

JOVANA KOSTIĆ
ALEKSANDRA STOJANOVIĆ

(RE)CONFIGURING LANGUAGE IDENTITY
AND MEMORY IN EVA HOFFMAN'S
*LOST IN TRANSLATION*¹

Abstract

The paper aims to examine Eva Hoffman's experience of language and subsequent testimony of the trauma of immigration in her autobiographical novel *Lost in Translation*. As the daughter of Holocaust survivors, Eva Hoffman bears the burden of inherited memories of her parents' Holocaust experiences, belonging to what Marianne Hirsch defines as the generation of postmemory. This status significantly impacts her sense of self and creates obstacles in the process of assimilation into a new country. Hoffman faces double immigration to Canada and the United States, where she struggles with her acquisition of the English language and finding an adequate narrative voice to testify to her family's trauma and her own trauma of losing her Polish language and identity. To overcome the trauma of an unfamiliar space and language she initially feels disconnected from, Hoffman narrates her life and experiences in a new world. By examining the process of acceptance of a new language, readers witness Hoffman's healing process and attempt to find closure in a world of fragmented, disassociated language and memories.

Keywords: *Holocaust, postmemory, language, identity, testimony, trauma, Eva Hoffman, Lost in Translation.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

The bilingual author Eva Hoffman published her critically acclaimed autobiography *Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language* in 1989. In her autobiography, Hoffman pins down the terrifying, difficult experience of her double immigration, first to Canada and then to the United States of America. The first section of *Lost in Translation* is entitled “Paradise” and depicts Hoffman’s loving memories of her postwar upbringing in her native country Poland. The second section, “Exile,” tenaciously reconstructs Eva’s Polish-Jewish family’s immigration to Vancouver in 1959 and her feelings of being perpetually confused, displaced and exiled in a new environment. The last section in which Hoffman immigrates to the United States, attends Rice University, obtains a doctoral degree at Harvard and becomes an example of a success story is entitled “The New World.”

Eva Hoffman is a member of the “second generation” to whom the stories of the Holocaust have been passed down. It may be suggested that her parents’ stories of the Holocaust are central to the development of her identity. “The epistemological question of how we know the past,” as Hutcheon (2004, p. 122) claims, “joins the ontological one of the status of the traces of that past.” The members of the second generation, that is, those who did not live through the Holocaust, are, in Hutcheon’s (2004, p. 122) words, “epistemologically limited in [their] ability to know that past, since [they] are both spectators of and actors in the historical process.” Unable to apprehend her parents’ past either ontologically or epistemologically, Eva Hoffman remains both a spectator who is continually exposed to their wartime stories while growing up and an actor who participates in the storytelling of said event. Since the past “can be known only from its text, its traces – be they literary or historical” (Hutcheon, 2004, p. 125), Hoffman decided to sit down and write her autobiography *Lost in Translation*, regardless of her own disassociation from Holocaust and words’ vague and ambivalent status. Karpinski (1996, p. 127) views immigrant autobiography as “a form of therapeutic healing of the anxieties connected with living between two cultures; as a narrative of the acquisition of cultural literacy; and as a site of the immigrant’s negotiating

a new position in the host culture.” In this sense, it is precisely the genre of autobiography that enables Eva Hoffman to position herself not only within a testimonial narrative but also within a cross-cultural one.

2. NARRATIVIZING ABSENT MEMORIES

Eva Hoffman, born to survivors of the Holocaust, who had endured “the war and the annihilation of their families of community” (Hoffman, 2004, p. 5), grew up in the Polish city of Cracow. Initially, the Holocaust had been to her nothing more than a “strangely unknown past” (Hoffman, 2004, p. 6) which she had internalized and which later served as the “ontological basis” (Hoffman, 2004, p. 278) of her entire life. Constantly plagued by her parents’ wartime experiences, Eva soon realized the significance and burden of being a child of the war, a member of the second generation to whom the war had been passed down. War, and particularly her parents’ state of exile and dislocation, impacted Eva as it “interwove itself into other, more sunny sensations with a sombre poetry of its own” (Hoffman, 2004, p. 4).

Marianne Hirsh defines the phenomenon as *postmemory* – the connection with the Holocaust in which “memory *can* be transferred to those who were not actually there to live an event” (Hirsch, 2012, p. 2). Eva Hoffman notes that her inheritance of the past is visible in her very name, as she was named after her late grandmothers: “But my parents have no lack of the dead to honor, and I am named after both my grandmothers – Ewa, Alfreda – two women of whom I have only the dimmest of impressions. There aren’t even any photographs which have survived the war: the cut from the past is complete”. Although Hoffman implies there has been a clean cut from the past since no photographs remain, the fact that she is named after them keeps the past perpetually stuck in the present and creates a burden of the past for the bearer of the name.

For the second generation, remembering included a textual aspect of stories being passed down without any visual sensations to help form the memories in the mind of survivors’ children. Thus, postmemory is based on

an “imaginative investment, projection, and creation” (Hirsch, 2012, p. 5). The accounts of the Holocaust are equated with dark fairy tales “more cruel, more magical than anything in the Brothers Grimm. Except that this is real.” For author Eva Hoffman, the creativity and emotionally-charged nature of a language would be her tool for representing and simultaneously making sense of the events of her own and her parents’ past. Growing up “dominated by narratives that preceded one’s birth or one’s consciousness” (Hirsch, 2012, p. 5) exposed Eva to sensitivity to language and the power it holds in the process of healing and testimony. Holocaust testimony has, however, always represented a topic of disagreement among theorists as it is frequently viewed as an event that “*produced no witnesses*” (Laub, 1992a, p. 80).

Stemming primarily from the idea that “there is no victim that is not dead” (Lyotard, 1988, p. 3) and that the true horrors of the Holocaust may only be witnessed from within the gas chambers out of which nobody emerged, it is believed that there can be no true testimony of the Holocaust. By ensuring the death of all those who may testify and creating such an event that will traumatize the survivors, the Holocaust was considered ‘the perfect crime.’ However, “the ‘perfect crime’ does not consist in killing the victim or the witnesses [...] but rather in obtaining the silence of the witnesses, the deafness of the judges, and the inconsistency (insanity) of the testimony (Lyotard, 1988, p. 8). In this vein, it may be argued that the testimonies of the second generation are not valid in representing the truthfulness of events as they had no direct contact or “living connection” (Hirsch, 2012, p. 1) to the events. Eva Hoffman (2004, p. 25) states that the Holocaust, though not experienced by the second generation directly, has “informed our biographies and psyches, threatening sometimes to overshadow and overwhelm our own lives.”

Little space in the book is devoted to writing about the Holocaust. Interestingly, the word Holocaust does not appear until the third section of the book, well into 250 pages of the narrative. Despite the textual marginalization of the event, the presence of the Holocaust is intensely felt in Eva’s reminiscence of her childhood and the difficulty she has adapting to a new setting. Although not taken to Canada against her will, Eva feels in her de-

parture the echo of her parents' exile in the war and the pain of the inability to return. Indeed, Eva does return to visit Poland in her adult 1990s but notices that although the city has remained the same, her experience of it and interaction with its inhabitants have become strained. A tension is detected in Hoffman's duty as the daughter of Holocaust survivors to keep the narrative alive and her feelings of discomfort as these inherited memories present a significant burden that is preventing her from being at home in a new environment while constantly being drawn to the past in her mind.

The displacement from Poland, for Hoffman, is described as being "exiled from paradise" (Hoffman, 1990, p. 5), for which she had been continuously searching throughout her life. Marianne Hirsch (1994, p. 77) criticizes Hoffman for being in denial due to her attempt to recapture her childhood, create a nostalgic story of the past and narrativize it in such a way that presents it as a paradise. According to Hirsch (1994, p. 76), Eva Hoffman lacks the objectivity and reality of representation by romanticizing her youth in Poland, admittedly alienating readers of the second generation and making identification with such an idealized image of the traumatizing past impossible.

The burden of the memory of the Second World War and the suffering of millions has created a unique perspective of testimony that cannot be dismissed. Eva Hoffman testifies not to the historical accuracies of the concentration camps, nor does she attempt to represent a universally accepted "truth." Her goal is to express the event's impact on the psyche of its survivors and its descendants, showing that even when spatially and temporally removed from the event, it remains a formative part of her identity and a considerable influence on her perception of the world. Trauma was instilled in Hoffman through narratives of the war, or perhaps sometimes the lack thereof. She belonged to

[...] the story of children who came from the war, and who couldn't make sufficient sense of the several worlds they grew up in, and didn't know by what lights to act. I think, sometimes, that we were children too overshadowed by our parents' stories, and without enough sympathy for ourselves, for the serious dilemmas of our own lives, and who thereby couldn't live up to our

parents' desire – amazing in its strength – to create a new life and to bestow on us a new world. (Hoffman, 1990, p. 230)

Dori Laub (1992a, p. 81) emphasized that it was not only the death of the participants in the event or the unresponsiveness of bystanders that caused the impossibility of testifying, but “it was also the circumstance of *being inside the events* that made unthinkable the very notion that a witness could exist, that is, someone who could step outside of the coercively totalitarian and dehumanizing frame of reference in which the event was taking place, and provide an independent frame of reference through which the event could be observed.” Eva Hoffman’s testimony of her life, the unconscious trauma that was her parents’ wartime memories and her own trauma of immigration, took place only, as Dori Laub has pointed out, from the frame of reference in which the events took place. The gap of witnessing was thus bridged by Eva’s arrival in Canada when she acquired adequate distance to observe her childhood, her parents’ trauma and, as the Holocaust previously “signified its own death, its own reduction to silence, any instance of survival inevitably implied [...] some degree of unconscious witnessing that could not find its voice or expression during the event” (Laub, 1992, p. 83). In the case of Eva Hoffman, the event during which her inherited memories of the war were precisely her life in Poland and the language in which the trauma of her parents was spoken. Hoffman notes: “To some extent, one has to rewrite the past to understand it. I have to see Cracow in the dimensions it has to my adult eye in order to perceive that my story has been only a story, that none of its events has been so big or so scary” (Hoffman, 1990, p. 242).

Poland, the seemingly happy childhood overshadowed by her father’s silence and mother’s hidden tears was made possible when she was spatially displaced from Cracow and even more so when she acquired a new language, a new discourse, and a cultural context through which she may observe the events of her life and attempt to make sense of them. Parents’ desire for their children to successfully build new lives for themselves presents as much of a burden as their memories, possibly interfering with the child’s successful assimilation and life in a new land.

3. NAVIGATING THE CONFLICT BETWEEN LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY

In *After Such Knowledge*, Hoffman (2004, p. x) states:

Indeed, it was not until I started writing about it in my first book, *Lost in Translation*, that I began discerning, amidst other threads, the Holocaust strand of my history. I had carried this part of my psychic past within me all of my life; but it was only now, as I began pondering it from a longer distance and through the clarifying process of writing, that what had been an inchoate, obscure knowledge appeared to me as a powerful theme and influence in my life.

English, although its learning proved to be a trauma for Eva in its own right, allowed her to work through her memories, contextualize them and attempt to make sense of her inherent and continuous feelings of not belonging. Caruth (1996, p. 4, italics Caruth) defines trauma as “not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual’s past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature – the way it was precisely *not known* in the first stance – returns to haunt the survivor later on.” In this sense, a traumatic experience “sometimes assumes the form of blank unreadability (in a variant of deconstruction) or of the unsymbolizable ‘real’ (in an important version of Lacanian psychoanalysis)” (LaCapra, 2014, p. x–xi). In other words, trauma or Lacan’s ‘real’ represents an event so unsettling and disruptive that one cannot articulate it through language. It invokes feelings of displacement, confusion and fragmentation as an individual realizes that language too can distort and minimize the reality of the actual occurrence. A significant type of trauma identified in *Lost in Translation* is the loss of language, the loss of understanding of the surrounding world and, ultimately, the crumbling of the symbolic order. Lacan (1991, p. 29) emphasizes that “however small the number of symbols which you might conceive of as constituting the emergence of the symbolic function as such in human life, they imply the totality of everything which is human [...] Everything which is human has to be ordained within a universe constituted by the symbolic function.” When Eva is faced with a

new, unknown language in which she cannot differentiate and adequately use the given symbols, a crisis or trauma emerges. Trauma, therefore, can also be associated with Marianne Hirsch's concept of a "memory hole," whereby a traumatic event causes a severance in the symbolic and, from there on, all language fails².

"What we experience as *reality* is structured as fantasy, and if fantasy serves as the screen that protects us from being directly overwhelmed by the raw Real, then *reality itself can function as an escape from encountering the Real*" (Žižek, 2006, p. 57, italics Žižek). The raw Real, for Hoffman, is the Holocaust itself and the burden of memories she has not lived through and thus has no proper means of articulating as the Symbolic order does not allow us to experience the unsettling reality of the 'real.' The Symbolic order functions as a kind of defense mechanism against it. Hoffman describes her thoughts on acquiring English as follows:

The thought that there are parts of the language I'm missing can induce a small panic in me, as if such gaps were missing parts of the world or my mind – as if the totality of the world and mind were coeval with the totality of language. Or rather, as if language were an enormous, fine net in which reality is contained – and if there are holes in it, then a bit of reality can escape, cease to exist. (Hoffman, 1990, p. 217)

Hoffman gives great significance to gaps in the language, as she realizes that such empty spaces lead to misunderstanding in communication and her inability to internalize and express the events of her life. The novel's subtitle – *A Life in a New Language* – reveals that Hoffman's transition from one cultural setting to another and, consequently, one language to another brings about the formation of an entirely new identity. This idea is further developed by Hoffman's choice to employ an indefinite article – it is as if each language presupposes a new life. Hoffman's reluctant immigration to Canada causes a split in her perception of herself as she is now forced to switch between two disparate languages continually. The gap in the signifying

² LaCapra (2014, p. 42) writes that "trauma brings about a dissociation of affect and representation: one disorientingly feels what one cannot represent; one numbly represents what one cannot feel."

chain caused by the conflict between two languages can be defined as a type of linguistic schizophrenia³.

It appears that when in Poland Hoffman embodies a structuralist language perspective. However, once she finds herself in the vast, unfamiliar territory of Canada there is a shift in her perspective – her seemingly successful acquisition of a foreign language and culture pushes her towards an increasingly poststructuralist stance which implies instability, rupture and dislocation. There has been a break in Eva's signification chain where "[...] the signifier has become severed from the signified" (Hoffman, 1990, p. 106). At the same time, Hoffman's poststructuralist point of view reflects her own incapacity to overcome the cultural shock induced by her double immigration. Thus, the gap in the chain of signification resulting in unrelated signifiers, i.e., a lack of correspondence between signifier and signified, is seen in her experience of the word "river":

'River' in Polish was a vital sound, energized with the essence of riverhood, of my rivers, of my being immersed in rivers. 'River' in English is cold – a word without an aura. It has no accumulated associations for me, and it does not give off the radiating haze of connotation. It does not evoke. (Hoffman, 1990, p. 106)

For Eva, words in English do not have any connotation or a concrete referent to the real world. The words that previously had meaning and emotion in her mind are now mere arbitrary symbols that complex her. Similarly, the English equivalent names "Eva" and "Elaine" given to the Hoffman sisters, Ewa and Alina, as an attempt at Americanization, are also viewed as "disembodied signs" (Hoffman, 1990, p. 105), devoid of any

³ [...] Lacan describes schizophrenia as a breakdown in the signifying chain, that is, the interlocking syntagmatic series of signifiers which constitutes an utterance or a meaning. [...] His conception of the signifying chain essentially presupposes one of the basic principles (and one of the great discoveries) of Saussurean structuralism, namely, the proposition that meaning is not a one-to-one relationship between signifier and signified, between the materiality of language, between a word or a name, and its referent or concept. [...] When that relationship breaks down [between signifier and signified], when the links of the signifying chain snap, then we have schizophrenia in the form of a rubble of distinct and unrelated signifiers. (Jameson, 1991, p. 25)

reference to their “true” identities whatsoever. These names, as Hoffman explicitly states, “make us strangers to ourselves.” Casteel (2001, p. 295) suggests that “the completion of her [Eva’s] autobiography is in itself a marker of her successful assimilation.” However, Hoffman’s story of asserting herself in the host culture and “learning” its language points us to a slightly different conclusion: “The tiny gap that opened when my sister and I were given new names can never be fully closed up [...]” (Hoffman, 1990, p. 271–272). Hence, we also conclude that there is a sense of a perpetual rift between Eva’s native culture and the forcefully “acquired” one, a rupture between two distinct worlds and languages that perhaps can be addressed but not healed.

“Our Polish names didn’t refer to us; they were as surely us as our eyes or hands. These new appellations, which we ourselves can’t yet pronounce, are not us,” Hoffman (1990, p. 105) states. Her feelings of dissociation from her English name arise from the inadequacy of said language to encompass her childhood self. It seems that her inability to articulate and establish herself in a new language prevents her from being truly assimilated in the first place. Hoffman eventually does pull away from her Polish self and sets out to acquire a new language in hopes of overcoming “the stigma of [her] marginality” (Hoffman, 1990, p. 123). She constantly feels out of place as she is unable to pronounce English words as a native speaker. “My speech, I sense, sounds monotonous, deliberate, heavy – an aural mask that doesn’t become me or express me at all” (Hoffman, 1990, p. 118). Furthermore, Eva has lost her sense of humor as she finds herself unable to make or understand other people’s jokes. Additionally, displays of emotion become strained in her foreign tongue as she struggles with English expressions of love toward her husband:

For a long time, it was difficult to speak these most intimate phrases, hard to make English – that language of will and abstraction – shape itself into the tonalities of love. In Polish, the words for “boy” and “girl” embodied within them the wind and crackle of boyishness, the breeze and grace of girlhood: the words summoned that evanescent movement and melody and musk that are the interior inflections of gender itself. In English, “man” and “woman”

were empty signs; terms of endearment came out as formal and foursquare as other words [...] How could I say “darling,” or “sweetheart,” when the words had no fleshly fullness, when they were as dry as sticks? (Hoffman, 1990, p. 245)

Language plays a significant role in Eva's life, as we may notice from the very beginning of the novel as Eva reinforces her reality and position in the world through language: “I repeat to myself that I'm in Cracow, Cracow, which to me is both home and the universe” (Hoffman, 1990, p. 5). Her need to articulate her thoughts establishes the agency of language as a primary source of her reflections about the world around her. Hoffman admits that language plays a crucial role in constructing one's identity. Žižek (2006, p. 65) defines language as “the symbolic network through which we relate to reality.” It is through language that we attach meaning to our own experiences. Hoffman's exile from Poland to Canada puts her in a culturally suspended state of being. As Eva gradually becomes accustomed to English, she realizes that “this language is beginning to invent another me” (Hoffman, 1990, p. 121). This suggests that identity is not a passive entity, something that can be possessed, but an everlasting, dynamic process that is culturally determined.

Struggling with the here and now, Eva decides to tell her story in an attempt to reconcile with the past that is Poland and embrace the uncertain future that is America. Despite being elusive and deceptive, language or storytelling allows her to seemingly bridge this gap between her old and new self and thus construct a stable, coherent identity that she desperately seeks to attain. Just as Holocaust in itself is a traumatic experience that “disarticulates the self and creates holes in experience” (LaCapra 2014: 41), so is the loss of one's language. Eva's double immigration caused not only profound feelings of confusion and disorientation but also the loss of a language. “Lost” in the novel's title refers to her state of being physically lost in a vast Canada with desert-like qualities, and the state of being lost due to continually having to translate from one culture to another, from Polish to English. Thus Hoffman finds herself “perpetually without words,” living

“in the entropy of inarticulateness” (Hoffman, 1990, p. 124). This evokes Thomas Pynchon’s use of entropy as a concept in information theory, whereby language collapse signifies the disintegration of the entire system. The moment of misunderstanding, or the failure of “feedback” (Pynchon, 1960, p. 198), brings about the collapse of the system of communication, thus leading to entropy – “the measure of disorganization for a closed system” (Pynchon, 1960, p. 183). The closed system in Hoffman’s novel being language itself, we may conclude that every failure of “translation” caused further ruptures:

When my friend Penny tells me that she’s envious, or happy, or disappointed, I try laboriously to translate not from English to Polish but from the word back to its source, to the feeling from which it springs. Already, in that moment of strain, spontaneity of response is lost. And anyway, the translation doesn’t work”. (Hoffman, 1990, p. 107)

Eva’s storytelling corresponds to Dominick LaCarp’s notion of “working through.” Working through, as LaCapra (2014, p. 22) writes, represents “an articulatory practice: to the extent, one works through trauma [...], one is able to distinguish between past and present and to recall in memory that something happened to one (or one’s people) back then while realizing that one is living here and now with openings to the future”. Personal identity, as Jameson asserts (1991, p. 25–26), presupposes a temporal unification of past and future with one’s present by virtue of language. However, “with the breakdown of the signifying chain [...], the schizophrenic is reduced to an experience of pure material signifiers, or, in other words, a series of pure and unrelated presents in time” (Jameson, 1991, p. 25–26)⁴. Hoffman’s cultural and linguistic schizophrenia places her “in the stasis of a perpetual present, that other side of ‘living in the present,’ which is not eternity but a prison. I can’t throw a bridge between the present and the past, and therefore I can’t make time move” (Hoffman, 1990, p. 117).

⁴ Caruth (1996, p. 61) notes that trauma consists of “a break in the mind’s experience of time,” ultimately leading an individual, who is no longer able to differentiate between past, present and future, into a state of shock.

Eva Hoffman's double immigration and the break in the signification chain are the leading cause of her schizophrenic, split-off self. In an interview, Hoffman says:

I think what I actually did when I first went to Canada and then to the States, when I first started coming into English, is that I pushed Polish out of the way. [...] And I think I stifled Polish, I shoved it out of the way so it wouldn't interfere, while there was this new language that I had to internalize. And then English at some point started being safe [...] it became internalized, [...] it became my language. (Phoenix & Slavova, 2011, p. 342)

Before the peace Hoffman found using the English language, she had to overcome struggles throughout her linguistic journey. The differend, as Lyotard (1988, p. 13) defines it, represents Hoffman's "unstable state and instant of language wherein something which must be able to be put into phrases cannot yet be [...] This state is signaled by what one ordinarily calls a feeling: 'One cannot find the words,' etc. A lot of searching must be done to find new rules for forming and linking phrases that are able to express the differend disclosed by that feeling." In Hoffman's case, the differend is noticed both in her inability to express her trauma of the Holocaust as she has only imagined it and rebuilt it based on her parents' experiences and due to her not speaking the language she has become surrounded by, the language in which she must now start expressing herself. For Hoffman, learning English was a process that required not only finding grammatical rules and phrases but building a new identity – the Canadian Eva. Eva's experience "asks to be put into phrases, and suffers from the wrong of not being able to be put into phrases right away" (Lyotard, 1994, p. 13). No matter how complex the process of testimony may be, the only way to "undo this entrapment in a fate that cannot be known, cannot be told, but can only be repeated, [is] a therapeutic process – a process of constructing a narrative, of reconstructing a history and essentially, of *re-externalizing the event*" (Laub, 1992a, p. 69). Eva has conversations between her two entirely detached identities and thus perspectives – her Cracow Ewa and her English Eva, her childhood self and her adulthood self, in an attempt to mitigate

meaning and affirmatively contextualize her surroundings. Hoffman intends to expose the impact of having to exist between two linguistically and culturally different worlds and between her parents' trauma of the past and her own immigrational trauma of the present. The following lines illustrate one such instance of Eva's internal dialogue, ultimately silencing the voice of her past and accepting her new identity:

Should you marry him? the question comes in English.

Yes.

Should you marry him? the question echoes in Polish.

No.

[...]

Why should I listen to you? You don't necessarily know the truth about me just because you speak in that language. Just because you seem to come from deeper within.

This is not the moment to lie to yourself. I'm not lying. I'm just not a child any longer. My emotions have become more complicated. I have ambivalences.

[...]

I won't be so easy to get rid of.

I don't need you anymore. I want you to be silent. Shuddup. (Hoffman, 1990, p. 199)

4. CONCLUSION

Eva Hoffman devotes most of her book to memories of her childhood and the trauma of her immigration and subsequent feelings of loss, alienation, and dislocation in a space deemed unfamiliar in terms of its geography, traditions, culture and, most importantly, language. Eva's dislocation causes fragmentation of self and inability to identify with only one cultural identity, no matter the effort she puts into discovering herself and returning to a unified identity, whether it is Polish, Canadian, or American. In her attempt to internalize America as her new home and the English language as her primary form of expression, Eva is left with a sense of emptiness and feeling that her past identity always remained present, despite her proclaimed death of the Polish language: "Who was I, after all? Eva's ghost, perhaps, a specter

that tried not to occupy too much space” (Hoffman, 1990, p. 114). The conflict between the two languages comes to a head when Hoffman tries to decide in which language she will write her diary – the testimony of her life. “Because I have to choose something, I finally choose English. If I’m going to write about the present, I have to write in the language of the present, even if it’s not the language of the self” (Hoffman, 1990, p. 121). She chooses English as it provides distance and objectivity, allowing her to analyze her memories (both personal and inherited) and attempt to overcome the trauma of her experiences. She states she “wants to recreate, from the discrete particles of words, that wholeness of a childhood language that had no words” (Hoffman, 1990, p. 217). Her choice to write her diary, and this novel in English, essentially represents her efforts to recapture and possibly heal her split-off self.

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(RE)KONFIGURACIJA JEZIČKOG IDENTITETA I SEĆANJA U ROMANU *IZGUBLJENO U PREVODU* EVE HOFMAN

Sažetak

Cilj rada jeste ispitati iskustvo jezika Eve Hofman, kao i njeno potonje svedočenje o traumi imigracije u autobiografskom delu *Izgubljeno u prevodu*. Eva Hofman nosi teret nasleđenih sećanja svojih roditelja koji su preživeli holokaust, stoga pripada generaciji koju Merijen Herš označava generacijom postmemorije. Ovakav položaj u velikoj meri određuje način na koji doživljava sebe samu i otežava proces njene asimilacije u drugoj zemlji. Hofman se suočava sa dvojakom imigracijom – u Kanadu i u Sjedinjene Američke Države – gde nailazi na poteškoće prilikom usvajanja engleskog jezika i pronalaženju odgovarajućeg pripovednog glasa kako bi svedočila, s jedne strane, o traumi svojih roditelja i, s druge, o sopstvenoj traumi gubitka poljskog jezika, te i svog identiteta. Hofman priča o svom životu i doživljajima u novom svetu ne bi li se izborila sa traumom koja je posledica njoj nepoznatog prostora, ali i njenih inicijalnih osećanja jezičke razjedinjenosti. Ispitujući proces prihvatanja drugog jezika kod Eve Hofman, čitaoci postaju svedoci njenog “zalečenja” i pokušaja da se pomiri sa iskustvom rascepljenih, disocijativnih sećanja i jezika.

Ključne reči: *holokaust, postmemorija, jezik, identitet, svedočenje, trauma, Eva Hofman, Izgubljeno u prevodu.*