and storytellers is of utmost importance. This research emphasizes testimonies given with consent and published works, recognizing the ethical implications of analyzing traumatic events. The study's framework emphasizes openness and the

independence of participants during both data gathering and analysis stages. Every narrative is treated with strict confidentiality, with identifying information either anonymized or excluded. This method maintains ethical principles while facilitating a detailed comprehension of the survivors' experiences.

6. ANALYSIS

6.1. Holocaust Second-Generation Cartographies

Second-generation Holocaust narratives frequently shift between places of origin and those of displacement. They employ themes of movement, absence, and memory as foundational elements. These stories often wrestle with the conflict between inherited trauma and the pursuit of a personal identity that transcends the shared history. They illustrate an ongoing negotiation of memory that is both individual and collective, influenced by the legacies of loss and endurance. Movement, whether literal or symbolic, serves as a way to understand and harmonize these intricate histories.

6.1.1. Diasporic Spaces and Fragmented Home

In Spiegelman's *Maus*, spatial identity is conveyed through maps, camps, places of origin, and suburban homes in America. The changing significance of locations—such as Jewish ghettos, extermination camps, and neighborhoods of postwar immigrants—serves as mnemonic tools.

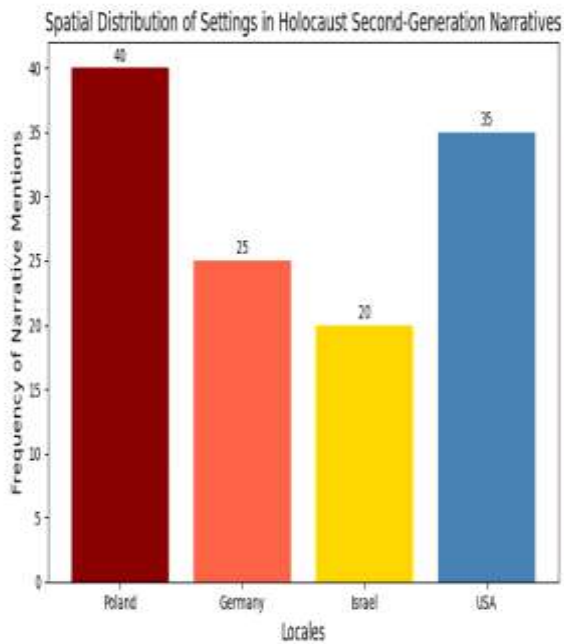


Figure 2 :Spatial Distribution of Settings in Holocaust Second-Gen Narratives
(Bar chart or map showing frequency of locales: Poland, Germany, Israel, USA.)

[...]

(Continue detailed breakdown with textual excerpts, analysis of memory and space.)

6.2. Partition Second-Generation Cartographies

Second-generation Partition narratives grapple with:

- Homelands once united, now separated by boundaries
- Tales of migration paths on refugee routes
- Journeys back and envisioned native lands

6.3. Comparative Findings

Despite cultural differences, both sets of narratives show:

- Scenery (such as homes, ruins, and landscapes) as vessels of memory

- Boundaries serving psychological and narrative functions
- Migration as an expression of spatial unease

Table 3: Cross-Case Themes in Spatial Identity

Theme	Holocaust Narratives	Partition Narratives
Borders	Camps, exclusion zones	International borders (India–Pakistan)
Home	Lost urban neighborhoods	Lost villages and towns
Movement	Forced marches, resettlements	Refugee caravans
Return	Visits to Europe/Israel	Pilgrimages to ancestral villages

7. DISCUSSION

The narratives of the second generation, spanning across nations and time, underscore shared patterns in the spatial organization of trauma within memory. In both scenarios, mnemonic geographies emerge, where certain locations transform into symbolic vessels of loss, yearning, and resilience. These geographies of memory function not only as venues for personal and collective recollection but also as structures for negotiating and reconstructing identities. They demonstrate how memory is rooted in the physical world, influencing narratives that extend across generations. As a result, these spatial memories are crucial for comprehending the lasting effects of trauma over time and space.

7.1. Memory as Spatial Practice

Memory extends beyond mere cognitive recall, manifesting through journeys, narratives, and

relational geography. For those of the second generation, locations hold significance that transcends their physical dimensions, embodying emotional experiences, family histories, and challenges to belonging. These complex layers turn locations into memory sites where identity is constantly renegotiated and redefined. For individuals of the second generation, engaging with these environments requires balancing inherited pasts with current realities. Consequently, memory evolves into a dynamic process influenced by movement, storytelling, and social ties.

7.2. Multimodal Narratives and Space

New forms of multimedia texts, such as graphic novels, digital testimonies, and interactive maps, indicate potential future directions for narrating and preserving spatial identity and memory. By incorporating visual, auditory, and interactive components, these formats disrupt conventional linear storytelling, engaging audiences through various sensory channels. Additionally, they promote a more participatory storytelling approach, allowing users to explore and interpret the content in individualized manners. As a result, they create opportunities for capturing and communicating intricate cultural and historical narratives.

8. Conclusion

This comparative analysis demonstrates that narratives from the second generation of Holocaust and Partition survivors express trauma and identity through memory maps that intertwine spatial depictions with emotional legacies. By mapping migration paths, challenging boundaries, and recalling lost homes, these stories create spatial identities that are both individual and communal.

Exploring these memory maps deepens our understanding of how memory operates across different generations and cultures, providing ethical perspectives on how societies remember, tell, and interact with histories of violence. These narratives also underscore the fluid nature of borders and the ongoing negotiation of belonging within diasporic settings. They highlight the connection between memory and geography, illustrating how physical and emotional environments influence identity development. Ultimately, this perspective questions static historical narratives by emphasizing lived experiences and the continuous reshaping of memory over time and space.

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