

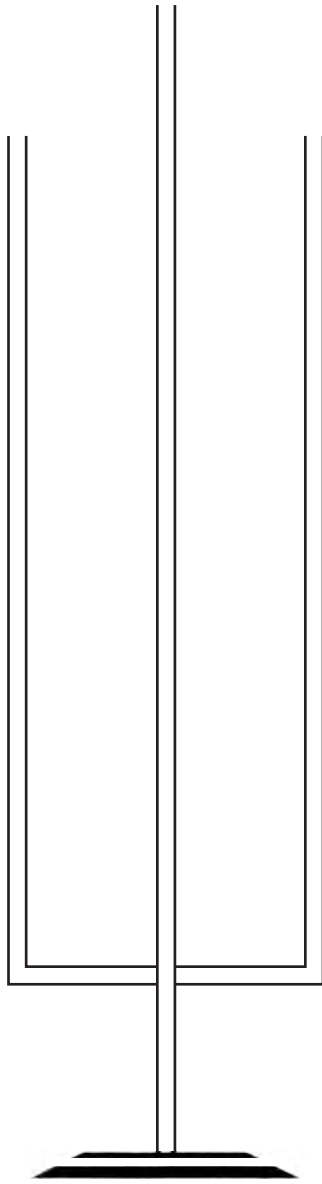
AN INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL FOR HOLOCAUST EDUCATORS • A ROTHMAN FOUNDATION PUBLICATION

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In memory of
Henry I. Rothman ז"ל
and
Bertha G. Rothman ע"ה
לחמו מלחמות ה'
*"who lived and fought
for Torah-true Judaism"*

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PRISM

AN INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL
FOR HOLOCAUST EDUCATORS

PRISM: An Interdisciplinary Journal for Holocaust Educators is a publication of the Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration at Yeshiva University. It is made possible by a generous grant from the Henry, Bertha, and Edward Rothman Foundation. Copies are available upon request. Contact prism@yu.edu to order.

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- Poetry submissions must be sent to **Dr. Charles Adès Fishman**, carolus@optimum.net, our poetry editor. Poetry should be single-spaced. Include your name and email address on each poem.
- All text should be double spaced, justified, and paginated.
- Submissions accompanied by documentary photos and artwork are given special consideration.
- Photos and artwork must be attached as separate JPEG or TIF files and accompanied by permissions and captions.
- The American Psychological Association (APA) *Publication Manual* (6th Ed.) is Yeshiva University's required reference guide for publications.
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- Each issue, including all photos, will be available as a PDF on our web site, yu.edu/azrieli/research/prism-journal/, so permissions must include online as well as print version.

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PRISM: An Interdisciplinary Journal for Holocaust Educators is a peer-reviewed journal. Publication depends on the following factors: sound scholarship; originality; clear, concise, and engaging writing; relevance to theme; value and interest to audience of educators; and adherence to style guidelines. We do not publish previously published essays unless prior approval from the *PRISM* editors has been granted.

The content of *PRISM* reflects the opinions of the authors and not necessarily those of the Azrieli Graduate School and Yeshiva University.

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Introduction

Children and trauma, the bystander, the Jewish family, defense, defiance, the *Kindertransport*: Each is a theme explored in past issues. Now, we present our first *unthemed* issue. It offers, as usual, historical research, pedagogy, literature, poetry, documentary photographs, and paintings—but on a variety of topics and themes that illustrate the particular passions and expertise of authors whose subjects may not warrant an entire journal but are too valuable to miss.

This idea clearly has met a need. We received more excellent submissions than ever before and were forced to pass up more manuscripts than we accepted, leading to our highest rejection rate yet.

Interestingly, the essays submitted focused on the traditional categories of perpetrators, Jews, bystanders, and helpers, and were divided among visual, literary, historical, artistic, and educational explorations. Our contributors hail from across the US and from Canada, Israel, and Scotland, and we welcome 13 writers and five poets new to these pages.

Jennifer Robertson, in two haunting short stories and a biographical sketch, introduces us to a bystander, a helper of sorts, and a rescuer. Ann Weiss's lyrical memoir of her survivor mother recalls her mother's vivid and spirited recollections of the beloved family and friends she lost. Poet Zahava Z. Sweet brings us into her barrack in Ravensbrück and poet Sarah Traister Moskovitz takes us to the train tracks to meet those who watched the cattle cars pass, while Doreen Rappaport's poem remembers Jewish resistance in all its forms.

Carson Phillips narrates his journey to Hartheim, the Austrian site of the T-4 euthanasia program; Rafael Medoff explains the story of the *St. Louis* and why the current controversy about this history matters; and Judith Tydor Baumel-Schwartz reminds us that not everyone in the US stood by: Between 1934 and 1945, 1,000 Jewish children were allowed to immigrate and were cared for by Jewish agencies and generous foster parents throughout the country.

Nancy Patz, in her poignant, original cover art and artifact drawings, offers us powerful images of what remains in the aftermath of the Holocaust, while Mary Lee Webeck and Cynthia Lynn Capers detail how they, as museum educators and curators at Holocaust Museum Houston (HMH), consider and use what remains of the lives of survivors to engage and educate the public. Learning through artifacts has wide appeal, and those featured here have already profoundly affected those who have



seen them. We are proud and delighted that this issue of *PRISM* will be honored at Goucher College (MD) in the fall of 2014. An exhibition there will feature this cover and these drawings along with a documentary video about them. The video, created by the artist Peter Bruun, is narrated by Nancy and by Goucher theater students and faculty and scored by Goucher music students. A city-wide preview of this exhibit will be held on Yom Hashoah at a synagogue in Baltimore, MD.

We are particularly pleased to have attracted essays from teacher practitioners in high schools across America. Their remarkable work highlights the necessity and value of student engagement and active learning.

Colleen Tambuscio, Lisa Bauman, and Bonnie Sussman, for example, have touched and changed the lives of untold American and Czech students through their and their students' work in a small Czech town that sheltered a Jewish family.

Matthew Rozell and his students interviewed soldiers from the 743rd Tank Battalion, an armored unit working in tandem with the famed 30th Infantry Division, which came upon a transport of nearly 2,500 prisoners from the concentration camp Bergen-Belsen. They cared for these newly freed prisoners in 1945 and reunited with them some 60 years later. The story is a movie waiting to be made.

Mark Thorsen's decision to ask his students to respond to their history lessons through art produced profoundly thoughtful drawings, paintings, and photographs, along with a reflective dialogue and a commitment to continue to learn and share survivors' stories.

Nine educators from the Holocaust Educators' Consortium, at the behest of Lana Bernhardt, former project director of Israel's Beit Lohamei HaGeta'ot (Ghetto Fighters' House) International Book-Sharing Project, responded to our many requests from elementary school teachers for age-appropriate book suggestions by contributing to a selective annotated bibliography. The reviewers include Lolle Boettcher, Beryl Bresgi, Patrick Connelly, Diane Fingers, Dana Humphrey, Carson Phillips, Tova Weiss, Bill Younglove.

We are always gratified when professors and their students examine Holocaust pedagogy along with its history and submit provocative ideas for college and graduate school study units. After grounding her pre-service teachers in Holocaust history, Jeraldine Kraver asks them to examine the ethical dilemmas confronted by a young German elementary school teacher during the 30s and to

apply their conclusions to teaching today. David H. Lindquist provides a careful, scholarly guide to using an infamous German storybook to teach about antisemitism, crucial to understanding the Holocaust, while graduate assistant Cory Johnston, in a must-read essay for all English teachers, analyzes four iconic writers.

Mary Todd and Rochelle L. Millen confront their Christian students with essential questions that will not allow them to live an unexamined life. Valerie Hébert brings post-Holocaust trials, including the Nuremberg Trial, into her graduate classroom to introduce her students to moral ambiguity, “provid[ing] broad scope for inquiry and analysis.” Pnina Rosenberg writes about the city of Nuremberg, using memorials and sculpture to introduce us to the new city that co-exists with the ghosts of its infamous past.

Poets Steven Sher and Louis Daniel Brodsky tackle the subject of survivor memory. Stephen J. Cipot brings to life a young girl “obsessed with the Holocaust.” Poet and translator Sarah Traister Moskovitz admits her difficulty in translating the poet Yitzhak Katzenelson, writing, “I did not want to fall into that deep dark water with you / and drown.”

With each issue we mark the passing of a beloved survivor; here, sadly, we commemorate the passing of two. Bernard Mann writes in memory of the poet-scientist Tom Berman, whose poems on his *Kindertransport* experience graced our spring 2012 issue. Tom’s unexpected death leaves us bereft.

The world is further diminished by the loss of the great historian Professor Israel Gutman, memorialized by Yad Vashem’s David Silberklang. Professor Gutman’s legacy has touched us all, and we mourn his passing.

This journal could not exist without the generous support of our benefactor, Mr. Henry Rothman and the Rothman Foundation. The international praise the publication garners makes clear the importance of his valuable and valued contribution. We thank as well Dean David Schnall for his unwavering commitment to, and appreciation of, our work. Finally, much praise and many thanks go to our extraordinary support staff: Steven Schloss, our project manager; Emily Scherer Steinberg, our art director; and David B. Greenberg, our new and gifted copy editor. Their talent, efforts, good nature, and great patience make them a dream team.

—Karen Shawn

"This story was given to me exactly as I have described, narrated by a Polish woman named Danuta," writes Jennifer Robertson. "Everything is true: the location of her grandfather's house, the request, and the consequences."

Jennifer Robertson

Footsteps

A group of women sat together around the kitchen table in a Warsaw apartment, sharing coffee and memories. Danuta shared her father's story.

"When my father was sixteen, the love of his life was a Jewish girl called Ciwia, Ciwia Hirsh. See, I even know her name! Ciwia lived in town and my father was a village boy, but they went to the same school.

"Then the war began. Late one evening, someone knocked at the door of the cottage in the village where my father lived. It was actually the first house in the village, clearly visible from the open countryside around. The knocking wasn't loud, it was very gentle, but just the same, everyone just froze where they were. It could have been the police, come to take someone away. But in that case, the knock would have been different, loud and persistent. This knock was soft, beseeching. So after a moment's thought, my grandfather opened the door.

"Mr. Hirsh, Ciwia's father, stood on the doorstep. Grandfather looked all around and invited him in. My father offered the stool on which he had been sitting and Mr. Hirsh told them that he had walked all the way from town, about 15 kilometers away. He had avoided main roads and even lanes. He was sure no one had seen him come to the door. After all, my father lived in the first house, so he hadn't had to walk right through the village.

"He had come, he said, because of Ciwia. He wondered whether my grandfather would take Ciwia in, let her live with them, hide her. They were going to be sent away. They knew that trains went away full and came back empty. So he had walked all that way to my father's village."

Danuta paused. We waited, wondering what would happen next.

"My grandfather refused," Danuta said. "My father was sitting there, and he heard his father say 'no' to Ciwia's father. There were five younger children, you see, and my grandfather had to think of that. He had those five kids to look after. But it wasn't just the five kids. He reminded Mr. Hirsh that their house was the first in the village. That meant they would be the first to be searched. That's what the problem was, the location of the house. And so he said no.

"Grandmother gave Mr. Hirsh something to eat and then he went away."

Danuta paused again. Darkness was falling and the kitchen window filled with cloudy twilight. In the silence, in the half-light, we heard a muffled sound. It was the father who had walked 15 kilometers, avoiding open roads. He had rested now. He must go. He stood up, a shadow among the shadows in the cottage. He hadn't wanted to cause any trouble. He had just come because And now he must go. He had a long walk ahead. He turned towards the door. His footsteps made just the slightest, muffled sound on the wooden floor.

One of us asked, "Did anyone survive? Did Ciwia . . .?"

"How could they survive? There was nowhere else to go. It was because it was the first house in the village, you see. It was too dangerous."

"Yes, if it had been the last one, right beside the forest . . ."

Our talk had shut out the sound of footsteps crossing the wooden floor, but now we listened again. A father was leaving a one-roomed home. A father who had no choice was shaking hands with a father who had made his choice. The father who has no choice steps out into the night. The door shuts behind him, the latch is dropped with barely a sound. But it should be alright. The doomed father

doesn't have to linger in the village. The house is the first one, right at the very edge. Just a few meters to go and he will have left the village safely behind him. What does he think as he walks away?

Perhaps he had frowned upon his daughter's friendship with a Polish boy. Perhaps, though, as the noose pulled ever tighter, his wife had said, "But, Moshe, that's the very thing that could save her life. The boy loves her. Go and ask them to take her in."

So he went . . . and now he is returning. "The answer is no."

But Ciwia lived on in her young lover's helpless heart. That first love was never forgotten. His daughter actually knows her name, all these years later. And Danuta added, "My own mother wanted children so she took my father in. She made room in her house, her bed, her body for a man she didn't love, for the sake of the children she wanted to

have. And if she hadn't, well, I wouldn't be here. But for the sake of the lost love, the girl his father would not save, my father never made room in his heart for anyone."

And now we hear them clearly, the footsteps retreating into the night. Those footsteps have been walking unceasingly for seven long decades. They walked into the room where we sat, a small group of women under the darkening sky. And when we parted, the footsteps followed us home.

Those footsteps walk across Poland, across Lithuania, Latvia, Ukraine. Their muffled tread leads into the forests of Belarus, they traverse the byways of Europe. Other steps join them, and more, and more. Listen: They are walking into the darkness, those footsteps of a people for whom all roads were closed.

"This story was given to me," explains Jennifer Robertson, "by Joanna Brańska, art historian, author of *Na Dobry Rok Badźcie Zapisani* (1997, Biblioteka Narodowa, Warsaw), a study of pre-war Jewish greetings cards. A member of the Polish-Israel Friendship Society, Dr. Brańska also managed Café Eilat, where cultural events took place and where she often received artifacts from the time of the Holocaust, exactly as I have narrated. I simply created the characters and setting around this true story."

Jennifer Robertson

Inside the Sewing Machine Drawer

Joanna ran a small café in Warsaw devoted to Jewish things: musical events, art exhibitions, poetry readings, and so on. She had set up a small display case.

"It's a memory store. I wanted to gather small, everyday objects from a vanished world, ordinary things that have become extraordinary because the people who owned them have vanished from the earth. Like this, for instance . . ."

She showed me a curved metal object, a container of some sort.

"It's a *mezuzah* case," Joanna explained. "It would have been fastened to the right side of the front door. Most Jewish homes in Poland had one and you can sometimes see the marks on the woodwork of pre-war buildings that show you that this house once belonged to a Jewish family."

So then she told me the story of the *mezuzah*.

She had received a letter from a small town in western Poland, a rambling letter with uncertain punctuation, from a woman called Maria Grabowska:

"I heard about you on the radio. Mother and I

were repatriated from the east at the end of the war. We had to pack up in a hurry, but she managed to take her sewing machine. She put it in a handcart along with whatever food she could get hold of, bundles of bedding, pots and pans. She put my little brother on top. I walked alongside with a sack across my shoulders—I was almost seven. Mother trundled that cart along to the train. I'd never been in a train before, but I can tell you, it wasn't exactly luxury: We travelled in a cattle truck. Do you know how we survived? Some people in our truck had brought their cow. Every time we stopped, which we did quite a lot because the train kept getting checked—they pushed the cow out to graze, and we all got busy scraping out the evidence of the cow from our truck. But we had milk, straight from the cow.

"You may be wondering, what's all this got to do with the sewing machine? Well, inside the sewing machine drawer, Mother had put a small metal object. I don't know exactly what it is, but it's something Jewish. Mother felt that it must be important because the lady who gave it to her asked her to look after it carefully. So Mother tucked it away. She kept hoping the people it belonged to would come back and claim it, but no one ever came. When Mother passed away, I didn't want to throw it away, either. But now I'm getting on and my kids for sure will just chuck it away. 'That old metal thing, there's no use keeping that,' they'll say. They'll chuck the sewing machine out, too. 'Old-fashioned,' they'll say. 'You can buy electric ones nowadays.' But I don't want to break faith with something my mother promised so long ago. So I decided I would write to see if you could advise me what to do."

Joanna told me that she had written back and offered to travel across to western Poland to see Mrs. Grabowska. Then it turned out that Maria Grabowska had to visit her sister-in-law in Warsaw, so it was decided that she would come in herself with this souvenir from another time, another place.

She arrived, breathless with haste and apologies, a small, stout woman with patchy face powder, reddened lips, and greying hair escaping from a severe-looking hat. Joanna helped her hang up her coat and ushered her towards a table beside the display case. Maria took off her hat and pulled out a powder compact to survey her flattened hair.

"Oh, dear me, I'm so sorry I'm so late. I never thought it would take so long."

"Well, you've come a long way. Never mind, you're here now. Tea? Or coffee? Or perhaps something cold to drink?"

"Tea, please." She was rummaging in her bag and pulled out a crumpled plastic bag, which she unwound with much rustling. "Here it is, the thing my mother kept so carefully for so many, many years . . ."

She laid the small, oblong piece of metal on the white tablecloth.

"A *mezuzah* case!"

"Is it? Jewish families used to have them at the entrance to their homes, didn't they? I think I can remember them from the small town where I grew up, but I'm not sure. It was so long ago. Mother said some people touched it as they entered or left the home, but she didn't know why. Kind of like a holy water stoup, but of course it wouldn't be, would it, holy water, I mean . . .?"

"No," said Joanna, almost mechanically. "May I have a closer look?"

"Of course, of course, that's why I brought it. Here." Maria pushed the *mezuzah* container across the cloth and Joanna cradled it carefully in her hand.

"So," she said slowly. "This is what your mother kept in her sewing machine."

"That's right, tucked away inside the little drawer. I used to love that drawer when I was small. I'd always be pulling it in and out and peeking inside."

"Do you remember what happened? You said someone gave it to your mother?"

"That's right. It was Mrs. Goldfarb. She was the doctor's wife."

"And where was this? Where did you live?"

"Oh, you won't have heard of it. It was a small town near Lwów. Of course, that's in Ukraine now."

"But in those days . . ."

"Oh, a right mixture." Mrs. Grabowska stirred sugar into her tea. "Poles, Ukrainians, Jews, Armenians, two or three Czech families, too. The Goldfarbs were Jewish, of course. My mother used to do dressmaking for the family and sometimes I'd go along to the house with them. They had a nice, big house. Of course, I have only the vaguest memories. Sometimes, I seem to see a house with a feel of space and, oh, I don't know, comfort maybe, and sometimes I think it's just because Mother has told me about it and I can't really remember at all."

"But when the war began, the Russians came, and then, in 1941, the Germans. . . . I was only four but I remember it quite clearly. You know, they show films about the war nowadays, but I never watch. I remember soldiers with big boots and guns

and harsh faces. And motorbikes. To this day the sound of a motorbike makes me feel as though I'm standing at the edge of a big black pit. . . . Horrible."

"Horrible indeed," Joanna agreed.

Maria Grabowska sipped her tea. "That's how it was for all the Jewish families. They wiped them out. Then, two or three years later, the Ukrainian nationalists came for us. They call it ethnic cleansing now. But by the time we were repatriated, as they called it, sent off in those cattle trucks to western Poland, the war was over and there were no Jews left in our little town. None at all. And there had been a synagogue and kosher shops and a school for the boys. A *cheder*, it was called. It was just one small room, which opened off the street. We used to go past the *cheder* on our way to market and see the boys, all with their caps on, crowded together, reciting long passages of the Scriptures by heart in Hebrew. Some were no bigger than I was then, three or four. Imagine killing little boys and their teachers just because they studied the Bible! It's the same God after all, isn't it? At any rate, that's what they say now, when it's too late. When they've all disappeared. They didn't say it then, but my mother did and she brought me up like that, you know."

"Is that why Mrs. Goldfarb gave you your mother the *mezuzah* case?"

"Perhaps. I've never really thought about it. She came and knocked at our door. Mother opened it, and it was Mrs. Goldfarb. She was in a big hurry. She said, 'I've come to say goodbye. We're going away, but we don't know where to, nor for how long. We have to be ready by noon.'"

Maria's blue eyes filled with tears. She searched in her bag for a handkerchief, blew her nose, and continued.

"You can imagine what a good person Mrs. Goldfarb was if she still found time to rush out and say goodbye to her neighbors."

"Yet she'd brought the *mezuzah* case with her, which must have meant she knew. . . ."

"She knew. And yet she didn't know. She told Mother something about going into the forests. 'Perhaps they want us to fell trees,' she said. But the elderly, the children? Perhaps, too, she brought Mother that case because she hadn't anything valuable left. The Russians had stripped their home, you know, because they were a bit better off than the others and lived in a bigger house. They made the Goldfarbs live in one room and quartered soldiers in the rest of the house, and when they went away, they took Mrs. Goldfarb's silver and nice

table linen, my mother said. Then the Germans came and they took all the Jewish families away. And we were left with this . . ."

Her gaze went across to the *mezuzah* case, which Joanna had laid back down on the table. But the scene replayed across the old woman's inner eye had taken place a lifetime—a deathtime—ago. And Joanna saw it too: two women standing in a low-ceilinged room. Sunlight filtered through the leaves of yellowing lime and poplar trees and fell in patches on the earthen path outside the little wooden house. A slight breeze rustled the leaves. It was a golden autumn day with just a hint of chill, but Mrs. Goldfarb wore a felt hat, a thick coat with a warm jacket underneath, and several layers of clothes under that; and on her stockinged feet were sturdy shoes.

"My husband's father built our home," she said. "I came here as a bride. My children were born here. And now it's time to leave."

"Your husband delivered my babies, little Janek and darling Maria."

"She's a credit to you. We love it when she comes round. Came, I should say."

And then there was silence. Maria said she had never forgotten the way that the golden autumn day had become anxious, tense. A dog barked, a deep-throated bark from the jowls of a brute trained to kill. A motorcycle roared through the sleepy square of a little town and Mrs. Goldfarb bit her lip, half turning towards the door.

"I must go . . ."

Perhaps the Polish seamstress said warmly, "Go well, dear Mrs. Goldfarb, you and your family. I'll keep this safe for you until we meet again."

Whatever she said, she had kept faith, and so had her daughter after her. They had kept the *mezuzah* case. It lay on the white tablecloth, a small piece of decorated metal from another time, another place, and yet now for all time and for every place.

Joanna looked at it again. "Thank you for bringing this to us, Mrs. Grabowska, and thank you for sharing the story. I shall be proud to display this for you—and for Mrs. Goldfarb and her family."

"Oh, yes, please. I'm glad I brought it to you. It would have been terrible to have thrown it away. It's a little act of memory, isn't it, that means the dear Goldfarb family hasn't been forgotten."

"That's what it's all about."

She helped Maria with her coat and saw her out.

"So that's the story of the *mezuzah* case," Joanna told me, and she gave it to me to hold.

How many other hands had touched this metal

after it had been nailed in place on the doorframe of the Goldfarb home? And what had Mrs. Goldfarb done with the precious parchment when she unscrewed its container?

"So many unanswered questions!" Joanna sighed, putting the *mezuzah* case back into her display cabinet. "The rabbi of Kobryn said, *Only when you possess knowledge do you know what you were lacking.*"

She smiled and left me to think this through. Maria Grabowska and her mother had known neither the name nor the purpose of the object they had kept so carefully. Nor had the Goldfarbs known what awaited them in the forest from which they never returned.

The *mezuzah* case, emptied of the scroll with its eternal commands but preserved in a Polish woman's sewing-machine drawer, had kept faith beyond the mass grave and the slow drift of leaves falling from thickly clustered trees. Now it rested behind glass, mute witness of the time when the noise of shooting had ceased, the last motorcyclist had roared away, and the little town had been pronounced racially clean.

“Artifacts and the multiple roles they play in the museum experience are at the core of exploration, contemplation, and remembrance at Holocaust Museum Houston (HMH),” explain Mary Lee Webeck and Cynthia Lynn Capers. “Artifacts foster thought, inquiry, and, we hope, understanding.” This first-person reflection by these HMH educators explores artifact usage in three current exhibition spaces at the museum. Pair it with Jennifer Robertson’s story on pp. 4–7 and with Nancy Patz’s renderings of artifacts on our cover and on pp. 14–19.

Mary Lee Webeck and Cynthia Lynn Capers

Sites, Sights, and Insights: Using Artifacts in Museum Education

Even those museums where the artifact is treated as a holy object necessarily display collections in ways that suggest meaning and coherence (Young, 1993, p. viii).

At Holocaust Museum Houston (HMH) in Texas, we work as educators and as part of a four-member exhibitions team that includes the Museum’s registrar and collections manager, Carol Manley, and its creative designer, Jayson Melanson. Our work reflects the Museum’s primary mission: to educate people about the Holocaust, memorialize the six million Jews and other innocent victims, honor the survivors’ legacy, and teach the dangers of hatred, prejudice, and apathy.

The exhibitions team must consider the most effective ways to introduce visitors to the painful and troubling history of the Holocaust, recognizing the complexity of such history and the importance of developing a rich context through which to explore its events, actors, actions, decisions, and consequences. We must also consider how people process and make meaning from information, recognizing that learning, as John H. Falk and Lynn D. Dierking (2000) note, is influenced by overlapping contexts: the personal, the sociocultural, and the physical. We consider the ways in which visitors experience museum spaces, recognizing that their learning tends to be nonlinear and personally motivated, as Falk and Dierking explain, and to involve considerable free choice as to when, where, and what to learn. As our team works together to create exhibitions and to use them as educative sites of contemplation and exploration, we develop a shared understanding of how visitors make sense of their experiences as they confront harrowing truths about this history.

Artifacts are objects, documents, and images that museums collect, steward, and interpret. How an artifact is selected, placed, labeled, and described can determine how its audiences perceive it and how it contributes to visitors’ experience and their comprehension of its historical context. In exhibit design and interpretation, defined as a communication process that forges intellectual and emotional connections between the interests of the visitor and the meanings inherent in the resource (National Association for Interpretation, 2013), artifacts play a key role in determining what visitors explore; what questions they pose; and what perspectives, knowledge, and understandings they gain.

UPROOTED: A STORY OF TWO FAMILIES

In 2013, the HMH was fortunate to be able to mount an exhibit we titled *Uprooted*, which tells the story of the Abramowicz-Mescherowsky-Teixidor family and the Levenback-Bielitz family by narrating their experiences before, during, and after the Holocaust. Through the use of artifacts including household items, rare documents, and photographs, the exhibition examines the difficult choices faced by these two extended family groups and exemplifies the hope of so many other Jews to find haven and reestablish their lives elsewhere, despite the annihilation policies of the Nazi government. By focusing on these two families’ experiences, we also addressed a key methodological consideration for Holocaust education: “translating statistics

into people” (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2001).

In an article titled “Interpreting Difficult Knowledge,” Julia Rose (2011) writes, “Interpretations of traumatic histories ask audiences to acknowledge the human toll and the varied viewpoints enveloped in histories of oppression. Such . . . education demands both emotional and intellectual engagement from audiences, engagement not easily carried out” (p. 1). In creating *Uprooted*, our exhibitions team kept these engagement needs in mind as we planned the interpretive structure of the exhibition [Fig. 1].



FIG. 1: Researching Artifacts for Exhibit Usage. Photo: M. L. Webeck, July 9, 2012.

Several questions were key: First, because the gallery space devoted to *Uprooted* would supplement the Museum’s main exhibition, how could we connect to and build upon the central viewing experience? Second, which artifacts from our major collections would most vividly enhance our visitors’ understanding of the complexities of the Holocaust and the specifics of these families’ experiences? Finally, what would visitors need to know as they entered the



FIG 2: Image from *Uprooted*. The shawl of Lea Abramowicz is laid across the chair. Permission Holocaust Museum Houston.

exhibit about the two families and their personal journeys?

Because there would be many unfamiliar foreign names and places, as well as photos of numerous faces, we began by creating large-scale family trees and maps to identify the family members and contextualize their journeys. We continued with a visual vignette, designing a parlor such as one of these families might have had before they were uprooted, with the aim of building empathy by connecting the families’ lives to those of the visitors. In the parlor, we placed artifacts donated by family members. A beautiful shawl [Fig. 2] rests on a chaise; Myriam Abramowicz remembers her mother, Lea, wearing it on Rosh Hashana (the Jewish New Year). Lily Bielitz donated a phonograph, set up as if to play. A delicate china tea set evokes a less hurried time. These artifacts are both familiar and meaningful (yes, even to today’s students!); such recognition lays the groundwork for an empathetic response to the families’ experiences.

Artifacts enabled us to illustrate and reinforce the difficulties Jews faced as they tried to emigrate from Germany to any other country. As visitors read the text panels about the July 1938 Evian Conference and the December 1938–September 1939 *Kindertransport* (one family member, Hedi Basch, was a *Kind*), they consider the large photographs [Fig. 3] and physical artifacts on view,



FIG. 3: Image from *Uprooted*. Lea Abramowicz with her infant son, George. In the artifact case is the family records book. Permission Holocaust Museum Houston.

particularly the documents necessary for Fritz and Lily Bielitz to leave Austria and for their niece Hedi to immigrate to the US.

These artifacts and stories are especially relevant to our local audience, many members of which also immigrated to the US during or after the Holocaust.

As visitors leave the exhibit, they are invited to write their thoughts in guest books we provide. Those whose

families came to America from other parts of the world express their understanding and sympathy for the families described in the exhibit and share their own tales of fleeing oppression or finding haven and opportunity.

Sometimes artifacts educate even their donors, as happened when Myriam Abramowitz and her brother, George, discovered the date of their sister's *yahrtzeit* (date of death) in a record book they donated for this exhibit. Jenny Ita was their parents' first child; she died in infancy before the Holocaust. When we placed their book in our artifacts case, we chose to open it to the page where the births of Lea and Mendel's children had been recorded, and there was Jenny Ita's death date as well, never seen or noticed by Myriam or George.

Interpreting the Holocaust through its artifacts invites viewers to "include contextualized and integrated social histories that recall a complex maze of relationships among historical players, their historical times, and relevant material culture" (Rose, 2011, p. 2). Our exhibitions team creates such connections and offers our visitors an opportunity to see history in new and vividly personal ways through the access we provide to artifacts and the stories they convey.

EYEGLASSES

Museum educators and curators commonly ask: In what ways can we increase viewers' interest in our subject and inspire a spirit of inquiry? How can we encourage visitors to return? One answer is to offer frequently changing exhibitions that feature compelling artifacts.

FIG 4: Vladimir Yudin (1906–1986). *Untitled*. Auschwitz extermination camp, Osventsim, Poland, 1945. From the series *Auschwitz (Osventsim)* gelatin silver print 15 1/8 x 10 inches. Loan from Teresa and Paul Harbaugh. Photo: CU Art Museum.



FIG. 5: Glasses at Buchenwald. Photo taken at Buchenwald Memorial by M. L. Webeck.

Through Soviet Jewish Eyes, for example, a current exhibition based on David Schner's (2011) study of Soviet-Jewish photographers and their work during World War II, features gripping photographs very different from readily recognized iconic Holocaust images. One image, *Untitled*, was taken by Russian photographer Vladimir Yudin (1945) at Auschwitz immediately after its liberation by Soviet troops. This haunting photo confronts us with a man in a striped uniform kneeling on the edge of a pile of thousands of eyeglasses. He is trying on a pair, his hands adjusting the frames as he peers through the glasses into the distance [Fig. 4].

Eyeglasses are quite ordinary objects, not commonly thought of as artifacts. Yet, when the ordinary is placed in an extraordinary context, the effect can be stunning, prompting sudden realization, making one think in new ways, evoking new paths of inquiry. It can cause one to feel deeply unsettled, almost sick with new awareness. Such was the case with this untitled photograph for Mary Lee. Sometimes, for those of us who work daily amidst this difficult history, it is possible (and perhaps necessary) to become inured, to feel that everything around us in the dark Holocaust world is common, normal, that in its grim and dismal truths there is nothing shocking. Invariably, though, we are jarred back and sensitized again to the uncommon reality of our subject upon reading a new text, discovering a newly uncovered facet of historical understanding, or listening to a new scholar's perspectives. For Mary Lee, this image did that.

We began to ponder possible uses of *Untitled* as we recalled the several pairs of damaged and broken eyeglasses in our permanent exhibit that are on loan from the Buchenwald Memorial, where, while on a tour, Mary Lee had photographed museum workers identifying and documenting recently found artifacts, including pairs of glasses [Fig. 5].

These artifacts prompted questions: What was it like, during the Holocaust, when, stripped of everything that mattered, one was further deprived of one's glasses? How much more frightening and confounding did the experi-

ence become when one's ability to see was compromised? What was it like, upon liberation, for this unidentified prisoner of Auschwitz suddenly to come upon a huge pile of eyeglasses? Pictured trying on a pair, is he hoping to see clearly once again or simply to return to a time of normalcy, when trying on glasses was an ordinary act? Might he find a pair, unbroken and unbent, that fits him? If he does, will he wonder to whom it once belonged? Will he wonder about the fate of all of the owners of these stolen pairs of glasses? Will we?

In this excerpt from "Eyeglasses," a perfect companion poem to the photo *Untitled*, the poet Oriana Ivy (2012) writes: "Before my grandparents left Auschwitz, / they went to the mountain of eyeglasses, / thinking that by a miracle / they might find their own" (p. 110) [see *PRISM*, Spring 2012—Ed.]. The ordinary becomes the extraordinary; the simple artifact becomes a lens through which we suddenly see a fact, a person, a moment of the Holocaust differently and in sharper focus.

This survivor's image, along with the poem and the questions they both raise, challenges us to consider the effects of showing and telling personal stories. This man, and the poet's grandparents, had a profound and personal experience that we cannot ask them about. However, enhancing our ability to try to imagine their despair turned to hope is the mass of eyeglasses, illuminating the scale of the murders of Jews, a reality we must acknowledge if we are to be able to place the liberated prisoners in their correct historical context.

Today, visitors to the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum see vast quantities—just a fraction of the evidence—of confiscated artifacts as, somber and quiet, they walk through rooms lined with possessions stolen from prisoners: suitcases, prostheses, eyeglasses, brushes, pots, shoes—even hair. (See *Memorial and Museum*, 2013, for clear photographs of these artifacts, useful for extended classroom learning opportunities.) In his discussion of "museological remnants," James Young (1993) asks:

What precisely does the sight of concentration-camp artifacts awaken in viewers? Historical knowledge? A sense of evidence? Revulsion, grief, fear, pity? That visitors respond more directly to objects than to verbalized concepts is clear. But beyond affect, what does our knowledge of these objects—a bent spoon, children's shoes, crusty old striped uniforms—have to do with our knowledge of historical events? (p. 132)

Former first lady Laura Bush, having visited Auschwitz, offers her response:

I realized that there are things textbooks can't teach . . . how to feel when you see prayer shawls or baby

shoes left by children being torn from their mothers, or prison cells with the scratch marks of attempted escape. But what moved me the most were the thousands of eyeglasses, their lenses still smudged with tears and dirt. It struck me how vulnerable we are as humans, how many needed those glasses to see, and how many people living around the camps and around the world refused to see. (Bush, 2005)

CHAJA VERVEER: A RECLAIMED HISTORY

Bush's comments underscore the power inherent in artifacts, especially those related to children, to evoke a strong affective response for those targeted during the Holocaust. At HMH, our permanent exhibition, *Bearing Witness: A*



FIG. 6: Chaja's childhood dress. Used with permission, Holocaust Museum Houston.

Community Remembers, includes a child's dress [Fig. 6; see also cover art—Ed.]. Still pristine, mostly white, it belonged to Houston resident Chaja Verveer, one of the youngest survivors.

Chaja's story represents a statistical anomaly. Hidden as a baby in the Netherlands, she was later imprisoned in Westerbork, Bergen-Belsen, and Theresienstadt, from which she was liberated. She was so young at the time that she has few memories; yet, through rigorous inquiry, study, and a few precious artifacts, she has reclaimed her history.

The dress on view is labeled, "Hand-embroidered silk baby dress, Netherlands, 1942," and described:

At the age of one, Chaja Verveer was separated from her mother and placed in hiding with another family.

They were betrayed, and she was sent to three different concentration camps, surviving alone. Chaja was reunited with her mother after the war and discovered her baby dress years later.

Next to the dress is another artifact, *Photo of Chaja Verveer, The Netherlands, 1942*, captioned:

Chaja Verveer, age 1½, taken by Mr. and Mrs. Izaak Van der Berg. Their family hid Chaja until she was 2½, when she was discovered. This photograph was sent to Chaja's mother by the Van der Bergs after the war.

Yet another artifact Chaja has unearthed is an image of an arrest warrant issued for her family in October 1942; on it is her birthdate: September 24, 1941. She was 13 months old.

On September 13, 1944, 52 toddlers from the orphanage in Westerbork were transported to Bergen-Belsen. Because their identity was unknown, they were registered in the camp records as "*Gruppe Unbekannte Kinder*" (Group of Unknown Children) [Fig. 7]. All but one survived Bergen-

Belsen and then Theresienstadt, and in the summer of 1945 they returned to the Netherlands. Chaja discovered these facts by accident when she picked up a book called *The Unknown Children* and found her own story in its pages.

We are planning an exhibition to feature artifacts including a photo of Chaja's father, with a Star of David sewn on his jacket pocket, holding her three brothers, all of whom survived [Fig. 8].



FIG. 8: Chaja's father and brothers. Permission Holocaust Museum Houston.

The photograph is a sweet moment in time, before life changed so drastically for the family, before the children were separated and forced into hiding, before Chaja's father became active in the Dutch resistance, before he was executed by the Nazis.

NEW INSIGHTS, NEW MEANINGS

At any site, whether a classroom or a museum, artifacts have the potential to prompt inquiry. When artifacts are accurately contextualized in a historical narrative, visitors who look closely and carefully do not merely see the objects that represent lives—a shawl, a photograph, eyeglasses, a dress—rather, they tease out the meaning behind the artifact and connect it not only to its history but also to themselves and their lives.

Gruppe "U nbekannte Kinder".		
	Nr.	
1. Unbekannter Junge	1	?
2. Unbekanntes Maedchen	2	Hetty ?
Frankenhuis?		Hetty ?
3. Unbekanntes Maedchen	4	Tinke?
4. Unbekanntes Maedchen	6	
v. d. Berg?		Carla ?
5. Unbekanntes Maedchen	7	Hetty ?
Elsas ?		Bert ?
6. Unbekannter Junge	9	Freddy?
7. Unbekannter Junge	10	Dorothea?
8. Unbekanntes Maedchen	11	Judith ?
9. Unbekanntes Maedchen	12	Nelly ?
10. Unbekanntes Maedchen	13	
11. Unbekannter Junge	14	Max ?
v. Klaveren?		Martha
12. Unbekanntes Maedchen	15	
13. Unbekanntes Maedchen	16	Klara Lina?
Velleman?		Carla ?
14. Unbekanntes Maedchen	20	
15. Unbekannter Junge	21	Rudolf?
Ehrlich?		Hanni ?
16. Unbekanntes Maedchen	22	Serina?
Hansjas?		Chana ?
17. Unbekanntes Maedchen	23	Roosje?
Heckster?		Lieschen?
18. Unbekanntes Maedchen	25	Carla ?
Naumann ?		Frederik?
19. Unbekanntes Maedchen	26	Hans?
Saffrin ?		Leo?
20. Unbekanntes Maedchen	27	Freddy?
v. Vlijmen?		Gretchen?
21. Unbekanntes Maedchen	28	H
v. West ?		Henriette?
22. Unbekannter Junge	29	Della?
Dennedoom?		Lockie ?
23. Unbekannter Junge	30	Arred ?
24. Unbekannter Junge	31	
25. Unbekannter Junge	32	Louise Henri
26. Unbekanntes Maedchen	33	Willy?
Le Noble?		Killy?
27. Unbekanntes Maedchen	34	Jansje?
Hamburger?		Glaartje?
28. Unbekannter Junge	35	Deddy?
29. Unbekannter Junge	36	
Hamburger?		
30. Unbekanntes Maedchen	37	
Hoepelman?		
31. Unbekannter Junge	38	
Schrijver?		
32. Unbekanntes Maedchen	39	
Montezinos?		
33. Unbekanntes Maedchen	40	
Deen?		
34. Unbekanntes Maedchen	41	
Piller?		
35. Unbekanntes Kind	42	

FIG. 7: Page found by Chaja in *The Unknown Children*. Personal library of Chaja Verveer.

Lawrence L. Langer (1998) stated:

The basic challenge for Holocaust educators is to begin by expanding their own sympathies and vision . . . and then gradually to extend to their students means for crossing the threshold into their historical and psychological space. Traditionally, teachers open doors of possibility for their students. In this one instance, they are obliged to open doors of impossibility, an equally compelling but more arduous task. (pp. 197–198)

Through the stories evoked by artifacts and the meanings made from these objects as students and other visitors inquire, learn, and make sense of history, we can and do expand their thinking and ask them to walk with us through doors that open onto both the possible and the seemingly impossible. As the English poet A. E. Housman (1922) wrote, “If we can, we must.” Through the careful curating of artifacts and related narratives, we can challenge our learners to enter the conceptual, human, and historical realms of the Holocaust. We must.

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Photographs
for ID
cards

Juden betreuen auf eigereifahrt!

JEWs enter this at your own risk!



"Anita's real mother—"

Written on back of
photograph entrusted
to her daughter's
rescuer



ID card
Fingerprinting
Kit



"So many suitcases, so many yellow stars," writes artist Nancy Patz in this lyrical narrative, reflecting on the artifacts in her paintings that grace our cover and these pages. "So many children holding their names on signs and hoping their parents will find them . . ."

Nancy Patz

About the Artifacts

I drew each artifact as if it were a portrait, and as I drew, I wondered: Where had it come from—the *shofar* made in the labor camp? The child's hand-knit woolen sweater with buttons down the front? The *siddur* (prayer book) bought with a morsel of bread? To whom had these objects belonged?

Remnants they may be, things left behind or saved from earlier lives, lined up in museums on shelf after shelf and here on page after page, silent witnesses helping to tell the story. Sometimes, only fragments remain. These too serve as testimony—to the depths of the horror to which humanity is capable of sinking, and to the resiliency of the human spirit.

So many little frocks embroidered with flowers and love by mamas and grandmas who watched their babies wear them year after year. If the infants were lucky enough to survive in ghettos, in hiding, in work camps, or in other places cruel beyond imagination, these dresses became blouses as the children grew inch by inch. There were also the photographs in first-day-of-school clothes, of moments before the war, of high hopes.

The artifacts I've drawn here are an endless still life, representing life even as they chronicle atrocities: so many suitcases, so many yellow stars, so many armbands, so many *taleisim* (prayer shawls), taken from prisoners by prisoners on railway platforms and piled high by still other prisoners working in the storehouses at Auschwitz.

Artifacts, though, often tell us only part of the story. Of the many objects here, let's look beyond the surface of two: a photograph and a letter I researched at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM).

Entranced by the sweet confidence of Miša (Frank) Grunwald and by Vilma, his lovely, smiling mother, I copied their studio photograph, taken in Prague, ca. 1933 [p.16]. Below it, I drew the letter Vilma wrote to her husband, Kurt, on July 11, 1944, the day she and her older son John were murdered. Transferred from Theresienstadt to Auschwitz, the family was separated when Kurt was sent with the able-bodied men and the others were slated for death.

"I am completely calm," Vilma wrote to Kurt on a

paper scrap she had taken from Theresienstadt. "Take care of the little golden boy and don't spoil him too much with your love."

The photograph and the letter don't mention the life that came before: Miša's and John's harsh expulsion from their school in Prague and the forced ending of their father's medical practice. Nor do they tell of the family's eviction and subsequent deportation to Theresienstadt or of their forced separation from one another. The photo and the letter do not report the moment when Miša was suddenly pushed by a caring friend out of the line for the gas chambers and into the line of older boys destined for a work camp. They do not indicate John's pronounced limp that likely made him unfit for work and kept him out of that line despite his age.

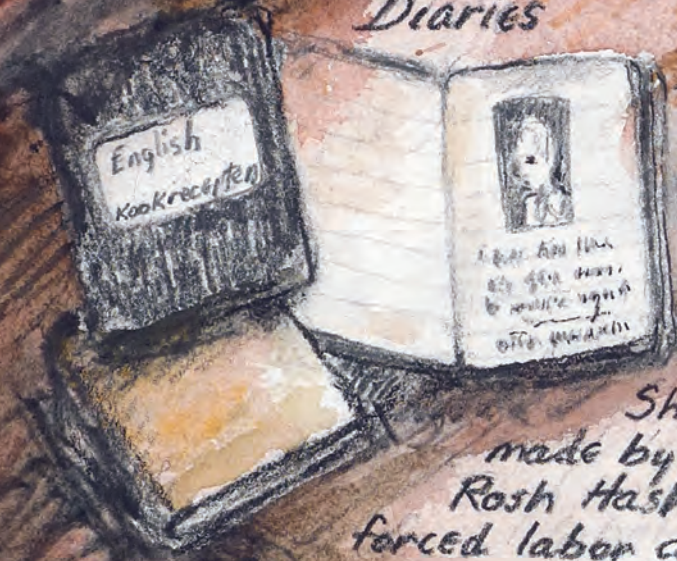
They do not illustrate the painful times afterwards when Miša's father, Kurt, was transferred to Sachsenhausen concentration camp and Miša himself barely survived his own march to that camp—or the joyful and unexpected reunion in Prague, years later. Father and son found their way to Austria, England, and, finally, the United States.

The artifacts do not reveal to us what we now know: that, in time, in New York, Kurt resumed his medical practice and Miša studied industrial design at Brooklyn's Pratt Institute. After Kurt died, Miša discovered the letter his mother had written to his father from Auschwitz, and he donated it to the USHMM in 2012.

The studio photo of Miša and his mother and Vilma's last letter to her husband don't tell us all there is to tell, but the miraculous survival of these artifacts compels us to think about, research, learn, and share their story. The searing truth is that there are millions of others we cannot picture or name. Most did not have a chance to have a studio portrait or write a final letter to someone they loved.

Artifacts move us, even when they tell us only mere fragments of the full history. They urge us to question, to study, to listen to testimony, and to remember. They call on us to wonder about the lives of those who owned, wrote, wore, used, posed for, played with, and prayed with these remnants. If we do not, we will find no answers at all. No one will know the stories, and no one will even remember.

Diaries



*Moshe
in Israel,
1977*



*Shofar,
made by Moshe,
Rosh Hashana,
forced labor camp,
1943*



*Miša and Vilma,
mother of Miša and John
Prague, ca. 1933*

*Prayer shawls
confiscated
from arriving
prisoners.
Found in
Auschwitz
warehouse,
1945*

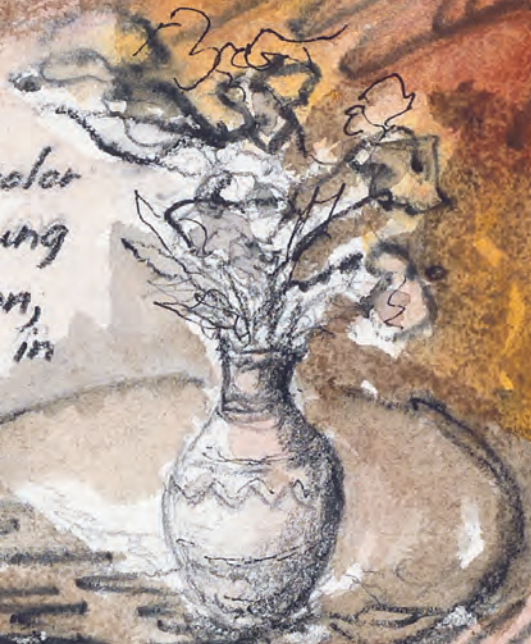


*Vilma's
letter,
Auschwitz,
1944*

*child's photo,
Auschwitz*



Watercolor
by young
Simon,
hiding in
France

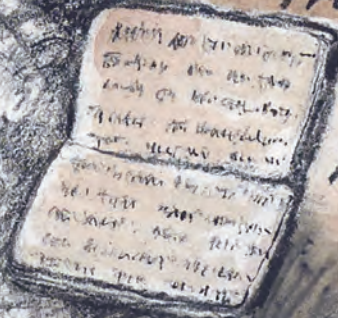


Jewish prisoner in
Red Army uniform



Hand-knit
child's sweater

Worn in
Ludwigsdorf
concentration
camp
1944-
1945



Prayer book
bought
"for a
portion of
my daily
ration of
bread" —
Auschwitz





Susie, born in
Kauterling
concentration
camp,
1945



16 performances
of the Verdi "Requiem",
conducted by
Rafael Schachter,
Terezin, 1943



Before the War



Lilly's wedding dress,
made from a parachute
and worn by 17-20
other brides in the
Celle and Belsen
DP camps





concentration camp certification

Yisrael's camera, used to document his family's departure from Europe



Eleazar in the chemistry lab, Mt. Scopus, Israel, 1946



On the way to Israel



Miniature tombstone, carved in a Cyprus detention camp by Moshe. Tools made by Efraim



"I have observed that students learn best when, as educators, we can make them care," writes Ann Weiss. "Facts mean more, and students learn them at a deeper level, when we can frame them within the context of the experiences of specific individuals. What happened to this person? How did that person react? Who was this person at all? To add individuals' names and stories to the history is the purpose of this essay, the stories of five of the six million."

Ann Weiss

Memories of *Chesed* (Compassion): What Remains When the People Are Gone

Often, when educators teach Shoah history, they concentrate on pivotal events—the book burnings, *Kristallnacht*, the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising—understandable because allotted class time is usually quite limited. Although most students know the number six million, I venture to say that few know much about any of the individuals who comprised that number.

Lunia Backenroth Gartner Weiss was my mother. By sharing her memories of people whom she knew and loved during the Holocaust, I personalize moments of this difficult history. Thanks to her detailed memories, we may learn about the compassion of those around her. She recounts memories of family and acquaintances, Jews who acted nobly and with grace, even in the midst of profound horror.¹

Lunia Weiss was born into Jewish royalty [Fig. 1].

The daughter of a prominent, Torah-learned, philanthropic, loving Hasidic family, she began her life in privilege, surrounded by great wealth—both material and of the kind she valued most: loving parents and little brother; wonderful grandparents; aunts and uncles on both sides, and many, many cousins, about whom Lunia said, "We were all like brothers and sisters!" The beginning of her life reads like a Jewish fairy tale: wondrous family holiday celebrations; governesses brought by her parents from different countries so that, in addition to the subject at hand, Lunia and her brother learned new languages and new cultures; exotic trips to Egypt; adventures with cousins; and most important of all, an abiding sense of love: of God, of family, of self, and for life itself. When life changed, Lunia had the courage to continue writing, even when the fairy tale of her pre-war life transformed into the darkest of nightmares.



FIG. 1: Chana, age 22, with her first-born baby, Lunia. April 1922.

Lunia survived the Shoah in a way she had never imagined—as sole survivor of her nuclear family. Her experiences, only a few of which are recounted here, were at times unimaginable and unendurable—yet, somehow, she managed to prevail and endure, remarkably, with her sense of self intact and still with a fervent belief in life, humanity, and God. Virtually all of Lunia's loved ones were murdered. Yet, although her world was utterly destroyed, somehow, she retained her sense of optimism; gratitude for life and family; compassion for others; and most of all, her ability to love unconditionally.

Lunia's life stories, though sometimes tragic, were nevertheless conveyed in ways that were vivid, exciting, honest, and sometimes even funny. Because of her stories, I came to know the times she cherished and the people she loved, enough even to be able to quote family members murdered years before I was born. Through her stories, my mom and I were able to walk the streets of her memory together, with detailed images and her clarity of vision informing the “steps” of our life-long talks. Lunia never stopped appreciating the sacredness of life, especially as seen through the lens of her Jewish values, and she never stopped looking for the goodness in others, managing to find it even in the worst of times.

LUNIA'S MOTHER, CHANA BACKENROTH GARTNER: ORPHANS, THE GHETTO, AND TYPHUS

Although my mother described her mother, Chana, as “a delicate, beautiful flower” who was pampered and protected by her family and especially by her husband, Naftali, Chana always had a heart for helping the less fortunate, particularly women and children. If a woman had no money for a dowry, Chana was the person to see. A romantic, she always found a way to make sure the necessary dowry was paid—with no loss of pride to the bride or to her family. Chana wanted nothing to stand in the way of love and marriage—especially when a simple matter such as money could solve the problem. It was for children's welfare, however, that she expended her greatest efforts.

One day, she learned that the Stryj Orphanage² was having trouble paying its operating expenses. A woman of wealth, creativity, and action, Chana decided to organize an exclusive, costumed masked ball; sell expensive tickets; and give all the money to the orphanage. Year after year, she raised money in this grand and spectacular way, and in this way provided an easy opportunity for others to participate in this *mizvah* (righteous act). As Lunia recalls:

My mother was a one-woman organization! She thought of the idea, organized the event, arranged nice costumes to wear and, most important of all, got everyone to buy a ticket! She was always exhausted from this tremendous effort but every year, when it

was over, and she could finally catch her breath, she knew it was all worthwhile.

But it was not only money that my mother gave: Several times a week, she went to the orphanage to play with, talk to, and hug the children and, most of all, let them know that they were loved.

When the war began and Lunia's family were forced out of their beautiful villa and pushed into a small room in the Stryj Ghetto, situated in the most squalid part of town, somehow Chana, Lunia's “delicate flower” of a mother, transformed into a fearless, tireless fighter. Here, despite extraordinary challenges and risks, Chana directed her energies to the welfare of children. Lunia described the increasingly dire conditions. As she explained, *Aktions* always resulted in more orphans:

Each time the SS came into the ghetto and took every Jew they could find, there were more and more orphans left, running around the streets, hungry, dirty, and begging for food. Every time these little beggars came to the door, my mother brought them inside. Besides feeding them, she cuddled them in her lap, telling them stories, hugging and kissing them until their tears finally stopped.

I remember my grandmother Chaya saying to my mother, “Look, Chanele, it's very nice that you wash them and feed them, but do you have to hug them so much? They are so full of lice! Pretty soon, you'll get sick!” My mother continued to hug the children. She knew that they were not only dirty and hungry but also scared and alone and needed more than just soap and food. They needed someone to love them again—so she would hold them, soothe and sing to them, and tell them stories, the way their own mothers once did. And for a while, at least, she made them feel safe again.

Well, my grandmother was right: My mother caught typhus and almost died. That's another big story about how the whole family worked day and night to try to save her—but when the day finally came that her boiling fever came down and her delirium ended, you wouldn't believe what she did! She convinced the ghetto elders to give her two rooms—we don't know how—and when the typhus epidemic was spreading even more through the ghetto, she got three rooms—and started a typhus isolation ward, so she could help others with the disease. Once you have typhus, you are immune, and typhus is so contagious, you have to keep the patients separated from the other people. No one could stop her. We were very worried about her, because she, herself, had almost died just a few weeks before, but she didn't listen; she knew she could help the sick people, and until the end, she did.

ELIEZER, THE GHETTO COMEDIAN

Even in the midst of horror, there was humor. Auschwitz survivor Arnold Shay (1990), who told unending jokes on any and every topic, bragged to me, "I kept people around me at Auschwitz alive with my jokes!" True or not, it is undeniable that humor has the capacity to lessen pain, give people hope, and make them feel human, even in the midst of inhuman circumstances. Survivor Viktor Frankl (1959) observes, "The illusions some of us still held were destroyed one by one, and then, quite unexpectedly, most of us were overcome by a grim sense of humor" (p. 54). In his Westerbork 1943–1944 diary, Philip Mechanicus (1985) explains, "Captivity means the barbed wire fence . . . but with a little imagination and a sense of humor . . . you can create a world of your own in which it is possible to forget the captivity of the material body" (p. 83). At its most essential, humor becomes a form of spiritual resistance; it keeps people from giving in and succumbing to depression, despair, and hopelessness. Steve Lipman (1991) notes the relationship between humor and faith:

During the Holocaust, religion and humor serve a like—though not identical—purpose: The former oriented one's thoughts to a better existence in the next world, the latter pointed to emotional salvation in this one. Both gave succor and provided an intellectual respite beyond the immediate physical surroundings. . . . Humor is concerned with the immediate incongruities of life, and faith [with] the ultimate ones." (pp. 11–12)

Lunia remembers Eliezer, a man from the ghetto who made people laugh. No one knew his last name or the details of his life, but virtually everyone in the Stryj Ghetto knew him, and life was enriched by his presence. My mother recalls:

There was an old man, no one knew exactly where he came from, who appeared in the ghetto one day. There were other people we did not know, of course, but Eliezer was different. Everywhere he went, he brought laughter with him. We were starving. No one had what to eat, and every day it was a big challenge just to find enough food for your family to survive one more day, but Eliezer was so beloved that many families, including ours, shared our meager scraps with him. In this way, Eliezer lived, and in this way, we also lived.

Why was Eliezer so beloved? He made us laugh! Every time we saw him, he found a way to lessen our misery with his jokes and make the squalor around us a little more bearable. His jokes were always topical and related to the latest changes in the ghetto condi-

tions. In fact, when some of the bigger ghettos were liquidated, sometimes people ran to smaller ghettos, like ours—I think that's how we got Eliezer. Many professional comedians who performed on big stages in Warsaw before the war were killed. We believe Eliezer was one who managed to escape to our smaller Stryj Ghetto.

Nobody knew where or how he lived. He had a habit of popping up here and there. Every morning he lifted up his arms to the sky and began to recite the morning prayers. He would say the *Shema* (Listen/Hear me!) and stop in the middle and yell: "See, Lord, I am still here—but what about You??" Then he would finish this prayer affirming the Oneness of God and the Presence of God and the rest of his morning prayers. I was always moved by Eliezer's faith and, at the same time, by his challenge to God. Surrounded by misery and more suffering every day, in disbelief he would ask, "Is it true, God, are You really still here?"

One day, I passed him on the street. He was laughing out loud and started singing and dancing. People stopped to ask him, "What is this great joy that makes you laugh so much now?" Eliezer replied: "I was just thinking of the other tyrants. When Pharaoh tried to destroy us, we survived, and now we eat delicious matzoh balls. When Haman tried to destroy us, we survived, and now we eat delicious *hamantashen*. I'm just wondering and planning what delicacy we will have after we get rid of this tyrant, Hitler!"

With his words, his jokes, and his laughter, Eliezer succeeded to dispel the mood of hopelessness in the ghetto. So it went. Starvation, disease, misery; life went from bad to worse to not even imaginable that anyone could survive—but still we did.

Everyone fed, loved, and cherished Eliezer. I would say that he was the most popular person in the ghetto. After every deportation, we would look around to see who was still left.

One day, the Nazis caught Eliezer. Everyone cried like we would for a relative.

As the Talmud affirms, "A man is known by his laughter" (Talmud, *Eruvin* 65b). We do not know Eliezer's full name, nor do we know the story of his life, but we know that a comedian named Eliezer once lived, and before he died, he managed to lessen the horror for those around him because every day, for a few minutes, he made people laugh.

THE OLD HASID AND THE PIT: PIETY AND COMPASSION

This Old Hasid is a person whose name we do not know but whose memory will be remembered because of his kindness toward my mother just moments before his own murder. Together with his compassion, he also affirmed,

in these last suffering moments of life, his piety and devotion to God.

The Nazis regularly “celebrated” Jewish holidays by planning extra suffering for the Jews. Tisha b’Av (the 9th day of the Hebrew month of Av), is the day on which both the First and the Second Temple were destroyed, a most sorrowful day in Jewish history. On Tisha b’Av in July 1942, the Nazis conducted a huge *Aktion* in the Stryj Ghetto. Lunia, who was then working as a maid for the Nazi high command, was ordered not to go outside. However, she sneaked out to warn her family to remain hidden and was caught. She was taken away, with thousands of others, to the *Umshlagplatz* (gathering place), which was the big, beautiful *shul* (synagogue) in Stryj. From there, they were marched hours out of town in the blistering heat.

It was inhumanly hot and we were so thirsty. We passed a brook but they would not let us drink. Even then I hated the heat—or maybe that’s how it started. Four or five hours later, we arrived, and it was already dark. They had floodlights. There was a huge hole in the ground and a board placed across it, like a bridge. Right there, we were ordered to undress: little children, older sisters and brothers, parents, and even grandparents. Of course, after seeing that deep, deep grave in the floodlights, we all knew what was going to happen. Even though we were about to die, almost everybody tried hard to shield their nakedness, pitifully, with only their two hands. I was a teenager, and together with all my other *tseures* (troubles), I felt ashamed to be naked in front of all the others.

An old, bearded Hasid was standing near me and probably sensed my fidgeting, which, no matter how I arranged my two hands, was not enough to hide my nakedness. He stood there, looking up at the sky, and quietly said to me, “Child, you do not have to look at anybody. Lift up your eyes to look hard for the *Ribono shel Olam* (Lord of the World).” His kind words, said to me just before we marched to the boards and the shooting began, succeeded to make me feel less ashamed with my body naked and even a little less afraid. When he told me, I looked up at the heavens and searched for God.

Then it was our turn, and four by four, we stepped onto the board. As the shots rang out, we fell into the pit. Bodies were falling all around me, and on top of me, but the bullet missed me. Somehow, I was alive! I struggled to breathe, but I was still alive!

After the Nazis finished for the day, my mother was able to make her way home. She never forgot this man. All we know about him is the story, nothing else. Unlike Eliezer, whose first name we know, here we have no name at all—

just his few compassionate words before he was murdered.

LUNIA’S PATERNAL GRANDFATHER, SHAMEI GARTNER: CHESED AND THE BUNKER

Lunia’s father’s family, the Gartners, were Boyaner *Hasidim*, followers of the Boyaner *rebbe* in pre-war Poland. (Recently, the current Boyaner *rebbe* in Jerusalem told me that Shamei Gartner, Lunia’s paternal grandfather, was frequently mentioned in archival dynasty records and was in fact the “right hand” of the pre-war Boyaner *rebbe*.) Lunia remembers Purim, her favorite holiday:

I often think about Purim, maybe because it is in the spring, which I always loved, or maybe because, in contrast to other holidays, nothing is forbidden. It was always a joyous time in our family. There was the customary feast with delicious turkey, and all the children dressed up in wonderful costumes and masks. My father always read the *Megilat* Esther (Scroll of Esther, the Purim story) to the whole family from our treasured Bezalel silver-covered scrolls. Baking went on for weeks in preparation. Then, on Purim day, friends and relatives sent each other *shalach manos*, plates filled with the best and nicest baked goods. Each family tried to do more to honor the other. As our maid was on her way to their house, the maids of our friends and relatives were making their way to ours. It was a joyous and delicious time, and best of all was the intense closeness and love we shared.

In deference to the younger children, our feast started in the late afternoon instead of the evening. At the head of the long table sat Grandfather Shamei, who had a beautiful, flowing white beard and soft eyes that seemed to smile even more than his mouth. Near him, on a low stool, was a bucket full of *zlotys* and also a little table with a pen and a checkbook. Children from the town would come to my grandparents’ house, much like trick-or-treaters do today. Grandfather would invite them to reach into the bucket and take out as many coins as they could. By evening, the children stopped coming and older people began to arrive instead. They came with assorted civic and personal requests, taking advantage of the general Purim mood of giving. Grandfather listened to each one and for each person, bigger or smaller, according to their needed, he wrote a check.

Shamei’s generosity was legendary. In addition to the civic requests made on Purim and other times, he and his family were responsible for building two of the most important public buildings in Stryj: the new wing of the city hospital and a landmark theater and opera house that was so beautiful, I am told, that some of pre-war Europe’s greatest



Lunia's parents, Chana and Naftali Gartner, at the posh resort of Truskawiec in Galicia, Poland, 1939, just weeks before the start of WWII. Courtesy Ann Weiss.

traveling companies, performing in cities such as London, Paris, Rome, and Berlin, also came to Stryj because of this marvelous new performance space!

Once the war had started, all of life changed radically for the family. As the situation for Jews in Poland became critical, it became clear that escape was no longer an option. My mother describes the brutally escalating conditions that necessitated building bunkers as hiding places, and why absolute secrecy was paramount to inhabitants' safety. The Nazis now wanted to capture Jews not, as before, to work them as slave laborers, but to kill them immediately; and they began to play a cruel new game with ghetto work papers, which were required to receive food. One day green work papers "saved" you; the next day, it was pink; on the third day, only yellow papers were considered good, and so the ruse continued. Lunia clarifies:

Different work places had different color working papers. The first time, all the people with pink working papers were sent back from the cemetery to the ghetto, and so began a desperate hustling to obtain pink working slips. People paid to their last *groschen* (Polish equivalent of a penny) to get them.

About a week later, the SS marched into the ghetto and grabbed all the Jews from the street. When they didn't find enough on the street, they went into the houses until they had 1,000. They took all the Jews to the cemetery to shoot them, but this time, they sent home all people with green working papers, shooting only ones who held pink ones.

Oh, how we Jews wanted to live, even this miserable life of hunger, freezing, and fear, constant fear, and so now began a scramble for green papers. Then it was yellow . . . and eventually we stopped believing. After a few more of these catching-and-killing *Aktions*, we became more realistic. We learned that it was not the color of the working paper that was important; it was only that the Nazis didn't get their hands on you *at all* that really mattered.

Now the concept of bunkers was born. Every house, every apartment, had a bunker. There was one very strict rule: There must be complete secrecy. Not even sisters, brothers, fathers, or mothers should know where the bunker is located if they did not live there. No one should know—and this rule turned out to be very important in saving lives.

When we were supposed to give up all our gold or be shot, Grandfather Shamei said he would rather be shot than leave the whole family in times like this without a penny. So as not to arouse suspicion, Grandfather told all our individual families to go and give up their gold. He sent Grandmother Chaya with quite a lot, but he kept the bulk of it and with it built and equipped our family bunker. A professional architect designed it, but all the work had to be done only by the family, so that absolute secrecy would be maintained.

Our bunker extended well under the street, and it was big enough to fit 18 of us and also the two former owners of the house. It was perfect, equipped with a generator for electricity, water, even a toilet that connected to the sewer, an airshaft, and 20 shelf-like beds. We had basic medical supplies and enough food.

The entrance to our bunker was through a fake oven in our room, which was the kitchen in the ghetto house. It worked like this: When an *Aktion* began, we would all run to hide inside the bunker. One man—only men drew straw lots—was left outside. The one who drew the short straw filled pots with water and potato peelings, which we saved especially for this purpose, and he put the big, heavy pot on top of the pretend oven, to cover our bunker's entrance. Then, when it looked like a working oven, he hid in the wooden rafters above and would wait in silence until the *Aktion* was finished. Although completely exposed if anyone looked up, he would not be seen; Nazis and the Jewish police looked down, not up, when they

were hunting for Jews. With all our ghetto bunkers so well hidden, the SS could not catch 1,000 Jews in a few hours anymore, as they had before. Our system worked well, until . . .

Hunger in our ghetto was getting worse. The streets were lined with corpses, blown up like balloons from malnutrition. The Nazis came up with a new ruse: They set up corner stands with fresh bread and one kilogram of marmalade per person, and over loudspeakers, again and again, announced they were giving out bread and marmalade. Whenever a hungry child came close to get the bread, the poor child got no food. Instead, the child was caught and tortured to tell where the family bunker was located.

Now the *Aktions* changed character. The people were not being shot on the spot in the cemetery; instead they were put on trains to be taken away. Now called "Resettlement for Honest Labor," *Aktions* were more frequent and more dire. Nobody ever came back. In these desperate times, the bunkers became even more important, and utmost secrecy was crucial.

Aktion after *aktion*, 19 people ran into our bunker, including Grandmother Chaya and Grandfather Shamei, and one person stayed outside to cover the bunker door with the pot on the pretend stove and climb up to hide in the rafters above. This is how it went every roundup—until the last two.

Almost everyone in my family was running for his life—my aunts; uncles; cousins; and, of course, my beloved parents and brother, together with my beloved grandparents—all were running to reach our secret bunker. Running near us was a young man in his 20s. When my grandfather saw him, he said, "We will take him into our bunker. It is not safe out here." His daughters, running, running in desperation, were horrified to hear his words and cried out, "No, Papa, we cannot take in a stranger. It is too dangerous. Where our bunker is located must remain secret!" My grandfather, running so fast with his beautiful white beard flying, did not discuss the matter with his daughters; there was no time. Instead, Shamei said simply, "That's okay, you go in. I will stay outside. They can take away from me everything else, but they can't take away from me my *menschlichkeit*" (humanity). With his last sentence, the whole family relented and the stranger, whose name was Ejzia Stark, was brought into our bunker. We remained safe and survived this *Aktion*.

When the next one happened, I was too far away and could not reach our bunker, so I hid someplace else. I prayed that the Nazis would not find me and that my family had all reached the bunker. Later, I

heard from my uncle, who had drawn the short straw, what he watched with horror when he was hiding in the wooden beams above. The same man Grandfather Shamei had saved in the last *Aktion* stood in front of the entrance to our bunker. My uncle heard him ask the Nazis, "Do you want to see where there are a bunch of rich Jews? I'll show you!" and he pointed to the stove, the pot of water, and the entrance to the bunker. It was in this way and in this moment that my whole Gartner family was taken away: Grandfather Shamei and Grandmother Chaya, my parents, aunts, uncles, cousins—all were captured and taken.

In our tradition, we are commanded "to remember" and "not to forget"; we are to remember the deeds but blot out the name of Amalek, that symbol of evil. As for me, it is Ejzia Stark's name I wish to blot out from my memory. This man returned my grandfather's kindness, humanity, and courage with cruelty, inhumanity, and cowardice. Because of Stark's action, my parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and many cousins were blotted out. May Stark's memory be erased from my heart and, for however many years, days, and hours that he lived past this moment, may he—not I—remember the evil that he did! It is hopeless—I don't think I can ever forget—but I try to remember the beautiful family I once had, not the terrible and brutal way they died.

EMANUEL FROM WARSAW:

TO SAVE A LIFE IS TO SAVE THE WORLD ENTIRE

The final person we meet through Lunia's memory is Emanuel. Before the war, Emanuel had started medical studies so he could save lives, but after everyone he knew and loved had been murdered, there were only two things he wanted to do: take lives—Nazi lives—and warn Jews in the east. Toward that end, he went from ghetto to ghetto, exhorting Jews not to believe Nazi lies, not to obey Nazi edicts, and to fight and resist because there was nothing but death ahead.

However, everywhere Emanuel went, Jews would not, could not, believe him, because believing him meant there was no hope. In each ghetto, Emanuel was treated like a pariah, a madman, or both. Finally, when he understood there was no benefit to warning Jews of the devastating reality ahead, he decided to throw his fate in with the next ghetto, which turned out to be Lunia's, in Stryj.³

Morale at this point in the Stryj Ghetto was very low. Starvation and disease were widespread; the previous ghetto resistance leader had been killed; and when Emanuel arrived, suicide rates were at their apex. People were throwing themselves against electrified fences, perhaps motivated to end not so much their lives as their suffering. My mother, who worked in the ghetto Underground,

describes Emanuel, who became the new resistance leader:

He was so strict and military that we were scared of him—but still, I had to report to him. He was rough and bitter. His family was dead in Treblinka, his medical studies interrupted, and he said quite plainly, “I would rather kill than heal.” He was itching to fight the Nazis but we were not ready. We had no guns for half the kids; we had no kerosene for the Molotov cocktails that we made ourselves. We had plenty of bottles but nothing to fill them with. Secrecy was essential. The Jewish police were hunting everywhere for us in the Underground. We continued to fight, but with the terrible hunger and fear of constant *Aktions*, a new wave of suicides began.

Then, suddenly, as if from under the ground, there came beautiful concerts in the ghetto and a little theater group put on the funniest and best plays. Lectures started, and poetry was read. The ghetto revived!

Emanuel had organized it all. He could not find guns and kerosene but he found singers, musicians, actors, lecturers, and joke tellers. The morale of the poor, scared, hungry people went up and up. Emanuel even found somewhere an old printing press and began to put out daily bulletins on tips that a ghetto dweller should know. He started and finished each issue with a *bracha* (blessing). In every issue, he included a joke or two, and sometimes even a beautiful, sad poem. The despair lifted; suicides ceased. And this boy was only 23 years old!

Conditions in the Stryj Ghetto continued to deteriorate, with hunger and typhus accelerating daily. In July 1942, the ghetto held 9,377 Jews; only three months later, there were fewer than 4,000 (Meron, 2009, pp. 766–767). On July 10th, a year later, Tisha B'Av again, Lusia was deported. Here she describes the cattle car carrying her to Auschwitz and, thanks to Emanuel, her remarkable escape:

They marched us to the train and loaded us onto the cattle cars, as many as they could push inside, all in a standing position, and then nailed closed the doors. Once we were inside, they kept us in these bolted cattle cars most of the day, until they finished loading everyone. Oh, it was so hot! Outside it was a regular boiling July day; inside, it was worse than an oven. Stuffed together like sardines, without a drop of water, without sanitary conditions, it felt like pure *Gehena* (Hell)!

Toward evening, the train started to move. We had been standing there, hot, hungry, squeezed together in this stench, since early morning. It gets me so furious when people who don't know anything ask, “Why didn't you fight? Why did you go like lambs?”

People don't understand that we were so weak that, not only could we not fight, we didn't even have the strength to lift up our arms!

In our car was Emanuel. He had a screwdriver taped to his leg. Right away, as soon as the train started moving, he started unscrewing the grates/bars on the tiny ceiling window. Now there was no doubt that we were being taken to Auschwitz and what Auschwitz was. When he removed the grates, he asked, “Who wants to jump?” I volunteered instantly without even thinking. I just couldn't stand the heat and the smell anymore. At this moment, even death seemed sweeter. Then two boys also said they would jump. In our car, there were already three people dead, still upright, leaning on the living, because they had no place to fall down. Emanuel—oh, what a boy!—pulled the three of us close to the ceiling window. We saw the searchlights turning round and round from the top of the cattle cars, and we heard the SS moving over our heads on the roof. He told us, “When we get close to the woods, we'll start jumping.” He stood on the shoulders of one of the boys, looking out the opening to find the right time.

Then with one word, “Now!,” he jumped down from the boy's shoulders and hoisted up the two boys. They leaped out. Momentarily, we heard gun shots. Emanuel looked at me and asked, “You still want to go?”

“Yes, yes,” I shouted and he hoisted me up, feet first, through the window. “Run to the woods. I'll find you,” he said as he pushed me out. I landed safely and started running to the woods, bullets whistling all around me. Once inside the woods, I stopped. I heard a terrible shriek.

“Oh, my G-d, it's Emanuel!” I started crawling on my stomach back towards him. Suddenly the shooting stopped. When I reached him, I saw that the whole inside of Emanuel's abdomen seemed to be on the outside. I started dragging him toward the woods. When I was pulling him, I stumbled over the two boys. They were both dead.

Emanuel was still conscious and said, “Stop. There is no way I can make it. Run. Run. We are close to a town; they must have alerted the SS. They will be on the prowl soon. Run!” But I refused to leave him. Then, with his dying breath, he said the only words that would compel me to run: “Lusia, I am already dead. Please run, please live! You are the only person who even knows I ever lived. Everybody else is dead. Say *kaddish* for me. Live!”

Just as he had predicted, I soon heard dogs barking and shouts of “*Jude, Raus!*” (Jews come out!). They were too close for me to outrun them so I climbed the nearest, tallest tree. Sometimes I wonder where we



Lunia in Modena, Italy, 1948.

got the strength to do the things we were doing. In the tree, I felt free and sheltered by the thick summer foliage, but that comfort did not last more than a few seconds. Suddenly, there were two dogs, barking and starting to run toward “my” tree. Without thinking, I took off both my shoes and tossed them as far as I could, in opposite directions. In these times, we were conditioned to think and act fast. Miracle of miracles, the dogs ran after the shoes, and the SS men ran after the dogs. After a while, everything quieted down. They must have found the three boys and were satisfied that they had found all the runaways.

Since then, the same way I say *kaddish* for my own mother and father and brother on their *yarzheits*, I say *kaddish* for Emanuel on his. Because I never knew his father's name, whenever I say *kaddish*, I call him “Emanuel, Son of Israel” because if ever there was a true son of Israel, it is Emanuel.

CREATE LIGHT; ENCOURAGE COMPASSION

As Elie Wiesel (2012) has said, “Even in darkness, it is possible to create light and encourage compassion . . . it is possible to feel free inside a prison” (pp. 72–73). Everyone remembered here by Lunia died in the Shoah; yet, while they were alive, they made choices to help others even as they were being hunted, brutalized, starved, and murdered.

As Shamei Gartner, her grandfather, affirmed: “They can take away from me everything else, but they can't take away my humanity!”

As we teach Holocaust history to our students, together with the numbing statistics and the details of how they died, let these five of six million help us remember how they lived. May their memories—those whom we know as well as those whose stories and names we will never know—be for a blessing.

AFTERWARD

Lunia survived the war alone. Leo Weiss, a pre-war friend from Stryj, convinced her that there was nothing left for her in Poland and persuaded her to become his wife and begin a new life with him in Italy, where he was active in the *Bricha* (illegal immigration to Palestine) movement. In Italy, they won two of the three full scholarships offered by the University of Modena and both earned Ph.D.'s, Lunia's in pharmacy and Leo's in chemistry. Several years later, their first child, Ann, was born in Italy.

NOTES

1. All quotes from Lunia Weiss are excerpted from her unpublished memoir and from our over 40 years of conversations and interviews. This essay is adapted from a presentation given at the International Association of Genocide Scholars conference delivered on June 19, 2013, in Siena, Italy, titled “Memories of *Chesed*: What Remains When the People are Gone.”
2. Stryj is a city near Lvov/Lemberg, now Lviv, formerly in Poland, now in Ukraine.
3. Stryj was one of the ghettos that, like the Warsaw Ghetto, staged a revolt. Because there was no illusion of success, this revolt, like many others, was more a symbol of defiance, intended to make a statement, with no hope of changing the course of the Holocaust (Kowalski, 1992; Spector, 2001).

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Zahava Z. Sweet returns to these pages with a haunting memory of her imprisonment in Ravensbrück.

Zahava Z. Sweet

In Ravensbrück

After "Two Winds" by Julian Tuwim

Perhaps there were leaves rustling in a field.
I couldn't see
through the windows covered with soot.
Maybe a wind blew in the meadow,
though I didn't hear it.

Inside the barrack,
(an anxious rectangle)
three sips of water in a tin can,
five crumbs of blind bread.
A sack full of straw — a bed.
The flimsy gray jacket
full of lice — a blanket.

"One wind in the meadow blew."
There must have been a sky somewhere,
children going to school,
drinking milk in the morning.
In this anxious rectangle:
two sips of water in a tin can,
three crumbs of blind bread.

Words tumbled in my head,
at night when nothing stirred.
Words, heavy at first,
from a forgotten well.
"One wind in the meadow blew.
A second wind in the garden flew.
The leaves chased and embraced
Second Wind."

“Jane Haining was arrested at the start of the murderous Nazi rule in Budapest and was killed when the first transports were sent to the death camp,” writes Jennifer Robertson of this virtually unknown hero. “This Scottish Christian woman devoted her life to oppressed Jewish children, giving them refuge and consistent love, feeding and caring for them. Ultimately, she died because she refused to leave them to an uncertain fate.”

Jennifer Robertson

“An Inspiration to All of Us”: Jane Haining of the Scottish Jewish Mission, Budapest



FIG. 1: Jane Haining. Photograph courtesy of Church of Scotland.

Opened in 1925, the National Library of Scotland houses thousands of rare books and manuscripts. Among the wealth of material is a letter, handwritten in pencil on brown paper and dated 15th July 1944. The postmark indicates that it was sent from Auschwitz, Oberschlesien, on 21st July 1944—by which time the writer was dead.

This is not a newsy letter; the writer says, “There is not much to tell you about from here.” Instead, she asks whether the addressee has plans for the flour stored upstairs, and has she used the eggs? Here is the partial text:

My dearest Margit!

I have not yet had an answer to my first letter. . . . I repeat briefly, in case by chance you haven't got it yet. You can write to me twice a month, and I can write once a month, but only to you. Packages are not restricted by number or name. I asked you to register me with our Red Cross, but . . . if you could possibly send me apples or other fresh fruit and biscuits, rusks and other kinds of bread, as of course the Red Cross doesn't send things like that.

Margit, what are you planning to do with the flour? Sell it? . . . Have you used the eggs as well?

How are you all? I think of you day and night with love and longing. I am waiting for news of what everyone is doing, also your dear family, Margit. . . . There's not much to tell you about from here. Even here on the way [indistinct; the word could be *way* or *border*] to heaven are mountains, smaller [indistinct; could be *further away*] than ours for sure—but just the same.

I greet the whole family in the most appropriate way. I kiss and hug you.

Your loving Jean.¹

“Jean” is Jane Mathison Haining, born at Lochenhead Farm in the village of Dunscore, Dumfriesshire, on 6th June 1897 [Fig. 1].

Quiet, self-effacing, academically gifted, Jane Haining gave up a successful business career to go to Budapest, Hungary, and work as a matron in the girls' home attached to the Scottish Jewish Mission on a street called *Vörösmarty*

utca, in the district of Pest. Her letters home were as self-effacing as the letter from Auschwitz. She would have quietly faded from the pages of history had it not been for her actions in caring for Jewish children during the Holocaust.

On holiday in England with her Hungarian friend Margit Prem [Fig. 2], retired headmistress of the Jewish Mission School, when war broke out in September 1939, Haining returned to the Jewish Mission in Budapest. "The journey back was a nightmare—five changes, no porters, no hot food, crowded trains . . . no sanitary conveniences fit to mention, two nights spent on the platform beside, or on, our luggage," wrote Jane (McDougall, 1949, p. 14), unaware of the real nightmare journey she would endure on the way to Auschwitz five years later.

The mission that Haining joined out of a deep sense of calling—"I have found my life's work" (p. 6)—had been founded in 1841 by two Church of Scotland ministers, Dr. Keith and Dr. Black, who had embarked upon a visit to what was then Palestine in 1839 with two younger colleagues, "to see the real condition and character of God's ancient people, and to observe whatever might contribute to interest others in their cause"² (Bonar & McCheyne, 1996, p. 8). In keeping with that Scottish tradition, Haining too was interested "in their cause."

As the clergymen journeyed towards Jerusalem in 1839, an accident forced Black to abandon the tour. He began the long journey home with Keith, but both were stranded in Hungary by ill health. Their contact with the large Jewish community in Pest led to the establishment of the Scottish Jewish Mission and the school, whose high standard of education attracted girls from both Jewish and Christian families.

Haining, 35, started work in the home in June 1932 and was soon immersed in the life of the girls under her care, sorting out quarrels, coping with dietary needs, illness, homesickness, and all kinds of day-to-day practicalities with quiet humor, a deep sense of justice, and her conviction to teach by example.

During the 1930s, as life became more difficult for Jewish families in Germany and Austria, Jewish refugees crossed the border into Hungary. The Scottish Jewish Mission, together with the Reformed Church of Hungary, hosted concerts for Jewish actors and musicians denied work opportunities elsewhere. The entrance fee went to the artists and paid for shelter for the growing numbers of Jewish refugees. The Scottish Jewish Mission became a place of refuge and support for many. In a Mission report written after Jane's death in 1944, Rev. George Knight, superintendent of the Mission until the war, wrote:

During those awful years of the "war of nerves," when refugees were pouring out of Germany into the comparative safety of Hungary, the Mission staff spent a



FIG. 2: L-R Mrs. Copeland; Robertina, Jane's step-mother; Nan, Jane's step-sister; Jane; Margit Prem. 1939. Courtesy Church of Scotland World Mission Council.

hectic time attempting to aid those émigrés to continue their flight to Great Britain and the Western Hemisphere. We established a training school for prospective domestic servants and Miss Haining . . . gave courses of lectures to Jewish refugees on British conditions. (Haining, 1944, pp. 20–22)

In the girls' home, Haining offered loving care to traumatized children. In autumn 1937 she wrote:

We have one nice little mite who is an orphan and is coming to school for the first time. She seems to be a lonely wee soul and to need lots and lots of love, so we shall see what we can do to make life a little happier for her. . . . One other is such a nice child. Her father is dead and the mother left for America in June to try to make a home and a living for them both there, and yet one never hears a complaint from her of loneliness, which is so different to another who still cries herself to sleep every night. (McDougall, 1949, p. 13)³

Haining knew from personal experience what it was like to lose a mother. Hers had died in childbirth when Jane was only five, and the little sister born then died not long afterward. Jane, too, had spent her school days away from home. She had won a scholarship to high school and was one of the first girls to be admitted to the girls' home attached to the school, where conditions were Spartan and discipline strict.

Although Haining wrote with genuine compassion about the little lovelorn "lambs" in her care, she did not indulge in sentimentality. She was strict when necessary, and she did not coddle them, emotionally or physically. Perhaps for her benefit as well as for the girls', she took

them on bracing walks: "We have had some gorgeous autumn days and . . . have been able to get over to Buda amongst the hills and get our lungs nicely aired and toned up for another week in the smoky city" (p. 13). Born and bred in the Scottish Borders, Haining clearly missed the countryside and, especially, the hills.

The year 1938 brought increased pressure on the Mission staff. Haining now received four Jewish refugee children from Austria to add to her care. Antisemitism was increasing in Hungary; with empathy, she wrote, "What a ghastly feeling it must be to know that no one wants you and to feel that your neighbours literally grudge you your daily bread" (p. 14).

Jewish families were under enormous pressure as fathers were forced into labor battalions or disappeared altogether. This pressure had increased massively by the time Haining returned to the Mission in Budapest in September 1939. Confusion reigned; some of the local domestic staff resigned and choosing suitable replacements fell upon Haining's shoulders. "It was a month after I came back before I was able to have one complete afternoon off duty" (p. 15). A severe winter and shortage of coal added to the bad news that the Scandinavian countries, then Holland, Belgium, and Luxembourg, were falling to the Nazis. The Mission committee in Edinburgh called its missionaries home. Haining refused, despite the grave risks she was taking in staying, which "was no surprise," as her sister, Margaret, later wrote. "After all, if the children needed her in peacetime, they had much more need of her in wartime and she would never have had a moment's happiness if she had come home and left them (p. 16).

The Jewish Mission School was placed under the care of the Hungarian Reformed Church and Haining negotiated arrangements to ensure that local staff was paid, although she refused a wartime raise. Difficulty in sending and receiving mail, air raids, increasing police surveillance, and fuel and food shortages added to Haining's problems. The hard work and stamina of the small Scots-woman, now in her mid-40s and far from young in the reckoning of that time, was a source of inspiration for her colleagues in the church, one of whom noted in a report written at the end of the war:

Her work and example was an inspiration to all of us. . . . She got up on market days at 5 a.m. and went with one of the janitors to the big market at Csepel to secure food for the Home, and she herself carried heavy rucksacks full of foodstuffs home. ("Brief Notes," 1939-1945, p. 3)

"Bread is now composed of maize," she reported to the Mission Committee, adding that flour, meat, and fats were hard to come by, but writing cheerfully that the girls were

well-nourished (p. 3). Used to making do, she reportedly cut up her leather suitcase to repair the girls' shoes (www.dunscore.org.uk/Jane-Haining.html).

Despite her full schedule, Haining found time to visit British prisoners of war, and she devoted Sunday afternoons (her only free time) to an "at home" in her flat for her former pupils, consolidating past friendships and offering the teenage girls sanctuary and relief from the huge pressures and dangers confronting Jewish families as the war continued. Knight (1944) wrote:

I can remember no instance when her rule of firm love was set at naught. . . . Her . . . "At Homes" for her former boarders amply testify to the love and affection her girls continued to hold for her long after they entered the battle of life in what was to them a cold and antisemitic world. (Haining, 1944, p. 20)

On 19th March 1944, the Nazis took possession of Budapest. The diary of MacKenzie Scott (1943-1944), a Scottish writer living in Budapest, serves as witness to the confusion and uncertainty suffered by Jews, Hungarians, and foreigners; Haining must have shared these fears:

19th-31st March 1944: All kinds of stories are flying around. . . . Tales of trains being stopped and passengers being asked to show their papers and of Jews being . . . taken to Police HQ. . . . The railway, post, telephone, and police are under German control, also the radio. A German plane has been rushing to and fro over our heads since early morning, much lower than Hungarian planes. No news. . . . Shall we be interned? Horrid vistas come into my mind. . . . This morning I saw the German army from my window. . . . People believed the whole thing would blow over and settle down in a month and Hungary would survive the war undamaged. Last night the radio announcement said that Jews must wear yellow stars on the left breast. Professional men lose their jobs and no non-Jew is allowed to serve in Jewish homes. (book XV, n.p.)

Now Haining was obliged to dismiss the Hungarian cook who worked in the girls' home. She found another employer for her, but the cook's son-in-law, Shreder, a member of the pro-Nazi Hungarian Arrow Cross, illicitly took over the room she had left. When Haining caught Shreder raiding the food stores intended for the girls, she told him to leave. He did, but threatened retaliation (Lee, 1945, pp. 1-2).

As matron, Haining had to ensure that all the Jewish girls wore the discriminatory yellow star. She wept as she sewed the stars onto the girls' outer clothing: It was one of the bitterest moments of her life (McDougall, 1998, p. 17).

In Scotland, the Mission Committee, anxious about



FIG. 3: Jane Haining on terrace of the Girls' Home, Budapest. She is third from right with her arms round the girls on either side. Courtesy Church of Scotland World Mission Council.

Haining's isolation and the risks she clearly ran, contacted the British Foreign Office, asking the Swiss Legation to keep watch on her situation.

The committee is under a very deep debt of gratitude to Miss Jane Haining . . . By her personal influence and faithfulness she has inspired such loyalty that the Budapest [Jewish] Mission has maintained its former high standards. Recent events have seriously altered the situation and the thoughts of the Church will be with [her] and her colleagues in the new difficulties that have arisen. (p. 25)

The committee was right to be concerned. Soon after the Nazi invasion, in early April, two uniformed men entered the Scottish Jewish Mission, detained Haining, searched her office and her bedroom, and gave her 15 minutes to prepare to leave. Her credentials, including a safe conduct from the Swiss legation and, no doubt, letters from Church of Scotland vouching for the validity of her work in the mission, were ignored; an officer took her Bible from her and threw it on the ground (McDougall, 1998, p. 26). Escorted to the waiting car, Jane looked up, waved to the children and called, "I'll be back soon."

Shock waves and rumors spread throughout the small British community. Scott wrote in her diary that on April 30th the consulate told her that Haining "had been arrested . . . and is now in the cellars of the Police HQ. I asked why and was told that a charwoman denounced her of hav-

ing a secret radio receiver" (1943–1944, n.p.). Deeper shock was felt by her Hungarian colleagues and by the children, who simply couldn't believe this had happened to their "beloved Miss Haining" [Fig. 3]. It seemed that nowhere now was safe for them either.

Haining was taken to one of the "Gestapo villas" in the Buda Hills, large houses that had belonged to Jewish families whose property had been confiscated, and from there was moved to the notorious Fo Utca prison. Flimsy charges were brought against her: She had worked among Jews, wept when the Jewish girls attended class wearing yellow stars, dismissed her non-Jewish housekeeper (as required by the new Nazi law), listened to the BBC news, visited British prisoners of war, and been active in politics. Jane admitted all the charges except the last (Lee, 1945, pp. 1–2).

Francis Lee, a fellow prisoner, provided this list of charges in a letter to Dr. Nagy of the Hungarian Reformed Church in 1945:

I remember very clearly the day she brought this list [of charges] from the Svabhegy prison where she had been "questioned": She read them out laughingly to me saying she had felt such a "stupid" repeating *Ja, es ist wahr* after each accusation, except the sixth (that she had been involved in politics). She said she had been too busy to occupy herself with politics. Yes, she had wept, and again began to weep. . . . After 17 days in prison, she was taken away but left in very good

health and spirits. We all felt sure she was going to a pleasant outdoor camp. Little did I realize I would never see her again. . . . She endeared herself to all her fellow-prisoners and everybody wept when she left. (pp. 1-2)

Haining was taken to a transit camp, Kistarca, from where, along with 90 other prisoners, she was transported to Auschwitz, then branded with the number 79467. Nothing more is known about her, apart from the letter in the National Library of Scotland and the date of her death. She survived less than three months in Auschwitz. Because she was British, a death certificate was issued on August 17th through the Swiss Legation in Budapest, stating that Haining, “who was arrested on account of justified suspicion of espionage against Germany, died in hospital July 17th of cachexia following intestinal catarrh” (McDougall, 1998, p. 19).

Cachexia is a collapse of the internal system of the body as a result of starvation or chronic illness. Jane had left the mission in April in perfect health, despite two gall bladder operations. The inhuman conditions in Auschwitz would certainly have undermined her health and, because of the references to food in the letter, commentators writing about Jane since her death have presumed she was starving. However, although her writing is a bit uneven and there are two spelling mistakes (*nummer* and *bei* are spelled the English way, something completely uncharacteristic for the meticulous Haining), no one so near to collapse and death could have written so coherently. I believe that the references to food show, rather, her concern for the welfare of the Jewish girls she had left behind, as does her greeting to “the whole family.”

Some think that the reference to those “mountains on the way to heaven” was a warning to Margit Prem that Haining was about to die, but the fact that she compares those heavenly hills with “ours” makes me certain that the hills she had in mind were the “hills of home.” Echoing in her mind would have been the verse by the poet Robert Louis Stevenson (1914), which she would have learned at school:

Be it granted me to behold you again in dying,
Hills of home! and to hear again the call;
Hear about the graves of the martyrs the peewees
crying,
And hear no more at all. (p. 168)

Even closer to her heart was Psalm 121, loved by so many Scots:

I to the hills will lift mine eyes
From whence doth come mine aid;

My safety cometh from the Lord,
Who heaven and earth hath made. (The Church
Hymnary, 2006, n. 81)

It was precisely these Psalms of David that gave Scottish Christians such a close identification with Israel and led Haining on her life's journey, which ended in Auschwitz.

On 22nd August 1944, with cold efficiency, a member of the Gestapo called at the Scottish Jewish Mission with the news that Haining was dead; he also delivered a parcel containing her few belongings. Her Bible was discovered only after the war, in the rubble of the former girls' home (McDougall, 1998, p. 31); it may be seen today in the former Mission building in Budapest.

Little known outside the annals of her Glasgow church, in recent years Haining's deeds have been widely and rightly recognized. A memorial service was first held for her in 1946 at the Scottish Jewish Mission Building; she was then honored in Queen's Park West Church in Glasgow by two stained glass windows, unveiled in 1948; in 1984, on the 40th anniversary of her death, the Jewish community in Budapest erected a commemorative plaque in the former Mission building. In 1997, the Commission for the Designation of the Righteous among the Nations at Yad Vashem bestowed the honorific on Jane posthumously, giving her elderly stepsister, Nan O'Brien, a medal and certificate declaring Jane “Righteous”; her name now adorns one of the honor walls in Jerusalem's Garden of the Righteous.

At a memorial gathering in Budapest in 1997, the centenary of Jane's birth, one of her former pupils, Ibolya Suranyi, spoke—perhaps the honor Jane would most have appreciated:

I started the school in 1935 at the age of 6. . . . We played together—40–50 children—and Jane was always with us. She was my second mother and had a very important influence on my life. She was a remarkable woman; she was a mother for all of us and she treated us all equally. She was strict on certain things but she was lovely. She had a fantastic heart; you always felt that you were the one she loved the most. She gave herself fully to us. Every second Sunday afternoon we were allowed a visit by our parents. If nobody came to a child, she invited the sad kid [who soon] . . . became the happy girl. (McDougall, 1998, p. 34)

The people of Dunscore erected a memorial “in loving remembrance of” Haining in 2005 [Fig. 4, p. 34], and in 2010, British Prime Minister Gordon Brown honored Haining as a British Hero of the Holocaust with a medal presented to her surviving relatives. In June 2012, in Haining's home village, at the most recent service in her honor, a Hungarian



FIG. 4: Memorial from the people of Dunscore. Courtesy of Jennifer Robertson.

survivor now living in Edinburgh donated the yellow star she had worn as an 8-year-old girl to the Jane Haining memorial display in Dunscore Church.

When Haining died, so little was known about Auschwitz that the initial 1944 Church of Scotland Mission reports state that she was “sent to a detention camp for women in Auschwitz in Upper Silesia,” and on the family tombstone, in the Irongray Graveyard near Dumfries in the Scottish Borders, it is written that she died in Germany (rather than Poland). A motherless child who had no children of her own, Haining indeed “gave herself fully” to the children under her care. “She died because she cared for the life of others,” concluded Suranyi (McDougall, 1998, p. 34).

Perhaps the last words should go to a woman called Anna, another of Haining’s former charges:

Suddenly I heard a nice voice, “O, you would be our little Anna.” I could not see anything except a couple of beautiful blue eyes and I felt a motherly kiss on my cheek. So this was my first meeting with Miss Haining and from this very moment I loved her with all my heart. . . . Then she was taken away. I still feel the

tears in my eyes and hear in my ears the siren of the Gestapo motor-car. I see the smile on her face while she bade farewell. . . . She is still alive, because her smile, voice, face are still in my heart. (p. 20)⁴

NOTE

David McDougall’s booklet, *Jane Haining of Budapest*, was first published for the Church of Scotland Jewish Mission in 1949. McDougall based his information on the material now found in the Jane Mathison Haining file in the National Library of Scotland. Almost everything written subsequently on Haining depends on this source.

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[1] Jane Mathison Haining. National Library of Scotland (papers concerning Jane Haining and the Budapest Mission, Acc. 7546 G. 46a); letter written in German, my translation. This letter was posted to the Church of Scotland, Department of World Mission, on 1st August 1956. There are two typed copies in her file, along with two slightly different English translations.

[2] Originally published as *Narrative of a mission of inquiry to the Jews from the Church of Scotland 1839*. A. Bonar and R. M. McCheyne, 1842, Edinburgh: William Whyte and Co.

[3] Letter from 1937.

[4] Translated from Hungarian and quoted by David McDougall (1998).

From “talking without talking” to “wait[ing] and hop[ing] for the explosion of light and sound” of the grenades they planted, the Jews memorialized in this poem by Doreen Rappaport fought the Nazis in whatever way they could. For additional poetry and essays on the subject of resistance, see the Spring 2012 issue of *PRISM*.

Doreen Rappaport

Resistance

The Nazis forced the Jews
to sell their businesses for a pittance
and leave their homes
for crowded ghettos
in run-down neighborhoods
where they lived twenty to a room,
without enough to eat.

Starving and disease-ridden,
the young formed secret networks
to defy their enemy however possible.
Long past curfew,
children as young as eight
hurried through dark alleys,
talking without talking, and
pasted up posters urging resistance.

Behind barbed wire and walls
that blocked out sunlight,
in ghetto workshops and labor camps,
forced to work for the Germans,
Jews stitched left sleeves into right sleeves,
sewed pants pockets upside down,
and stuck nails into the soles of army boots.
They poured water into car batteries,
removed filters from gas masks,

reversed firing pins in guns,
and made tiny tears in parachute silks.

They stole, smuggled, and captured
rifles, bayonets, and knives
and trained for combat
in underground bunkers.
They planned uprisings
they did not expect to win.

When their uprisings failed,
those who didn't die escaped
to forests and swamps and villages
high in the mountains
to continue the battle.

They slept outdoors in snow and rain —
when lucky, in pigsties and barns
and underground shelters.
They begged and foraged for food
from local people.
When rebuffed, they threatened,
stole, did without, or killed.
They battled hunger and cold and,
in many places, the hatred
of their own countrymen.

Outnumbered,
outweaponed,
in the dark of night,
they wrapped their feet in rags
and traipsed through forests
and over mountains
to kill collaborators
and ambush the enemy.

With their bare hands,
they pulled down telephone poles
and ripped out telegraph wires.
They planted homemade bombs
under bridges and granaries
and communication systems.
They removed bolts from train rails
and laid dynamite under the tracks
that had taken their loved ones to death.
Then they waited and hoped
for the explosion of light and sound
that would mark their revenge.

Judith Tydor Baumel-Schwartz writes, “The historical and social focus on the British *Kindertransports* [see *PRISM*, spring 2013—Ed.] has all but eclipsed the story of the 1,000 or so Jewish refugee children who reached the United States before and during World War II and, unlike significant numbers of their Jewish counterparts in Britain, stayed in their country of refuge after the war’s end and remained significantly attached to, or at least nominally part of, the Jewish religion. Despite efforts to promote this story by the American organization One Thousand Children (OTC), created by Iris Posner, little is known to the general public about the American endeavor”—hence this essay.

Judith Tydor Baumel-Schwartz

One Thousand Children— Jewish Refugee Children in the USA (1934–1945)

Between 1934 and 1945, over 1,000 unaccompanied refugee children from Central Europe, most of them Jewish, found refuge in the United States. More than two-thirds arrived before the war; a few arrived from England from 1939 onwards, usually to join family already in the States; the rest came directly from occupied Europe during the 1940s. The story of their migration, all as legal immigrants and not under any special refugee category as in other countries, is part of the saga of Jewish refugee children during the Hitler era.

HOW IT BEGAN

Several weeks after Hitler came to power, the plight of Jewish children in Nazi Germany moved several American Jewish organizations to action. The American Jewish Congress, the World Jewish Congress, and the American Jewish Committee began to put together a practical plan to bring 250 German-Jewish children to the United States, with the ultimate goal of 1,000 (American Jewish Committee, 1933). Children, unlike adults, would not compete with American labor; immigration regulations allowed children for whom an organization had posted a bond to enter with relatively little bureaucratic difficulty, as they would not need individual sponsors; and children would arouse more sympathy than any other group (Steward, 1969, pp. 76–77). Only children up to the age of 16 and born in Germany would be considered; they could enter under the German quota of some 26,000 (Kohler, 1934; Dubinsky, 1940; GJCA, 1934c). In April 1934, the German-Jewish Children’s Aid (GJCA) was created to post bonds for the refugees, prevent their

becoming public charges, arrange their transfer to the US, and care for them after their arrival—in short, “to establish in the United States a kind of Youth Aliyah” (Tartakower and Grossman, 1944, p. 476). This American initiative predated by close to five years the *Kindertransport* and other rescue plans [detailed in *PRISM*, spring 2013—Ed.] that were motivated by the events of *Kristallnacht* (GJCA, 1934a, 1934d).

After more than a year of planning, the first group of nine boys, aged 11 to 14, arrived in New York on Friday, November 9, 1934, accompanied from Cherbourg by Dr. Gabrielle Kaufmann, a Jewish professor of philosophy. The boys were sent immediately to foster families in and around New York City—a resettlement policy that would be changed as the organizations responsible came to fear creating a refugee enclave of Jewish children in New York and its surroundings, which might encourage antisemitism. The changed policy was an outgrowth of the general resettlement policy of the National Refugee Service (“New York is big, America is bigger”), which actively encouraged immigrants to settle in areas outside New York City and the east coast (newspaper article, November 10, 1934; GJCA, 1940a).

Several hundred children were placed before *Kristallnacht*. Most refugee children were placed in large cities, with approximately 27 percent in the greater New York area; a smaller percentage were sent to Chicago, Philadelphia, St. Louis, Los Angeles, Cleveland, Detroit, Baltimore, Boston, Newark, Atlanta, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, and Kansas City. Some cities had only a handful of available homes: Albany,

Bridgeport, Buffalo, Columbus, Dallas, New Orleans, Omaha, Portland, Rochester, Seattle, Dayton, Denver, Hartford, Indianapolis, Louisville, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, New Haven, Washington DC, and Wilmington each housed between two and ten children, and only one refugee child was sent to each of the following cities: El Paso, Houston, Manchester, Nashville, Oklahoma City, Providence, San Antonio, Shreveport, Spokane, and Stockton.

The organizations were plagued by a lack of funds and of suitable Jewish foster homes. By American law, which differed considerably from those governing the *Kinder*, children could be placed only in foster homes of their own religion, unlike in Britain, where large numbers of Jewish children were sent to non-Jewish foster families [see Licht, *PRISM*, spring 2013, pp. 17–23—Ed.] In the US, children had to be placed in homes; in Britain, large numbers of older children, for whom it was impossible to find sponsors, were housed in group hostels. In the US, social service and Jewish organizations were in frequent contact with the children and monitored their situation; in Britain, at the war's outset, many refugee children and over a million-and-a-half English citizens from London and other cities found themselves resettled, losing contact with the refugee organization responsible for them; thus, many were isolated from any Jewish institutions. Consequently, the younger and more impressionable ones were often easily influenced by proselytizing groups or just by a desire to “fit in” with their host families, and, although not known precisely, significant numbers of Jewish refugee children in Britain eventually converted to Christianity (Baumel-Schwartz, 2012)—an almost unheard-of development in the US.

American foster families had to agree to care for children until the age of 21, ensure their education, and guarantee they would not become charges of the state; homes had to offer a minimum economic standard that included a separate bed for each child and no more than two children in a room. As these were the years of the Great Depression, few working-class families, which most American Jews were, could provide such a standard. Traditional and Orthodox Jewish families usually had even smaller income, larger families, and more crowded homes than secular Jews.

While potential Orthodox foster homes were occasionally offered in various cities, only in Rochester, New York, did the local committee announce that the city could always find homes for Orthodox children. Requests were not always accommodated, as in this ironic anecdote:

“I didn't remember much from Germany,” stated one child of eleven who had been in transit in Western Europe for two years since leaving Germany at the age of nine,

but I did tell the people when we arrived that my mother wore a wig and lit Sabbath candles and that we

were Orthodox. When asked where I wanted to be resettled with my brother, I asked for an Orthodox home, so that we could continue what we had known as children. (Baumel, 1981b)

However, the children, who had originally been sent to the US with an Orthodox group via Belgium, had come via secular Jewish children's homes in France, where their Belgian foster parents had left them as they fled the country following the Nazi invasion. The worker in charge of their placement did not believe that the children, aged nine to eleven, could have remembered their early upbringing accurately; consequently, they were placed in a non-Orthodox Jewish foster home—in Rochester.

The GJCA faced opposition on several fronts: Jewish social workers in Germany were not attuned to a project that would separate children from their families and were protesting the scheme, at least until *Kristallnacht*; each refugee child cost the GJCA \$500 a year that was paid to his or her foster family; and even with the few dozen signed up for resettlement in the mid 1930s, there were not enough American Jewish foster families to go around. Few Orthodox children could come due to the lack of available families for them; no large-scale public appeals were made, out of fear of giving the project too much publicity, which might increase local antisemitism (Genizi, 1984). Consequently, by March 1938, the GJCA had only 351 children under its auspices and its directors were contemplating terminating its efforts (GJCA, 1940, 1937, 1938).

The events of the spring, summer, and autumn of 1938—the *Anschluss*, the Evian Conference, the Munich Agreement, and the Nazi takeover of the Sudetenland; the deportation of thousands of Polish Jews from Germany; and, finally, *Kristallnacht*—were turning points for European Jewry and for the refugee organizations dealing with its plight. It was now obvious to the American organizations that their work was just beginning, and the end of 1938 saw a series of (mostly aborted) legislative battles in the American Congress regarding German refugees, children in particular.

The most notable of these was a joint resolution submitted by Senator Robert Wagner of New York and Representative Edith Nourse Rogers of Massachusetts in early 1939 calling for legislation to permit the entry of 10,000 German children under the age of 14 each year during 1939 and 1940 in excess of the existing quota. Children had to have resided in Germany or its occupied territories during the period following January 1, 1933 (S. Joint Res. 64, 1939). The idea was to circumvent the American quota system, which permitted only about 150,000 immigrants a year to enter the country, some 26,000 of whom could come from Germany. Shortly after the bill's introduction, Quaker activist Clarence E. Pickett formed the Non-

Sectarian Committee for German Refugee Children to lobby for its passage ("New Group," 1939). Supporters of the bill were found among almost all religious denominations and organized labor, yet it had little hope of passing. During hearings, advocates and opponents debated the American birthrate, the economic threat to employment, the children's value as future consumers, separation of families, and a reiteration of the theme that charity begins at home (*Refugee Facts*, 1939, pp. 13–15; Leiper, 1939, p. 474). Despite the sympathies of Eleanor Roosevelt, Secretary of Interior Harold Ickes, and Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins, President Franklin Roosevelt remained silent over the extra-quota bill from the day of its introduction. His one response was in June 1939, when he received a memo stating that Caroline O'Day, a Democratic congressional representative from New York, had asked whether he would express his views on the bill. His response lay across the top of the page: "File, no action, FDR." [See Walders, *PRISM*, spring 2013, pp. 52–53—Ed.] The final draft of the bill gave preference to child over adult immigrants from Germany, but all within the existing quota. In view of the threat by anti-immigration congressional representatives to introduce legislation to cut those quotas, the sponsors of the bill withdrew it from consideration.

RESCUE ORGANIZATIONS AND ACTIVISTS

Between 1934 and 1945, several groups of unaccompanied Jewish children reached the United States: 590 from Belgium and the Netherlands; over 350 from France, Spain, and Portugal; and several dozen from Great Britain, including a few from Belgium and the Netherlands and 50 from Vienna, brought over by the Brith Sholom Lodge in Philadelphia, whose activists Gilbert and Eleanor Kraus traveled to Europe at great personal risk in 1939 to rescue these Viennese children (Baumel, 1990, pp. 29–30). Dozens of national organizations were active in the transfer and resettlement of European refugees in the United States; five worked only with children, including the National Coordinating Committee and the National Refugee Service (NRS) (NRS, 1942a, 1942b; Levy, 1942a, 1942b; Ziegler, 1942); the German-Jewish Children's Aid (later renamed European Jewish Children's Aid) (GJCA, 1934b), and OSE (*Oeuvre de Secours aux Enfants*/Undertaking for Saving Children), active primarily in Europe (Papanek & Linn, 1975). There were also small-scale organizations such as the United Fund and Selfhelp (1939); funding organizations such as the National Council of Jewish Women, HIAS, and the Joint Distribution Committee; special care bodies such as the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC); and governmental organizations such as the United States Children's Bureau, the President's Advisory Committee on Political Refugees, and the United States Committee for the Care of European Children (USC).

The *Reichsvertretung der Juden in Deutschland* (Central Organization of Jews in Germany), headquartered in Berlin, coordinated with Jewish organizations worldwide to find emigration opportunities for children at risk. Preference was given to those whose removal from Germany was considered urgent: young boys in concentration camps and children one or both of whose parents were in a camp or had been deported. The procedure used to select and transfer children to the United States was almost identical to that which was used during the *Kindertransports*, as described by Herta Souhami, a former Westphalian Jewish social worker who worked in the Children's Emigration Department in Germany prior to *Kristallnacht*. The children's parents would submit applications and pictures to the provincial social worker, who would evaluate the case's urgency. The paperwork, including health and school certificates, pictures, statements regarding the parents' health, geographical and financial situation, and other related documentation, would be forwarded to the central office in Berlin, which received thousands of applications each month. As the volumes of applications and the lack of help in the social work offices precluded the possibility of their all being read, irate, desperate parents often came directly to the central office complaining that they had not received replies. Such perseverance often paid off. The social worker would frequently sift through the pile of applications from that parent's district, find hers, and promptly deal with it (Institute for Contemporary Jewry, n.d.a, n.d.b).

These people had their American counterparts, including Cecilia Razovsky, assistant to the executive director of the National Refugee Service, and Lotte Marcuse, placement director of the GJCA. Until 1937, Marcuse had been a worker in the National Refugee Service. Both women were strong personalities; each had her difficult side, but without their assistance, dozens if not hundreds of children would have had a harder bureaucratic struggle in their transatlantic odyssey. Another important activist was Dr. Ernest Papanek, a political refugee from Vienna who became an OSE educator in France, later moving to the US, where he assisted in the resettlement of several hundred children brought from OSE homes in France.

IMMIGRATION AND ACCULTURATION

The procedure for choosing children for the US was similar to that for the *Kindertransport*, but as these children were arriving as immigrants and not transmigrants as in Britain, they required numerous immigration documents that the *Kinder* were spared, as the British Government required only one document to be filled out, while even without individual sponsors' affidavits, the American regulations required myriad documents for each immigrant. Like the *Kinder*, though, after they received permission to immigrate, their families were informed of travel arrange-

ments, the amount of luggage they were permitted, and permissible items. Although asked to keep luggage to a minimum, it was a rare parent who didn't try to include a few valuable items, photo albums, and the like. Not knowing what the children would be given in the US, some families sold their possessions and sent children with steamer trunks full of clothing in sizes that would keep them until age 21! One uncle met his 10-year-old niece at the pier, saying, "I thought you were a poor refugee and here you come with three suitcases!" (Baumel, 1990, p. 138)

The first children to arrive received minimal care at reception. Within hours of their arrival, they were often taken on excursions around New York and then placed in a foster home (Marcuse, 1941). Later arrivals went through a few days of reception care at places including Camp Lehman of the 92nd Street Y in New York City and the Brith Sholom camp near Philadelphia, where they underwent medical examinations and had time to orient themselves while authorities allocated them to agencies throughout the country. Children who had suffered "refugee shock"—the trauma of flight through several countries—could recover from their ordeal before meeting their foster families and begin acclimatizing to American life. This was particularly necessary for those who arrived after the outbreak of war, who were much more traumatized than those in earlier groups. Some children arrived undernourished, needing immediate medical care, especially those coming from France, and later from Spain and Portugal. Some hoarded food; some older boys, who had spent time in camps, were rowdy; and there was stealing, a survival technique learned in occupied Europe. Most of the children spoke German, a few knew French, and the workers and foster families spoke German and Yiddish until the children began to pick up American expressions. As with the *Kinder*, there were misunderstandings; one girl thought the word "juice" was "Jews" and that it was a special drink for refugees only (GJCA, 1941, 1940b; Baumel, 1981a).

Relatives were often given preferential consideration as foster parents but, after experiencing the reality of the responsibilities and expenses of caring for additional children, some requested that their young charges be placed with another foster family, causing already vulnerable youngsters to feel abandoned by their flesh and blood. In other cases, where there had been a lack of chemistry from the onset between the children and their relatives, both breathed a sigh of relief at parting. Regina's experiences were typical of both American refugee children and *Kinder*:

After about a week, our uncle, my mother's brother, rented an apartment in Brooklyn, where we lived for three months. Since he was about to be married and he did not realize how expensive and difficult it would be to keep us, he requested aid from the Jewish

Federation of Philanthropies in New York. (Dembo, 1939)

Regina and her two sisters were sent to a reception center and, over the next two-and-a-half years, were placed with three different Jewish foster families.

As in the *Kinder* experience, young, blond, blue-eyed girls were much in demand in the States. Older children were harder to place than younger ones and foster parents usually preferred girls to boys. Potential foster parents were, at times, ready to accept refugee children only on their own terms. Upon discovering that the children were predominantly older boys, just ordinary children (not geniuses), and not for adoption, more than one family reneged on the offer of a home.

Most families had no connection to the refugee children they offered to house. The majority were decent, genuinely wishing to offer haven; others, as in England, wanted children to act as companions to their own children. One agency received a request for a 13-year-old girl who was to be a companion for the 17-year-old disabled daughter of the family. In another community, people had the mistaken impression that the GJCA was bringing over children to be servants (European-Jewish Children's Aid, n.d.). Such service was not allowed, unlike in Great Britain, where larger numbers of refugee children did, in fact, serve as companions and maids, and this was legally allowed as soon as the children had reached a certain age.

Once the children were settled in America, local child care agencies shared responsibility for their care with their foster families. Children maintained monthly contact with a social worker, often in meetings to purchase necessary clothing. "Shopping was a dreaded task," said a 15-year-old from Munich. "I was always torn between what any teenager wanted and having to take very forceful 'suggestions' on what was proper from my social worker" (W.Y., author's questionnaire). The child's selections, under the social worker's guidance, were constrained by a budget, which usually meant buying only utilitarian clothing, since public money could not be wasted on fashionable items. Recalled Camilla Maas (1981b):

I always wanted saddle shoes. All the girls in my class had them and probably every Jewish girl from a middle class family in the city had them. Yet my social worker was adamant in insisting that they were a luxury I did not need, as saddle shoes, being black and white, would dirty much quicker than the standard utilitarian all black or brown.

Like the *Kinder*, refugees in America wrestled with issues relating to their caretakers, language learning, education, and their future. Most had left parents in Europe; commu-

nication after the outbreak of war was difficult, if not non-existent. Some were angry with their parents for sending them away. "My most vivid memories were a constant desire to be reunited with my family and occasionally I would be angry for having been sent here," stated Freda Grab (author's questionnaire), who reached the United States in 1939. Cut off from their parents for weeks, months, even years before the war, their fears and anxiety grew about the unfolding situation in Europe and their parents' fate.

Language was an important issue in the children's Americanization. Very few refugees knew any English upon arrival. However, most became fluent within six months to a year, depending upon their age at arrival and their placement. Ursula Pels Block attributed her fluency in English to the fact that she did not live in New York. "If one stayed in New York and lived in Washington Heights," she wrote, "one could communicate in German forever" (author's questionnaire).

Education was another concern, also as with the *Kinder*. The release form that parents or guardians had signed in Europe entrusted the GJCA with their children's education and training. Some children were initially put back several grades or placed in a class for foreigners of all ages. Within a short period, however, most were permitted to enter their regular grades. "I received some extra tutoring in language," recalled one, "but was ahead of my age in math and geography and sciences" (Eric Green, author's questionnaire).

Two studies on the education of young refugees concluded that the children enjoyed learning and viewed school as a challenge, not a chore (Gutman, 1947, p. 23; Gates, 1955, p. 94). This was supported by the children themselves. "It was hard getting back into a regular school routine," said a girl from Munich, "but it became a challenge to see how long it would take me to catch up to my American schoolmates." Accustomed to the rigid European system of education, most refugee children adapted rapidly to the more flexible American system and many received educational prizes or grants for exceptional scholarship. For example, a 15-year-old won a New York City-wide high school contest for her essay "What It Means to Me to Be an American," and another received first prize in a national contest for her essay "Why National Unity is Important to My Country" (newspaper article 1941, 1943, 1944).

However, again as with the *Kinder*, academic excellence did not always lead to professional training. Although many children had come from families with professional backgrounds, the budgetary limitations of child welfare services often made it difficult to obtain higher education and training. After completing high school, children were expected to earn a living. "No one even brought up the possibility of my going on for higher education," wrote

Helga. "Although both my real and foster families were intellectual, it was understood that as early as possible I was to go out and earn my keep" (Helga R., author's questionnaire). Nevertheless, family tradition, the desire for education, and the GI bill, among other factors, enabled refugee children to complete professional training later in life, often after military service. Among former Jewish refugee children are college professors, nurses, physicians, lawyers, business people, insurance agents, writers, manufacturers, and restaurant owners: loyal Americans, appreciative of the wonderful qualities of the country that gave them a home and the unique society that absorbed them.

CONCLUSIONS

"What is past is prologue," reads the inscription on the base of one of the statues flanking the entrance to the National Archives in Washington, DC. The refugee issue of the 1930s was a harbinger of the postwar displaced persons (DPs); the exodus from Eastern Europe; and, more recently, the displacement of millions from the Third World. Throughout the decade following the end of the Holocaust and as a result of lessons learned during it, the immigration policy of the United States and popular attitudes towards refugees began to change. American reflection on restrictionist immigration policies led to subsequent liberalization, certainly as compared to pre-war and wartime regulations. Post-war DP legislation of the late 1940s and early 1950s, for example, abolished quotas for immigrants with a first-degree relative who was a citizen. While neither overthrowing the quota system nor ignoring previously existing restrictions, American legislation would slowly begin righting the wrong done by the government to the hapless refugees of the Third Reich.

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Cory Johnston posits that “the concise syntax in the works of Primo Levi, Viktor Frankl, Aharon Appelfeld, and Elie Wiesel creates various and different effects to achieve an end; in Levi’s plainspoken account of his experience in Auschwitz or Appelfeld’s jarring juxtaposition of various thematic elements, for example, we see a particular style shaping poignant moments in each narrative.” For all of us who teach the writings of these iconic survivors, Johnston’s essay is required reading.

Cory Johnston

Mastery and Meaning in Four Holocaust Narratives

One of the great joys I find in writing is the apparently simple act of capturing events within the stable boundaries of a sentence. The structure of a sentence provides a strange kind of beauty, announcing itself on the page with an oversized capital letter and culminating with a modest but definitive period. That these tiny units of language can trap within them all the intangible elements of thought and experience, that they can define each within the world in the form of physical lines on a page, is a uniquely human process easily taken for granted. Equally intriguing are the myriad ways that a sentence may be constructed, and how that very structure itself can establish meaning. Although we might expect a certain style, such as short and plain syntax, to lead to predictable results, the reality is that the most concise prose, including that of Primo Levi, Viktor Frankl, Aharon Appelfeld, and Elie Wiesel, can produce a range of different effects.

CONCISION AS STABILITY IN PRIMO LEVI AND VIKTOR FRANKL

On the table beside me is Primo Levi’s Holocaust memoir, *If This Is a Man* (2013). Though the book itself is quite flimsy—the front cover bent to almost 90 degrees, dozens of pages dog-eared and splattered with ink from my pen—the sentences within are a testament of strength and concision. Levi writes sentences as a mason might lay bricks: Each is cut to the smallest possible size and stacked atop the others with elegant, unadorned simplicity. The horrors that he describes are almost unimaginable. The depth of suffering and emotional depravity is perhaps unmatched in modern human history. Yet Levi’s writing eschews the kind of sprawling, indulgent syntax best suited to expressing emotional largesse. That the precision of his syntax does not allow for emotional digression is what makes

reading Levi such a puzzlingly affective experience. The text does not seem intent on moving us to tears or stirring some dormant pool of emotion. Instead, the distance and detachment contained by these unapologetically short sentences demand from us only one task: that we simply understand the events as described.

I think of Alberto, the man whose friendship and generosity inside Auschwitz saved Levi’s life on numerous occasions. The majority of the prisoners are reduced to a nameless mass, the *Häftlings*, scattered like rags throughout the pages of his work. Alberto, though, stands out as a real human being. He is a man: individuated and unique, incorruptible by the forces of oppression. Like most of the prisoners sent to Auschwitz, Alberto is killed. Despite the importance of his presence within the memoir, when Alberto is marched off to his death, the writing remains plain and the syntax generic. Only a single paragraph comprised of four sentences is devoted to the loss:

All the healthy prisoners . . . left during the night of 18 January 1945. They must have been about twenty thousand, coming from different camps. Almost in their entirety they vanished during the evacuation march. Alberto was among them. Perhaps someone will write their story one day. (pp. 95–96)

These short sentences refuse to conceal the truth. They deny us the respite of digression and focus instead on the inescapable reality of what happened. We read this almost as we would bullet points in a history lecture: with no jarring emotional climax, void of poetic imagery. Yet, despite the emotional restraint, it remains poignant. It would have been easier, perhaps, if Levi had left out Alberto entirely; the death march of 20,000 men is gener-

alized enough to be beyond comprehension. However, he goes the one step further and, in the most concise sentence of the paragraph, informs us of Alberto's fate. Through the understated emotional subtext of the passage, the horrors of the death march are made specific and real.

Restraint and detachment work hand-in-hand with the precise syntax. Together, they function as a magnifying lens; they eliminate all that is extraneous and force us to see the unbearable truth on the page. The writing does not allow us the satisfaction of judgment, and it does not prescribe for us an orchestrated emotional response. Instead, we are given an account of the events as they transpired. This detachment is implemented through the intentional absence of emotion. The concision of the syntax functions as a barrier through which the emotional gravity of the event fails to break, and thus allows the narrative to stay on its desired track. As readers, we are left to puzzle out our own emotional response as we see fit. Our struggle to do so—and as we will see, this struggle with emotion is a defining characteristic throughout Holocaust literature—is itself severely affecting. As far as the writing is concerned, Alberto is dead. So it moves on.

This syntactic restraint is a mechanical element of a larger thematic pattern. A chemist by trade, Levi's adherence to empiricism is the foundation of his style. He seeks understanding above all else and allows emotion to fall as it will. The uniqueness of the suffering in Auschwitz makes sympathizing with the *Häftlings* almost impossible; it is simply too much for me, with my warm apartment and well-stocked pantry, to imagine. To *understand* Auschwitz is, perhaps, to overcome it, in the way that modern medicine is founded on the understanding of germ theory. This brand of scientific detachment—the displacement of emotional investment with the desire for objective clarity—permeates the writing in each of his books.

This is never truer than in *The Periodic Table* (1995), perhaps Levi's greatest work. It is a sustained paean to the beauty of the scientific method, and Levi's passion for his trade jumps from the page. It is a joy to witness him, as an adolescent, ignite a sample of hydrogen for no other reason than that he admires the chemical process that precedes the explosion. Equally awe-inspiring is the astonishing biography of a single carbon atom, and the respectful wonder with which Levi expresses its bizarre life cycle. Because of this passion and wonder, the experience of Auschwitz is all the more jarring when it unavoidably cuts through the book like a scalpel at the steady hands of a practiced physician.

Again we find detachment, the dissolution of emotion in favor of the empirical need for understanding. Levi writes:

I find it difficult to reconstruct the sort of human

being that corresponded, in November 1944, to my name or, better, to my number: 174517. I must have by then overcome the most terrible crisis . . . and I must have developed a strange callousness (p. 144).

Here we see the return of distance, again developed through syntax, but instead of the brevity that depicted Alberto's death, detachment here is expressed through formality and preparatory phrases. Levi does not say that it is difficult, but that "I find it difficult"; he does not show us how he managed to overcome the crisis but merely reflects on the fact that this "must have" happened. He even obscures the continuity of his life by thinking back to "the sort of human being that corresponded" to who he was at the time. Short sentences would not work in this passage because he is not putting to words a situation for the reader to confront. The desire for understanding has been inverted; rather than force the reader to understand through uncomplicated syntax, Levi is himself attempting to understand the mind of his youthful counterpart, and the scientist inside of him does this with empirical detachment.

The fact that I have spent the previous 140 pages of *The Periodic Table* developing an intimate bond with this man, reveling in the exploits of his youth and admiring his bountiful curiosity, makes this sudden detachment intensely powerful. The difficulty with which these sentences struggle to capture their objective brings me even closer to the man. The fallibility of his means of understanding is shared by the reader as we plod through the formality of his prose. The process of writing itself, as well as empiricism, is humanized by the plainness of its inherent limitations. This detachment in the writing, then, does not create detachment in me. Instead, it has the opposite effect of bringing me closer to the narrator, my protagonist, the man whose *number* calls from the page with its own soft-spoken horror. It is this dynamic tension between the writing's dispassionate empiricism and the powerful yet restrained emotional core that makes Levi's work so thought-provoking.

Although discussion of Auschwitz is relegated to two chapters in *The Periodic Table*, these chapters serve as the lynchpin that holds the book—and indeed the protagonist's life—together. When he describes the years immediately following his liberation, and the difficult task of reintegrating with normal society, Levi uses the same syntactical plainness that haunts his description of life in the *Lager*:

But I had returned from captivity three months before and was living badly. The things I had seen and suffered were burning inside of me. I felt closer to the dead than the living, and felt guilty at being a man, because men had built Auschwitz. (p. 157)

In this case, the use of short and simple sentences is almost suffocating. They refuse to weave a sprawling arrangement of diverse clauses and digressions that might allow for a reprieve from the truth. Instead, we are left with the raw words of a man—so full of life only a few chapters earlier!—who now detests his own humanity. In this minimalist syntax, every word becomes important, and the single adverb used here is especially devastating. With the entire lexicon at his disposal, the only word we are given to describe the whole of his life during this period is the inept and frustrating “badly.” Its simplicity seems almost to mock us from the page, and the terseness of each sentence precludes our ability to escape it.

Encountering this passage for the first time, I wished for nothing more than to feel the fire that burned inside of Levi during those difficult months, to experience the emotions that he corrals and subdues with these tight, resolute sentences. The writing, though, does not provide me with details of the flames. It asks instead that I find them on my own. This struggle to feel, and to understand the nature of what we feel, is the lasting effect of *The Periodic Table*.

The absence of this feeling—the consequence of losing the struggle—is seen briefly in Viktor Frankl’s Holocaust memoir, *Man’s Search for Meaning* (2006). In the dead of winter, Frankl is assigned to a work group tasked with digging trenches in the frozen topsoil. Nearing exhaustion, Frankl is approached by a Nazi guard, who reprimands him. The scene is expressed in terms similar to much of Levi’s writing:

By then I had grown rather weak physically. Along came a foreman with chubby rosy cheeks. His face definitely reminded me of a pig’s head. I noticed that he wore lovely warm gloves in that bitter cold. For a time he watched me silently. I felt that trouble was brewing. (p. 25)

Frankl’s prose is as succinct and unemotional as Levi’s. It is bizarrely comical to witness him vaguely consider the guard’s resemblance to a pig, a moment of absurdity that becomes almost haunting in its detached brevity. Unlike with Levi, however, readers are not given the intensity of the narrator’s struggle to understand or his desire to make *us* understand. The curtness of the syntax, instead, mirrors the emotional death of the narrator. Worked to exhaustion and with declining hopes for the future, Frankl can do little more than simply observe and reflect on what goes on around him with the detachment of a man who has succumbed to the struggle. That the sturdiness of even these short sentences can be reduced to such a hollow husk, representing empty void rather than hopeful empiricism, is more devastating than any passage of emotional indulgence.

CONCISION AS “VAGUE ANXIETY” IN APPELFELD’S *BADENHEIM 1939*

I have always considered short sentences, such as those by Levi and Frankl, to be emblematic of stability and reason. They reduce their subjects to the necessary core and reject the meditative emotional uncertainty that lengthy digression allows. Yet, at the hands of a skilled writer, even this most stable unit of prose can become confused. In *Badenheim 1939* (2009), a short novel about a pastoral Jewish community in the months before the residents are shipped off to concentration camps, Aharon Appelfeld uses simple syntax to accomplish almost the opposite of what Levi attempts. Appelfeld’s prose is even terser and less adorned than Levi’s, and yet the result of this style is an intentional lack of clarity and reason. In this sense, the struggle of *Badenheim 1939* is not to understand our emotional response, but simply to understand precisely what is happening in the story.

Each individual sentence in *Badenheim 1939* is a testament to syntactical concision. As in Levi, there is plainness to the text that lays bare every simple and shocking truth. The difference lies instead in the disrupted flow—the way that each of these sentences fails to sync with its surroundings:

Dr. Pappenheim was overjoyed. Whenever anyone returned it made him happy. The secret was gradually encompassing the people and there was a vague anxiety in the air, born of a new understanding. They walked softly and spoke in whispers. The waiters served strawberries and cream. The summer cast its dark green shade full of intoxicating madness onto the broad verandah. (p. 40)

Each of these individual sentences is stable and concise. Each relates, quite clearly, something specific. Taken together, they amount to chaos. Unbridled joy abuts anxiety and intoxicating madness; residents wander hopelessly through the streets afraid to speak above a whisper, and yet they dine on fresh strawberries and cream. Sentences can’t seem to fall in step with one another. At work here is pure syntactical detachment: the isolation of each individual sentence from those that accompany it. That even the sturdiest of prose—concise, stable, focused—can be reduced to confusion is unsettling. The sentences themselves are like the doomed residents of Badenheim; at a trivial level there are no problems but, in fact, they are completely cut off from their surroundings.

Although everything around them suggests their impending doom, the residents blithely wrap themselves in daily minutiae. When two characters discuss the fact that they are to be shipped to Vienna in the coming weeks, they do so with the same aloofness that we see in the sen-

tences themselves: “[Their] words floated in the void like tired, dispirited birds. Downstairs, in the kitchen, they were making the beloved apple strudel. The sweet smell wafted over the verandah” (p. 71). Again we see the unsettling juxtaposition of gloom and merriment, of death and dessert, of two distinct images that seem impossible to reconcile. Condensed into these three short sentences are also two images of flight, but they, too, are polar opposites: hopeless birds and sweet aromas of strudel. That these images are strung together as a single paragraph is disquieting, to say the least. Forcing such disparate elements into a tiny space, without offering explanation or digression, is itself a kind of detachment. Rather than directly share the struggle these people go through, as we do in Levi’s writing, we are instead forced into a spectator position. This distance between the reader and the text reminds us of a horrible truth: that we are unable to save them, that their fate is sealed.

Appelfeld’s style, then, is similar to Levi’s, but with important differences. He and Levi both use concision and plain syntax. This style, for both authors, creates a void of emotional indulgence on the page. However, where Levi employs an empirical detachment that keeps the text laser-focused on explaining, and thus understanding, the trials of Auschwitz, Appelfeld’s syntactical detachment intentionally obscures our understanding; it suggests that any attempt to understand the horrors of the Holocaust is to become drunk with madness.

In this way, *Badenheim 1939* effectively creates an inescapable feeling of detachment. Although I feel for these characters and develop bonds with them, the intentionally conflicting elements of the text obscure my ability to be fully grounded within it. I thus can only watch as each character slowly approaches his ghastly fate. Even though our struggle to understand what is happening mirrors their own, the intentional confusion isolates us from them in the same manner that each sentence is isolated from those around it.

Conversely, although Levi employs detachment through the similar means of unadorned syntax, we share his desire to understand and participate in the process of coming to terms with Auschwitz. Indeed, this mutual participation is an essential element of Levi’s writing. In the preface to *The Drowned and the Saved* (1989), he sets forth the thesis of the book:

This book means to . . . try to answer the most urgent question, the question which torments all those who have happened to read our accounts: How much of the concentration camp world is dead and will not return . . . [and] what can each of us do so that in this world pregnant with threats at least this threat will be nullified? (p. 21)

The purpose of Levi’s writing, then, is communal progression beyond Auschwitz. We must, as individuals and as a collective people, deeply understand what occurred during the Holocaust so that we can ensure it is never repeated. The fact that Appelfeld, using such a similar writing style, can accomplish the opposite—can blur and confuse the chaos of the time—now seems even more disturbing, as it suggests that Levi’s goal may be unattainable.

SYNTACTICAL BREAKDOWN IN WIESEL’S NIGHT

The authors discussed herein offer a complicated testimony to the nature of concise syntax. It remains my basic belief that this style is to writing what the four forces of nature are to physics: a blueprint that abides specific rules for complex construction. As with the elementary forces, there is tremendous capacity for experimentation within the relative simplicity of this form. That I can read Appelfeld and Levi—two authors who engage the same subject matter in similar writing styles—and form such disparate reactions suggests an unexpected capriciousness to this style. It seems that syntax, like gravity, entirely dependent on the weight of that with which it interacts, is more dynamic than it appears at first glance.

One of my favorite traits of good writing is a willingness on the part of the author to allow a sentence to break down entirely. Perhaps this is my own over-infatuation with symbolism, or my desire to anthropomorphize written language to distract myself from the eventual breakdown of my own body, but there is something beautifully devastating about a thought or emotion that has failed to follow the prescribed rules of expression. Like the *Häftlings* of Auschwitz, the image of a broken sentence on the page resonates with a powerful empathy.

In *Night* (2008), Elie Wiesel’s account of his experiences in death camps, the stability of concision and the clarity of plain syntax finally collapse. *Night* is a much different style of memoir from Levi’s *If This Is a Man* and does not shy away from the literary toolbox: There are images, metaphor and simile, and frequent use of abstraction. Although these differences might suggest that Wiesel’s sentence structure would expand and digress, the opposite is true. Sentences in *Night* are even more condensed. In fact, during the most emotionally resonant moments, the writing ceases to form sentences at all.

Early in the memoir, Wiesel’s Jewish community waits in fear to be shipped off to a Nazi camp. As our narrator contemplates the image of his hometown before departure, this marriage of concision and abstraction is realized:

Open rooms everywhere. Gaping doors and windows looked out into the void. It all belonged to everyone since it no longer belonged to anyone. It was there for the taking. An open tomb. A setting sun. (p. 35)

This is concision taken to the extreme—so much so that the basic structure of the sentence is sacrificed in favor of succinct abstractions. These images, taken together, effectively capture the atmosphere of the scene and offer a sense of what it felt like to experience such a moment. In this way, this passage is similar to those from Levi, but rather than ask us to understand the events that occurred, it demands instead that we understand how it felt to experience them.

To convey this kind of emotion requires a different tack from Levi's empiricism, and yet these quick and solitary abstractions still represent another form of detachment. Images and associations do not directly convey emotion but instead suggest emotion's overall flavor. A setting sun and open tomb do not have a firmly established metaphorical meaning; the reader must struggle to work out exactly what feeling is being described. We might call this evocative detachment: the intentional avoidance of direct expression in favor of an associative emotional picture. These images set off a chain reaction in my mind, which calls forth feelings of uncertainty, death, and decline.

The suggestive nature of this style may be thought of as the inverse of Appelfeld's maddening lack of flow. Whereas Appelfeld's prose must be analyzed on the level of the individual sentence, and where sentences taken together amount to confusion and incongruity, Wiesel's fragmentary style is most effective when taken in as a whole. Each specific sentence or fragment calls to mind an image, but only when the various images blend at the paragraph level is the true picture of camp life attained. We see this in a passage describing Wiesel's arrival at Birkenau, the home of the Third Reich's most active gas chambers: "In front of us, those flames. In the air, the smell of burning flesh. It must have been around midnight. We had arrived. In Birkenau" (p. 46).

None of these short sentences, in isolation, amounts to an accurate description of his arrival. Taken together, our senses are activated and our emotions are stirred. Despite the total lack of emotion in the writing itself—it is little more than plainly stated description—I experience an almost soul-crushing emotional reaction to this passage, owed entirely to the broken syntax. Each fragment is the condensation of a haunting image, given even greater power by the slow pacing that such short sentences produce. The final two fragments are especially devastating, as though each period mimics the electrified fence surrounding Auschwitz. There is a definitiveness to it all, an inability to deny the gravity of the location.

A major difference, then, between Levi and Wiesel is the nature of that which is being described. Levi tackles action and events: the stuff that *happened* inside a Nazi death camp. Wiesel is focused more on setting: what it *felt* like to be inside a Nazi death camp. When describing the

confines of the railcar used to ship prisoners between camps, Wiesel writes:

Pressed tightly against one another, in an effort to resist the cold, our heads empty and heavy, our brains a whirlwind of decaying memories. Our minds numb with indifference. Here or elsewhere, what did it matter? Die today or tomorrow, or later? (p. 116)

Setting is established here despite the lack of physical description. We do not see the railcar itself but are, nonetheless, given a complex portrait of how it felt to be inside of one. The emotional state of the prisoners is the means through which we can understand the railcar. That emotional state is developed through the frustrating lack of action, the absence of which suggests a setting outside of time itself. Nothing *happens* at all here, and our desire for those actions forces us into the mindset of the prisoners: trapped perpetually in a present moment that offers little hope of future happenings.

This is not to suggest, of course, that Primo Levi had any qualms with imagery or literary tools, or that he never described the internal mental state of the common prisoner. Although he mostly eschews the level of abstraction that characterizes Wiesel's work, Levi does have one image that arises continuously: the "drowned," his term for the lowliest prisoners, the ones doomed to selection for the gas chambers. The first description of this group represents a moment when Levi allows his prose to break through the mold of concision and dwell on the emotional depth of a single concept. It is, for me, perhaps the single most emotionally affective passage I have encountered:

Their life is short, but their number is endless; they, the *Musselmänner*, the drowned, form the backbone of the camp, an anonymous mass, continually renewed and always identical, of non-men who march and labour in silence, the divine spark dead within them, already too empty to really suffer. One hesitates to call them living; one hesitates to call their death death, in the face of which they have no fear, as they are too tired to understand.

They crowd my memory with their faceless presences, and if I could enclose all the evil of our time in one image, I would choose this image which is familiar to me: an emaciated man, with head dropped and shoulders curved, on whose face and in whose eyes not a trace of a thought is to be seen. (Levi, 2013, p. 54)

This is an image that requires space and that demands time enough for a detailed emotional portrait to be created. Levi wants us to see these men, the drowned, and to feel something for them. Perhaps more than any other element

of life in Auschwitz, it is imperative that these men, whose ability to understand has been stolen from them, leave a lasting impression. It is for their sake that all of these stories have been written in the first place, and it is their legacy that we champion when we choose to learn from these authors.

In this one most devastating image, the one that we would most like to be able to forget, Levi gives a detailed vision of the flames that rage inside of him. Whether we must avert our gaze from their harsh reality is something readers must discover for themselves.

A COMPLICATED PORTRAIT

Like all gifted writers, these authors, and the passages that have stayed with me—the ones that linger in my mind and color, with their subtle refusal to be forgotten, the way in which I experience the daily grind of life—utilize a wide range of styles to accomplish their literary tasks. Although the use of concision and plain syntax unites the work of Primo Levi, Viktor Frankl, Aharon Appelfeld, and Elie Wiesel, the result for each author is quite different. There is stability and reason, confusion and intoxication, emotional death, and intensely resonant imagery. Taken together, these texts paint a complicated portrait that reflects the emotional impact of modern history's greatest atrocity.

NOTE

A version of this essay originally appeared as a fall 2013 entry in the blog *Gently Read Literature*.

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Sharing the genesis of this poem, Sarah Traister Moskowitz writes, "I kept postponing the translation to English of Katzenelson's Yiddish poem about the loss of his wife and two of his three boys. I knew how terribly painful that would be for him. Finally, when it was the only poem in the whole Ringelblum Archive left to translate, I began the work, and the following poem of apology came to me."

Sarah Traister Moskowitz

Translator's Note to Yitzhak Katzenelson

Why I put off translating "The Day of My Great Disaster" that you dedicated to your wife, Hana

I did not want to go into that empty room with you,
the one you left her in a couple of hours ago with your two young sons,
the room that smelled of warmed-up morning bread
crumbs still on the table, scattered like pebbles in a cemetery.

I did not want to go into the room in which you slept with her
where you whispered so the children would not hear
where you said her silences, filled with love, were so rich for you
where she protested when you called *all* Germans bad and said
"When you talk that way you become like them!"
and where you loved to bend to her and kiss the whiteness
in the part of her black, curly Jewish hair.

I did not want to go into that place, into that sea of roiling loss
where you, the struggling swimmer, flailed and in the rising tide
of desperation called out for help that would never come.

I did not want to go so near the roaring engines
with their cattle cars coming on and on.

I put off translating this poem for years, left it for last—
the last of your great poems in the Ringelblum Archive
and the only one I know where you write of yourself in first person.
I did not want to see how much you loved Hana and your boys
I did not want to fall into that deep dark water with you
and drown.

David H. Lindquist examines antisemitism through the visual imagery in *Der Giftpilz (The Poisonous Mushroom)*, a children's picture book published in Germany in 1938. His lesson affords students an introductory knowledge of antisemitism and its pernicious threat while helping them gain valuable experience in evaluating primary source documents. Pair with Jeraldine Kraver's essay (pp. 107–112) to prompt discussion on the ethical dilemmas educators confront in teaching this subject.

David H. Lindquist

The Story of *Der Giftpilz*: Teaching About Antisemitism Through a Children's Picture Book

Students often ask, “Why the Jews?” as they begin studying the Holocaust. Unfortunately, many Holocaust curricula avoid this question altogether or answer it in simplistic, ahistorical terms. Thus students may assume that Nazism's attack on the Jews occurred in a historical vacuum, leaving the Shoah to be viewed as an aberration, a misstep along the path of history.

Dawidowicz (1990) recognized this situation, holding that a lack of sufficient coverage of antisemitism (or, in many cases, no coverage of the topic at all) was the most important element missing in Holocaust curricula that she evaluated.¹ She proposed that

the more acceptable and common pedagogic strategy [in excluding antisemitism from Holocaust curricula] is to generalize the highly particular nature and history of antisemitism by subsuming (and camouflaging) it under general rubrics like scapegoating, prejudice, and bigotry. . . . These abstract words suggest that hatred of the Jews is not a thing in itself, but a symptom of “larger” troubles, though no explanation is given as to why the Jews, rather than dervishes, for instance, are consistently chosen as the scapegoat. (p. 28)

While classroom coverage of the Shoah has increased in scope and sophistication since Dawidowicz voiced her concerns, a study of textbooks frequently used in contemporary high school history courses shows that little progress has been made in the coverage of antisemitism and

its relevance to the study of the Holocaust (Lindquist, 2009). This lack of adequate coverage of the Shoah's most critical antecedent factor hinders effective education. This essay outlines a lesson that overcomes this limitation, an imperative because, as Eliot Eisner (1979) argues, “what schools do not teach may be just as important as what they do teach. . . . Ignorance is not simply a void, it has important effects on the kinds of options one is able to consider” (p. 83).

A BRIEF DISCUSSION OF HISTORICAL ANTISEMITISM

Antisemitism is a complex, nuanced topic, and a detailed discussion of it is beyond the scope of this paper. Hence, a brief discussion of what has been called “the longest hatred” must suffice to establish the basic historical context for this lesson.

Although the word antisemitism was not coined until the 1870s, the phenomenon it identifies predates the Common Era (Bergen, 2009). European antisemitism is usually viewed in three overlapping historical phases: 1) the religious, based on the fact that Jews did not accept Jesus as the messiah and linked to the charge of deicide; 2) the cultural, focused on the idea of the Jews as being different, “the Other,” and thus a social, economic, and political threat to European (i.e., Christian) civilization; and 3) the racial, founded on the pseudo-scientific theory that Jews are biologically different from non-Jews and, by extension, a threat to the racial purity of non-Jewish peoples. It should be noted that each phase defines *the Jews* as a collective body, a belief that assumed critical importance during the Nazi era.

While precise dates for the dominance of each phase of antisemitism cannot be set, it is useful to establish the general time frame during which each variation exerted its primary influence on European history. Religious antisemitism (at least the Christian version) began early in the Common Era and continued to play a vital role throughout the Middle Ages, losing importance as the Church's role as the central force in Western Europe diminished. Cultural antisemitism developed during the Middle Ages, evolving as it moved through various periods of economic, social, and political change that eventually resulted in the Modern Era. Racial antisemitism achieved academic and political legitimacy in the late 1800s, morphing into its eliminationist form with the coming of the Third Reich.²

PROPAGANDA DURING THE NAZI ERA

Children were a primary audience for Nazi propaganda, causing Mills (n.d.) to contend that “no single target of Nazification took higher priority than Germany’s young Of the topics that teachers were required to treat, the most important was racial theory and, by extension, the Jewish problem.” As a result, no child was too young to be introduced to the polarizing notions of supposed Jewish racial inferiority and *Volkish* (German) racial superiority. Mills adds:

The Nazi curriculum sought to instill the image of the Jew as something less than human that represented the antithesis of both the natural order and the divine order; something that was at once unnatural and immoral and, therefore, posed a danger to the very existence of moral German society. The image of the Jew as something less than human, unnatural and immoral, recurs throughout the Nazi propaganda picture storybooks for young children.

Thus a study of children's picture storybooks published during the Nazi era provides a lens to examine three key factors: 1) antisemitism's three phases; 2) Nazism's racial ideology; and 3) the general texture of propaganda during the Third Reich.

PEDAGOGICAL BASIS, ORGANIZATION, AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LESSON

Understanding the visual medium is critical to our perspective of the world because we live at a time in which “Don't tell me—show me!” has become a standard request (Kramer, 2007, p. vi.). For that reason, visual imagery has become a medium through which history can and should be taught. Visual images have the power to engage students as they work with social studies topics because contemporary learners are immersed in a visual world (Beal, Bolick, & Martorella, 2009). Chung (2005) states that “visual im-

ages are not simply embodiments of social reality; they are indeed ideological sites embedded with powerful discursive sociopolitical meanings that exert strong influences on the ways in which people live their lives” (p. 24). Such images can thus provide students with thought-provoking perspectives as they examine various historical topics (Pegler-Gordon, 2006).

In this lesson, we offer an examination of the 18 drawings found in *Der Giftpilz (The Poisonous Mushroom)*, a children's picture storybook published in Germany in 1938.³ We study and evaluate the title of each image, a representative sample of the accompanying text, and its portrayal of Nazi ideology. Along with the study of the historical context of antisemitism, we introduce the book, consider the three phases of antisemitism, and note when, where, how, and why each phase was in play. We analyze contemporary and long-term implications of each phase along with connections between the phases and their respective historical contexts and discuss ways in which visual images may be evaluated and deconstructed, as well as the strengths and limitations involved in using still images to teach history.

Although we do not reproduce here the images in *Der Giftpilz* due to space and copyright constraints and because such racist caricatures should not be widely disseminated, they are available on several websites; the most efficient link to use is the Jewish Virtual Library (www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/Giftpilz.html), which presents the images in the order in which they appear in the book, accompanied by their titles and brief portions of their accompanying text. The full German text of the book, accompanied by full-color images, may be accessed at <http://www.archive.org/details/DerGiftpilz>.

CRITICAL TEACHING POINTS

Teachers, first and foremost, must ensure that students do not accept as fact the stereotypes depicted in the images and the pejorative text that accompanies them. *Teachers must emphasize that fallacious ideas were at the root of antisemitism in general and Nazi racial ideology in particular.* Students must also be aware of the falsity of Nazism's assertion that the Jews constitute a distinct race. The article “Do the Jews Constitute a Race? An Issue Holocaust Educators Must Get Right” discusses this issue in depth and is a “must read” for teachers who include the study of antisemitism in their curricula (Totten, 2002).

One might begin the lesson by introducing each visual image to the class in order, with students deconstructing each and assigning various phases of antisemitism to it, as they discuss how the images advanced the goals of Nazism's racial ideology. Alternatively, the Jigsaw method (Aronson & Patnoe, 1997) may be used, with each group responsible for the evaluation of several images that represent all

three phases. In this approach, each image is studied by several groups, which report to the class as a whole. In either case, the deliberation that occurs at upper taxonomic levels becomes the central factor in the teaching/learning process. We pose essential questions that tie the images to antisemitism's phases and to Nazi ideology, encouraging students to delve deeply into both the images and the stereotypes that the images promote and consider how the images and text might have affected the book's intended audience, German children in the primary grades.

THE IMAGES

Image 1: The Poisonous Mushroom (the book's title page: no text). The poisonous mushroom (representing the Jews) is hiding among edible vegetation, thus employing secretive methods to gain control over society. The cover displays a Star of David to ensure that the mushroom's connection to the Jews is not missed. This page advances the cultural stereotype that Jews are devious, secretive, and manipulative. A racial component is involved: The mushroom shows supposed Jewish physical characteristics, exaggerated and grotesque; the Jew is thus depicted as being physically malformed, a defect indicative of racial inferiority.

Image 2: The Poisonous Mushroom. "Just as it is often hard to tell a toadstool from an edible mushroom, so, too, it is often very hard to recognize the Jew as a swindler and criminal." Addressing her young son, a blond German woman states that Jews use covert, criminal methods to implement their anti-cultural agenda, making them a threat to the well-being of German society.

Image 3: How to Tell a Jew. "The Jewish nose is bent. It looks like the number six." The teacher tells his students, all of whom have a stereotypical German appearance, that Jews may be identified by distinguishing physical characteristics. A Star of David and a grotesque caricature have been drawn on the blackboard, guaranteeing that the students are aware that the Jews are being discussed. The image purports that Jews are biologically different from and inferior to *das Volk* (the German people, also viewed as an organic, racially defined body), thus reinforcing a central element of Nazism's racial ideology.

Image 4: How the Jews Came to Us. "Just look at these guys! The louse-infested beards! The filthy, protruding ears!" Protruding ears are an example of physical deformity, an indicator of racial inferiority, while the descriptions "louse-infested" and "filthy" propose that Jews are not civilized enough to keep clean, a serious fault in a society that prides itself on orderliness and cleanliness.

Image 5: What is the Talmud? "In the Talmud it is written,

'Only the Jew is human. Gentile people are not called humans, but animals.' Since we Jews see Gentiles as animals, we call them only *Goy*" [a false translation of a Hebrew word that means "nation," used to refer to a member of a nation other than the Jews]. According to this text, Jews see themselves as better than gentiles and use the Talmud to justify this view; this element brings religious antisemitism into play as a supposed cultural arrogance is intertwined with the religious hubris depicted.

Image 6: Why the Jews Let Themselves Be Baptized. "Baptism didn't make a Gentile out of him." While religion is apparently this image's central theme, racial antisemitism is actually its focal point. According to Nazi ideology, Jews who converted to Christianity were still defined racially as Jews. Thus being Jewish was a biological fact, not a religious or cultural label that could be altered by either religious conversion or a change in lifestyle. This concept was given the force of law during the Third Reich, meaning that converted Jews and their immediate offspring were subject to anti-Jewish legislation enacted by the Nazi regime. This image also expresses cultural antisemitism: No matter what the Jews do, they will always be "the Other," the outsider living a perpetual lie by adopting German ways in a vain attempt to become truly German.

Image 7: How a German Peasant Was Driven From House and Farm. "Daddy, someday when I have my own farm, no Jew will enter my house." The farmer has lost his land, probably because of Germany's post-World War I problems. This portrayal aligns with the Nazi assertion that a supposed international Jewish-Communist conspiracy had caused the nation's economic, political, and social difficulties during the 1920s. The image depicts cultural antisemitism, labeling Jews as being anti-German (a political threat) and greedy (an economic threat). Note also that the young boy has learned his lesson well: He pledges that his generation will exclude Jews from German life when it comes of age.

Image 8: How Jewish Traders Cheat. "Farming woman, have I got something special for you today. Look at this material! You can make a dress from it that will make you look like a baroness, like a countess, like a queen." This drawing focuses on the cultural stereotype of greedy Jewish merchants who exploit Germans. The merchant's physical features are based on a traditional caricature, ensuring that readers realize that the man is Jewish. The fact that the Jew is a merchant and the German is a hard-working farm woman reminds readers of the stereotype that Jews are lazy and do not do physical work. A cross is hung on the kitchen wall, and the traditional rural culture that Nazism glorified is on display. These elements stress the need to separate Jews from hard-working Germans.



Nazi propaganda photo of children engrossed in the book. Courtesy *Stadtarchiv Nürnberg* (StadtAN), E 39 Nr. 2381/5.

Image 9: The Experience of Hans and Else With a Strange Man.

“Here, kids, I have some candy for you. But you have to come with me.” This image focuses on the stereotype that Jewish men are sexual predators who continually try to accost German girls. In this case, however, the man is trying to lure two young children, one girl and one boy, to go with him. Thus this image suggests an even more repulsive accusation than normal: The man intends to molest both the boy and the girl, an ultimate act of racial defilement and a particularly incendiary idea because racial defilement was one of the most heinous charges that Nazi ideology directed toward Jews. The man’s stereotypical features are grotesque; hence, a racial theme also is present.

Image 10: Inge’s Visit to a Jewish Doctor.

“Two criminal eyes flashed behind the glasses and the fat lips grinned.” The accusation of racial defilement is central to this image as well. The doctor’s target is an attractive, innocent young girl whose appearance suggests the German ideal; as such, her physical beauty serves to emphasize the doctor’s unattractive features. The message is clear: The Jewish doctor threatens to despoil *das Volk* in general as he molests one German girl in particular. A cultural factor also is present:

The percentage of physicians in Germany who were Jewish far outpaced the percentage of Jews in the overall population. Thus Jews were seen as attempting to control Germany by dominating influential professions such as medicine, journalism, law, commerce, and academia.

Image 11: How the Jew Treats His Domestic Help.

“A man was waiting for me at the station. He tipped his hat and was very friendly to me. But I could tell immediately that he was a Jew.” The Jewish man has adopted the civilities and manners expected of Germans, but the girl whom he greets has the cultural awareness needed to see through his charade. The fact that the Jewish man has hired a German girl is an affront to what the Nazis saw as the natural order of things; after all, Germans should not have to demean themselves by working for Jews. In this regard, Nazi propaganda held that Jews sought to control society by exploiting Germans economically. One additional aspect of this image also should be noted: The girl realizes that the man is a Jew even though his appearance does not portray the stereotypical physical features portrayed elsewhere in the book. Being able to identify Jews culturally as well as physically was a skill Germans were encouraged to cultivate.

Image 12: How Two Women Were Tricked by Jewish Lawyers.

“Well, Colleague Morgenthau, we did a good piece of business today.’ ‘Splendid, Colleague Silberstein. We took the lovely money from the two *Goy* women and can put it in our own pockets.” Both men have stereotypical Jewish names and many of the physical features that are found in the other images. Like the doctor, these men are in a prestigious profession in which Jews were prominent. Hence, Nazi propaganda saw Jewish lawyers as trying to dominate German society through their deviousness—they tricked the women—a trait emphasized by the cynical comment “We took the lovely money from the two *Goy* women.” According to the lawyers, money is lovely (thus emphasizing the concept of money-hungry Jews), and the use of the word *Goy* implies Jewish disdain for Gentiles (e.g., Germans).

Image 13: How Jews Torment Animals. “The animal fell once more to the ground. Slowly it died. The Jews stood around and laughed.” This image equates a lack of humanity with Jewish religious practices. The animal is slaughtered according to kosher laws, which are humane, but the butchers are depicted as laughing while the animal writhes in agony, linking the image to cruelty. Two German boys watch; perhaps this is their first exposure to kosher slaughtering. If so, it confirms all the negatives they have heard about the Jews.

Image 14: What Christ Said About the Jews. “When you see a cross, remember the gruesome murder of the Jews on Golgotha.” The charge of deicide—placing the blame for Jesus’s death on the Jews *collectively throughout history*—had been the primary reason for Christian antipathy toward the Jews since shortly after the advent of Christianity. While religious antisemitism played only a minor role in Nazi ideology, it did provide a historical backdrop for Nazism’s anti-Jewish policies. After all, what greater reason could a person have for hating a group of people than a belief that that group was responsible for the murder of one’s God?

Image 15: Money Is the God of the Jews. “The God of the Jews is money. To earn money, he commits the greatest crimes. He will not rest until he can sit on a huge money sack, until he has become the king of money.” In this image, a stereotypical Jewish figure sits atop a huge sack of gold, his obese figure suggesting an insatiable appetite for wealth and power. The implication is that he probably became wealthy by cheating good Germans. In the background, several other Jewish men seem to be plotting to become wealthy, probably by using similar means.

Image 16: How Worker Hartmann Becomes a National-Socialist. “The Jew cries, ‘We don’t care about Germany. . . . The

main thing is that things go well for us.” Nazi ideology claimed the existence of an international Jewish-communist conspiracy seeking to undermine Western civilization in general and German society in particular. Realizing this, Hartmann turns to National Socialism as the only force that can protect *das Vaterland* from internal and external enemies who are in league with one another. This image suggests a Jewish threat to destroy Germany politically, a development that would also lead to the demise of *das Volk* as a viable racial body.

Image 17: Are There Decent Jews? “People are always saying that we Jews cheat other people, that we lie and deceive. Not a word of it is true. We Jews are the most decent people in the world.” Stereotypical Jewish figures are discussing how Germans view Jewish behavior. The men are convinced that they are the victims of a conspiracy, that the world is against them. In doing so, they are establishing a justification for what they do and what they are—money hungry, clannish, and the like. As such, they are using their faults to justify their faults. What could be more evil than that?

Image 18: Without Solving the Jewish Question No Salvation for Mankind. “He who fights the Jews battles the Devil.” This image introduces Julius Streicher, editor of the virulently antisemitic magazine *Der Stürmer*. His comments summarize the key points made in *Der Giftpilz*: The Jews are evil and money-hungry; if one wishes to be a good German and to protect *das Vaterland*, one must defend all that is right and good by opposing the Jews at every opportunity. Dressed in Nazi party uniforms, youthful Germans stare admiringly at Streicher’s image. They have learned their lesson well: They will oppose the Jews. They will preserve *das Volk* by shielding it from the Jewish plague. They will save Germany.

EXTENDING THE LESSON

The lesson may be extended by introducing and explaining the dangers of four conspiracy theories that students should learn to recognize, reject, and protest: 1) Jews are a threat to society; 2) Jews use hidden and nasty methods; 3) Jews are a foreign body, “the Other,” seeking to influence and cause harm to society in general; and 4) Jews are loyal only to themselves and can never be loyal to *das Vaterland* or any other non-Jewish entity (Yad Vashem, 2007). An extra level of analysis may be developed by aligning *Der Giftpilz* to these theories. For excellent portrayals of Nazi propaganda in general, see the online exhibition *State of Deception: The Power of Nazi Propaganda*, located on the website of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (www.ushmm.org), and the corollary text *State of Deception: The Power of Nazi Propaganda* (Luckert & Bachrach, 2009).

SKILLS AND CONTENT KNOWLEDGE

Holocaust curricula that minimize the issue of antisemitism or avoid it completely fail to provide students with a full opportunity to examine the Shoah's implications. This suggested lesson overcomes that shortcoming while providing students with an opportunity to analyze a primary source document, expanding both their historical skills and their content knowledge.



Germany: A teacher points out the salient features of a student's profile during a lesson in racial instruction. Circa 1934. Source: *Tot geschwiegen* 1933–1945. Courtesy United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

NOTES

1. See Bergen (2009, p. 4) for a discussion of various spellings of "antisemitism." Bergen's spelling is used in this article unless another source is quoted.
2. See also the online exhibition *Antisemitism: The Continuing Threat*, located on the USHMM website. The website also houses a series of podcasts titled *Voices on Antisemitism*.

3. In translation, the book is titled *The Mushroom*. However, common usage refers to it as *The Poisonous Mushroom*.

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“What can be gained,” asks Mark Thorsen, “by teaching about the Holocaust through the arts—not cleverly deployed images and artifacts offered cursorily to garner attention but as a pedagogical immersion in the possibilities unique to the media, working through art as an end in itself? What can be gained, perhaps more importantly, by encouraging students to *respond* through the arts?” The works of three high school students illustrate an answer.

Mark Thorsen

Capturing Empathy: Student Artists Respond to the Holocaust

“Unlike the printed text, which unfolds over time, pictorial art can speak volumes at a glance.”

—Feinberg & Totten (2001), p. 239

The arts should play a prominent role in Holocaust education. Aesthetics allow for an appropriately complex view of the event “based upon the experience of the individual—using a medium that appeals not just to the intellect, but also penetrates straight to the heart” (Yad Vashem, n.d.). As Lawrence L. Langer (1996) noted, textbook sources can fail to capture potentially engaging testimony that can be revealed by aesthetic means. Understanding the suffering of the Jews of the Holocaust is complex and difficult, especially so when we present it only through discursive methods beholden to a chronological sense of time. Connecting as many senses as possible to the facts and stories of this event allows students to perceive nuances not necessarily revealed by merely reading and discussing a text.

Yet, as my colleagues and I re-envisioned our Holocaust unit of study, the idea of using the arts to teach this history was only a beginning. Inspired by the thinking of Maxine Greene (1995), who wrote, “Participatory involvement with the many forms of art can enable us to see more in our experience, to hear more on normally unheard frequencies, to *become conscious* of what daily routines have obscured, what habit and convention have suppressed” (p. 123), we felt that encouraging students to create art *in response* to their learning might offer them the opportunity to see, hear, and become conscious of aspects of the Holocaust narrative that would otherwise remain hidden.

I am a secondary social studies teacher in a suburban Denver area school district. Working with three art teachers, Jeff Garland, Patricia Hayes, and Kyle Porter, I developed

a Holocaust unit using aesthetic sources of testimony such as art, music, poetry, and narrative to supplement a traditional history unit. For six weeks, 36 secondary Advanced Placement Studio Art students would learn about the Holocaust through history and testimony expressed in person and through literature, music, and art and would respond to their learning by creating art. I articulated the objectives; the art educators suggested the various aesthetic sources of memory to be included.

For this brief unit, I wanted my students to be able to define key vocabulary associated with the Holocaust and strive for precise language as they responded to the event; to become aware of and analyze the destructive path that led to the Holocaust, putting into context such global terms as hatred of the “other,” antisemitism, and dehumanization; to recognize the concept of “choiceless choices” and empathize with the Jews who were forced to confront them; and, more broadly, to begin to recognize and appreciate the complexity and range of human experiences within the Holocaust. Finally, my overarching goal was to move my students to action: I wanted them to use the arts to process and express key aspects of all that they had learned.

My colleagues presented the aesthetic sources in two categories: artistic testimony created in ghettos and camps, including Petr Ginz’s (1928–1944) *Moonscape* and Petr Kien’s *Uniformschneiderei* (*Uniform Tailor Shop*, 1943) at Terezin; Fritz Lederer’s (1878–1949) *One Left Behind*; and Fritz Taussig’s *Leaving Transport and Life in the Attic* (1943–1944), as well as artistic testimony rendered as memorial witness, such as the paintings of Samuel Bak, Jor-

dan Krimstein (1933–), Geoffrey Laurence, and David Olére (1902–1985), and the contemporary graphic designs of Aaron Morgan. In particular, we studied the oil-on-canvas Bak paintings *Ghetto of Jewish History* (1976), *Alone*, *The Family* (1974), *Warsaw Boy*, and *Sounds of Silence*; Krimstein's *Electric Fence Watercolor*, *Auschwitz—Gas Chamber 1*, and *Auschwitz—Toothbrushes*; Laurence's *Survivors* (2000); Olére's *Unable to Work*, *For a Crust of Bread*, and *The Food of the Dead for the Living*; and Morgan's *The Yellow Star* and *Remember Us*.

Music and poetry enhanced and deepened the learning. Students heard and responded to a musical performance featuring Shostakovich's *Symphony No. 13* (1962) and analyzed poetry including "Babi Yar" by Yengeny Yevtushenko (1961), and "The Butterfly," composed by Pavel Friedman (1942), a child in the Terezin Ghetto.

The young artists in the course had a foundational knowledge of elements of design that allowed them to discuss, analyze, and interpret the expressive nature of the forms of testimony they examined during the three initial weeks of learning. The paintings, poetry, and music they studied offered them daily opportunities for exploration and engaged their imagination. We wondered: What themes or aspects of the Holocaust would students choose to explore in response to their learning, and what media would they choose for self-expression? We envisioned a metaphorical conversation: The students would create and discuss their art, and we would respond in vignettes.

During the initial three weeks, our students were eager learners, but it was the three following weeks of response that generated greater passion and excitement. In class, they teased out from their new knowledge those strands of the narrative that particularly intrigued them. They expressed both growing empathy for those caught up in the Holocaust and a need to act on their expanded understanding of the results of racial antisemitism; the dynamics of power and powerlessness; the actions of the Jews in ghettos and camps; resistance and resilience in the midst of despair; and the potential for, and reality of, further genocides. Their learning became reflective, participatory, fully engaged, and highly individualized, with students choosing their preferred medium to create original works of art representing their "journey through the kingdom of fire and ashes," as Elie Wiesel has described such learning.

THREE RESPONSES: DEHUMANIZATION, LOST INNOCENCE, RESILIENCE

Thirty-six works of art were created and displayed in a concluding show; three are represented here. Christina, an 11th grader, struggled with the complex concepts of the history through a medium by which she was most inspired, photography. She did not want to capture the horror

about which she had learned; rather, she sought to explore its beginnings, to provoke questions and imaginings. She chose an innocent, pastoral setting to underscore her theme: the still-omnipresent dangers of dehumanization [Fig. 1].



FIG.1: *Dehumanization*, Christina Erb, photographic image (2010).

Christina commented on her work:

It was difficult to incorporate the Holocaust into practical photography. I originally envisioned a series of garments, representing a number of victims. I wanted to prop up a series of outfits, shirts and pants sewn together, and hung above a pair of shoes. I would hang them between two poles. I abandoned that idea for a simpler one but the inspiration for the project was our learning about one of the first steps toward the Holocaust, dehumanization.

As my response to Christina's work, I wrote:

Slightly off-center, the dress is empty, with a form that implies it is snug to the arms, hips, and legs of a woman, but with no sign of the limbs or head that should protrude from this cloth. The sleeves extend mid-length and the flowing skirt should just reveal her knees, but there are no hands, no knees, only the dress, suspended above a pair of shoes. The outfit longs for the legs, the shoulders, the neck, and the face, which now exist only in shadow. The skin and frame that used to fill this garment are lost. A woman, perhaps a mother, a daughter, a sister, is now missing. Her memories, experiences, stories, reside only in the shadow that extends from her shoes. She used to know

life, companionship, joy, and hardship, and now she aspires to be known—remembered. The shoes are a haunting reminder of images cast by the liberation of Nazi camps, shoe after shoe, pile upon pile. The dress, not piled, is adrift in the wind that used to lift her hair. The valuables taken: earrings, necklace, bracelet, timepiece, heirlooms confiscated, memories lost. This woman, like the dress, stood proudly. The terrain enveloped her with the subtle breezes and scents of the seasons. The fence demarcated her realm but did not contain her. She was free. The trees provided shade and shelter as she dreamed of her future; the sun warmed her flesh, spirit, and faith, even as it now fills the photo with illumination, casting rays upon a timeless landscape.

Another 11th grader, Karlee, produced a series of pieces, each depicting a child and his tragic memory captured by and reflected in his eyes. She took her inspiration from what she had seen of the works of Bak, creator of a series of paintings based on the iconic photo of the boy from the Warsaw Ghetto, who came to represent Bak and all others who lost their childhood. Karlee approached her work with a similarly empathetic mindset, with one representing all [Fig. 2]:



FIG. 2: *Lost Innocence*, Karlee Bumgarner, drawing (2010).

Karlee's commentary on her work focused on children in the Holocaust; childhood in the ghettos was the subject that had informed her art during the three weeks of painting:

The loss of a childhood is a tragic element in the Holocaust. Compared to what I see here day in and day

out, such pain is difficult to imagine. What these children have endured is horrifying to think about, and what they have seen, no child should ever see. I want others, today, to think about what these children have seen and suffered in the hope that future children do not.

I responded to her work:

A child's loss of innocence is represented in the tragic images that remain—reflections in the eyes of a young boy frozen in time. This image causes viewers to halt, trapped in the foreboding gaze. Not just the technical skill with which this particular work is crafted but also the obvious impact of the history on the painter causes us to pause, heeding the work of this artist, who has personalized, internalized, and articulated the sorrow of the Holocaust childhood.

Students came to class early and stayed late, fully immersed in creating their aesthetic responses and taking great pains to refine and re-craft their work. Idea after idea, symbolized by one sketch or draft after another, filled pages in sketch journals—erased, redrawn, and even ultimately discarded. They conversed with each other, with their art teachers, and with me about their burgeoning awareness that what they had learned was directly influencing the direction their work was taking, moving them toward a final reflection they had never before considered.

Nothing came easily, but they persevered. The work of a 12th-grade artist, Hannah, for example, is the successful outgrowth of numerous failed attempts. I counted at least six different versions of this watercolor, none of them quite right according to her, each discarded as she began again. I was moved as I watched her struggle to capture the perfect image, battling the limitations of her chosen medium: imperfections in the canvas, brush too wet or not wet enough, or color not quite right. The final piece represents arduous weeks of work. Resistant to frustration and resilient herself, she focused on and finally captured, with great empathy, the last stage of a ghetto family's failing attempt to remain resilient [Fig. 3].

Hannah discussed her work:

I had not tried watercolor before and it took a while to understand how it worked. I had an idea about what the final piece would look like, but somehow I could not get it right and so the image just evolved: partially

faded, rumors of people, just lingering, and barely hopeful.

I wrote in response to her watercolor:

Ghostly pale surrounds what appears to be a Jewish family in extremis. Ghetto life has almost destroyed what was once a hopeful group. Faces are fading, dehumanized, and frail—in grave distress, they linger still. The artist demands that we stare at length at this work, that we fight the urge to look away. When we do, it is always too late. We cannot unsee. (Thorsen, 2010)

THE POWER AND PROMISE OF THE AESTHETIC RESPONSE

If we are to teach about the Holocaust in ways that engage all students, then we have to offer them the means to *show* us their learning as well as to talk and write about it. There are those who will connect with Holocaust history—and learning in general—only if their own voice and the ability to express it in their chosen form are honored in the pro-

cess. Such students—all students—should be given the opportunity and urged to feel, ruminate, connect, empathize, and process, and to risk, revise, and risk again as they create and express, through the arts, the learning they take and the meaning they make from this study.

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FIG. 3: *Clutching Life*, Hannah Wiebelhaus, watercolor (2010).

Reflecting on the inspiration for his poem, Steven Sher explains, "Marcus Retter, *zichro livracha* (of blessed memory), was the respected patriarch of one of the guiding families at Heichal Moshe, a well-known *shtiebel* (small synagogue) on Manhattan's Upper West Side where I *davened* (prayed) and learned before I made *aliyah* (moved to Israel). On Sivan 20th (June 18th this year), Mr. Retter was *sheliach tzibbur* (leader) for *shacharis* (morning prayers). It was the *yahrzeit* (anniversary of death) of his parents and his sister, who had been deported and murdered by the Nazis more than 60 years earlier; he had escaped as a teenager on a *Kindertransport* in 1938. Mr. Retter's emotional *davening* inspired me to write this poem."

Stephen Sher

Sivan 20

For Marcus Retter, of blessed memory

Legs unsteady as a candle's flame,
his voice grows faint reciting *Kaddish*
for his parents and a younger sister
murdered by the Germans more than
sixty years before. Yet the embers banked
within his heart burst into flame again.
Tears pool anew. Voices break loose
inside his brain and none can guess
what they now whisper in his ear.
Shacharis done, he sits with a shot
of whiskey, piece of cake, staring off.

"Just as the story of Anne Frank and the iconic photo of the child in the Warsaw Ghetto with his arms raised in surrender have come to symbolize the Nazis' war against the Jews," notes Rafael Medoff, "the voyage of the *St. Louis* has become the best-known symbol of America's tepid response to the Holocaust." Read this narrative in conjunction with Baumel-Schwartz's essay (pp. 38–43), on the 1,000 refugee children who did find haven, to prompt an essential discussion about America's indifference to the plight of European Jews.

Rafael Medoff

Revisiting the Voyage of the Damned

Are you going to be comfortable if Assad, as a result of the United States not doing anything, then gasses his people yet again and they—and the world says, why didn't the United States act? History is full of . . . moments where someone didn't stand up and act when it made a difference.

And whether you go back to World War II or you look at a ship that was turned away from the coast of Florida and everybody on it lost their lives subsequently to German gas, those are the things that make a difference.¹ And that's what's at stake here.

—Secretary of State John Kerry to members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee at a September 3, 2013, hearing on whether the US should intervene in Syria (Source: *Washington Post*)

Secretary Kerry's reference to the ill-fated voyage of the refugee ship *St. Louis* was significant for several reasons. First, it indicated that the Obama administration believes the record of America's response to the Holocaust should play some role in the formulation of foreign policy today. Second, the decision to raise the issue before the Senate, and the fact that none of the senators present challenged it, suggested that not just in the White House but on Capitol Hill, too, the experience of the *St. Louis* is considered relevant. Finally, that Kerry would mention the episode without naming the ship, evidently assuming his listeners and the public would recognize the story, points to the widespread familiarity with at least the main elements of that tragic episode. In addition to countless history books and high school textbooks, the *St. Louis* has been referenced in numerous novels and plays, was the subject of a US Senate resolution (in 2009) and a State Department apology (in 2012), and has even been

mentioned in the comic strip *Doonesbury*. Just as the story of Anne Frank and the iconic photo of the child in the Warsaw Ghetto with his arms raised in surrender have come to symbolize the Nazis' war against the Jews, the voyage of the *St. Louis* has become the best-known symbol of America's tepid response to the Holocaust.

"THE SADDEST SHIP AFLOAT"

For one agonizing week in the spring of 1939, the plight of the *St. Louis* was front-page news in America's major daily newspapers. Then, the "saddest ship afloat," as *The New York Times* called it, having been rebuffed by both Cuba and the United States, was forced to return to Europe, and the story of the tragic voyage vanished from the headlines—and from public consciousness—not to become a subject of substantial interest again until the late 1960s [Fig. 1].



FIG. 1: The SS *St. Louis*. Courtesy of The David S. Wyman Institute for Holocaust Studies.

The *St. Louis* did, however, garner a bit of attention during and shortly after World War II, thanks to Dutch novelist Jan de Hartog, who used the story as the basis for

his play *Schipper Naast God*, or *Skipper Next to God*. (In de Hartog's version, the skipper beaches the ship in the middle of a Long Island yachting competition and the yachtsmen rescue the passengers.) The Dutch underground performed the play in the hope of inspiring fishermen to hide Jewish children from the Nazis. After the war, *Skipper* made it briefly to Broadway (1948) and was made into a movie in 1953, although neither production occasioned much fanfare.

The story of the *St. Louis* gained wide postwar public attention only with the publication in 1968 of *While Six Million Died: A Chronicle of American Apathy*, by the investigative journalist Arthur Morse [Fig. 2]. It was the first book to examine the Roosevelt administration's policies concerning European Jewry. Prior to the book's publication, Morse's chapter on the *St. Louis* had appeared in the popular US news magazine *Look*, giving the story especially wide circulation.

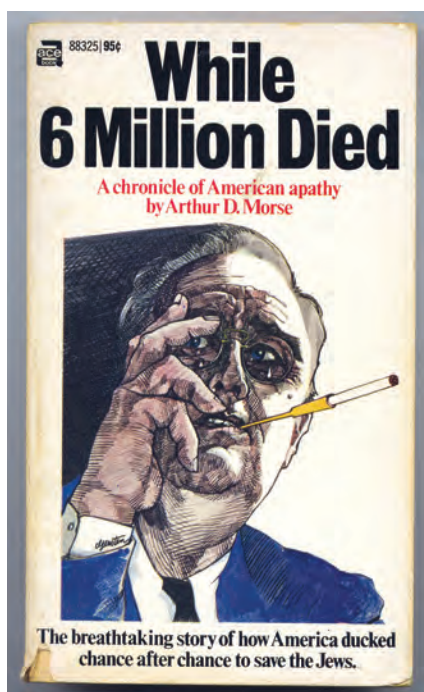


FIG 2:
Book cover.
Courtesy of
The David S.
Wyman Institute
for Holocaust
Studies.

Morse (1967) began:

On May 13, 1939, the Hamburg–American Line's luxurious *St. Louis* sailed from Germany with 936 passengers—930 of them Jewish refugees, among the last to escape from the Nazis' narrowing vise. Inscribed on each passport was a red "J," and in each mind, the memory of six years of ever-increasing terror. (p. 59)

All but 22 passengers held tourist visas issued by the Cuban Director-General of Immigration, which they had purchased for \$161 each. In addition, 734 of the passengers had already applied for visas to America and received quota numbers and had then been placed on the long waiting list

to enter the United States.

The ship set sail with the encouragement of the Nazi regime, which at that point was energetically promoting the emigration of Jews from Germany. In fact, some of the passengers had been released from the Dachau concentration camp (in which they had been imprisoned during the mass arrests of *Kristallnacht*) only upon pledging to leave Germany by a specified date.

The reason they could not be admitted to the US immediately was that in 1939, for the first time during President Roosevelt's years in office, the annual quota for immigrants from Germany was filled. In fact, it would be the only year during the Roosevelt presidency that the German quota was filled; during most years in the FDR era, less than 25% of the German quota places were used. This was because the administration piled on extra requirements to discourage and disqualify would-be immigrants. In the immediate aftermath of *Kristallnacht*, however, the president permitted the quota to be filled for the coming year. The passengers on the *St. Louis* thus considered it their good fortune to have qualified for entry to Cuba in the meantime.

Even before the *St. Louis* reached Havana, the government of Laredo Bru, wracked by internal disputes and sensitive to rising domestic antisemitism and nativism, invalidated the refugees' tourist visas. When the ship reached Cuba, the only passengers permitted to disembark were those 22 who had paid an extra \$500 fee for an immigration visa, in case the tourist document proved insufficient. The others were turned away.

Two American Jewish envoys, Lawrence Berenson of the American Jewish Distribution Committee (JDC) and Cecilia Razovsky of the National Coordinating Committee for Aid to Refugees, flew to Cuba on May 30 to negotiate with President Bru. Berenson was confronted with conflicting and steadily escalating monetary demands by Bru

and other Cuban officials. The JDC representative also feared that the terms would establish a precedent the Joint would be unable to underwrite in the future. Because of these factors, Berenson waited too long to give his final assent to Bru's terms. The Cuban leader called off the talks. The captain of the *St. Louis*, Gustav Schroeder (who subsequently was recognized by Yad Vashem as one of



FIG 3: Gustav Schroeder, captain of the *St. Louis*. Courtesy of The David S. Wyman Institute for Holocaust Studies.

the Righteous Among the Nations) [Fig. 3], still hoped for a last-minute agreement to spare the passengers a return to Germany, so instead of immediately sailing for Europe, on June 1 he steered a course north towards the coast of Florida.

THE UNANSWERED TELEGRAM

So close to the shore that they could see the lights of Miami, a committee representing the passengers sent a telegram to the White House, begging President Franklin Roosevelt, "Help them, Mr. President, the 900 passengers, of which more than 400 are women and children" [Fig. 4]. They received no reply.



FIG 4: Seven-year-old twin sisters, Ines and Renate Spanier, aboard the SS *St. Louis*. Courtesy of The David S. Wyman Institute for Holocaust Studies.

An unpublished memoir by Razovsky (1967), recently discovered by the Israeli scholar Bat-Ami Zucker, sheds some light on the administration's position. Describing the negotiations, Razovsky wrote: "We again at that time tried to get permission from Secretary of State Hull to take them but our State Department was unsympathetic and Franklin Delano was apathetic, although Eleanor did everything in her power to change their attitude" (p. 112).

Roosevelt administration officials instructed US diplomats in Cuba to keep their distance from the controversy. The president feared being seen as taking the lead in helping foreign refugees because of widespread isolationism and anti-immigration sentiment among the American public. The American Consul General in Havana, Coert du Bois, reported to Secretary of State Cordell Hull that Avra Warren, chief of the State Department's Visa Division, had told him "that under no circumstances" would Warren "or

the Secretary of State or the President give me or the American Ambassador in Habana any instructions to intervene in the matter of the landing of the *Saint Louis* nor, presumably, any other European refugees" (p. 3). Du Bois (1939) wrote that Warren

said he wanted to make the position of the Department perfectly clear in this matter and repeated these instructions twice, and corroborated me when I repeated them back to him. . . . He said he had had several interviews with Secretary Hull and that word had come from the White House, all to this effect.

Additional evidence of the Roosevelt administration's attitude may be found in a 1971 essay by Irwin Gellman in the *American Jewish Historical Quarterly*, which was the first scholarly treatment of the *St. Louis* episode. He quoted Assistant Secretary of State George Messersmith rebuffing an appeal from US Senator James Mead (Democrat of New York); Messersmith said the US should not intervene "in a matter of this kind which was one purely outside of our sphere and entirely an internal matter in Cuba" (p. 149).

Gellman noted that when the JDC's Berenson asked US Ambassador J. Butler Wright and Consul-General du Bois to accompany him to a meeting with the influential Cuban military chief Fulgencio Batista, "they refused to become involved in a situation which affected Cuban sovereignty and Laredo Bru's personal prestige" (p. 152).

State Department officials did briefly canvas some South American governments to see whether they would be of assistance. The Roosevelt administration did not shy away from asking other governments to do for refugees what it declined to do itself. Henry Feingold (1995) has noted that "Roosevelt's enthusiasm [for refugee resettlement schemes] appeared to grow the further away such projects were from the Western hemisphere" (p. 107). But State found no takers among its South American contacts, and refrained from exercising pressure on those regimes to admit the refugees. With the crisis escalating and attracting widespread news media attention, Assistant Secretary of State Sumner Welles eventually authorized Ambassador Wright to say something to Bru in support of the *St. Louis*. By then, though, the ship was well on its way back to Europe; it was too little and too late. US officials subsequently blamed the Jewish negotiators for the fiasco. Du Bois wrote to his colleagues that Berenson "and his co-religionists in New York" (the JDC leadership) were guilty of "horse-trading" (pp. 149–154) instead of seeking to save lives. Although the wisdom of Berenson's negotiating tactics may be debated, du Bois's remark, especially with the gratuitous reference to Berenson's "co-religionists," contains perhaps a passing nod to certain classic stereotypes about Jews.

THE VIRGIN ISLANDS SOLUTION

In the midst of the crisis, Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau, Jr., discussed with Secretary Hull a possible solution involving the Virgin Islands: Because the islands were a US territory and therefore not governed by the immigration quota system, the passengers might be admitted there, temporarily, as tourists. The Virgin Islands were just a few hours away from Florida; moreover, in the wake of *Kristallnacht*, the governor and legislative assembly of the islands had publicly offered to open their doors to German Jewish refugees.

Hull shot down the idea on the grounds that the *St. Louis* passengers did not have valid return addresses, a prerequisite for a tourist visa. However, the Roosevelt administration actually had more leeway on the tourist visa issue than it acknowledged. For example, since the passengers had been required to pay a return fare of \$81 in advance (in case they were turned away from Cuba), the administration could have chosen to consider that fact to be evidence they had somewhere to which they could return. Alternatively, the president could have taken action along the same lines as his post-*Kristallnacht* decision to extend the visas of 15,000 German Jews then in the United States as tourists, on the grounds that it was unsafe for them to return to Nazi Germany. Aiding the *St. Louis*, however, meant risking criticism from anti-immigration forces, and President Roosevelt was not willing to take that risk.

As the *St. Louis* slowly sailed back to Europe, JDC officials there successfully lobbied the governments of England, France, Belgium, and the Netherlands to each admit a portion of the passengers. A few US diplomats, such as Robert Pell of the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees, played a minor supporting role in this effort, but the JDC deserves the lion's share of the credit for finding havens.

The passengers of the *St. Louis* understandably rejoiced when they learned they were not returning to Germany. Even the detention facilities in which some of the passengers were placed in Belgium and Holland were far preferable to life under Hitler. Citing the passengers' initial expressions of relief, some contemporary Roosevelt supporters have argued that the refugees were, in effect, rescued from the Nazis. Yet the findings of Sarah A. Ogilvie and Scott Miller (2006) of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum suggest otherwise. They interviewed every living survivor of the ship for their book *Refuge Denied* and discovered that upon disembarking in continental Europe, many of the passengers quickly looked for ways to flee again.

Thus, for example, after Clark Blatteis and his parents reached Belgium, "Clark's mother wasted no time in applying for American visas" (p. 10). Michael Fink and his parents were sent to Holland, where his father immediately tried to scrape together enough money to buy per-

mits for them to become construction workers in Chile. A passenger named Bela (no last name provided) who was sent to France quickly departed for Hungary because, as he later explained, "After all, people knew the Nazis could invade France at any time" (p. 67). Warren and Charlotte Meyerhoff, taken to Holland, smuggled themselves out of the Westerbork detention facility and made their way back to Cuba. The *St. Louis* exhibit at the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York City includes additional anecdotes of this nature.

How many of the passengers of the *St. Louis* perished during the subsequent German occupation of their lands of refuge? Arthur Morse (1968) did not know—nobody at that early stage knew—and he did not pretend otherwise. He wrote, correctly, that

The only *St. Louis* passengers protected from the Nazi terror were those who had found sanctuary in Britain. Many—it is impossible to know how many—died in the German gas chambers following the Nazi invasion of Belgium, Holland, and France. (p. 299)

In 1974, journalist Gordon Thomas and television producer Max Morgan Witts published what has become the best-known book about the *St. Louis*, *Voyage of the Damned*. A 1976 film based on the book, costarring Faye Dunaway, played an important role in acquainting the public with the fate of the *St. Louis* and establishing it as the central symbol of America's response to the Holocaust. Highlighting the human dimension, Thomas and Witts reconstructed the story through personal vignettes gleaned from interviews with surviving passengers and crew members. Although their narrative was more fast-paced and dramatic than Morse's, they got the basic story right.² They noted that if the survival rate of the *St. Louis* passengers was similar to that of other Jews in Europe during the Holocaust, then nearly all of those who went to England would have survived, as would have most of those who went to France and Belgium, and about one-third of those who disembarked in Holland.³

By and large, mainstream historians have been appropriately cautious about the number of fatalities. Classic works in the field, such as David Wyman's *Paper Walls* (1968), Henry Feingold's *The Politics of Rescue* (1970), and Ronald Sanders's *Shores of Refuge* (1988), made no claims as to the death toll. The matter was finally resolved in the aforementioned study by Ogilvie and Miller. They found that of the 620 passengers who went to France, Belgium, or Holland, 87 emigrated shortly afterwards. Of the 533 who were still in those countries when the Germans invaded in 1940, 254, or about 48%, were murdered (pp. 174–175). The other passengers, who went to England, survived.

A NEW CONTROVERSY

In recent years, several authors have promoted a version of the *St. Louis* story much more favorable to President Roosevelt and his administration as part of a broader effort to reshape the public's view of FDR's response to the Holocaust. The most notable of these accounts appears in the 2013 book *FDR and the Jews*, by Richard Breitman and Allan Lichtman. They make the surprising claim that "there is no truth to the notion, found in some literature, that American officials ordered the coast guard to prevent any passengers from reaching American shores" (pp. 137–138).

The question of the Coast Guard is of some significance. Because neither President Roosevelt nor Secretary of State Hull made any public statement about the *St. Louis* during the crisis, the action of the Coast Guard constituted the only visible response by the United States government to the presence of the *St. Louis* in US waters. As Deborah Lipstadt (1986) has written: "The *only* action taken by the American government was the dispatch of a Coast Guard cutter when the ship was close to the shore of Miami" (p. 118). Likewise, Ogilvie and Miller note: "Several US Coast Guard cutters surrounded the vessel to make sure that none of the would-be émigrés attempted to swim for shore" (p. 3).



FIG 5: Political Cartoon. 1939. Courtesy of The David S. Wyman Institute for Holocaust Studies.

In March 2013, four *St. Louis* survivors issued a public statement challenging the Breitman–Lichtman claim:

We saw the Coast Guard planes that flew around the ship to follow its movements. We saw the Coast Guard cutter that trailed us and made sure the *St. Louis* did

not come close to the Florida coast. We heard the cutter blaring its warning to the *St. Louis* to stay away. Since the Coast Guard was carrying out its job of guarding the coast against anyone who tried to come close without permission, the Coast Guard planes and cutter had clearly been ordered to intercept the *St. Louis* and prevent any unauthorized landings of passengers. (SS *St. Louis* Legacy Project press release, March 17, 2013)

Further confirmation of the Coast Guard's role comes from the transcripts of Secretary Morgenthau's conversations with Secretary Hull about the *St. Louis*. In those discussions, Morgenthau made reference to his awareness that the Coast Guard was already trailing the *St. Louis*.

THE FORGOTTEN MAN

Unlike other aspects of America's response to the Holocaust, very little new information of significance about the *St. Louis* has emerged over the years.

At first glance, Breitman and Lichtman did appear to have uncovered a bombshell when they published their suggestion that the initial voyage of the *St. Louis* was part of a secret deal in which President Roosevelt had convinced Cuba to admit Jewish refugees; in exchange, he was to reduce tariffs on Havana's sugar exports to America. Breitman and Lichtman's source for this claim, however, turned out to be a celebrity gossip columnist, and more than a dozen leading scholars of US–Cuban relations and Cuban Jewry contacted by this author replied that they had never seen any evidence of a sugar-for-Jews deal.

As for the aforementioned Ogilvie–Miller study, it did flesh out some missing details, but the basic facts of the tragic voyage, the muddled negotiations, and the chilly US response, as first chronicled by Morse 45 years ago, have stood the test of time. The story of the *St. Louis* remains a powerful and instructive symbol of missed opportunities for rescue and reveals much about the president who presented himself as the champion of "the forgotten man" and yet seldom answered when desperate refugees knocked on America's door [Fig. 5].

The circumstances surrounding the *St. Louis* episode constitute almost a textbook case of the Roosevelt administration's prewar response to the plight of Europe's Jews. There was no doubt as to the danger the passengers faced if they were turned away; *Kristallnacht* had already demonstrated that. The refugees posed no danger to America's well-being; indeed, the vast majority had already qualified for eventual admission to the United States, meaning that even if they could not find jobs, friends or relatives had guaranteed they would not become dependent upon government assistance. Although the regular quota for German nationals was full in the spring of 1939, there was an

obvious solution at hand in the Virgin Islands, whose leaders had set an impressive moral example by unilaterally offering to open their doors to Jewish refugees. There also was considerable public sympathy for the passengers, as the many positive newspaper editorials at the time and the heartfelt letters of appeal in the files of the State Department attest [Fig. 6]. That is not to suggest there was sufficient sympathy to make possible liberalization of the immigration quotas, but there might have been enough—with some presidential leadership—to enable their temporary admission to a US territory out in the Caribbean.

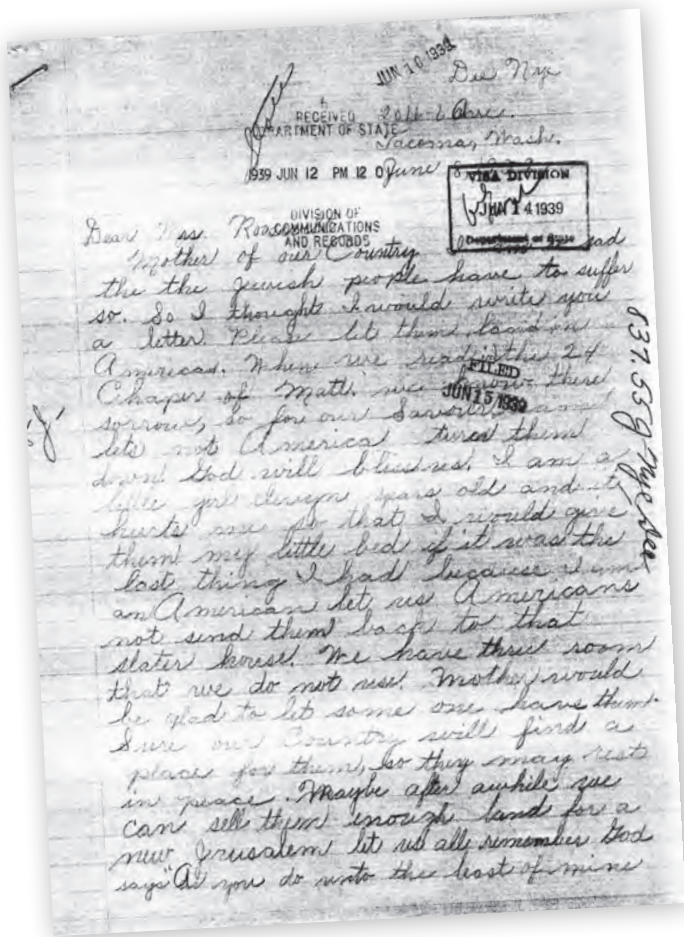


FIG 6: Letter to Eleanor Roosevelt asking her to let the *St. Louis* passengers land in America. Courtesy of The David S. Wyman Institute for Holocaust Studies.

The facts that lay before the Roosevelt administration during the *St. Louis* crisis offered the president a stark choice between, on the one hand, a policy of unnecessary stinginess and, on the other hand, a policy of minimal generosity, within the limits of the existing laws, that would have saved lives at no substantial political risk. In the case of the *St. Louis* passengers, the question of whether they had a safe return address was not black and white. The president, and his policy advisers, could have opted

to go either way. The return address problem had not stood in the way when Roosevelt was considering the fate of 15,000 German Jews who were in the United States in late 1938 on tourist visas. The president unilaterally extended their tourist status not because they needed more time to visit the Grand Canyon but because he recognized that in the wake of *Kristallnacht*, their return addresses were at least temporarily unsafe. He could have acted in the same spirit to enable the passengers of the *St. Louis* to land in the Virgin Islands even though they were not genuine tourists. All that was required in Washington was a little human desire to help and some creative thinking along the lines of the post-*Kristallnacht* “tourists.” Instead, the return address issue became the administration’s convenient device for blocking the admission of refugees even to those tiny, distant island specks.

The significant number of innocent lives lost when they could have been saved reminds us of the real-life consequences when government officials search for reasons to avoid extending a helping hand rather than aspire to the noble principles for which America has always stood that are inscribed on the Statue of Liberty. The voyage of the *St. Louis* remains, as former president Bill Clinton (2005) has put it, “one of the darkest chapters in United States history” (Eshman, p. 10).

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[1] Although many of the *St. Louis* passengers did ultimately die in Nazi gas chambers, many survived the Holocaust; the numbers are clarified in the text.

[2] The film likewise remained largely faithful to the historical record, despite its invention of a doomed romance between a Jewish passenger and a German crewman and its erroneous suggestion, in a note at its conclusion, that most of the passengers died in the Holocaust.

[3] Ironically, the statistics provided by popularizers Thomas and Witts were more accurate than those of some well-known historians who referred to the *St. Louis* in the years to follow. Howard M. Sachar (1992), for example, wrote that of the 621 passengers who went to France, Belgium, or Holland, “all but four perished.” Michael Berenbaum (1993) wrote that aside from those who were admitted to England, “only a few survived the Holocaust.” See *A History of the Jews in America*, by Sachar, 1992, New York: Knopf, p. 493; and *The World Must Know: The History of the Holocaust as Told in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, by Berenbaum, 1993, Boston: Little, Brown, p. 58.

Twenty Canadian educators chose Austria's infamous Castle Hartheim, a site of the Nazi T-4 euthanasia program, as the entry point to their Holocaust study tour because, guide and author Carson Phillips explains in this reflective overview, "It would compel us to grapple from the beginning with the deadly effects of Nazi racial theory and eliminationist antisemitism, a fatal combination that undergirds the Holocaust."

Carson Phillips

The Legacy of Hartheim: A Prelude to Teaching About the Holocaust

"The true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members."

—*Mahatma Ghandi*

As our motor coach drove through the pastoral countryside of Upper Austria, *Schloss* (Castle) Hartheim stood out from its rural surroundings, a silent witness to the dark chapter of Austria's National Socialist past. The castle's soaring Renaissance architecture makes it an instantly recognizable landmark, a beacon amidst the verdant farmland, in this least mountainous region in Austria [Fig. 1].



FIG. 1: *Schloss* Hartheim. Photo credit: Todd S. McLaughlin (tour participant).

Four polygonal towers anchor the symmetrical castle while a majestic, hemispherical dome adorns a central turret. Beneath the neatly symmetrical, pristine exterior lurks a murderous narrative: The castle was a site of T-4, the first orchestrated mass killings by the Nazis, in which the regime euthanized mentally and physically handicapped, including, from the outset, Jewish men, women and children.

We—20 Canadian teachers and curriculum consultants—visited Hartheim, now refurbished as an educational and teaching center, as part of the introductory segment of our Holocaust educators' study tour, to learn about its role in the Nazi industrialization of killing as well as its pre- and post-Holocaust functions. The castle was originally built in 1600 by Jakob von Aspan to be an aristocratic residence. In 1898, the owner, the prince of Starhemberg, donated the estate to the Upper Austrian Charity Association and it became an institute for children with mental and physical disabilities. Its large inner courtyard, numerous rooms, and relatively secluded position on a large lot made it an ideal setting for a care facility. It functioned in this capacity, under the stewardship of the Sisters of the Order of St. Vincent de Paul, until after the 1938 *Anschluss* of Austria.

Our guide into this sinister chapter of Austrian history was Mag. Martin Hagmayr¹ of Hartheim's Pedagogical Department. When the building was confiscated by the Nazis in 1939, he explained, some 200 children and 20 staff members, primarily Roman Catholic nuns, were moved to

other local institutions, and the castle was transformed into one of six Nazi killing centers that participated in the T-4 euthanasia program, thus code-named for the address of its headquarters in Berlin, *Tiergartenstrasse 4*. Castle Hartheim's renovation, including the installation of a gas chamber, was completed by mid-May 1940, and that spring, for the first time, handicapped patients were put to death there. Thus, the 200 children had only a brief respite. They were brought back to the newly renovated facility by the notorious "grey buses"—so named because of their dark grey color and windows darkened by black paint or curtains—and murdered by carbon monoxide gassing.

Today, the garage where the buses delivered patients is marked by a metal-paneled outline [see Fig. 1]. We stood where handicapped children disembarked to meet their death; the site had a profound impact on us. As history teacher Joanna Sampson (personal communication, August 28, 2013) commented:

The pre-program readings had only prepared me intellectually for what I was seeing; being on site . . . was visceral. [I realized] the complicity of those who stood by as the grey buses arrived full of the most vulnerable members of society and left empty, their passengers murdered.

In Hartheim, we learned, staff worked to find the most efficacious means of killing groups of people. Here murder progressed from the cumbersome method of lethal injections to the industrialized process of gassing patients in a specially constructed hermetic chamber. With its doctrine of racial superiority, adherents of National Socialist ideology believed that the so-called Aryan race had both the right and the responsibility to subjugate and even exterminate those deemed inferior. Thus began our encounter with the Nazis' murderous ideology, a prelude to the Final Solution. As Henry Friedlander (1995) observes:

The euthanasia killings proved to be the opening act of Nazi genocide. The mass murder of the handicapped preceded that of Jews and Gypsies; the final solution followed euthanasia. . . . The instigators had learned that individuals selected at random would carry out terrible crimes "without scruples." (p. 22)

Indeed, the euthanasia program carried out at Hartheim demonstrated that members of a modern society—doctors, nurses, bus drivers, attendants—could, without coercion, regardless of belief in the ideological goals of their actions, facilitate the mass killing of a group of identifiable people. Bus drivers drove the patients to the center, attendants assisted with boarding and disembarking, physicians examined the patients and condemned them to death,

medical receptionists documented those decisions, workers turned the spigot of the gas line and removed gold fillings from the cadavers: Each performed a task essential to the operation.

EXAMINING THE BLEAK REALITY

Critically examining this bleak reality encouraged us to deconstruct the victim-bystander-perpetrator paradigm. In doing so, we studied the terms *Hauptschuldige*, *Mitläufer*, and *Entlastete*, terms rooted in the post-war denazification process that German-language scholarship uses to describe individuals of varying degrees of involvement in the crimes of National Socialism. As Gregor Dallas (2005) explains: "*Hauptschuldige* were the principal guilty Nazis . . . *Mitläufer*, [literally] 'fellow-travellers,' who were not subject to any specific penalties; and *Entlastete*, those who were pardoned but were not considered innocent" (p. 613). As our understanding grew, we confronted the shades of gray on the continuum of complicity as we prepared to rethink our teaching.

The visit to Hartheim also allowed us to engage in historical, document-based learning. Of the wealth of archival documents available there, two affected us profoundly: first, Hitler's brief authorization letter [Fig. 2, p. 72], typed on his personal stationary, for the euthanasia program; second, a medical evaluation form [Fig. 3, p. 73] used by physicians to assess and select patients for medical murder. We studied both documents in the original German, and considered such questions as "Who might have composed or dictated them? Who might have typed them? What was the intent behind these documents? What can we discern from the letterhead?" We attempted to interpret the values and ethics of the creators of the documents, developing as we did so a grim understanding of their effect on the lives of tens of thousands of innocents.

Hitler's letter bears his signature and personal stamp and is dated September 1, 1939; his authorization coincides with the day World War II began. Yet, what the document does not divulge—thus forcing us to do the crucial work of contextualizing its history—is the fact that the date it bears is not when it was written, which in fact was October of that year. According to Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wipperman (1991), that it was backdated suggests some unease among T-4 operatives about the illegality of their actions until that time. This simple note, then, served as official authorization both to murder and to re-order the population of the Reich along officially sanctioned parameters. War would not only alter the international status of the Reich but also herald "domestic purification," as Friedlander (1995) points out.

The English translation, attributed to staff working at the Nuremberg Trials with the United States Chief of Counsel for the Prosecution of Axis Criminality, reads:

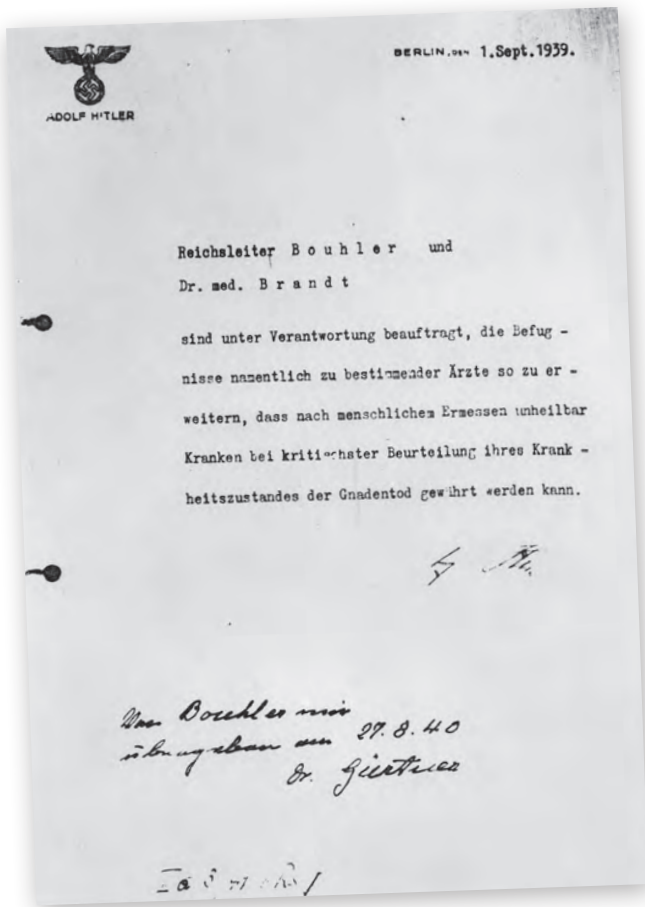


FIG. 2: Euthanasia authorization note. Credit: Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes.

Berlin, 1. September 1939.

Reichsleiter Bouhler and Dr. Brandt, M.D., are charged with the responsibility of enlarging the authority of certain physicians to be designated by name in such a manner that persons who, according to human judgment, are incurable can, upon a most careful diagnosis of their condition of sickness, be accorded a mercy death.

(signed) A. Hitler

After our initial inquiry into the original document, we conducted a deeper analysis, considering the meaning, intent, and ramifications of the note. Contextualizing the document provides an important link between the endorsement at the highest levels of the Nazi hierarchy of mass killing as a means of eliminating those who did not fit the National Socialist ideal, and the Nazi decision to annihilate the Jews of Europe. In the National Socialist state, euthanasia was not authorized through any parliamentary or judicial system, nor were the needs of the patient con-

sidered. Rather, as Friedlander (1995) underscores, authorization was granted by the Führer's personal note, which served as the legal basis for the operation. Once the moral and ethical barriers to deciding which individuals may live and who must die were crossed, the foundation was laid for the ultimate outcome of eliminationist antisemitism. Indeed, many of the personnel involved in the T-4 program were enlisted to bring their particular expertise to the murder of Jews in Poland and Eastern Europe: "The killers who learned their trade in the euthanasia killing centers of Brandenburg, Grafeneck, Hartheim, Sonnenstein, Bernberg, and Hadamar also staffed the killing centers at Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka" (Friedlander, 1995, p. 22). Burleigh and Wippermann (1991) also have documented this:

Ninety-two ex-T-4 personnel were given a crash course at the SS training camp at Trawniki and then deployed in the context of "Aktion Reinhard" to run the technical side of the extermination camps Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka. . . . The lists of camp staff read like a roll-call of former T-4 operatives, with Christian Wirth (the commandant of Belzec, formerly Hartheim and Hadamar); Franz Stangl (the commandant of Sobibor and Treblinka, formerly Hartheim); Franz Reichleitner (the commandant of Sobibor, formerly Hartheim), and so forth. (p. 166)

During our critical examination of Hitler's authorization note, we noticed that, despite the Nazis' elaborate pretense that these murders were, in some way, of medical necessity, absent was any reference to the expressed wishes of the patients or their parents, spouses, or legal guardians, and that the document implies that the victim's family members need not be informed that a decision to "grant a mercy killing" to their loved one had been made. Public opinion, however, was vital to the National Socialist regime, who actively sought to mold it to their ideology. In 1940 they commissioned an entertainment film that dealt favorably with the medical murder of mentally and physically handicapped individuals. The result was *Ich klage an* (Tobis Filmkunst, dir. Wolfgang Liebeneiner, 1941), an emotional and melodramatic fictional narrative of Hanna Heyt who, suffering from the onset of multiple sclerosis, accepts euthanasia facilitated by her physician spouse. While *Ich klage an* was a commercial success, it remained a thinly veiled propagandistic attempt to sway public opinion in favor of this deadly practice.

When we paired Hitler's authorization note with the medical evaluation form—dated August 7, 1940, less than one year after the start of the Second World War—[Fig. 3], we saw clearly how medical professionals became the final arbiters of life and death for handicapped patients. Hitler's

authorization note makes reference to the human judgment of “certain physicians to be designated by name” who were charged with carrying out the decision-making process. Those physicians made a notation in the bottom left corner box of the evaluation form, under the term “treatment” (“Bemerkungen”). A red plus mark indicated a decision to kill the patient; a blue minus indicated that the patient should remain alive. Three plus symbols by three separate physicians were required to issue a warrant for euthanasia. Where a unanimous decision could not be obtained, the patient was kept under observation until another attempt was made to find unanimity.

While an examination of this medical evaluation form gives us some understanding of the doctors’ involvement, it provides limited insight about the victim. Although her surname is blocked out in accordance with privacy laws, we know this individual was named Klara B. She resided at *Kluckygasse 5* in the 20th district of Vienna. Her mother, Ida B., lived on *Herminengasse* in the second district of Vienna, close to the historic city center. We know she was Jewish; the form includes the designation “Sara” after her first name in accordance with a German anti-Jewish law implemented in Austria after the *Anschluss*. The medical data recorded on the form indicate that Klara

B. had been diagnosed with schizophrenia and hospitalized on three previous occasions (1934, 1937, and 1938) for treatment. Among the most disturbing parts of the form may be the three red plus marks, indicating that Klara B. was selected to be killed. Equally distressing is the section on the evaluation form with the typed word *unbrauchbar* (useless), used to evaluate the patient’s state of health, response to treatment, and overall prognosis.

THE VOICES OF THOSE WHO WERE LOST

In studying such documents, we had to keep in mind that they were written by the perpetrators and thus provide valuable evidence about the crimes of National Socialism but do not offer the perspective of those who were murdered. In addition, these forms provide only a brief overview of those individuals; much information remains lost to us. Bringing into the discussion the voices of those whose lives were cut short must remain the focus of our pedagogical approach, and our visit to Hartheim offered a unique opportunity to learn something about them. Few survived the efficiency of the industrial process or left diaries or letters behind to serve as their personal testimony. During the restoration of Hartheim, though, a cache of approximately 8,000 personal objects was unearthed on the castle grounds, and a representative assortment is displayed in showcases, serving as a silent memorial [Fig. 4, p. 74].

In addition to these discrete objects, a large mass of earth is displayed in a glass vitrine, exactly as it was excavated. To discern the individuality of the items in that mass requires the viewer to pause, seek out familiar shapes and forms, and actively engage with the display through inquiry-based learning.

One of the most intriguing artifacts discovered at Hartheim is a spoon engraved with a Star of David on one side and Hebrew letters on the other [Fig. 5, p. 74].

We could determine only limited information about the utensil’s original owner. We could see the Hebrew letters *yod*, *shin*, and *peh*; they may be his or her initials, engraved by a parent or spouse as an expression of love and as a reminder to the loved one, away from home, of his or her Jewish heritage. We know only that this artifact belonged to a Jew killed in Hartheim; additional information about him or her remains a mystery.

The aged spoon is emblematic of the contemporary mission of Hartheim: to return identity to as many of the victims as possible. There is little testimony or documentation from relatives; the stigma associated with mental illness that lingered for decades after the Second World War meant that even surviving family members were often reluctant to speak or write about their experiences with the T-4 program. While researchers have identified approximately 16,000 of Hartheim’s 18,000 victims by name, some identities may never be recovered from the abyss of

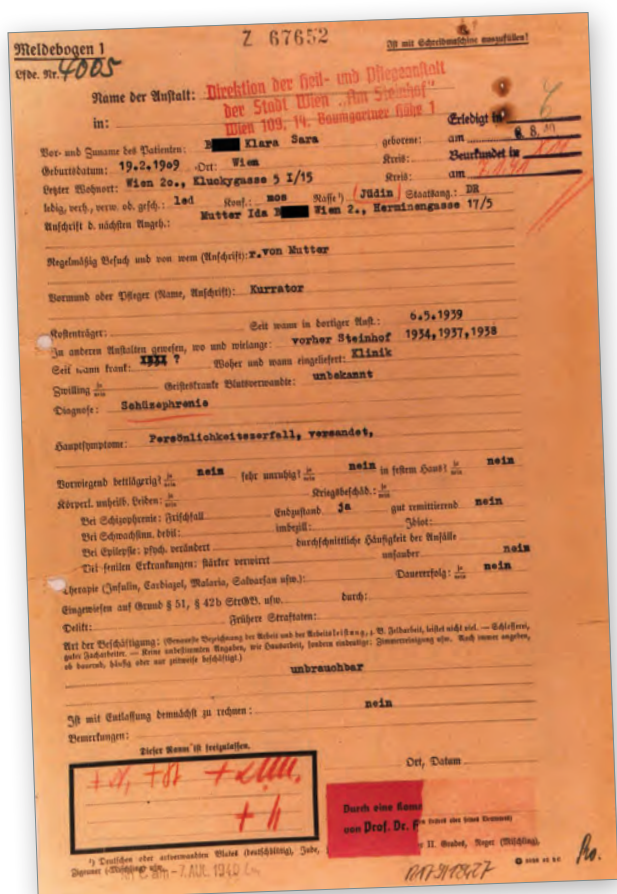


FIG. 3: Medical assessment form. Credit: Bundesarchiv, Germany.



FIG. 4: Personal objects unearthed. Photo credit: Todd S. McLaughlin (tour participant).

anonymity that the T-4 program created.

We all found Hartheim to be a meaningful entry point to our study of the Holocaust. English and drama teacher Michael Luchka (August 31, 2013, personal communication) noted, “Walking down stone corridors and into the rooms where victims’ lives were erased with a physician’s signature . . . was unsettling. I continue to struggle to understand human behavior, how people can treat others so inhumanely.” Engaging with document-based learning, critical inquiry, and knowledgeable and helpful site guides in this historic castle allowed us to struggle with Nazi ideology, racial science, and antisemitism. The enduring understandings we took away from our encounter coalesced around the value of including in our teaching respect for the sanctity of life, the T-4 program as a prelude to the Final Solution, and the complicity of ordinary men and women in the day-to-day operations at Hartheim.

Indeed, to visit Castle Hartheim is to encounter one of the most disturbing episodes of human history. Hartheim was the site of the murder of some 18,000 people. At all six T-4 sites combined, over 70,000 murders were medically authorized.

In August 1941, Hitler ordered a halt to the T-4 program, in part due to opposition voiced by a few religious leaders, notably the Bishop of Münster, Clemens August Count von Galen. That von Galen never applied his sense of social consciousness to condemn the deportation of Jews from German towns and cities, however, is both unsettling and shameful. As Beth Griech-Polelle (2002) has convincingly argued, von Galen, who won “international acclaim for his very public denunciations of euthanasia and Nazi neopaganism, like so many of his colleagues,

maintained his silence concerning the fate of the Jews, even when he had verifiable proof that deportation meant death” (p. 97). Despite the opposition and the reprieve ordered by Hitler, the Nazi euthanasia program continued under a greater degree of secrecy, in a decentralized form. Described by historians as “wild euthanasia,” the final phase of this program continued until the end of the war. As Friedlander (1995) writes, “After the stop order, physicians and nurses killed handicapped adults with tablets, injections, and starvation. In fact, more victims of euthanasia perished after the stop order was issued than before” (p. 151).

“THE VALUE OF LIFE” CAFÉ

After encountering such unsettling history, we were aided in transitioning back to the contemporary world by a visit to *Café Lebenswert* (Value of Life Café), integrated into one of the historic buildings on the grounds of the castle. Part of the nearby *Institut Hartheim*, the cafe is a place of restitution of sorts: In a clear attempt to redress past crimes, today it provides employment and educational opportunities for physically and mentally challenged individuals. English teacher Catherine Gitzel (September 8, 2013, personal communication) found it “beautiful and life-affirming to encounter—and speak with—handicapped individuals and to witness the success of inclusion and integration.” When we finally departed, we carried with us the weight of the questions that we need to address about the relationship of the T-4 program to the murder of Jews and a new understanding of the value of life—a firm foundation for the study of the Holocaust.



FIG. 5: Spoon with Hebrew inscription, Star of David (not visible) on reverse. Credit: *Dokumentationsstelle Hartheim des OÖLA*.

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WEBSITE REFERENCES FOR FURTHER LEARNING

The war against the inferior: On the history of Nazi medicine in Vienna, www.gedenkstaettesteinhof.at/en/interviews: An online exhibition with video interviews and English transcripts collected from 12 survivors of the notorious *Spiegelgrund* facility in Vienna.

Documentation Centre of Austrian Resistance (DÖW), <http://www.doew.at/english>: Offers an extensive collection of photographs and documents, as well as a database of Austrian victims of the Holocaust.

German History in Documents and Images, www.germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org: A valuable collection of primary source documents, including the 1941 written testimony of Lily Offenbacher sharing her knowledge of the so-called euthanasia program with the U.S. Coordinator of Information.

<http://www.schloss-hartheim.at/index.php/en/>: Information available in English and German on the remembrance and educational activities of Castle Hartheim.

[1] Mag.: contraction for *Magister* commonly used in Austria as an honorific denoting that the individual has attained the equivalent of a Master's degree.

[2] The other T-4 killing centers were Brandenburg, near Berlin (a memorial comprised of a 30-meter blue glass wall is set to open there in the fall of 2014); Grafeneck, in southwestern Germany; Bernburg and Sonnenstein, in Saxony; and Hadamar, in Hessen. Hartheim was the only facility located in Austria.

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Dr. Phillips, a member of our board, was selected as the recipient of the 2013 BMW Canada Award for Excellence by the Canadian Center for German and European Studies (CCGES). This most prestigious award recognizes the very high quality of his academic work and the originality and scholarly merit of his Ph.D. research, as well as his ongoing engagement at the CCGES and his outstanding contributions to the Sarah and Chaim Neuberger Holocaust Education Centre of UJA Federation of Greater Toronto.

"I wrote this poem," explains Louis Daniel Brodsky, "after reading about a Parisian woman, Eliane Dommange, who is so traumatized by what the Nazis did to her family that she still cannot enjoy the simple pleasure of eating green peas. I employ the apathetic words 'it hardly matters' to show that, in the end, it does indeed matter that she be able to eat green peas again, that it indeed matters that justice and human decency prevail."

Louis Daniel Brodsky

Green Peas

It is important to establish guilt, "so that my parents did not die in vain."
—Eliane Dommange, in USA Today, October 6, 1997

It hardly matters that her name is Eliane Dommange
Or that, in 1942,
She was 8 years old,
Eating green peas in her family home in Bordeaux, France,
When the local police of the Gironde region,
Under immitigable orders from their supervisor,
Maurice Papon —
Just another of the numerous French opportunists
Collaborating with the wartime regime
Based in Pétain's Vichy stronghold —
Invaded her house, arrested her parents
For deportation to the gas chambers at Auschwitz,
Left her bereft, in a matter of seconds,
An orphan, one of an estimated 2500
Who, by some quirk of fate, survived,
Wasn't among the 75,000 Jewish men, women, children
Stuffed into Canaan trains bound for ingloriousness
(Spared the fate of the more than 1500 Jews,
Torn from Bordeaux's *purlieus*,
Whom this future minister of the budget
In the cabinet of President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing,
Personally had rounded up —

Reportedly “with initiative, zeal, and inhumanity” —
Even before receiving German orders to do so,
And sent to their doom).

No, it hardly matters at all
That this woman in her mid-sixties
Still can't eat green peas,
Gets nauseated when she sees them on a plate,
And can't help recalling, with terrifying vividness,
Those French youths, in French uniforms,
Who invaded her French house
(That fortress, bastion, moated château
Her 8-year-old imagination had constructed
To guard her against the barbarians from the north),
Routed out her French mother and father,
Who just happened to practice Judaism,
And shoved them into death-convoys,
This woman who would eventually grow to maturity,
In her native country, where until the 1980s
All state high-school children, she included,
Were taught, in their history books,
That only Germans arrested French Jews during the occupation,
Not that 80% of the arrests were Vichy-initiated . . .
Where not until last week —
Last week, early October 1997 —
Did the French Catholic Church
Admit its bishops had been wrong to preach silence
Even as the roundup of Jews
Proceeded in public view, under their upturned noses.

It hardly matters (or does it?)
That Eliane Dommange receive justice,
So her parents will not have died in vain,
That she, the French people, the world,
Face the historic truth of our moral shortcomings,
The never-ceasing crimes we perpetrate against our own kind —
Mankind, womankind, humankind . . .
That this humble lady,
Weeping in her Paris apartment, after all these years,
Weeping while being interviewed by the zealous media
(Six hundred strong, gathered, there in Paris,
At the start of Maurice Papon's trial),
Weeping as she confesses she still doesn't understand
How people can be condemned because of their religion
("I keep asking myself one question: 'Why? Why?'" . . .
That this survivor, someday before she dies,
Eat *petits pois* without flinching, wincing, choking
And taste their delicious sweetness again.

PRISM art editor Pnina Rosenberg introduces us to Israeli artist Dani Karavan and Nuremberg artists Ursula Rössner and Jürgen Eckart, who share the common goal of “founding a solid base for a more just and moral society on [Nuremberg’s] ghostly ruins and remains.” Pair this with Valerie Hébert’s essay (pp. 85–91) on using the Nuremberg and other post-Holocaust trials in a graduate school classroom. Do such “ghostly remains” form the null curriculum of every Holocaust unit of study?

Pnina Rosenberg

Reshaping Haunted Nuremberg: From the City of Nazi Party Rallies to the Street of Human Rights

A zoom-in of the huge swastika that crowns the Zeppelin—the gigantic Nuremberg Grounds tribune—serves as the background to the rolling titles at the beginning of the film *Judgment at Nuremberg* (1961). At its end, there appears on the screen a massive bombardment of the swastika, an event that actually happened on April 22, 1945, when the US Army blew up the Nazi emblem, a symbolic act meant to convey to the world the message that Nazism had been destroyed (Brockmann, 2006, p. 220). The Nuremberg Nazi Party Rally Grounds, representing Nazi shaping of public opinion during the Third Reich and its partial erasure, are the two facets that postwar Nuremberg confronts.

The city’s efforts to come to terms with its Nazi legacy, including the Nuremberg Laws (1935) and the Nazi Party rallies (1933–1938), are openly manifested in architectural landmarks such as the Palace of Justice (constructed before the Nazi era but one of the main relics of the infamous laws) and the Zeppelin tribune, which were and are gradually being transformed into educational/memorial/museological institutions. They are part of the metamorphosis from the City of Nazi Party Rallies into the City of Human Rights, symbolically represented by the *Way of Human Rights* created by the Israeli artist Dani Karavan (1995). Thus, the haunted city does not efface the icons of its Nazi history but rather uses them, as a means both to memorialize the past and to deliver its present, humanistic message. The dual presence of Nuremberg’s “undesirable past” (Macdonald, 2006, pp. 9–10) and its re-shaped postwar image are the focus of this paper.

NUREMBERG: STAGING THE NAZI PARTY’S TOUR DE FORCE

After the Nazis rose to power in 1933, Hitler declared that Nuremberg would be the city of Nazi Party rallies (it had already served as such in 1927 and 1929), thus embedding the new rising power into the city’s glorious past and legacy (Brockmann, 2009, pp. 133, 141). The annual Nuremberg party rallies, held for about a week each September from 1933 until 1938, were among the most vehement vehicles of Nazi propaganda and served to introduce and reinforce, visually, audibly, and sensually, the party’s ideology. These manifestations of power were based on a structured pattern: They began with the arrival of the Führer and ended with his departure, while in between each day was dedicated to a different theme, such as the Day of Community, Day of Political Leaders, Day of Hitler Youth, and Day of the Army (Brockmann, 2006, pp. 152–153). The half-million people who came to Nuremberg to attend these events, who more than doubled the city’s population (400,000), were a most receptive and enthusiastic public that, coming from all over Germany, embodied the unholy trinity—the unity of the German people, the Nazi Party, and Hitler (Brockmann, 2006, p. 153).

To design an appropriate setting for those grand annuals, meant to be an ultimate glorification of the Führer as the leader of the party and the nation and to promote the idea of Germany as a united and unified national community, Albert Speer, Hitler’s architect, was commissioned to draft a monumental plan for the Nazi Party Rally Grounds. His plans included, among other initiatives, the

Zeppelin Grandstand and the Zeppelin Field, open-air spaces modeled after the monumental second-century Greek Pergamon Altar (whose fragments can be appreciated at the Berlin Pergamon Museum). The Rally Grounds could accommodate up to 100,000 Nazi members and adherents, who gathered there to hear Nazi leaders' speeches, notably Hitler's. Thus, for several years, Nuremberg's old city and new grounds served, for about a week, as the arena for the ultimate manifestation of increasing Nazi power.

JUDGMENT AT NUREMBERG: LEGISLATION, TERROR, AND JUSTICE

During the annual Party Rally, Nuremberg became the *de facto* capital of Germany, mainly due to the presence of Hitler and the elite of the Nazi establishment, military and civilian alike. Hence, it was almost inevitable that on September 15, 1935, during the Seventh Party Rally (September 10–16, 1935), the German Reichstag (parliament) would hold a meeting in the city and passed the infamous, racist Nuremberg Laws. This legislation, which deprived German Jews of most political rights and prohibited them from marrying or having sexual relations with Germans, was a significant step towards Jewish exclusion from all spheres of life, eventually leading to their annihilation.

After the Nazi defeat, when Allied forces hesitated among Leipzig, Luxembourg, and Berlin as the appropriate location for the military tribunal, it is not surprising that they finally chose Nuremberg as the seat of the Nazi trials, mainly for pragmatic and symbolic reasons: the massive Palace of Justice, almost intact despite the Allied bombardment that had destroyed large portions of the city; its adjoining prison, which could house the defendants; and the fact that it was the City of the Nazi Party Rallies and the cradle of the infamous racial laws, which would give the trials a greater aura of poetic justice (Brockmann, 2006, pp. 237–239).

The Nuremberg Trials, held between 1945 and 1949, triggered both great polemic activity and intense interest. A highly charged dramatic event, it was and remains a rich source of inspiration for books, plays, and films, including the Oscar Award-winning *Judgment at Nuremberg*. [see Valerie Hébert, pp. 85–91—Ed.].

FROM THE MEMORIUM NUREMBERG TRIALS TO THE WAY OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Judgment at Nuremberg, filmed in black-and-white to enhance its documentary character, was produced in a Hollywood studio. Although artificial, the setting of the cinematic courtroom scenes, which encompass most of the film, resembles Courtroom 600 of the Palace of Justice on *Führer Strasse*, where the historical Nuremberg Trials took place. In August 1945, having requisitioned and begun to renovate the entire Palace of Justice, for the trials, the

Americans constructed an additional visitors' gallery and removed the back wall of Courtroom 600 to accommodate the masses of reporters and camera crews they sought to attract to cover the unprecedented event. In 1961, after handing the room back to the Germans, all alterations were reversed, and the famous venue regained its original layout. It is still used for major trials today (Schmidt & Christmeier, n.d.).

The unceasing public interest in Courtroom 600 encouraged the Museum of the City of Nuremberg to turn the former Nazi tribunal into a permanent memorial. The Documentation Centre at the Party Rally Grounds took charge of the challenging project, and a new Memorium opened its doors in 2010 in the attic of the Palace of Justice, exhibiting the legal persecution of Nazi criminals in Germany and abroad as well as the legacy of the Nuremberg Trials, including the International Criminal Court in the Hague. Courtroom 600 has become the highlight of the exhibition [Fig. 1].

Once the spectator enters this charged space, he is carried away by the wings of history. As with the experience one undergoes while visiting the Zeppelin Grounds, a journey into the past is unavoidable—a voyage leaving impressions based simultaneously on the actual site and, for those who have seen the film, on the acquired memory derived from *Judgment at Nuremberg*, although, as mentioned, the filmic Courtroom 600 was nothing but a Hollywood set. Political scientist Bernd Mayerhofer (2011) summarizes his experience:

The visitor does not learn anything really new. Nor, of course, was this to have been expected. Most of the information is known and easy to obtain. Yet the Memorium is still needed, because it combines the auratic “power of place” with the “power of words,” and this then with the power of images, in a suggestive and informative context, thus filling a gap in the existing practices of remembrance and memorial. (n.p.)

The goal of the memorial is not only to create a somewhat haunting yet memorable experience but also to be an educational institution at whose core is the Nuremberg Heritage, i.e., “the development of modern international criminal law and human rights education” (Memorium Nuremberg Trials, n.d.)—an ambition that goes hand-in-hand with Nuremberg's gradual transformation from the City of Nazi Party Rallies into the City of Peace and Human Rights.

THE WAY OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Following the expansion in the 1980s and 1990s of the Nuremberg Germanic National Museum, which first opened to the public in 1853, its directorship launched a competition in which artists submitted proposals to rede-

sign the previously insignificant *Kartäussergasse* (Kartäusser Street) as the museum's main entrance. Dani Karavan, an Israeli artist whose numerous outdoor installations and memorials in Israel and abroad have gained him international renown, was the unanimous winner. The project, titled *The Way of Human Rights* (in German, *Strasse der Menschenrechte*, The Street of Human Rights), is comprised of 27 white concrete pillars, two white concrete arches, and an oak tree stretching to the old city wall and flanked by two white concrete arches [Figs. 2–4]. On each is engraved an article from the 1948 United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Brookman, 2006, pp. 261–265; Macdonald, 2009, pp. 129–131), in German and in languages of a people who suffered discrimination, including Yiddish, Dutch, French, English, Russian, Arabic, Tibetan, Zulu, and Japanese [Fig. 4].

The Way of Human Rights opened in July 1993. According to Stephan Brookman's (2006) rich and original survey of Nuremberg's different and sometimes contrasting layers, it is

an intervention in the urban design of Nuremberg, inscribing the universal declaration of human rights into the landscape of the city itself. At the same time, it forced anyone going into the major museum of German history and identity to physically walk through the declaration of human rights. With the erection of this monument . . . Nuremberg and its fathers were trying to transform their city from the city of the Nazis' Nuremberg Laws into a city of human rights. (p. 262)



FIG. 1: Students visiting the Memorium at the Palace of Justice, Nuremberg (background photography documents the Nuremberg Trials, 1945–1948). Credit: Memorium Nuremberg Trials. Photographer: Dr. Astrid Betz.



FIG. 2: Dani Karavan, *The Way of Human Rights*, Nuremberg, overview. Credit: Human Rights Office, City of Nuremberg. Photographer: Christine Dierenbach.



FIG. 3: Dani Karavan, *The Way of Human Rights*, Nuremberg: an arch. Credit: Human Rights Office, City of Nuremberg. Photographer: Christine Dierenbach.



FIG. 4: Dani Karavan, *The Way of Human Rights*, Nuremberg: pillars. Credit: Human Rights Office, City of Nuremberg. Photographer: Lothar Mantel.

Karavan's work creates a multi-leveled dialogue, not only with Nuremberg's "difficult history" (Macdonald, 2009, p. 1) and with Germany's 19th-century "romantic nationalism within which the museum was founded" (p. 130), but also with two artistic poles. On one hand, it evokes the sixth-century BC Athenian *agora* (or forum), a central public space in the city, flanked by remains of columns, gates, and various religious and civic institutions such as temples and law courts. The *agora* served as the center of political and public life, and it was there that four meetings were held every month to pass legislation and discuss various topics relating to the Athenian city-state, the cradle of democracy (Mee, 2011, pp. 62–67).

On the other hand, *The Way of Human Rights* contrasts, perhaps deliberately, with another of Karavan's *oeuvres*, the 1994 *Passages* memorial he erected in memory of Walter Benjamin (1892–1940), the German-Jewish philosopher and literary critic who hoped in vain to find refuge in France after being stripped of his rights as a German citizen and declared stateless according to the Nuremberg Laws. This memorial is located in seaside town of Portbou, on the Spanish-French border. It was there that Benjamin died in 1940, following his abortive attempt to escape the Nazi and Vichy regimes through the Pyrenees Mountains (Fittko, 1991, pp. 103–115).

Karavan's *Passages*, built only one year after his *Way of Human Rights*, encourages the visitor to descend a 33-meter claustrophobic flight of steps enclosed between dark walls, (mis)leading one towards a glass panel that prevents passage to the sea [Fig.5]. The natural light that



FIG. 5: Dani Karavan, *Passages*, Portbou. Photograph: Julie Higashi.

comes from the back casts the shadow of the visitor on the glass, which seems drawn into the waves of the sea. At the glass screen that protects the visitor from falling into the abyss are a bullet hole and an engraving of Benjamin's own prescient words:

"It is more difficult to honor the memory of the anonymous than that it is to honor the memory of the famous The historical construction is dedicated to the memory of the anonymous" (Benjamin, 2003, p. 406).

The contrast between the open, navigable Mediterranean and the claustrophobic dead end reflects and represents the trapped, persecuted fugitives, who hoped, to no avail, for a passage, an escape from Nazi terror. The memorial's title is not only a tribute to those persecuted by the Nazi regime but also an homage to Benjamin's last monumental research, *The Arcades Project* (*Passagen-Werk*) (Tiedemann, 1999), a most significant cultural criticism anchored in Benjamin's reflection of 19th-century Parisian glass and iron-covered arcades—in French, *passages*—written between 1927 and 1940 and published posthumously.

Karavan adopted an approach akin to Benjamin's own, connecting the traces of past pain, memory, and exile. . . . The memorial incorporates a number of the thinker's concepts . . . [including] the philosophy of history, the necessity of experience, the idea of limit, the landscape as aura, and the necessity of memory. (Walter Benjamin in Portbou, n.d.)

While Karavan's *Way of Human Rights*, with its wide, open arcades on each side, enables freedom of movement and circulation, his *Passages*, contrary to its title, evokes a suffocating trap that impedes any movement except a one-way route to death. Thus the comparison between these two memorials portrays clearly the different fates of those whose civic and human rights are ensured and those persecuted German Jews who were designated undesirables by the Nuremberg Laws, stripped of all rights, and doomed to annihilation.

THE STREET OF CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

During the 1993 opening of Karavan's Nuremberg monument, it was announced that the city would establish a biennial human rights awards, a vision that has since been realized and gained momentum. Since 2000, a Human Rights Office, established as part of the office of the mayor of Nuremberg, has initiated and organized various activities. One of the most interesting manifestations of the city's current interest in human rights is its preoccupation with the next generation, as vividly illustrated by the Street of Children's Rights project, which seeks to publicize, visually and playfully, the results of the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. To this end, Nuremberg artists Ursula Rössner and Jürgen Eckart (2007) have created, with the cooperation of Nuremberg's children, seven colorful sculptures and installations serving as stations in the *Street of Children's Rights*.



FIG. 6: Ursula Rössner and Jürgen Eckart, *Tortoise—Right to Health and an Intact Environment*, Street of Children's Rights, Nuremberg. Courtesy of Ursula Rössner. Photographer: Jürgen Eckart.

A tortoise [Fig. 6] represents children's right to health and an intact environment; a play lane, the right to play at leisure time; an amphitheater, freedom of expression. Other playful figures represent the right to equal treatment and the right to privacy and intimacy; a sculpture of a parent represents the right to parental care; and an advertising pillar, children's right to information.

The project was initiated in 2005 by the city's Children's Committee and inaugurated by the mayor in 2007 in a ceremony attended by children, the artists, and Karavan, who agreed to act as the patron of the project, guiding the artists and addressing the public at various inaugurations. The stations, situated in a much-frequented public space, "bring children, young people, and adults face to face with the importance of children's rights in an unobtrusive manner . . . in a playful and sensuous experience of children's rights," proclaims the municipal website (Human Rights Office, n.d.).

Artist Ursula Rössner (2013) discussed the process of the creation of the stations:

Jürgen Eckart and I are working for many years as a team conceptualizing and developing art projects for children . . . [including] the "Street of Children's Rights" in Nurnberg. Starting in 2006, we planned

and carried out five stations (one of them the *Tortoise*) over a period of three years. We worked with some groups of children between seven and 12 years of age . . . brainstorming and discussing the ideas with them. Every station we planned should not only be a piece of art but also something to play with or to make use of for the small (and grown-up) visitors. After one idea was chosen, we made a model together with the children . . . and then looked for the best ways of technical and artistic realization. The children contributed as much as possible to the work—mostly design and painting or doing the easier parts of the mosaic of the tortoise.

Over the course of two generations, the infamous city has gradually come to present a different face. The bestial has been replaced by humanity; mass blind obedience has given way to individual democratic rights.

METAMORPHOSING RELICS OF THE EVIL

Nuremberg is a multilayered space whose past echoes resonate. Its architectural legacy, enhanced by its filmic representations,

maintains a vivid dialogue with its new spirit and displays a remarkable effort to combine both. Public space and collective memory reflect the simultaneous co-existence of past and present; thus, in a dynamic process, the visitor sometimes retreats to one to enable the other to surface. This dual and inseverable bond requires full consciousness of the dark period and a wish to redeem it, a process that is occurring through acknowledgement and education, using the sinister icons of the past both as instructive archaeological sites and as centers of contemporary documentation, memory, and study. The Zeppelin Grounds and Courtroom 600 at the Palace of Justice serve as overwhelming case studies in which one can visualize the past and, at the same time, defy it through the instructive programs they offer. In parallel, Nuremberg is challenging its Nazi legacy by turning itself into the City of Human Rights, an ongoing process that began with Karavan's *Way of Human Rights* and is rapidly progressing in a variety of fields including art and research.

The cradle of the 1935 Nuremberg Laws is pursuing the opposite path, a metamorphosis achieved not by ignoring the city's sordid heritage but by building on its ghostly remains the foundations of a more just and moral society. Nuremberg's Nazi-era relics serve as a constant reminder both of evil and of Germany's current attempts to combat it.

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"The concept of Primo Levi's 'gray zone' has inspired my concept for a course on the Holocaust using postwar trial-related materials," explains Valerie Hébert. "The moral ambiguity of his essay's subject matter and his admonishment to think without judgment reflect a privilege that I as a historian, and other scholars in the humanities, take for granted. It is a privilege of which our students also should be aware."

Valerie Hébert

Teaching the Holocaust with Postwar Trials

A year before his death, Primo Levi (1989), a survivor and memoirist of Auschwitz, wrote an essay he called "The Gray Zone."¹ It explores a particular spectrum of Holocaust-era figures who defy the categories that help to sort, define, and thereby make more comprehensible the events and experiences of the Holocaust (victim/oppressor; good/evil; guilty/innocent). Plotting that space between black and white, Levi locates at various points along the tonal gradient those people who made small to great compromises with the German authorities to obtain some advantage: a measure of protection, a larger ration of food, a prolongation of life; or because they thought they could make a positive difference in the lives of the Jewish prisoners. They were members of the Jewish councils (*Judenräte*) who mediated the relationship of Nazi officials and ghetto prisoners, communicating the demands of the former to the latter. They were inmate functionaries in the camps, from barrack bed smoothers and lice-checkers (relatively benign in consequence) to *kapos*—overseers of work squads, who sometimes brutalized their fellow prisoners. At the most extreme, they formed the *Sonderkommandos*: the prisoners (often, but not exclusively, Jews) who shepherded unknowing victims to the gas chambers, search the corpses for valuables, feed the bodies into the ovens, and dispose of the ashes. This work ransomed for those who did it better food and sleeping quarters and a forestalled end in the gas chamber. Exceptionally few survived the war, however. The first task of newly recruited *Sonderkommandos* was to destroy the remains of their predecessors. This occurred at regular intervals.

In his reflections, Levi treads lightly and cautions the reader more than once about both the discomfort of following him in this exploration and the boundaries to be heeded. He writes that it is "neither easy nor agreeable to



U.S. executive trial counsel Thomas J. Dodd speaks at the International Military Tribunal (IMT) trial of war criminals at Nuremberg that opened in the fall of 1945, six and a half months after Germany surrendered. Photo Credit: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of John W. Mosenthal.

dredge this abyss of viciousness," that "one is tempted to turn away with a grimace and close one's mind" (p. 53), and that the entire story of the gray zone "leaves one dangling" (pp. 66–67). Still, Levi insists that "if we want to know the human species" (p. 40), then we must know it. Who these people were, however, and what their moral positions were, are complicated questions. Nazi power created the structures and pressures by which a victim could be co-opted into the very process of destruction. In Levi's words, the existence of the *Sonderkommandos* was evidence of "National Socialism's most demonic crime" (p. 53).

Those people who populated the gray zone were victims, certainly, but they were also ready to compromise and, in that bargain, became “vectors and instruments of the system’s guilt” (p. 49). Thinking about them provides revelations about the Nazi system and about the frailties of human moral armature. We observers are not equipped to fit them into any existing moral framework. We must, Levi declares, “meditate on the story . . . with pity and rigour,” but no one, he writes, “is authorized to judge them” (p. 59).

Levi’s admonition to suspend final judgment in cases of moral ambiguity resonates with the approach of humanities scholarship to atrocity. Our disciplines have a high tolerance for open-endedness, and our contributions are still considered useful when they generate more questions than they answer. The historian’s job is to recreate context, to demonstrate contingency, to analyze outcomes. Although our work is rife with questions of moral and ethical significance, it is not our primary responsibility to endorse one position to the exclusion of all others.

My research has centered on legal confrontations with atrocity. In many ways, law and history are compatible. Both concern themselves with the past: Both seek to reconstruct events, to locate and assess evidence, to identify responsibility and consequence. The disciplines diverge, however, at that moment when the judge renders a conclusion. A judge must choose only one interpretation, whereas a historian need not. The analogy I wish to draw between Levi’s essay and trials of Holocaust crimes is not that the accused should have been spared from judgment. In the cases I discuss below, guilt was rarely beyond dispute, and the means by which the accused acquired that guilt were wholly different from those with which the members of the gray zone acquired theirs. Rather, Levi’s essay reminds us that historical nuance and complexity can be lost in a juridical process that admits only the binary alternatives of guilt and innocence. The rigidity and finality of the law can constrict and abridge our understanding of the past.

Despite this limitation, however, trials lend themselves readily to teaching. They represent marvelous historical snapshots because they capture, in neatly packaged form, a particular set of actors, questions, and conclusions that are both shaped by their contemporary historical circumstances and influential on subsequent interpretations of key issues. There is a finite list of characters: the accused, the prosecutors, the defense counsel, the witnesses, the judges. The central question is usually unambiguous: Is the defendant innocent or guilty? Specific laws govern the process and serve as the analytical framework, and a judgment presents a clear and self-contained assessment of the evidence. Separately, however, the social, political, legal, and historical implications of each factor provide broad scope for inquiry and analysis.

Trials and the law enjoy a level of prestige and social

currency that lend their decisions an air of authority and impregnability. The law, though, is as human and as fallible a construct as the events over which it sits in judgment, and the incongruities between law and history can produce disjointed and incomplete narratives. Nonetheless, the privilege that attaches to legal decisions often means that the narrative emanating from a courtroom strikes deep roots in public memory of events. If we acknowledge that the very processes of legal investigation and decision are too narrow to account for all shades of nuance, and that they do not always match the scope of the crimes they confront, we can see how misleading legal pronouncements potentially are. Therefore, building a course on the Holocaust using sources generated by trials offers students means by which to disrupt inherited notions of justice and retribution, fact and truth, good and evil. Such sources also, in ways that will be explained below, speak to concrete historiographical issues that help to refine the details of a student’s training in the field of Holocaust history. The questions I highlight, however, are not limited to historical inquiry. They also have contemporary relevance. As any good work in history does, the course would ideally inspire students to apply historical examples to timeless problems.

Such a course would work best at the graduate level. Students should already have a solid grasp of the historiographical terrain and be prepared to read a monograph or a collection of excerpts and/or shorter works in each of the course’s modules, which are indicated by the sub-headings below. The course could proceed chronologically, in the order (more or less) that the trials took place. This would give students a sense of the evolution of legal thinking about the events and, placed next to the historical literature as it developed, would throw into sharper relief where law and history intersect and diverge. In what follows, I highlight recent and seminal publications in the field of Holocaust-related trials with suggestions of how they might be used pedagogically. I do not purport to encapsulate the full complexity of each individual work, nor is the selection representative of the literature as a whole.²

TRIALS AS PRODUCTS OF HISTORY

The first trial at Nuremberg (under the International Military Tribunal, or IMT), prosecuted jointly by the Americans, British, French, and Russians, received the most contemporary attention and remains the best known of the postwar trials of German war criminals. It is only fitting, then, that consideration of Holocaust-related trials begin there. It should be noted that the Holocaust was not the primary preoccupation of the IMT; rather, evidence of the destruction of the Jews was presented alongside evidence of a viciously long list of Nazi atrocities. This was not a Holocaust trial (the term was not even in use yet), but its place among trials concerning the Holocaust is central.

Further, the influence of the IMT on the development of post-atrocity justice is significant. Nuremberg established an agenda for transitional justice that remains in place today. These trials seek not only to render justice but also to serve as a kind of broader rehabilitative force for the perpetrator nation. This trial also coined the vocabulary of contemporary international criminal law: “Crimes against humanity” and “genocide” are only two examples of legal terms created and/or first used at Nuremberg to articulate the nature and scope of Nazi offenses.³

Perhaps because of its stature, Nuremberg has been a target of well worn and now familiar criticisms, such as that it was an example of victors’ justice and applied ex post facto law. The historian Michael Marrus (1997) responded to many of these critiques in an essay titled “The Nuremberg Trial: Fifty Years Later,” in which he offers his view of the origins, contributions, and legacy of the trial. At the center of his argument, valuable for the course, is the assertion that the IMT must, in all instances, be considered a product of its time and place. The laws, processes, goals, and judgments were all a reflection of an atmosphere in which Nazism was still a fresh, visceral, and threatening memory; when Europe and the world were realigning politically; and when participants on all sides were still in the emotional throes of devastating loss. Such pressures might well have clouded the motivations of those involved, but Marrus concludes that the trial, overall, was fair, even-handed without being detached from the meaning and significance of the crimes being adjudicated. It also became, by virtue of the vast documentary record it brought to light, a “voice for history.” Thus, as an introduction to the course and its themes, this short piece serves to underscore the importance of viewing trials as neither separate from nor superior to historical circumstance. Moreover, trials themselves, and the evidence and decisions emanating from them, become part and parcel of our historical memory.

THE EMERGENCE OF THE SURVIVOR-WITNESS AND AN EARLY POST-ATROCITY CONCEPTION OF JUSTICE

Occurring simultaneously with those first proceedings at Nuremberg, the Americans conducted 462 trials of over 1,700 defendants on the grounds of the former concentration camp at Dachau. These were hastily organized cases whose laws and processes little resembled the higher-profile proceedings taking place further north. Tomaz Jardim’s (2012) book *The Mauthausen Trial: American Military Justice in Germany* chronicles the organization and prosecution of one of these cases, in which former personnel of the Mauthausen camp were tried. The book and the case it describes raise two issues of interest for us, one historiographical and one philosophical. First, the historiographical: Because of the number of trials and defendants and the

dearth of material and human resources, trial organizers relied heavily on the testimony of survivors to build their cases and then to substantiate claims and accusations in the courtroom itself. What emerges from this study is a far different image of the survivor from that which has hitherto been the standard. The commonly held view has been that it took nearly a generation, and the occasion of the 1961 Eichmann trial, for Jewish survivors to tell their stories. Yet while it was indeed the Jerusalem proceedings that gave survivors an international venue from which to speak, and it was the drama of the trial that attracted an international audience to listen, it does not hold that Jews were silent or powerless in the immediate aftermath of their persecution. The Mauthausen trial and other trials held at Dachau offer an important corrective to the mainstream perception.

Another avenue of analysis to be pursued with this book (and revisited with subsequent works) is the question of post-Holocaust conceptions of justice. The defendants in the Mauthausen and other Dachau trials were coerced into dubious confessions and, owing to the novel “common design” charge, indiscriminately lumped into a single interpretation of criminal responsibility. That is, in the court’s view, whether one murdered prisoners with one’s own hands or peeled potatoes in the kitchen, one’s presence in and contribution to the operation of the camp were interpreted as equally incriminating, and death sentences were handed down almost as indiscriminately. Was this just? Should we think instead about gradations of criminal and/or moral culpability in the context of the Holocaust, or, as my comments on later works suggest, might this have been a truer articulation of justice than that expressed in other trials?

CONFRONTING THE PERPETRATOR

As mentioned above, the first trials at Nuremberg remain the best known of the postwar Nazi trials, but there were 12 more conducted by the Americans alone using the same courtroom and most of the same law and processes. They are known variously as the Nuremberg Military Tribunals and the Subsequent Nuremberg Proceedings; both titles refer to a series of cases against various institutions of the Nazi state: the judiciary, the military, industry, doctors, and the SS, among others. Using a monograph on one of these cases, and building on the themes of degrees of culpability and just retribution, students could think about the motivations of perpetrators who stood trial. In her book *The Nuremberg SS-Einsatzgruppen Trial, 1945–1958*, on the prosecution of 24 leaders of mobile shooting squads responsible for the deaths of over one million men, women, and children, Hilary Earl (2009) uses biography to attempt a more fulsome description and understanding of the “perpetrator.” Earl admits that one can never truly enter

the mind of these perpetrators to explain their behavior conclusively, and that the context of a trial in which the defendants' lives hang in the balance does indeed raise questions as to the sincerity and authenticity of their claims. However, she argues that we would be doing the record and ourselves a disservice if we were to dismiss perpetrator testimony altogether. We can, at a minimum, reconstruct fairly detailed profiles of the men in the dock.

Earl traces the individual defendants' paths to murder by comparing their social, political, and economic backgrounds. She proposes three perpetrator types: ideological soldiers, conflicted murderers, and deniers. Inherent in each group are particular moral implications. For example, the ideological soldiers had no regret for their actions, whereas conflicted murderers exhibited moral qualms (pp. 140–141). Nonetheless, the latter carried out their work as effectively as the former and ultimately bore no less responsibility. The deniers prove the most inscrutable as to motivation, because they admit nothing (p. 141). In this respect, the book pushes beyond inherited characterizations of the banal perpetrator, who bore little initiative or personal investment, as well as the cruel and sadistic monster who reveled in his tasks. Those who committed genocide, writes Earl, were not monsters, but “human beings” in whose eyes one “recognizes the spark of human intelligence” (p. 302). Questions suggested by the book range from the utility of perpetrator testimony to perpetrator motivations to the use of biography as a historical lens.

WHEN JUSTICE AND POLITICS COLLIDE

Both the trials held at Dachau and the American-conducted proceedings at Nuremberg fell into obscurity shortly after they pronounced verdicts. It was the first trial at Nuremberg and the Eichmann and Auschwitz trials of the 1960s that made deeper impressions on public consciousness. How and why earlier trials faded so quickly from memory is partly explained in my book *Hitler's Generals on Trial* (2010). It bears emphasizing that these trials were conceived and prosecuted with the stated goal of using them not only to punish a representative sample of the guilty but also to teach the German public as a whole about the crimes of the regime they had supported, and thereby drive a permanent wedge between them and Nazism. The 1948 High Command Case (the subject of my book) examined high-ranking military staff and field officers. I argue that the trial was more or less successful: 11 of 13 defendants were found guilty and the proceedings produced a vast, irrefutable documentary record of military crimes, many of which were connected to the deportation, enslavement, and murder of Jews throughout Eastern Europe.

However, I extend the story into the post-trial period to show how shifting political priorities, shaped by Cold War concerns, undermined the Americans' prior commit-

ment to justice and education. Eager to secure West German commitment to the anti-Soviet alliance, American occupation officials gave in to West German pressure and backed down from punishment of the convicted, ultimately releasing all those they had held in custody. American officials even scuttled plans to publish trial materials from this and the other 11 cases in the series in German. I interpret this reversal as a key factor in the tenacity and longevity of the so-called myth of the military's “clean hands,” which denied the German military's participation in racial and ideological crimes—a view that was not formally discredited until the mid-1990s. The book, therefore, can be used to discuss the vulnerability of historical truth (as established in the courtroom) to political influence.

Hitler's Generals on Trial also provides a case study through which to reflect on the meaning of justice after genocide. The evidence produced in the High Command case implicated millions of ordinary Germans in unprecedented crimes. Only 13 men were called to answer for them, and none remained in prison past 1954. Although only a negligible fraction of the guilty were to be punished, the book argues that abandoning the principle of punishment, symbolic as it might always have been, played a part in undermining public memory of and, by extension, acknowledgment of broadly shared responsibility for Nazi crime. When these convicts (and the others sentenced in the subsequent proceedings, all of whom were released by 1958) were returned to freedom, the temporal and material articulation of moral condemnation of the atrocities was truncated; consequently, the link between past and present required for ongoing public contemplation of Nazi criminality was severed.

WHEN LAW DISTORTS HISTORY

Hitler's Generals on Trial provides an example where the law worked fairly well to establish an accurate historical narrative that might otherwise have functioned to provoke a broad-reaching confrontation with Nazi evil. Rebecca Wittmann's (2005) book on the 1963 Frankfurt Auschwitz trial, titled *Beyond Justice: The Auschwitz Trial*, provides students with an example of how distortive an effect the law can have in producing a historical record. The German penal code applied to the investigation and prosecution of that case made clear distinctions between *perpetrators* of murder and *accomplices* to murder. Very briefly, a perpetrator was one who willfully and intentionally committed the crime and demonstrated initiative, whereas the accomplice merely aided and abetted—that is, took part in the killing. The issue of initiative was, therefore, decisive. To prove personal initiative, it had to be shown that the person acted with excessive violence or cruelty. Moreover, beyond proving that a person was a perpetrator (as opposed to an accomplice), to prove that that person was guilty of *murder*

(as opposed to *manslaughter*), there had to be evidence that that person had acted out of “base motives,” i.e., cruelty, out of bloodlust, sexual desire, or the like.

The application of these laws produced some rather disturbing warps in the emergent narrative. Because sustaining the charge of perpetration of murder required proof of individual initiative motivated by bloodlust or sadism, increasing emphasis was placed on those defendants who had behaved in abnormally cruel and perverse ways. However, as any cursory consideration of the functioning of the camp reveals, the vast majority of killings at Auschwitz were committed routinely, almost mechanically. Most of the Nazi guards and overseers could perform their duties within the regulations and systems in place at the camp. Therefore, in applying the letter of the law, those who “only” followed orders got off most easily. Yet it was just such persons who had comprised the majority of Holocaust perpetrators. Auschwitz functioned with such deadly efficiency precisely because the majority of its personnel complied with the regulations of the camp. The murder of millions remained, therefore, grossly under-punished.

Significant social repercussions stemmed from this. The trial was extensively reported domestically and internationally. However, owing to the particularities of the law, the trial did little to correct the mainstream impression that Nazi perpetrators were abnormally brutal monsters. Because the most severe sentences went to those who had been sadistic and cruel, the trial reinforced the comforting notion that the perpetrators were abnormal, somehow different and aberrant from mainstream German society. The book thus demonstrates how strongly the kind of law applied can shape the historical narrative produced by a trial and how uneven and halting Germany's confrontation with its past has been as a result.

TRIALS AND THE MEDIA

Devin Pendas's (2010) *The Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial*, which has the same trial as its subject, can be used to explore another potential site of mediation among history, law, and public understanding. For West Germany, the Auschwitz trial was a “cultural watershed” and a public history lesson (pp. 250–251) that would optimally have forced confrontation with widespread moral culpability for supporting the Nazi regime, if not also personal practical responsibility for contributing to its crimes.

One of the major contributions of this book is its thorough examination of the press reportage of the trial. Pendas shows how misleading press depictions (for example, casting the defendants, or the German nation more broadly, as victims) and newspaper reproductions of the historical distortions resulting from the particularities of German law did not advance honest and nuanced understanding of the events in question. Indeed, they may even have pro-

voked a general hostility or at least ambivalence in public opinion toward trials of Nazi crimes. Class discussion of the work could focus on whether and which media communicate courtroom events to the public and by which terms such distortions are best articulated. The work further underscores that the laws and processes of a court are to be critically analyzed, as even accurate and thorough reporting can serve to reproduce and disseminate inaccurate or over-simplified narratives.

THE EICHMANN TRIAL IN HISTORY

In her 1963 reports on the Eichmann trial for *The New Yorker*, the political philosopher Hannah Arendt (1994) first expounded on her famous and widely accepted “banality of evil” thesis, portraying Eichmann as an ambitious but hardly monstrous bureaucrat who nonetheless was responsible for the murder of hundreds of thousands of Jewish men, women, and children. However, as shown above, reading material from other trials facilitates a more subtle engagement with the perpetrator, one that delves more deeply into motivations and into the interplay between structural factors and the personal initiative and attitudes of those who fall into that category of Holocaust actor (Earl, 2010; Lipstadt, 2011).

Indeed, of all the concepts covered in the wide scope of Arendt's book (*Eichmann in Jerusalem*), the “banality of evil” thesis serves as a most compelling starting point. Was he really as “banal” as she understood him to be? One could argue that adopting this thesis unduly minimizes Nazi ideology as an explanatory factor, but alternately one could take the analysis in a different direction altogether and, in so doing, link it back to the *Einsatzgruppen* trial, with its different types of perpetrators—ideological soldiers, conflicted murderers, deniers—and each type's distinct moral profile.

Although motivation is sometimes (but not always) decisive in a trial, why should it matter to students of history? When the practical consequences of a defendant's actions are so unambiguous, what does understanding the perpetrator add to our knowledge of the experience? Of course, answers can move in several directions: knowing for the sake of comprehensive understanding; knowing to anticipate and then prevent recurrence of atrocity; knowing, as Levi might suggest, to “know the human species” (p. 40). Asking students to reflect on their questions can be as enlightening as attempting answers.

THE EICHMANN TRIAL AND ISRAELI STATE-BUILDING

Almost all the trials discussed so far served extra-legal ends: confronting German society with the scope and scale of Nazi criminality, attempting to provoke national self-examination, creating a history of the events in question. Similarly, the Eichmann trial was intended to serve



The International Military Tribunal trial of war criminals at Nuremberg. Credit: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of National Archives and Records Administration, College Park. Jan 1, 1946 – Oct 1, 1946. Photographer: Ray D'Addario.

specific national social and political interests. The kidnapping of Eichmann in Argentina, the staging of the trial in Jerusalem, the provenance and application of the “crimes against the Jewish people” charge, and the deliberate use of witness testimony wholly superfluous to the evidentiary threshold: These were all expressions of Israel’s newfound sovereignty and a means of knitting Israeli society more tightly together. Students might discuss the ethics of using trials for extra-legal ends, or the instrumentalization of Jewish suffering for contemporary political or social concerns. For this theme, students could draw on excerpts from works that span over 40 years of scholarship, including selections from Segev (2000), Douglas (2001), Lipstadt (2011), and Hausner (1966).

THE LAST HOLOCAUST TRIAL?

THE GERMAN CASE AGAINST IVAN DEMJANJUK

Taking a recent case, students could conclude the course with a consideration of the Demjanjuk trial, which in some ways capitalized on the accumulated wisdom of over six decades’ worth of war crimes prosecution and in other ways produced “an end without an ending” (Douglas, 2012, p. 52), leaving observers, to borrow Levi’s image, “dangling” (p. 67). Lawrence Douglas (2012) witnessed the trial firsthand for *Harper’s Magazine* and published a short but incisive report on the proceedings titled “Ivan the Recumbent, or Demjanjuk in Munich.”

After being misidentified in an Israeli trial and only

narrowly escaping execution, Ivan Demjanjuk, a Ukrainian who worked as a guard in the Sobibor death camp, was brought to trial in Munich in 2009 for assisting the SS in murdering over 28,000 Jews. The prosecution’s strategy was fairly simple: Because Sobibor functioned strictly as a death camp, and because the number of staff working there was relatively small, counsel argued that all would have been linked to the murder process. That is, by Demjanjuk’s very presence, he was implicated as an accessory to murder.

As elegant a legal interpretation as this was, it was late in coming. Many of the earlier trials of suspected Holocaust perpetrators insisted on specific evidence of particular instances of criminal acts. The Dachau trials and their common-design charge were anomalous in this way: the majority of trials aimed at specificity and individuality, and as seen with Wittmann’s work, frequently became mired in debates over whether a person’s actions had exceeded the orders and practices already in place. This latter approach undermined any attempt to address the criminal purposes of these camps and of the persons who worked there. It took 66 years for a German court to acknowledge that the criminality of these persons was manifest by virtue of their very presence in such a criminal place.

The legal strategy worked after a long and arduous trial. Demjanjuk was found guilty of being an accessory to the murder of 28,060 Jews at Sobibor and sentenced to five

years in prison. Upon announcing their verdict, however, the judges released him pending appeal. He died less than a year later.

Given that, in all likelihood, this was to be one of the last significant Holocaust-related trials, how fitting an end does it represent to three generations of legal efforts to address Holocaust-era crimes? If it has lasting meaning, is this to be found in the legal sphere? Was this vindication for a legal strategy that more accurately reflected the criminal nature of the whole system, which required complicity and cooperation on all levels from persons too numerous to be counted? Did the insistence on this trial reinforce the image of political commitment to prosecute past crimes, even when the vast majority of perpetrators went free? Was the prosecution of an old, ailing *Ukrainian* actually just another example of Germany's side-stepping rigorous self-examination? Why was it important, after years of confusion and suspicion, to locate Demjanjuk's place in the history of the Holocaust? Does his case stand in for the memory of countless collaborators whose identities will never be known?

The questions stemming from legal responses to Holocaust era crimes abound. Immersing students in the literature that, on the one hand, lays out the clear-cut nature of court verdicts and, on the other hand, problematizes these very decisions in terms of their historical and social implications provides many benefits. From the point of view of comprehensive training in Holocaust historiography, the material on trials speaks to concrete questions of historical understanding. For example, the emergence of the survivor-witness and the variety of perpetrator types represent two recurring themes in both trials and academic writing on the Holocaust. In terms of training students to think like scholars, engagement with trial-related literature encourages them to resist simple and uncomplicated interpretations and embrace the nuanced and complex. The nature of justice after genocide, the vulnerability of law to competing political concerns, the fallibility of law itself, and extra-legal functions of trials of atrocity: These are just a few of the timeless issues raised by Holocaust trials. Ideally, they will inspire students to engage with them with the rigor and sensitivity that Levi hoped would characterize our reflection on the Holocaust.

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[1] This book was first published in Italian in 1986.

[2] Thousands of trials of Nazi war criminals were held in Europe following the end of the war. Records of proceedings in former Soviet bloc countries were unavailable to Western historians until relatively recently, and the emerging literature is often published in East European languages. These works would therefore present a challenge to students without the relevant linguistic proficiency. There remains, however, a rich literature available in English on various trials held in France, the UK, Canada, Germany, and other countries. Limitations of space and a desire to explore a smaller number of themes in greater detail influenced my selection of trials for discussion in this article. Certainly, though, one could expand the course I propose and tackle issues of Holocaust denial (the 1985 and 1988 Zundel trials in Canada), collaboration (the 1945 Robert Brasillach trial in France), and the very question of the reliability of the historical method to produce truth (the 2000 Irving trial in the UK), to name just a few additional examples.

[3] Although the Genocide Convention was not formalized until 1948, well after the IMT concluded, the term *genocide* was used during the Subsequent Proceedings at Nuremberg. Its application more closely resembled the definition advanced by Rafael Lemkin in his now famous 1944 work *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*. For more on this, see: "Semantics of Extermination: The Use of the New Term Genocide in the Nuremberg Trials and the Genesis of a Master Narrative," by Alexa Stiller, in *Reassessing the Nuremberg Military Tribunals: Transitional Justice, Trial Narratives, and Historiography*, ed. Kim C. Priemel and Alexa Stiller, 2012, New York: Berghahn.

"The deaths in Treblinka, Sobibor, and other killing centers began in the trains into which our people were jammed without air, food, or water," writes Sarah Traister Moskovitz. "I do not know whether my Warsaw family—Aunt Rivele Gettshtein; her husband, Yudel; and their three children, Tseerl, Shmuel, and Pinyeh—were among them or were already dead from shootings, disease, or starvation in the ghetto. The Red Cross International Tracing Service searched for three years but could not find them." Here the poet writes of Polish bystanders, farmers who "see the trains / and go about their business." The farmers "bring the cows in from the cold"; the trains go to Treblinka. Compare these people to the bystander in "Footsteps," the short story by Jennifer Robertson on p. 3.

Sarah Traister Moskovitz

Trains

Trains go from Biala Podlaska through Miezdricze
loading on more Jews, then to Siedlice and Sokolow
through fields and miles of birchwood
to Treblinka.

Cows look up and keep on munching.
Farmers hear the cries of children trapped in trains
stare off into space and keep on haying.
Townfolk stop at railroad crossings
see eyes of terror behind the wooden slats
and speak of cabbage.

The trains pass roadside shrines they call "*kaplichkas*."
One honors Saint Antonio who cares for lost things
another Mary who protects
and Peter, gatekeeper of heaven.

Trains come by in daylight.
Trains come in the night
in spring when trees sprout green
in summer when fireflies dance over berries
in fall when apples glow bright red
in winter freeze when soup is ladled hot in bowls
and feather quilts are not enough.

The trains keep coming
with the cries of children
on their way to death.

The farmers and the townsfolk see the trains
and go about their business
hoeing, haying, praying

then they bring the cows in from the cold.

With the end of the war in sight, a startling encounter takes place between Jewish survivors of the Holocaust and American combat troops who have survived nine months of grueling combat across Northern France, Belgium, Holland, and now Germany. In 2001, interviews conducted by Matthew Rozell, a high school history teacher, and his class paved the way for joyful reunions between the survivors and their American soldier liberators over 60 years later. Pair this with additional teacher narratives on pp. 58–61 and 101–106; each helps us to appreciate what excellent educators and supportive administrators can accomplish!

Matthew Rozell

The Transport to Life: A Class Project Reunites Survivors of the Holocaust With Their Liberators



FIG. 1: Moment of Liberation. Credit: Major Clarence L. Benjamin, 743rd Tank Battalion. Source: After-action report, April 1945, 743rd Tank Battalion S-3 Journal History, p. 118.

The photograph [Fig.1] is striking.

Query the words “train” and “Holocaust” in an image search and the results generally show Jews being deported to killing centers. This shows the opposite.

It is a cool spring morning. In the background, downhill, are two cattle cars. At the opening of the sliding doors of one of the cars we can see a figure sitting, perhaps too weak to climb out, perhaps soaking up some energy from the warming April sun. In front of him, a wisp of smoke seems to rise from a small makeshift fire around which others have gathered: an appropriate backdrop for the drama unfolding in the foreground. Trudging up the hill toward the photographer, now only a few steps away, are a mother and her young daughter. The mother, her hair wrapped in a scarf, is clutching the hand of the girl with her right hand. Her left arm is extended outward as if in greeting; her tremulous half-smile reflects a mixture of astonishment and enveloping joy, as if she is on the cusp of accepting the belief that she and her daughter have finally been saved.

The little girl is shooting a sideways glance away from the camera. Her expression is one of distress; she looks terrified. She may well be responding to the two Sherman tanks now clanking up to the train, behind the photographer in the jeep with the white star. Following the mother and daughter

are two other women. One welcomes the tanks with outstretched arms and a wide grin; the other follows and appears to be crying.

It is Friday, April 13, 1945, in Germany. Led by their major scouting in a jeep, Tanks 12 and 13 of the 743rd Tank Battalion of the U.S. Army have just stumbled upon a train transport carrying thousands of sick and emaciated survivors of the Holocaust. Major Clarence L. Benjamin snaps a photograph, which will be inserted into his official report to headquarters.

What have they discovered? From where have these people come? What do the soldiers do now?

THE INTERVIEWS

On July 31, 2001, I sat with a World War II veteran to videotape his recollections of the end of the war in Europe. Carrol “Red” Walsh, a retired New York State Supreme Court justice, sat in a rocking chair in his daughter’s home in Hudson Falls, the small upstate New York town where I teach. For the past 10 years I had been inviting veterans of World War II into my classroom or visiting them at their homes to videotape their testimony as part of my World War II Living History Project. In 2000, I launched a website (<http://www.hfcsd.org/ww2/>) where my students and I posted the transcripts of these interviews.

Judge Walsh was the grandfather of one of my students. We had a lively conversation about his service for nearly two hours that summer afternoon. What he would tell me would eventually and profoundly change our lives and the lives of thousands of others. I would learn about the existence of this photograph and 10 others taken at the moment of the discovery of the train—but all of this almost did not happen.

In 1945, Sergeant Walsh was the tank commander of Tank 13. He had arrived in France in July 1944, and by the time of the Battle of the Bulge the following December, he was commanding his own Sherman light tank with a crew of four in the 743rd Tank Battalion, an armored unit working in tandem with the famed 30th Infantry Division, the “Workhorse of the Western Front.” That afternoon he told harrowing stories of pitched battles and close calls, of weeks that alternated between extremes of boredom and sheer terror. On one occasion, pinned down inside the tank during a two-day German artillery barrage, he was convinced he was about to die. As he put it,

I [was] 24. I would have been in combat for nine months. That is a long time to survive—to survive nine months was to survive 100 years! I could not even remember my former life. . . . I was a fugitive from the law of averages, as it were.

Our conversation wound down. As I was about to turn off

the camera and pack up my equipment, Walsh’s daughter spoke up.

“Did you mention the train at all? That was kind of interesting.”

“No, I didn’t tell him about the train.”

“What was that?” I asked.

“Well,” he began, “late in the war, again a nice, beautiful April day . . .”

We were shooting like crazy across the top of Germany, and Major Benjamin of the 743rd was kind of out ahead scouting a little bit. . . . He came back to the battalion and he pulled my tank and George Gross’s [fellow tank commander] tank out. He told us to go with him. So we did. We came to a place where there was a long train of boxcars. . . . I can remember pulling up alongside the train, Gross and I, and Major Benjamin. As it turned out, it was a train full of concentration camp victims, prisoners, who were being transported from one of their camps. . . . I think they had been in Belsen, on their way to another camp.



FIG. 2: George Gross and Carrol Walsh, 1945. Source: Gross family collection.

So there they were. All of these people, men, women, children, jam-packed in those boxcars, I couldn’t believe my eyes. There they were! Now they knew they were free, they were liberated. That was a nice, nice thing. I was there for a while that afternoon. You know, you got to feed these people. Give them water. They are in bad shape. Major Benjamin took some pictures, and George Gross took some pictures, too. (Walsh, 2001) [Fig. 2]



FIG. 3: April 14, 1945. Photographer unknown, probably U.S. Army. Credit: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), courtesy of Flora Carasso Mihael.

Encouraged by Walsh, I contacted George Gross, a professor of English literature at San Diego State University, by then retired. Dr. Gross greeted me warmly, gave me access to the other photographs that he had taken that day, and encouraged me to post his recently penned narrative of his recollection of that liberation.

Outside of the German hamlet of Farsleben, near the Elbe River, 100 miles westsouthwest of Berlin, the train transport of perhaps 50 mixed passenger cars and boxcars was stopped on the tracks [Fig. 3]. Nearly 2,500 prisoners from the concentration camp Bergen-Belsen were on the transport, many still sealed in the boxcars. Assessing the situation, and hearing from some of the prisoners that a large group of SS troopers were in the area and unaccounted for, Major Benjamin ordered Sergeant Gross, the commander of Tank 12, to pull up to the head of the train to establish that it was now under the authority and protection of the United States Army.

Benjamin returned to division headquarters to report on the plight of the refugees and ordered Sergeant Walsh and his tank back to the main body, which was making its way to what would be the final battle for the city of Magdeburg. Sergeant Gross stayed by his tank at the train with the survivors for a full 24 hours. The experience affected him deeply.

The major led our two tanks, each carrying several

infantrymen on its deck, down a narrow road until we came to a valley with a small train station at its head and a motley assemblage of passenger compartment cars and boxcars pulled onto a siding. There was a mass of people sitting or lying listlessly about, unaware as yet of our presence. There must have been guards, but they evidently ran away before or as we arrived, for I remember no firefight. Our taking of the train, therefore, was no great heroic action but a small police operation. The heroism that day was all with the prisoners on the train [Fig. 4].



FIG. 4: Ink drawing by Hungarian survivor Ervin Abadi, who was liberated from this train. During his convalescence, he created dozens of works of Holocaust art. Credit: USHMM, courtesy of George Bozoki.

Major Benjamin took a powerful picture just as a few of the people became aware that they had been rescued. In the foreground, a woman has her arms flung wide and a great look of surprise and joy on her face as she rushes toward us. In a moment, that woman found a pack left by a fleeing German soldier, rummaged through it, and held up triumphantly a tin of rations. She was immediately attacked by a swarm of skeletal figures, each intent upon capturing that prize. My yelling did no good, so that I finally had to leap from my tank and wade through weak and emaciated bodies to pull the attackers off the woman, who ran quickly away with her prize. I felt like a bully, pushing around such weak and starving fellow humans, but it was necessary to save the woman from great harm. The incident drove home to me the terrible plight of the newly freed inhabitants of the train.

[Now] a number of things happened fairly quickly. We were [later] told that the commander of the 823rd Tank Destroyer Battalion had ordered all the *burgermeisters* of nearby towns to prepare food and get it to the train promptly, and we were assured that Military Government would take care of the refugees the following day. So we were left to hunker down and protect the starving people, commiserating with, if not relieving, their dire condition.



FIG. 5: Gina Rappaport stands before Tank 12, April 13, 1945. Credit: USHMM, courtesy of Gross family.

A young woman named Gina Rappaport¹ [Fig. 5] came up and offered to be my interpreter. She spoke English very well and was evidently conversant with several other languages besides her native Polish. She had been in the Warsaw Ghetto for several years as the Nazis gradually emptied it to fill the death camps, until her turn finally had come. She was taken to Bergen-Belsen, where the horrible conditions she described matched those official accounts I later heard.

We stood in front of the tank as a long line of men, women, and little children formed itself spontaneously, with great dignity and no confusion, to greet us. It is a time I cannot forget, for it was terribly moving to see the courtesy with which they treated each other and the importance they seemed to place on reasserting their individuality in some seemingly official way. Each would stand at a position of rigid attention, held with some difficulty, and introduce himself or herself by what grew to be a sort of formula: The full name, followed by “a Polish Jew from Hungary” or similar phrase that gave both the origin and the home from which the person had been seized. Then each would shake hands in a solemn and dignified assertion of individual worth. Battle-hardened veterans learn to contain their emotions, but it was difficult then, and I cry now to think about it. What stamina and regenerative spirit those brave people showed! [Fig. 6].



FIG. 6: Liberation at Farsleben, April 13, 1945. Credit: USHMM, courtesy of Gross family.

Also tremendously moving were their smiles. I have one picture of several girls, specter-thin, hollow-cheeked, with enormous eyes that had seen much evil and terror, and yet with smiles to break one’s heart [Fig. 7, p. 98]. Little children came around with shy smiles, and mothers with proud smiles happily pushed them forward to get their pictures taken [Fig. 8, p. 98].

I walked up and down the train, seeing some people lying in pain or from lack of energy, and some sitting and making hopeful plans for a future that suddenly seemed possible again. Others followed everywhere I went, not intruding but just wanting to be close to a representative of the forces that had freed them. How sad it was that we had no food to give im-



FIG. 7: Liberation at Farsleben, April 13, 1945. Credit: George C. Gross. Courtesy of Gross family.

mediately, and no medical help, for during my short stay with the train, 16 or more bodies were carried up the hillside to await burial, brave hearts having lost the fight against starvation before we could help them.

We were relieved the next morning, started up the tank, waved good-bye to our new friends, and followed a guiding jeep down the road to rejoin our battalion. I looked back and saw a lonely Gina Rappaport standing in front of a line of people waving us good fortune. On an impulse I cannot explain, I stopped the tank, ran back, hugged Gina, and kissed her on the forehead in a gesture I intended as one asking forgiveness for man's terrible cruelty and wishing her and all the people a healthy and happy future. I pray they have had it. (Gross, 2001)

THE EVACUATION TRANSPORTS FROM BERGEN-BELSEN

The liberators' accounts contextualize the remarkable photographs of that day, some of which have recently been acquired by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), and shed light on the evacuation of three transports from Bergen-Belsen as the Third Reich collapsed.

The history of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp is well established. By the spring of 1945, Bergen-Belsen was a scene of horror. When the British liberated the camp on April 15, they were confronted with the grim reality of having to deal with over 50,000 prisoners, many of whom were barely holding onto life in those hellish conditions. Thousands of corpses lay unburied. Hundreds died on the liberation day.

Two years previously, an exchange camp had been opened at Bergen-Belsen, holding Jews from occupied Europe who held certificates or papers that might have made them useful at a later date for exchanging for Germans interned abroad. While these prisoners were not compelled to forced labor or to wear prison uniforms, rations became more meager with the transfer of brutal SS admin-

istrative staff from Auschwitz to Belsen in the beginning of 1945. As the winter of 1944-1945 turned to spring, prisoners from all over the collapsing camp system arrived. Bergen-Belsen was, as one author (Hinsley, 1988) put it, "the terminus, the last station of the Holocaust" (p. 717). Typhus, typhoid fever, and tuberculosis were now rampant, and the crematorium broke down. By March, efforts to dispose of the dead were given up (Stafford, 2007).

As the Third Reich reeled from the pressure of the advancing Allies in the east and west, one of Himmler's main deputies, SS *Obergruppenfuhrer* Oswald Pohl, visited Bergen-Belsen in March and arranged for the evacuation of nearly 7,000 in the exchange camp, perhaps in the hopes that these Jews would prove useful in negotiations with the Allies (Stafford, 2007). Between April 6 and 10, 1945, 6,700 men, women, and children from the exchange camp passed through the camp gates and marched several kilometers to the railhead at which many had arrived months or years earlier. Three train transports of cattle cars and shabby passenger cars were prepared and loaded. Some people were executed for attempting to steal sugar beets at



FIG. 8: Liberation at Farsleben, April 13, 1945. Credit: USHMM, courtesy of Gross family

the railhead (Rozell, 2011).²

The transports would be headed for the Theresienstadt concentration camp, which for the moment was far enough from advancing Allied lines and would prove to be the last camp liberated on the last day of the war. Only one train made it there. The other two were stranded, discovered, and liberated, one by the Americans at Farsleben, the other by the Russians near Tröbitz.³

The first train left Bergen-Belsen on 6 April and travelled for six days before coming to a stop near Farsleben (Horstmann, 2013). It was this transport that the soldiers I interviewed came upon on Friday, April 13.

THE REUNIONS SIX DECADES LATER

Four years after posting the tank commanders' interviews and photographs on our school website, I was astounded to receive an e-mail from a survivor of that train. Lexie Keston, a grandmother living in Australia, later recalled:

I will never forget the day when I opened the website, and before my unbelieving eyes I was looking back to 1945—the photographs before me were taken when I was six-and-a-half years old. . . . So now, some 61 years on, in front of my computer at my home, I was confronted with photographs of the day of my liberation. I found this experience so raw and emotional that I screamed and then burst into tears.

I looked at the bleak, miserable geography of the site, the horrible train carriages, and the skeletal human shapes—fortunately my memory is still a blank. I do not remember being in the train for six days, I do not remember being hungry or thirsty. All I remember is being out of the train, standing on the ground and watching the German guards fleeing and dropping their guns. I picked up one of these guns and before I could do anything, it was snatched from my hands. That is my only memory of that day. However, the events of the day are documented visually and that is incredible to believe. For no written words

could describe so vividly the happenings of that day as do these photographs. It is a historical miracle that Major Benjamin and tank commander George Gross had their small Kodak camera and that on that day there was film left to use and record the day.

I have developed a warm email relationship with Professor George Gross, with Judge Carrol Walsh. . . . It is a great joy for me to hear about their lives today and of their family happenings. The fact that this connection was made some 61 years after the event is very difficult to believe possible. But it is so. The friendship I have developed with these two wonderful men has helped me to bring some sort of closure to that unfortunate time in my childhood. (Keston, 2007)

To date, nearly 240 additional survivors of the Train Near Magdeburg have discovered the story of their liberation and the photographs,⁴ and many have even met their liberators. Eleven reunions have been held between survivors and the soldiers of the 743rd Tank Battalion and the 30th Infantry Division [Fig. 9, p. 100]. Lt. Frank W. Towers, the liberating soldier charged with transporting the victims out of harm's way to a captured Germany military facility and hospital, has been instrumental in locating many and even travelled to Israel in 2011 to meet with 65 of the survivors. At 96 years old, Frank is the project's official secretary, dutifully recording in our registry the name of each new survivor who comes forth [Fig. 10, p. 100].

George Gross passed away in 2009 and Carrol Walsh in 2012, but their eyewitness accounts and photographs preserve forever the evidence of the greatest crime in the history of the world. Their warmth and humility endeared them to the survivors and their families. In 2009, Walsh wrote to one of the survivors:

You are always expressing gratitude to me, the 743rd Tank Battalion and the 30th Infantry Division. But I do not believe gratitude is deserved because we were doing what we, and the whole world, should have been doing: rescuing and protecting innocent people from being killed, murdered by vicious criminals.



A woman and two children rest next to the train, April 14, 1945. Many prisoners died during transit, and most of the survivors were suffering from severe malnutrition and lack of medical attention. Photographer: Harry E. Boll, U.S. Army. Courtesy of USHMM.

You do not owe us. We owe you.

We can never repay you and the Jewish people of Europe for what was stolen from you: your homes, possessions, businesses, money, art, family life, families, your childhood, your dreams, and all your lives. That is how I feel.



FIG. 9: Liberator Carrol Walsh meets survivors of the train for the first time in 64 years, September 22, 2009, near Hudson Falls, New York. Clockwise from left: Walsh, Ariela Rojek of Toronto; Paul Arato of Toronto; Elisabeth Seaman of California; Fred Spiegel of New Jersey. Credit: Twilight Studios.



FIG. 10: Frank Towers at the USHMM, April 29, 2013. As president of the 30th Infantry Division Veterans of World War II, Frank has worked tirelessly for the 30th's inclusion in the record of official liberating units at the USHMM. Credit: Peter Fredlake, USHMM.

EPILOGUE

In the aftermath of the liberation, the U.S. Army set up a camp for the survivors at a captured German Luftwaffe base nearby and cared for them as the base transitioned to a DP camp. The story of the survivors and their liberators, our “Train Near Magdeburg” project, has taken on a life of its own and has led to a new website (<http://teachinghistorymatters.com>), where visitors can read many more stories and even download the 1945 train manifest list now being reconstructed, with our help, by Bernd Horstmann of the Bergen-Belsen Memorial. My school has installed a telephone in my classroom with an international line so that we can field calls that still come in from survivors and soldiers. My students and I continue to record and transcribe these histories. Time is running out.

The students have become time-traveling detectives as we piece together fragments of the evidence of the Holocaust.

“It’s life altering,” said one teen-ager, “and because we’ve heard these stories, it’s our job to make sure it won’t happen again.”

NOTES

[1] Gina Rappaport’s family in Israel contacted me by email in September 2007, following the media coverage of our first reunion, attaching a recent photograph of her looking at Dr. Gross’ photo of her in 1945. It can be seen at teachinghistorymatters.com/2012/01/05/gina-i-trust-her-dreams-were-realized.

[2] Interview of Leslie Meisels, September 2009. Meisels, a survivor who at the time was 14, remembered: “We were dragging ourselves because we were skeletons. . . . I weighed 79 pounds. Before I entered the cattle wagon where we were going to be, I had seen [an] open wagon loaded with red beets. And I saw that some people went there to steal a few pieces. . . . So I asked my mother to give me a pillowcase, which we were carrying, and I dragged myself there and collected maybe a half a dozen and was bringing them back. . . . As I am approaching my cattle wagon [on] the next track, an SS guard was standing with his back to me busy shooting a 10- or 11-year-old little boy, who was holding a red beet in each hand. . . . While he was shooting that little boy, I gave my bundle to someone at the door. When he turned around, he just barked to me, “Get up.” Had he turned around earlier, he would have shot me to death as well. Thus beets were the supplement of food for the six days while we were in the train.”

[3] The train freed near Tröbitz travelled through Germany for two weeks and was liberated by the Red Army on April 23, 1945. It is commonly referred to as the Lost Transport.

[4] The photographs are available in PDF form at www.hfcsd.org/ww2/Links/Annotated+Photos+of+Liberation+for+THC.pdf.

"We had always used diaries to encourage inquiry-based learning," write Colleen Tambuscio and her colleagues, "because students' natural curiosity is piqued by reading daily accounts of life written by other teens. However, while reading our core text *Salvaged Pages*, we, along with our students, discovered one diary that became not merely a testimony of things past but a bridge to life during the Holocaust and, in an unexpected and remarkable journey, to current life in the Czech Republic. Both in and out of our classrooms, our students have immersed themselves in history through their study of Otto Wolf's diary and their active research into—and commemoration of—his life, his neighbors, and his town."

Colleen Tambuscio, with Lisa Bauman and Bonnie Sussman

Making History: Beyond the Text

Lisa Bauman, Bonnie Sussman, and I met in the summer of 1998 as teacher fellows of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) in Washington, DC. As we learned and worked together over the following years, we realized that, despite our geographic and demographic differences, we shared philosophies as Holocaust educators. Lisa, an English teacher at St. Thomas Aquinas High School in Overland Park, Kansas; Bonnie, the history department chair of Bishop O'Dowd High School in Oakland, California; and I, a history teacher at New Milford High School in New Jersey, designed and taught a semester-long elective on the subject, using as our primary text Alexandra Zapruder's (2002) *Salvaged Pages: Young Writers' Diaries of the Holocaust* and believing that teaching the Holocaust requires making meaningful connections between text and the real world. We agreed that diaries written by Jewish teens as they experienced and responded to the ever-worsening conditions of their daily lives could bring to life the history that contextualized the narratives. We did not know in those years that history would come to life for our students and for us in a then-unimaginable way.

I had visited Eastern Europe in 1997 and, having been guided by Israeli historian Shalmi Barmore, returned home convinced that such a visit would be life-changing for my students. Through much work, great luck, and the remarkable generosity of supporters and administrators who agreed with me, I was able to fund trips to Eastern Europe almost every year for a dozen or so of my high school juniors and seniors, chosen on the basis of their schoolwork, their character, recommendations, and a detailed and rigorous application process including a personal essay. On each day of our visits to Berlin, Prague, Krakow, and Warsaw, we wrote in our journals. Upon our return each year, students wrote essays reflecting on their expe-

riences, detailing the ways in which their face-to-face confrontation with the history they had studied in class had deepened their understanding of the Holocaust and of the process of learning itself. These essays had a real-world purpose and audience. Proofread and edited in-house, then professionally bound, they were mailed to Lisa, Bonnie, our funders and supporters who made each year's tour possible, and even to our historian Shalmi Barmore and a variety of Germans, Poles, and Czechs who touched our lives each year when we met them on our expeditions.

By 2007, Lisa and her students, intrigued by our now-two-week study tour, had raised money and convinced their families and administrators of the value of this learning adventure, and they joined us for the first time. Seventeen of us met and, together with Barmore, we studied the roots of Nazi ideology in Berlin, the richness of Jewish life in Prague, and the tragedy of concentration camp life at Terezin. At the end of our trip, as we traveled from the Czech Republic to Poland, we lunched, by chance, in the city of Olomouc (Olomutz), near the Czech–Polish border, a modern university city with remnants of Jewish life. Only when we had said our goodbyes and returned to our classrooms in the States did we remember that *Salvaged Pages* diarist Otto Wolf [Fig. 1, p. 102] had grown up in the city of Olomouc and the neighboring town of Trstice (Trshitz) and, along with his family, was sheltered by his neighbors in both places during the Holocaust. After much conversation, we all decided to research possible survivors from the Wolf family and those townspeople who had helped them to hide, thus saving their lives.

RESEARCHING THE WOLF FAMILY

The youngest of three children, Otto Wolf was born in Mollenice, Moravia, on June 5, 1927, to parents Berthold and Ruzena Wolf. His oldest sibling, Kurt, was born on February



FIG. 1: Otto Wolf in his teenage years, before the family was forced into hiding. Courtesy of Milan Jaros, *Respekt* magazine (Czech Republic), vol. 23, May 13, 2012.

13, 1915, and his sister, Felicitas (Lici), was born on March 27, 1920. During Otto's childhood, the family lived in Olomouc, where Otto attended school and where Otto's father was a respected businessman. Kurt studied medicine in the city of Brno, not far away. Lici, having studied textiles, worked in an Olomouc dress shop and was renowned as a dress designer. Their family owned a summer home in Trstice and spent vacation time there. They knew the people of the village well.

In the summer of 1942, all of the Wolfs but Kurt, who had gone to Russia to help fight the Nazis, were included on a transport list. Instead of boarding the train, they made the difficult decision to hide in Trstice, hoping the heavily wooded forest near their vacation home would provide the necessary shelter. Otto begins his diary on June 22, 1942, and continues writing detailed accounts:

Otto's Diary: June 24, 1942. Wednesday, first week

At 4:14 a.m., we look for a stable hideout and manage to locate one. It is in thick bushes, so that we can't even sit up in there, just lie down. At five, Lici and I go get some water at the spring by the forest. Only then do we lie down to sleep and sleep until 11, bothered by hundreds of ants. Dad is cooking the first warm meal in two days: soup and meat with bread. . . . In the afternoon, we lie down again with the ants, and stay down until evening, and then have eggs and bread for dinner. (Zapruder, 2002, pp. 130)

Local families, some with completely altruistic motives, others not, risked their lives to bring the family food; three families even took them into their homes, at grave risk to their lives, in the coldest parts of winter.

April 13, 1944. Thursday, 95th week

Lici shows up at half past nine with good news. She is

carrying a loaf of homemade bread, one and a quarter kilos of honey, a quarter kilo of margarine, and two large noodle soup cubes. Mrs. Oherova apologized extensively and said that Lici should come back on Monday. Mrs. Ticha wanted to give us some lard . . . whatever is in her power to do for us, she will do. We can have as much bread as we need. She lent us a thousand crowns and wouldn't hear of a receipt. This says more than lengthy panegyrics about the goodness of her heart. (pp. 144–145)

Otto wrote regularly until April 13, 1945, when he was captured during a round-up by the Gestapo and Ukrainian Vlasovite troops and murdered, along with 18 other males of Trstice and another nearby village, Zakrov. Lici, who picks up and maintains the diary from April 19 until May 8, 1945, when the remaining family members were liberated from their underground havens, writes a final entry detailing that day and thanking the many individuals who risked their lives to hide her family.

LINKING THE TEXT TO THE EXPERIENCE

Our students wanted to know more about how the Wolfs survived for three difficult years and about their Christian rescuers, and thus we began a year-long search for the living history associated with Otto's diary. First, I reached out to Zapruder, the editor of *Salvaged Pages*, along with the English translator of the original diary, Michael Kubat, attempting to locate the oral testimony of Otto's sister to share with students. Lici, however, had passed away a few years before and was never interviewed by the Shoah Foundation. Next, I contacted Irena Steinfeldt, director of the Department of the Righteous at Yad Vashem in Israel, who located the names and last known towns of residence of the rescuers who had helped to hide the Wolf family. Using the Internet to search for the head of the Jewish community in Olomouc, students discovered he was a survivor, Milos Dobry, who not only was familiar with the Wolf story but was responsible for preserving it since 1945 and instrumental in researching and presenting the necessary documentation to Yad Vashem to certify the other rescuers from Trstice. How exciting it would be for our next group of students to meet him—and for him to meet us!

To prepare the city for our visit, Dobry visited the mayor of Trstice, Leona Stejskalová, and explained our eagerness to learn this history firsthand. Together, they located several descendants of those who had helped, including Marie Zborilova, whose mother had worked as a maid for the Wolf family; she was 19 years old when her parents, Marenka and Frantiska, took them into their home. On April 26, 2008, our group of 13 students met her at Trstice City Hall, along with Zdenka and Vladmir, surviving children of other rescuers, Marie and Oldrich Ohera.



FIG. 2: April 9, 2013. Dr. Karel Brezina; Zdenka Ohera; and Eva Vavrecka, the niece of Otto Wolf and daughter of his sister, Felicitas, discuss photographs and *Salvaged Pages*.

We also met Dr. Karel Brezina, who as a child had watched as the members of the Wolf family entered and exited their two underground hideouts [Fig. 2].

Welcomed to City Hall by the mayor with the traditional bread and salt, our students met, listened, and asked questions, spellbound as they came to understand the complexity of rescue efforts; the valor of the townspeople, whose families had risked so much to help save the Wolf family; and the constant tension and fear with which everyone had lived during those dark years.

Zborilova, whose mother, Marenka, appears in Otto's diary (p. 133, pp. 145–153), made clear to us that everyone in town knew that several families were assisting in hiding the Wolfs and that their survival depended upon everyone's keeping their secret. Many were terrified that Trstice would become another Lidice—a Czech community completely destroyed by the Nazis as reprisal for the assassination of SS General Reinhard Heydrich—yet the villagers continued their difficult task of protecting the hunted Jews.

After this meeting, Dobry, Mayor Stejskalsalova, and Dr. Brezina took us into the forest to see the remains of the two underground hideouts where the Wolf family had lived for three long years [Fig. 3].

As we stood in the forest, stunned by the site of the now visible entrances to the hideouts, unmarked remnants of history, we were grateful for this extraordinary opportunity for our high school students to witness the evidence, both physical and human, of this simultaneously tragic and hopeful facet of the Holocaust narrative. Who else, though, would know about this place after we left? After some conversation, we asked the mayor whether it would be possible to erect a marker on the site to commemorate the Wolf family story. She and her council fully supported the idea and, after enlisting community support through an enthusiastic town meeting, they gave us their blessing. In the fall of 2008, we began to plan and fundraise to build a memorial—and to raise money for our next trip.

BUILDING THE MEMORIAL

In 2009, Bonnie, who had been following every word of our experiences, joined our group, and in 2010, fully convinced of the educational and personal value of this tour—and now also funded—she came back with her students. Each new group of young people we brought to Eastern Europe now blogged (hst10.blogspot.com) each day and worked collaboratively with the Jewish community of Olomouc and the municipality of Trstice, building on the work of previous groups to conceptualize and design the marker that would memorialize the Wolf family. We soon came to realize that we had two obligations: one to preserve and mark the site of the two underground hideouts in the forest, and the other to honor the rescuers of Trstice, who risked their lives to hide the family in their homes. We decided to create two monuments: one to be placed in the forest at the hideouts and one to be erected in the center of the village to honor the rescuers.

The first monument [Fig. 4, p. 104], a five-by-three-foot stone memorial, was designed by the Jewish community of Olomouc and the mayor and council of Trstice in consultation with us. It was funded through the efforts of the students in our schools and crafted by local stonemasons. We held the dedication ceremony on April 2, 2012, with the participation of Alexandra Zapruder, and what an event it was! National government officials joined local officials. Milos Dobry, the survivor who first had brought us to Otto's hideout in the forest four years earlier, sent his grandson Petr Papousek, who brought members of the Olomouc Jewish community. Residents of Trstice came, including friends of the Wolf family, and even the local Czech Boy and Girl Scouts arrived, because they also study *The Diary of Otto Wolf* and had read the essays that our earlier groups had written about their visits to the town. We were joined by Mrs. Oherova, whose parents, Marie



FIG. 3: Historic image of the hideouts, Trstice, Czech Republic, circa 1990s. Courtesy of the Jewish community of Olomouc.

and Oldrich Ohera, had helped hide the Wolf family, and by Edita Stastna, a friend of Lici. Neighbors brought Edita to the forest in her wheelchair so that she might witness this ceremony to honor the people who had helped to save Lici's life. Among our most honored guests was Lici's daughter, Eva Vavrecka [see Fig. 2, p. 103], who had never visited the forest.

The community had taken great care and pride in the preparation of the memorial site, even constructing a wooden pathway not originally in the plans, to make access easier for visitors [Fig. 5.]

Much to our surprise and delight, the Czech scouts had laminated the essays we had sent to their village. We had hoped the essays were being read, but we certainly never had expected



FIG. 4: The dedication of the first memorial in the forest of Trstice, April 2, 2012. We placed memorial stones at its base.



FIG. 5: View of the memorial site constructed by local craftsmen. The hideouts are still visible just behind the memorial; The entrances appear as two holes in the side of the hill.



FIG. 6: Student Gabrielle Leiberman views a collection of our previous trip essays laminated and hung in the forest by the local Boy Scouts to honor the Wolf family at the dedication, April 2, 2012.

to see the words of students from past journeys hanging here now on a line strung between trees [Fig. 6]!

The scouts also had built a shelter next to the memorial site and had spent the night there in the forest as a demonstration of their commitment to care for and honor the Wolf family story.

We were participating in something extraordinary. Students in Holocaust courses in three schools in New Jersey, Kansas, and California studied a diary in their classrooms and ultimately brought all these different people together in this remote forest setting across the world to commemorate one Jewish family of the millions murdered in the Holocaust, and to celebrate Christians who, 70 years earlier, had acted to resist oppression, risking

their own safety to stand up for what was right.

After the unveiling, we cried as, together, we placed stones on the memorial as is traditional at a Jewish cemetery and read aloud the inscription on the memorial, written in both Czech and English:

During the Holocaust in the years 1942–1945, the citizens of Trstice hid four members of a Jewish family in these underground hideouts for three years. The Wolf family, Berthold, Ruzena, Felicitas, and Otto, sought shelter from Nazi persecution here and periodically in the homes of their rescuers. This memorial stone serves as a reminder to the heroic deeds of these extraordinary individuals. With gratitude and honor for their courage, dedication, and perseverance.

Below, in English, was written: “Donated by students studying ‘The Diary of Otto Wolf’ and the Holocaust in the United States: New Milford High School, New Jersey; St. Thomas Aquinas High School, Kansas; Bishop O’Dowd High School, California.”

THE SECOND MEMORIAL

After an additional year of planning and seeking funding, the second memorial to the rescuers, designed in collaboration with the Jewish community of Olomouc and the mayor and council of Trstice, was erected on April 9, 2013 [Fig. 7].

As we walked along with a new group of 23 students to the tiny park in this town of 1,500 citizens to unveil the memorial, we saw townspeople converging on the site from every street to witness the dedication of this monu-

ment to its residents' rescue efforts. The Czech scouts read from Otto's diary and time stood still. Some were hearing Otto's words for the first time, as his voice lived through these Czech boys. Mayor Stejskalsova and Papousek, the head of the Olomouc Jewish community, had invited 10 local mayors from surrounding communities to attend the dedication; they were curious about and intrigued by our work and wondered how they could bring to life the Holocaust history that exists in their towns. Seeing this great interest, our students grasped the impact that the first visit and the first memorial had had upon the entire region and began to recognize the necessity to mark, preserve, and engage with history, and to act on their learning.

LIVING HISTORY

Because of our funding efforts, our dedicated Czech partners, and our own grant-writing skills, this second phase was funded by the Jewish community of Olomouc, the village of Trstice, the Olomouc Regional Government, and U.S. Commission for America's Heritage Abroad board members Joan Ellyn Silber and Sherman J. Silber. As students and teachers from our three schools continue to work collaboratively with the region of Olomouc and Trstice in the Czech Republic, we look forward to helping the village of Trstice realize the next project—a local museum that will honor the Wolf family story and utilize Otto's diary as an artifact and teaching tool.

Year after year, our students realize that the Holocaust is not ancient history. They have kept the voices of a handful of Jewish teenagers alive by marking the place where young Otto Wolf recorded his family's tragedy in his diary. They have kept the deeds of a few good Czech Christians alive by marking their willingness to risk their lives to save their Jewish neighbors.

CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

How is such a project possible with today's focus on state-mandated testing? Forward-thinking administrators and colleagues understand and support our work, knowing that appropriate project-based learning is correlated with en-

hanced student achievement. Principal Eric Sheninger (2013) blogged about our program:

Technology has enabled all stakeholders to become a part of this. . . . This type of learning . . . cannot be replicated in the classroom. Before, during, and after the trip, students engage in authentic learning while enhancing essential skill sets such as communication, collaboration, critical thinking, media/digital literacy, and global awareness.

Even though it is easier to put texts in front of students and make them read, it's immeasurably more valuable to

bring them beyond the texts. Fundamental in our teaching philosophy is the belief in authentic learning, using real-life situations and projects to help students go beyond the classroom to extend and apply knowledge gained during their study. From bringing a survivor into the classroom—in person or through Skype—to organizing a Holocaust Awareness Day, from visiting the USHMM to implementing a Holocaust study tour to Europe, the key to our teaching is experiential learning that enables students to make connections between what they read and hear and what they see, experience, and do, to connect the facts and the dates on a timeline to the lived history of the Jews and to the sites of that history. If travel opportunities are out of reach and visiting those sites is not possible, students still have access to technology and countless opportunities to extend their knowledge beyond the classroom, including our ongoing project at hst10.blogspot.com.

Take risks. Bring your students out of their classroom to visit survivors, museums, and

local memorials, and, if at all possible, take them to Eastern Europe. Contact the authors of the Holocaust texts you use in your units of study. Connect with others in your school, across the country, across the world, and bring survivors, the few rescuers, and museum educators and archivists, even virtually, into your classrooms. Build partnerships with other schools to strengthen the class-



FIG. 7: Memorial honoring the rescuers of Trstice.



New Milford High School students viewing and analyzing Otto's diaries with United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Director of Collections and Conservation Jane Klinger. Courtesy of USHMM.

room experience. Instead of teaching the text, allow the text to lead the educational process.

Because of the background information we learned about the Wolf family, we were able to form a connection with their Jewish community, which changed the way we taught the diary and ultimately touched the lives of people we never had known existed. We didn't simply *study* history—we *made* history by erecting memorials in the Czech Republic. The monuments in Trstice will remind its citizens that the actions of individuals make a difference. Their Christian ancestors helped to save the Jewish Wolf family. Because of our memorials, they are reminded that the caring, generous, and life-saving actions their people took have profound meaning not just to their community but to citizens of the world.

When teachers reach beyond the text, there are no limits to the educational possibilities.

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Jeraldine R. Kraver integrates Holocaust education into her student teaching methods classes, explaining, “I want my teacher candidates sensitized to oppression and atrocity; however, sensitivity without action is so much hand-wringing. Therefore, action—call it a rule book for conduct—is exactly my aim” in such integration. “If I am successful,” she adds, “it will be my students’ aim as well for those they will eventually teach.”

Jeraldine R. Kraver

Teacher Preparation and Holocaust Education: Creating Authentic Connections

To teach about the Holocaust means first of all to convey the truth about the events, and to give them an interpretation that incorporates on the one hand the state of people’s consciousness at that point in history, and on the other hand our moral and social views today.

—Zdzislaw Mach, “The Memory of the Holocaust and Education for Europe”

Discussions about Holocaust education typically focus on such issues as defining curriculum, establishing rationales, choosing appropriate content, and developing strategies for effective instruction. In his introduction to *Teaching and Studying the Holocaust*, John Roth (2001) acknowledges the complex questions that inform such matters. Beginning from Charlotte Delbo’s poignant challenge, “I do not know / if you can still / make something of me / if you have the courage to try,” Roth offers a list of questions, including “What can and cannot be done . . .?” “What must and must not be made of . . .?” “What awareness should . . .?”; and “What pitfalls must . . .?” (p. x). These stems alone indicate that teaching the Holocaust entails multiple choices that extend beyond content area concerns. Teachers, especially beginning teachers, find overwhelming the challenge explicit in these words. To teach the Holocaust poorly is to fail not only their students but also the lives of those affected by these events. Simone Schweber (2006) adds to the conversation an additional set of contemporary concerns, including issues of “cultural/commercial trivialization, curricular overexposure, and political consciousness” (p. 51). Clearly, choosing to teach the Holocaust is no insignificant decision.

In most public secondary schools, study of the Holocaust takes place in the general education classroom.

Post-secondary students may enroll in courses dedicated to Holocaust study or some aspect of Jewish studies. However, my primary responsibility is preparing future secondary English/Language Arts (ELA) teachers. Thus my choices of materials are directed by the specific needs of my teacher-candidate audience, and I incorporate the Holocaust into my teaching in very particular ways.

Obviously, in-depth study of the Holocaust is important; literature cannot be read in a vacuum. I require students to read Doris Bergen’s short and accessible (2009) *War and Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust* and to view testimonies from the Anti-Defamation League’s *Echoes and Reflections: A Multi-Media Curriculum on the Holocaust*. They study appropriate sources that provide historical perspective and context, essential to understanding the ethical dimension of Holocaust literature, and are advised to incorporate such resources into their teaching.

I must operate, however, within my home state of Colorado, which, like most other states, does not mandate Holocaust education. In the majority of states, students learn about the Holocaust as a moment in world history or geography or as told from an American perspective in American history. In English classrooms, students might get snippets of background as they read Anne Frank’s diary, Elie Wiesel’s *Night*, or Art Spiegelman’s *Maus*, each of

which is inconsistently taught (in terms of both frequency and quality) in middle or high school. To ensure that meaningful, quality Holocaust education is included in instruction, I believe we must envision new ways to prepare teachers, ways that at once acknowledge Delbo's challenge and speak directly and meaningfully to the lives of their students.

WHAT WE DON'T TALK ABOUT WHEN ALL WE TALK ABOUT IS ANNE FRANK

Fundamental to the English education program I direct is a belief that, at all levels, the classroom must be a liberating experience—one in which content and pedagogy spur students actively to seek social, economic, and political justice. Placing the Holocaust at the center of a methods class—in any content area—speaks directly to this purpose. It allows pre-service teachers to consider events, texts, and implications from the perspective of what Henry Giroux (1988) calls “transformative intellectuals.” Such teachers, Giroux defines, seek to “empower students by giving them the knowledge and social skills they will need to be able to function in the larger society as critical agents but also educate them for transformative action” (p. xxxiii). This action, however, involves taking risks and fighting for social justice inside and outside the classroom. With teacher candidates, this responsibility becomes especially weighty when it is considered alongside the educational policies and practices of teachers during the Holocaust.

My approach both as a professor of English and as an English educator privileges creating a personal connection between students and the texts they study. That such connection is fundamental to adolescent literacy is the conclusion of multiple researchers, among them Kelly Gallagher, Jeffrey Wilhelm, and Elizabeth Moje. For my pre-service teachers, focusing on education during the Holocaust fosters such connection. At the same time, I am expressly modeling for my students how to locate, for their future students, methods for studying the Holocaust, approaches that can answer skeptics, such as Peter Novick (2000), who wonder whether there are, in fact, lessons we can glean from such study. In *The Holocaust in American Life*, Novick claims that locating “lessons from the Holocaust” applicable to our everyday lives is “dubious.” He contends, “Lessons for dealing with the sorts of issues that confront us in ordinary life, public or private, are not likely to be found in this most extraordinary of events” (p. 13). Yet, it is, in fact, the ordinariness of so many aspects of the Holocaust—multitudes of ordinary people participating in, watching, or being victimized by such extraordinary cruelty—that compels me to include it in my own teaching. My goal is thus to illustrate for my teacher candidates how easily individuals not unlike them—in this case, ordinary classroom teachers—could choose to act as they did.

Clearly, the Holocaust has profound implications for studying history. In her introduction to the collection that includes Mach's essay, editor Jolanta Ambrosewicz-Jacobs (2005) explains, “Teaching about the Holocaust is not only a matter of teaching facts. . . . It is important to comprehend the meaning of those facts, to cultivate empathy and sensitivity” (p. 9). As Lawrence Kohlberg and those who came afterward have argued, moral and ethical questions must be addressed in the classroom. Teaching the perspectives of bystanders, victims, resisters, collaborators, and the few rescuers, making sense of and looking to learn from the actions of ordinary citizens—including the perpetrators—is an essential element of teaching the Holocaust. Daniel Goldhagen (1996) makes this last point in his controversial *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* when he describes the failure of earlier historians to attend to the values and beliefs of the perpetrators. Goldhagen argues,

Any explanation that fails to acknowledge the actors' capacity to know and to judge, namely, to understand and to have views about the significance and the morality of their actions, that fails to hold the actors' beliefs and values as central . . . cannot possibly succeed in telling us much about why the perpetrators acted as they did. (p. 13)

To dismiss this element is, Goldhagen continues, to ignore both the “human aspect of the Holocaust” and the humanness of the perpetrators, including “their capacity to judge and to choose to act inhumanely” (p. 13).

WHY TEACH . . . ?

However non-traditional my approach, my rationale for using the Holocaust with my teacher candidates attends to the same questions raised by Feinberg, Totten, and Fernkes (2001) in their chapter from *Teaching and Studying the Holocaust* titled “The Significance of Rationale Statements in Developing a Sound Holocaust Education Program” (p. 3). Below, I address these questions, although for my purposes—developing a sound *literature* methods course—I alter them to read: Why study the Holocaust in a methods course? What are the most important lessons for teacher candidates to learn and why? With limited time, what key topics can I address with teacher candidates and why are these important? What do I want my teacher candidates to take away and why? What one idea can I plant that I want teacher candidates to ponder over the course of their lives?

The question “why study?” resonates for teachers of literature. My discipline is rife with those who contend that the Common Core State Standards portend the death of literature in the classroom. Increasingly, English teachers at all levels are challenged by the question of why we

should study literature at all. I defer to Louise Rosenblatt (1995), who best renders applicable Kenneth Burke's notions of "imaginative rehearsal." As described in her timeless *Literature as Exploration*, literature prompts readers to "imagine the human implications of any situation," and, as a result, they are "better able to foresee possible repercussions of [their] own actions in the lives of others" (p. 176). Rosenblatt explains that, unlike other disciplines, literature's power, realized through discussion and reflection, is its capacity to help students "learn to order [their] emotions and to rationally face people and situations [they are] emotionally involved in" (p. 227). Literature has the power "to transmit understanding of society in terms that will be personally assimilable" (p. 227). Thus, while there are litanies of possible responses to the question "why study the Holocaust," for my purposes, Rosenblatt's notions are equally applicable to any of those responses, especially in terms of the teaching methods classroom.

As important as are subject-area content and pedagogical theory, my goals include providing opportunities for pre-service teachers to reflect on the position of the teacher in society and to envision the kinds of actions they can take in that role that will serve the ends of a liberatory pedagogy. I want all the texts that teacher candidates study in the methods classroom, including the literature we read, to encourage them to rehearse imaginatively their impending lives as teachers. In previous semesters, I have relied on Charles Dickens's (1854) glorious novel *Hard Times*, with its rich depiction of the dangers of utilitarian education and the "Gradgrindian" classroom, for this purpose. However, since its publication, I have been using Ursula Hegi's (2011) Holocaust novel *Children and Fire*, both to examine how to teach the elements of the required ELA content and to contemplate what it means to teach. Hegi's novel allows teacher candidates to consider the position and the responses of teachers in Germany, especially in the 1930s. In addition, it is an occasion to study and analyze Nazi policy using primary and secondary materials while concurrently reading theoretical texts about the ethics and obligations of the teaching profession. Discussions that emerge from the novel allow students to reflect on the nature of teaching and learning, with an eye to the challenges and choices that are part and parcel of their (future) positions as classroom teachers.

REHEARSING OUR TEACHING LIVES

To be sure, a narrow focus on education during the Holocaust lacks the depth that many Holocaust educators advocate. Fred Newman (1988), for example, suggests that it is through "sustained study" that students move "beyond superficial exposure to rich, complex understanding" (p. 346), but teachers face various limitations of time and curriculum, and my students understand that theirs is not a

course in Holocaust history or literature but, rather, one that makes use of one particular piece of Holocaust literature to teach central issues of pedagogy. Rosenblatt notes that a balance must be struck in creating meaningful transactions between content studied and lives lived, and Hegi's novel is an effective text for doing so. Moreover, I am, in my pedagogy, modeling for students how they must, in their own classrooms, locate ways to make this or any difficult topic or text meaningful for the variety of students they will teach.

Children and Fire transports teacher candidates into the world of a classroom teacher who is trying to make sense of events in pre-war Germany. Hegi weaves together two related tales. Readers follow the events of a single day in the lives of protagonist Thekla Jansen and her class of fourth-grade boys. That narrative is interrupted by Thekla's own story, from her parents' first meeting through her childhood and to her troubled present. That present is February 27, 1934, the one-year anniversary of the Reichstag fire. The narrative places this young teacher, with ideals and aims not unlike those of my students, in situations that challenge all that she knows about teaching, learning, and, indeed, the world around her. The novel compels teachers and students alike to ponder the kinds of moral and ethical choices that will confront them in some form and at some moment during their lifetime. It looks to the kinds of questions Goldhagen suggests are requisite to understanding the Holocaust. As a result, my teacher candidates encounter in Hegi's work an opportunity to study some elements of the Holocaust, to hone their ELA content area teaching skills, and to think about their chosen profession and its attendant ethics and obligations. By reflecting on what Thekla does—or fails to do—in her role as a teacher, they can begin to imagine the challenges that they may face as young teachers and reflect on how they will confront difficult choices. Such reflective thinking provides students the link between "feeling, thought, and behavior" that Rosenblatt underscores (p. 227).

In its depiction of an ordinary figure—the teacher—in an extraordinary circumstance—Nazi Germany—*Children and Fire* provides a perspective on history previously unknown to my teacher candidates. For example, they discover that the teaching profession was a significant target of Nazi policy. As Klaus P. Fischer (1996) describes in his *Nazi Germany: A New History*, there was a "strong racist dimension" to education under the Nazis. The aim was "to produce a new type of person . . . [who is] a strong, self-conscious racial type who was proud of country and loyal to the Führer" (p. 347) [Fig. 1, p. 110]. Under Minister of Science, Education, and National Culture Bernhard Rust, teachers who did not conform to Nazi ideology were purged from the profession. All were required to join the National Socialist Teachers' League (*Nationalsozialistische*



FIG. 1: German boys attend a geography lesson in a classroom adorned with a portrait of Adolf Hitler, Hamburg (Hansestadt), Germany. Credit: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Lehrerbund, NSLB). The NSLB was charged with monitoring teachers' performance and conducting what amounts to professional development programs that made explicit the duties of German teachers under National Socialism, including providing racial instruction, which became a mandatory part of the curriculum in 1933. Disturbingly, as Fischer explains, too many teachers were compliant:

After these assaults on the teaching profession, teachers on all levels, with a few, all too few, notable exceptions, conformed so well and toed the party line so obediently that the regime did not have to spy extensively on teachers. (p. 348)

[See Wegner in *PRISM*, spring 2010, pp. 42–46—Ed.]. This is Holocaust history that speaks directly to the professional aspirations of my teacher candidates; they are immediately engaged. They read with attentiveness edicts that sought to redefine Nazi curricula and laws that restricted access to education. They contemplate the choices made by teachers who collaborated and the policies that oppressed those who did not. They read and hear testimonials of students and teachers who lived history. Although the challenges that will confront my teacher candidates will be, of course, specific to the present, issues of education policy and curriculum control are timeless. The pressures on teachers to conform are universal, and the choices

they make, like those made by Thekla Jansen and the actual teachers about whom they read, will affect the lives of their students. *Children and Fire* compels teacher candidates to consider all these issues.

FIRING STUDENTS' IMAGINATION

For my discussion here, I do not focus on the book's (considerable) aesthetic or "literary" elements that pertain to the ELA classroom. Further, I do not address to any extent instances in Hegi's novel that depict the reality of *students'* experiences during the 1930s in Germany.³ Rather, here I share how the class examines the specific moral and ethical challenges faced by teachers during this complicated time and illustrate how I use *Children and Fire* in my classroom by focusing on activities designed to create critical, activist teachers.

The semester is organized around three "essential questions" that address the kinds of complex and enduring matters that cannot be answered with a simple yes or no. Because they focus on teaching, these questions add authenticity and relevance to our study. First, what does it mean to be a critical teacher? Second, what do we do as critical teachers? Third, how can we use our subjects of study to create critically literate students? Here I focus on the first two questions, for, after finishing *Children and Fire*, my teacher candidates select texts and develop their own lessons designed to create the critical, activist stu-

dents at the heart of question three. In addressing the first two questions, I want to share an activity I undertake with my students when we use Hegi's novel alongside primary historical texts as well as readings in pedagogical theory.

First, though, let me outline the first six weeks of our course (students spend the last six weeks building the units mentioned above).

PHASE ONE—Weeks One and Two: Our focus is the novel *Children and Fire*; discussions and assignments center on three areas:

- (1) The novel's depiction of education—from teacher Thekla Jansen's classroom performance/pedagogy to the role of the school and its administrators to the out-of-school instruction (broadly writ) of the students we meet.
- (2) How Thekla's pedagogy—her teaching and her choices—aligns with their own sense of what teaching ought to be.
- (3) How the historical context—that is, the events surrounding the narrative, e.g., the Reichstag fire and subsequent political changes—inform, are reflected in, and shape Hegi's narrative and purpose.

PHASE TWO—Weeks Three and Four: We add to our reflection and reading assignments more theoretical readings about education and pedagogy. Discussion shifts to framing a congenial definition of critical pedagogy. Typically, students read some portion of Henry Giroux's (1988) *Teachers as Intellectuals*. In addition, they read a curious little text, *The Elements of Teaching*, by James Banner and Harold Cannon (1999), a kind of primer about the art of teaching. The reflections and assignments related to these theoretical texts ask students to consider the following:

- (1) How the roles, position, and responsibilities of the stakeholders in education, as described by these texts, align with what they see in Hegi's novel.
- (2) How the role, position, and responsibilities of the teacher as described in these texts align with their view of teaching articulated in earlier assignments.
- (3) How the role, position, and responsibilities of the teacher as described in these texts align with what they are seeing during their practica in partner schools.⁴

PHASE THREE—Weeks Five and Six: Once we have established a sense of how teaching is portrayed in the novel and students have begun to frame for themselves what it means to be a critical pedagogue, we look to a variety of primary and secondary sources (e.g., documents, contemporary publications, survivor testimony, and histories) that address education and

teaching during the Holocaust, focusing on the following topics:

- (1) How is what we read and see in these sources reflected in the novel?
- (2) How do the events described in these source materials challenge a teacher who embraces critical pedagogy?
- (3) How do the teachers we encounter in these primary and secondary sources and in the novel respond to those challenges? What ethical or moral notions guide their responses?

• **Subsequent Weeks:** My approach to critical pedagogy requires that my students ensure that every text they study with their students is a vehicle for discussing contemporary issues. To model this approach to teaching literature, I ask students to consider:

- (1) What contemporary challenges to the ideas that define a critical pedagogy confront teachers at the national, state, and local levels?
- (2) How can a critical pedagogue teach in the face of, in response to, or against these challenges?

CONVERSATION, CRITICAL PEDAGOGY, AND THE WORLD CAFÉ

Much of what we do in our lessons is built around a *World Café*, an activity designed to recreate the relaxed and open conversation that make cafés such congenial spots for sharing ideas. Importantly, the very act of engaging in a World Café models the kind of democratic classroom teachers must create and the kind of democratic environment students must embrace.

A World Café consists of a series of three or more 15- to 20-minute rounds of small-group discussions at tables around a room. Conversation may be in response to a question, an excerpt of text, an image, or whatever the instructor selects. At the end of the time allotted for the first round, each group disperses to other tables, with one member of the group remaining in place as table host for the next round, welcoming the next group and briefly summarizing the conversation from the previous round. The new group continues the discussion. Along with a host, the group finds at each table colorful pens and large sheets of blank paper. Discussants are encouraged to make whatever jottings they choose—key words, phrases, images, symbols—that reflect ideas emerging in their conversations. As the activity progresses, by reflecting on the drawings and musings at various tables, participants begin to see patterns emerging, and the collective wisdom of the group is made visible on the paper before them. Depending on the nature of our topics and what I observe of the discussions, I may choose to pause between rounds for whole-class discussion or simply send the discussants on to the next round.

Students participate in World Café discussions inspired by excerpts from the novel, our theoretical readings, or primary and secondary readings about the Holocaust. At their café tables, students read aloud and discuss a passage I provide and then respond to questions I pose. For excerpts from the novel, for example, students consider what the narrative reveals about Thekla's pedagogy. After reading passages from our theoretical texts, students reflect on the degree to which the excerpts on teaching align with what they see in Hegi's novel and with their own views. Finally, in the case of excerpts from primary or secondary materials, students consider how these texts help to contextualize their reading of the novel and their understanding of the time period. I ask students to reflect on what they have learned from the reading of these materials individually and then in concert with the novel and the pedagogy texts.

DEVELOPING A SOUND (LITERATURE) METHODS COURSE

Discussing the ideas of critical teaching by looking at and talking about fictional teachers frees my pre-service teachers to talk about themselves and their apprehensions: "You see, I have this friend, and she has this problem. . . ." Students can project their ideas, fears, and experiences onto Thekla and, in discussing the choices made both by these imaginative characters and by actual teachers during the Holocaust, they delve safely and, more deeply into human motivations. Not only do they reflect on the practices about which they read, they also practice the skills required to be reflective practitioners. Although the Holocaust is certainly not the only event around which one might build a curriculum, the questions and the problems it poses for students who seek to become teachers—in any content area—are resonant. Such is my rationale for using the Holocaust in my methods course, for I, too, feel the weight of Delbo's injunction to "make something" meaningful out of the Holocaust. I seek to "make" thoughtful, activist teachers who, if called on to make difficult choices, recognize that what we do matters.

[1] I am not including in my list Advanced Placement European History, International Baccalaureate curricula, or Holocaust-centered courses offered as electives in some schools and districts.

[2] See, for example, Gallagher's *Readicide*, Wilhelm's *Going with the Flow*, or Moje's *All the Stories We Have: Adolescents' Insights on Literacy and Learning in Secondary School*.

[3] For example, we see Thekla's boys join youth groups, we see rituals that involve saluting images of Hitler, we see Jewish children disappear from classes, and we see an increasingly nationalistic skew to classroom content. These are topics students discuss as we read the novel.

[4] At the same time that teacher candidates are in my methods course, they are participating in one of four phases of practicum experiences, observing classrooms and teachers in partner schools.

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"Our aim is to educate toward goodness," Rochelle L. Millen and Mary Todd write in their dialogue about teaching the Holocaust in Lutheran, Catholic, and public state university settings. "Our lives must testify to goodness." Pair this with essays by David Lindquist (pp. 52-57) and Jeraldine Kraver (pp. 107-112) to provoke discussion on the conflicting convictions that may simmer within any university student as s/he learns the history of the Holocaust and wrestles with the dissonance and distress it evokes.

Mary Todd and Rochelle L. Millen

Convictions in Conflict: A Dialogue About Religious Identity in the Holocaust Classroom¹

PART ONE: A LUTHERAN TEACHES THE HOLOCAUST IN THREE VENUES

Mary Todd: When I was in graduate school, I stumbled upon an article that began, "We owe it to our students to tell them who we are." I've never forgotten that line—it's led me to be a fairly autobiographical teacher, not because it's all about me, but because I hope to engage students where they are, and by doing so encourage them to share—and learn—more about who they are. To that end, on my syllabus is a quote from Peter Haas (1988): "In studying the Holocaust we study not only a particular society of the past but ourselves as well" (p. 232).

I have taught interdisciplinary introductory courses on the Shoah at two church-related institutions, one Lutheran, one Catholic; and at a public state university. A Christian raised in a Lutheran parsonage, I met Rochelle Millen, my Orthodox Jewish co-author, when we participated in a summer seminar on post-Holocaust ethics at the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM). Our shared experience in teaching the Shoah has been punctuated by challenging moments that mark the nexus of the theoretical and the empirical in our pedagogy and highlight what Stephen Haynes (1997) suggests in his book *Holocaust Education and the Church-Related College*: that religious questions are "an essential part of Holocaust education whether or not a particular course has religion as one of its foci" (p. 122). Religious questions raise issues of identity for both students and faculty.

Sharon Daloz Parks's (2000) groundbreaking work on the search for meaning as an elemental task of the young adult years informs our dialogue. Parks, who understands

faith in broad, inclusive terms of seeking meaning, suggests that higher education plays a critical role in "the formation of critical thought and a viable faith" (p. 10). The Holocaust classroom that encourages the exchange of strongly held convictions will, not infrequently, find those beliefs in conflict, but it will become in the process an essential site of the development of both character and conscience.

In the Lutheran and Roman Catholic classrooms where I taught the history and literature of the Holocaust, while the classes were comprised of students from a diversity of traditions, the majority of students identified with the dominant tradition of the institution. At the public university, students demonstrated a similar diversity of traditions but seemed more reticent to speak from a particular tradition, with the exception of one, a Jehovah's Witness.

I believe it is important for students to recognize what informs their perspective on whatever it is they're studying—I've often used an exercise at the beginning of a term to help them identify the filters through which they see. We share these with one another as a means of acknowledging our differences, our biases, our leanings, and as part of a process that Nel Noddings (1993) calls "educating for intelligent belief or unbelief."

Religious identity in the Holocaust classroom often reveals itself in difficult exchanges with students around particular, challenging issues. I begin my course by introducing students to Judaism, then to anti-Judaism and antisemitism, starting with selected passages from Christian scripture and Martin Luther's (1543) infamous *On the Jews and Their Lies*. My Lutheran students were very troubled to read what this hero of their faith had written, such a

very different text from words they had memorized from his *Small Catechism*. Some could not get past it—at the end of the course a number of them reported that discovery as the most disturbing element of the course. [See Millen, *PRISM*, spring 2010, pp. 51–55—Ed.] Similarly, Catholic students struggled with the role of the Roman Catholic Church during the Holocaust, the role of Pope Pius XII, and the failure of the Church to protest the deportations to the camps. Many were shocked to learn that Hitler was a baptized Catholic whom Rome has never excommunicated. [See McMichael, *PRISM*, spring 2010, pp. 67–72.]

Ignorance not only of other religious traditions but also of their own traditions and immaturity of spiritual formation leads some students to resist ideas about Judaism presented in texts, in videos, or by guest speakers. Many Christian students tend to hold a supersessionist point of view about Judaism, so I ask them to relate their thoughts regarding the major monotheistic tradition that followed Christianity—how, then, do they understand Islam?

Some of the most profound resistance I have encountered has been to the notion of God on trial. As we listen to an audiotope of Elie Wiesel (1988) reading the story of a child's hanging in Auschwitz, we are confronted by the haunting question at its end, "Where is God?" As I told another Wiesel story of some Jews in the camps putting God on trial, I heard an angry outburst: "For what?" Students demanded to know what the charges were. "Silence and absence," I replied, and then reported that the rabbis acting out the trial had found God guilty. That believers could be angry with God or even argue with God was a concept most of my students refused to accept, even when I explained that it was not only a longstanding Jewish tradition but one I myself practiced, especially after the sudden death of my husband. We encountered that idea again when we read Simon Wiesenthal's (1997) profound narrative *The Sunflower*. Each of these texts challenged students' notions of God—admittedly a difficult conversation.

However, the single most challenging comment from a student at the Lutheran university took me quite by surprise. As we debriefed a visit during the previous class period by an Auschwitz survivor who frequently spoke to my classes there, students shared poignant reflections on what her story had meant to them, until one young woman quite unabashedly said, "[The survivor] said she went through hell. But she has no idea. She is going to hell." An awkward silence followed until one of her classmates spoke up and suggested that decision might be best left to God.

It would be all too easy to put our heads on our desks at the end of a course on the Holocaust, immersed in its darkness and in despair over its enormity. At the end of the ethics seminar Rochelle and I attended at the USHMM, seminar leader John Roth (2001) shared a poignant story about the perpetually grey skies over Auschwitz. He

described a photograph on his office wall of those skies—but with a sliver of blue in one corner. To him that sliver represented hope. His story resonated with me, a Christian, whose personal encounter with the Holocaust has been accompanied by a search for any sliver of hope, a fundamental tenet of my faith tradition.

Students need to see hope, too, amid the horror, and we looked for it where we could, whether challenged by Tadeusz Borowski's (1976) powerful yet cynical reflection on hope in *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen* or by the arguments among members of the women's orchestra in Auschwitz, as portrayed in the film *Playing for Time*, about whether their SS captors were human.

Another film, *Weapons of the Spirit*, depicts perhaps one of the most uplifting stories of the Holocaust. The simple belief of the descendants of French Huguenots that led them unquestioningly to open their village, Le Chambon, to harbor Jewish children is a compelling lesson in living one's faith. The villagers simply heeded the words of their pastor, Andre Trocme (1940):

The duty of Christians is to resist the violence that will be brought to bear on their consciences through the weapons of the spirit. We shall resist when our adversaries will demand of us obedience contrary to the orders of the Gospel. We shall do so without fear, but also without pride and without hatred. (n.p.)

Students are almost universally encouraged and challenged by the film's powerful message, as they are by the story of Hans and Sophie Scholl and their White Rose resistance group [see *PRISM*, Spring 2010, pp. 47–48—Ed.]. "Here is my hope," wrote one honors student, describing in profound simplicity her admiration of Sophie Scholl and her comrades. "They were brave. They were smart. And they did something." Another, a theater major, was deeply moved by Charlotte Delbo's (1995) account in *Auschwitz and After* of staging a production of Molière from memory. Delbo's work, the final reading in a course on gender and the Holocaust, was cited by several students as the most memorable of the semester.

Most often, however, I find hope in my students themselves. At the end of each course, I ask them to recount what they have learned in a final reflective essay. One young woman reported leaving every class with "a headache and an unsettled frame of mind," struggling because "this class raised questions that I need to consider and explore as I learn more about the world and myself." While recognizing that the questions would stay with her "for a very long time, if not forever," she found herself amazed at the personal growth she observed. Another wrote: "I am left with more questions than answers . . . questions that I previously wouldn't have asked."

A frequent response addressed the impact of studying the Holocaust on one's worldview, possibly influenced by Delbo's poetic imperative "I beg you to do something" (pp. 229–231): "I have gained a sense of duty or responsibility from all I have learned/read/seen. The most important (to me) is . . . the danger of silence, the consequences of indifference. . . . I feel empowered by that."

From a young woman of few words: "I can refuse to be a bystander."

And then there was Rachel, who ripped pages from her journal and left them on my office door with a note that read, "I'm seeing things differently . . ."

Stephen Haynes (1997) asserts that "teaching the Holocaust is an act of faith, of religious self-criticism and of religious affirmation" (p. xxii). Yet, as in faith itself, tension is the inherent paradox in teaching this challenging and demanding subject. Each time I teach it, I am enriched; each time I teach it, I agonize—over decisions about texts, films, assignments, questions, and more.

PART TWO: A JEW TEACHES THE HOLOCAUST IN A LUTHERAN VENUE

Rochelle L. Millen: In the spring 2010 issue of *PRISM*, an essay I authored on "Reflections on Bystanders: A Pedagogic Paradox" (pp. 51–55) alluded to some of the issues addressed here. This discussion offers fresh insights into teaching the Holocaust in this venue. Only several years after being hired at Wittenberg University in 1988 as the first full-time Jewish studies faculty member in the Department of Religion did I realize that my hiring was part of a radical transformation taking place in the newly formed Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), officially formed in 1987. The then-president of Wittenberg, Dr. William Kinnison, was deeply involved in what became, in 1994, the official condemnation of Luther's 1543 anti-Jewish polemic, quoted by the KKK in the 1920s and lauded by the Nazis. One way Wittenberg chose to deal with its German Lutheran legacy was to hire me, a traditional Jew with a Ph.D. in religious studies, to focus on Jewish history, traditions, and theology within its previously more monolithic program of religion courses.

Over the 25 years I have been on faculty, there have been visible changes both in the students I teach and in my own awareness and teaching. When I began, few students knew that Jesus was Jewish. A colleague who teaches both Hebrew and Greek scripture was asked on occasion, "What kind of church did Jesus go to?" The knowledge of Jesus' Jewishness is now more common among my students, a credit to the religious education some have had.

My 200-level Holocaust class, titled "Reflections on the Holocaust: History, Literature, and Theology," is the only course among the many I teach in which I openly identify my religious affiliation. I begin the first session

by placing a coffee filter in front of my face, a teaching strategy I learned from Mary Todd. This gesture is a palpable manifestation of the diverse perspectives in our classrooms: We all see the world through the filter of our own experiences. It allows students to feel comfortable with differing viewpoints and more readily to share ideas.

I state that this class will deal with material difficult on many levels. In coping with the readings, films, and discussions, it's important to be cognizant of who each of us is and what each of us brings to the study of often painful—as well as religiously and philosophically challenging—material. And then I continue: "Let me tell you who I am. Then we will go around the room; please share whatever you wish about yourselves. Perhaps you'd like to speak about why you are interested in the Holocaust, of what your previous exposure consisted, what your pastor has said, or anything else." Then I talk about how my parents married in Poland in 1936. My mother, already a naturalized citizen, having been in the US since 1930, traveled by boat back to Poland in 1936 to wed her long-time beau, whom she then was able to bring back to America. All of my father's family and much of my mother's, unable to get visas to emigrate, were killed by *Einsatzgruppen A* in 1941 or in the liquidation of the Sambor Ghetto, in 1943.

This initial sharing creates an unarticulated, but palpable, framework for the class. Who are we when we begin? What do we learn along the way? At the conclusion of the course, how might each of us reflect upon the past 16 weeks? Have we been transformed in some way? Have our perspectives changed, and if so, how? The context formed by the initial focus on identity is expanded and made more powerful—and personal—by the requirement that students keep a journal in which they must write at least twice a week for a half-hour each time (the greater the quantity, the higher the grade). The journals are collected three times during the semester. I might assign a journal entry on a poem, a chapter in our secondary history, or an essay on post-Holocaust theology, but for the most part, students explore issues that bother them, that they are considering, that they need to analyze further. At the conclusion of the course, a final reflective essay is required in which students select 10 journal entries that, in their opinion, best reflect the changes, progress, and transformations (if any) in their thinking. Are they the same people they identified the first day, or have they changed? If so, in what ways? They hand in the entire journal with a table of contents earmarking their selections.

Students in two other classes I teach, the ideas of which partially overlap with the Holocaust course, also keep journals. Those courses are "Judaism and Christianity: The 2,000-Year Conversation" and "Germans and Jews: Culture, Identity, and Difference." The latter extends from the time of Moses Mendelssohn until after the Shoah.

Each of these courses, in different ways, includes Holocaust-related issues and materials.

Such courses expose students to fundamental elements in the history of antisemitism: problematic biblical texts, such as Matthew 27:25 (“His blood be on us and on our children”) and John 8:44 (“Your father is the devil and you choose to carry out your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning . . . there is no truth in him”); the accusation of deicide and its implications; supersessionism and proselytization; diverse meanings of the Second Coming and salvation; writings of the early Church Fathers; edicts of the Catholic Church; and, of course, Luther. We study not only his 1523 and 1543 documents, but also Luther himself, both as founder of the modern German language and as a pivotal figure in the development of German nationalism. We read Richard Wagner’s “Jewry in Music” essay and excerpts from Houston Chamberlain. We talk about the “science” of eugenics and the cultural context in which it developed from the mid-19th century. I also teach the history of the blood libel, going back to Apion in the second century BCE (Josephus, *Against Apion*, 2:89–102), its use by Rome against the early Christians (Ben-Sasson, 1972, p. 1121a), and its revival as an exclusively anti-Judaic slander beginning in the 13th century. Students are often shocked that hatred of Jews has such a long history. They occasionally comment, in surprise, that they hadn’t thought antisemitism had existed until the 1930s in Germany! We discuss the implications of difference in terms of colonialism, race, religious belief, and human value. I see my task as not only to disabuse students of historical naïveté and ignorance and increase the perspectives through which complex histories develop but also to challenge them morally and ethically. Scrutinizing the details of Holocaust history and the moral dilemmas faced by perpetrators, victims, rescuers, and bystanders focuses students’ attention upon nuances of identity, its complexity and its profundity.

There is always a lively debate in class about whether the Nazis—and their sympathizers throughout Europe—were “really” Christian, even after students view a documentary in which Reich Bishop Ludwig Mueller marches alongside Hitler when the German Christian movement is officially established on September 23, 1934, becoming the official German Lutheran Church. Students are thus invariably led to examine their own religious faith and its implications, an inner struggle that is sometimes articulated in class or in journal entries. That Bishop Mueller promoted a synthesis of Christianity and Nazi racial doctrine challenges the Christian students, even if they are not church-going or involved in their denominations. How could the teachings of Jesus be aligned with racist ideology? Students remain flummoxed, often declaring that the Germans were not “really” Lutheran or Christian. As one stu-

dent wrote, “All of the hatred Christians had toward Jews has surprised me. . . . This class continues to challenge my faith, which is a great thing.” Another, at the end of a lengthy journal entry, exclaimed with frustration, “What is it about Christianity as a power that doesn’t allow peace through differences?” A young man found that the stories in W.G. Sebald’s (1997) *The Emigrants* had had the most profound influence on him. They made him realize, he said,

that each life lost . . . in the Holocaust was precious. . . . I was so caught up in numbers that I forgot they were individuals . . . and each had a family. I am using what I learned from this class to prevent myself from joining the majority and to do what is right in life. I am standing to help those who are bullied [or] persecuted . . . because I want the world to be a better place.

Others are deeply affected by the poetry of Paul Celan (2008), especially “Death Fugue” and “Tenebrae.” One woman wrote that “Tenebrae,” to her, portrays the abandonment of the Jews by God, even as it reverberates with Christian theological imagery: “We have drunk, Lord / The blood and the image that was in the blood, Lord / Pray, Lord. / We are near.” Resonances of the blood libel also reverberate in “Tenebrae.” Toward the end of the semester, one young woman described the anger she increasingly felt as our class read some of the vast literature of the Holocaust. In response, she authored a 13-line poem that begins, “What is wrong with us? / I see crematoria in potters’ kilns and scorched screams in flames . . .” and concludes, “How do we live knowing we could have been the ones / sleeping in coals or casting stones?”

A customarily reserved young man shared in his journal deep feelings about the challenges to his identity. Responding to excerpts from the 1523 and 1543 Luther pamphlets, he writes:

The readings for today . . . made me feel uncomfortable and . . . confused. The article is a rant by Luther on why the Jewish people are horrible and should not be trusted. This made me question my own religion. . . . [I am a] dedicated Lutheran [but have] lost much respect for Luther . . . I do not understand why this article is not more well-known. . . . It is unsettling.

He begins his “Final Reflections” entry with these words: “I can honestly say that I never expected this course to make me grow as much as I have.”

PART THREE: THE SUNFLOWER

We both have students read Simon Wiesenthal’s (1997) *The Sunflower* toward the conclusion of the semester. Its focus on forgiveness is a means of confronting the complex and

ambiguous ethical, moral, and religious strands interwoven in the detailed tapestry of Holocaust history, literature, and theology.

Students attempt to define *forgiveness*, most often informed by a partial (and occasionally more sophisticated) understanding of this concept. Should all evil be forgiven? Is forgiveness valuable for the sinner, for the victim, for both? What are its psychological implications? A discussion usually ensues regarding distinctions between the Christian and Jewish concepts of sin, repentance, forgiveness, and the notion of an afterlife. As the students begin to distill and discern some of the nuances of forgiveness, some come independently to understand the distinction between legal guilt and moral guilt, articulated toward the end of the book by the high-ranking Nazi official Albert Speer. Was the soldier maintaining his antisemitism by suggesting that one Jew could represent all Jews? If he was seeking “last-ditch” peace of mind, one student wrote, “he most certainly didn’t deserve Wiesenthal’s forgiveness.” The soldier’s attempt to remove the burdens of his conscience made him seek a cleansing of sorts, a kind of forgiveness. This, though, was not “legitimate, genuine forgiveness.” Yet this latter forgiveness is not elaborated upon. Students view the soldier’s request as an indication of his cognizance of wrongdoing, even as it is a desperate cry to assuage guilt resulting from that wrongdoing. One student quotes Harry James Cargas’s (1998) words: “I am afraid not to forgive because I fear not to be forgiven” (p. 124), and finds his words “incredibly powerful,” although they may be theologically convoluted. From a moral standpoint, do we do X so that the possibility of reciprocation for us remains open? That is problematic in ethical theory. Other students adopt Cargas’s perspective that forgiveness may be misunderstood; that if some crimes are unforgivable, certainly those the Nazis and their henchmen have committed are such acts. This view is similar to the understanding of Amalek in Jewish tradition.⁴

Analysis of *The Sunflower* compels students to see nuance and subtlety in the complex conceptual vortex of sin, forgiveness, redemption, and salvation. In this way, it serves as a fitting concluding text for the courses we teach. While the story itself poses a dramatic ethical dilemma and could be used alone, the symposium of responses Wiesenthal includes represents an amazing wealth of diverse voices, from Primo Levi to the Dalai Lama, all struggling with his singular question: *What would you have done?* The symposium offers instructors and students a set of primary sources that introduce divergent theological perspectives on the concept of forgiveness, also providing a model for interfaith dialogue and rich personal reflection.

EDUCATING TOWARD GOODNESS

What is our hope in teaching the Holocaust? Learning out-

comes assume student mastery of a certain degree of knowledge about the subject as well as the application of skills of critical thinking, close reading, and insightful analysis. The most difficult outcomes to measure or assess, however, are those called *dispositions*, habits of mind, such as empathy, that influence students’ attitudes and behaviors long after they have left the classroom.

Charlotte Delbo’s (1995) memorable poem, “Prayer to the Living to Forgive Them for Being Alive,” begs readers to “do something / learn a dance step / something to justify your existence / . . . because it would be too senseless / after all / for so many to have died / while you live / doing nothing with your life” (p. 230). Both of us, through this poem and immersion in other Holocaust texts, allude in our classes to this message perhaps most of all. Our aim is to educate toward goodness, to clarify, even to inspire students to realize that in the post-Holocaust world every individual carries a weighty responsibility: to act; to respond to evil and wrongdoing; to live a worthy life; to be a “real” Christian, a “real” Jew, a consummate human being, not a bystander. Our lives must testify to goodness. Gerda Lerner (1997), in her eloquent final chapter of *Why History Matters*—another text we both assign—concludes that “the main thing history can teach us is that human actions have consequences and that certain choices, once made, cannot be undone” (p. 205). As the Quakers say, *let your life speak*.

One of our students posed well the challenge we all face when confronted with the multiple layers in Holocaust studies:

Wow, how, and where can I start! This class has really opened my eyes and has made me see beyond the black and white religion I have been hiding behind all my life. . . . This class has made me super-sensitive to the echoes of anti-Judaism and antisemitism found in everyday conversation, not just church services. . . . While this thrills my Pastor in the fact that I am having scholarly discussions with him . . . it does not make my conservative family particularly happy. . . . If anything, this class has made me confused. . . . It has left me with more questions than answers, which in a way is good, because now it is my duty to go out into the world and try to forge my own answers, regardless of the fact that answers haven’t [yet] been found.

The Holocaust classroom can be an uncomfortable place even as it is a transformative one. As each of us seeks, through the lenses of our own faith traditions, to understand the roots of hatred that led to genocide, both professors and students become theologians engaged in interfaith dialogue—whether we know it or not.

NOTES

1. This work builds on a presentation we made at the conference "Bearing Witness: Memory, Representation, and Pedagogy in a Post-Holocaust Age" at Shenandoah University in April 2010.
2. While Wittenberg is affiliated with the ELCA, only 25% of its student body choose to identify as Lutheran. An equal number are Catholic, 1–2% are Jewish, and the remaining are Protestant without further designation.
3. Students read about the blood libel in one of two texts: either *The Jew in the Medieval World: A Sourcebook*, by J. Marcus, 1995, pp. 325–1791, or *Scattered Among the Nations: Documents Affecting Jewish History*, by A. Rubin, 1995, pp. 105–129.
4. In the Bible, the Amalekites are a nomadic people who attacked the Hebrews at Rephidim (Exodus 17:8–10) in the Sinai Desert following the Exodus. They killed the most vulnerable and the weakest, as described in Deuteronomy 25:18. In rabbinic tradition, and based on other biblical references, Amalek has come to symbolize irredeemable evil. Haman, in the Book of Esther, is identified in the Talmud as an Amalekite.

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"The historical images, and stories of all those people, those poor children with yellow stars stitched to their coats, is heartbreaking, too much to bear," writes Stephen Cipot. "The poetry is a very tough poetry; we try to understand and imitate and create life and make connections, but that particular life is occupied by death, and our powers are so very limited. We desperately try to connect to the living and with the dead; to cherish, share, and bring life and light to their memory; to give them a proper memorial and burial."

Stephen J. Cipot

Joanna

At 12 she's become obsessed with the Holocaust,
with the thought of children her age
who in the soft evening did not
go to bed tucked in with pleasant dreams
and fluffy play animals at their feet.
She knows about the children
bathed in seething gas and
turned to ash and cinder.

Her dreaming eye sees Anne Frank:
stuffed into tight attics,
hiding under tables,
herded into cattle cars,
separated from her family,
reduced to skin and bones,
ravaged by typhus, freezing to death,
her small body unceremoniously dumped
into a mass grave,
and an indelible yellow star
stitched through her heart.

This annotated bibliography was written by educators from across America who are members of the Holocaust Educators' Consortium, an interreligious community of practice founded by Karen Shawn in 1995. Now expanded to include the Midwest Holocaust Educators' Consortium, founded by *PRISM* board member Darryle Clott, the consortium is dedicated to examining and implementing best practices in Holocaust education. Based on work by Shawn that appeared originally in *Dimensions* (1993), this guide was spearheaded and compiled by Lana Bernhardt, former project director of Israel's Beit Lohame HaGeta'ot (the Ghetto Fighters' House) International Book-Sharing Project; edited by Karen Shawn and Bill Younglove; and written by Lolle Boettcher, Beryl Bresgi, Patrick Connelly, Diane Fingers, Dana Humphrey, Carson Phillips, Karen Shawn, Tova Weiss, and Bill Younglove.

Holocaust Educators' Consortium

What Books Shall We Choose for Our Children?

A Selective, Annotated Guide to 30 Years of Holocaust Narratives for Students in Grades Four Through Eight

Holocaust narratives for readers in high school and college may be evaluated on a variety of merits, including historicity and accuracy, literary value, insights into the period, and ability to engage the student. A teacher may recommend a diary, memoir, fictionalized autobiography, biography, personal narrative, testimony “as told to”—whatever he chooses, it is unlikely that the choice will harm the reader, leaving him or her traumatized, unable and unwilling to learn more. Holocaust literature for elementary students, however, can be fraught. The wrong book brought forward at the wrong time for a student can provoke anxiety, depression, unease, and nightmares, and make further learning about this subject impossible. Thus we chose to annotate books for students aged 9–13, the time when the Holocaust is most commonly introduced in upper elementary and middle-school grades and students are most vulnerable to a choice wrong for them. No teacher can read all possible texts to make a fully informed choice. We hope this guide, while arbitrarily selective, can help.

Before you begin to teach this subject, which we suggest should not be before grade four, at the very earliest, you may wish to lay the groundwork for what will be taught in later grades by helping children to understand the concept and importance of remembering and the role

that memory plays in the lives of individuals and in the lives of collective nations in general and the collective Jewish people in particular. What, why, and how we remember are ideas that ground our teaching and guide our choice of materials, so examining the complexity, value, and power of memory is a natural and age-appropriate precursor to the study of the Holocaust. The following books are perfect choices to introduce the topic.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN: LAYING THE GROUNDWORK

Fox, M. (1989). *Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge* (J. Vivas, Illustrator). Brooklyn: Kane Miller. (Grades K–5). Annotated by Karen Shawn.

Wilfred, who lives next door to a nursing home, hears that one of the residents has lost her memory. He sets out on a journey to find it. This tale introduces the concepts of memory and recollection and illustrates how artifacts can help bring forgotten memories to consciousness. It is a wonderful read-aloud for students as young as five and a great conversation-starter for all elementary readers.

Lehman-Wilzig, T. (2007). *Lotty's lace tablecloth* (K. Topaz, Illustrator). Jerusalem: Gefen. (Grades 4–8). Annotated by Beryl Bresgi.

Lotty's desire to have beautiful lace finery leads her to an apprenticeship with a lace-maker from whom she learns this special trade, eventually achieving fame with her beautiful creations. She uses her talent to create a special Shabbat tablecloth for her own new family. The story of how this special tablecloth is lost, regained, and valued by Lotty's family through the generations is simply and beautifully told, making it accessible to a range of readers. Young children will be able to relate to the dilemma of having to share something precious, understanding that this is a universal struggle. It also is a wonderful Shabbat story, as the family uses ritual objects that have been passed down through the generations, as well as a story about the precious legacy of memories.

Lehman-Wilzig, T. (2007). *Mayer Aaron Levi and his lemon tree* (K. Topaz, Illustrator). Jerusalem: Gefen. (Grades 4–8). Annotated by Beryl Bresgi.

Mayer Aaron Levi lives in a shtetl (small village) and leads a traditional Jewish life filled with ritual observance. His family has a special lemon tree growing in the yard, and his wife uses its lemons to supplement the family's income. Her delicious lemonade is sold in the town square; she uses the proceeds to buy food and clothing for her children. When some lemons go missing, she is confused and upset, wondering who in the village might be stealing her precious fruit . . .

Mayer's generosity and the way in which the villagers show their gratitude form a story that is passed down in the Levi family through the generations. The lemon tree itself is passed down reminding subsequent generations of this family to maintain their values of generosity and sharing.

This narrative is useful and accessible for younger and older children, as it illustrates the concept of sharing, helping one's community, gratitude, and the centrality of memory in our lives. Both of Lehman-Wilzig's titles are set in the present, opening with a child's retelling of the story of a treasured family artifact. These are wonderful additions to a growing collection of books for older readers (*Who Was the Woman Who Wore the Hat*, by Nancy Patz, 2003, as well as the 1997 text *Of Heroes, Hooks, and Heirlooms*, by Faye Silton) that deal with ideas of heritage and memory, connecting children to their past through inherited objects and the stories told about them. This essential prelude to studying the Holocaust provides students with the understanding of the vibrancy and variety of historic Jewish life all over the world.

Martin, B., Jr., & Archambault, J. (1997). *Knots on a counting rope* (T. Rand, Illustrator). New York: Henry Holt. (Grades 2–4; a Reading Rainbow book). Annotated by Karen Shawn. A Navajo Indian grandfather recounts the story of his grandson's birth as the boy listens intently. This narrative

of intergenerational love and tradition will help young readers understand the ways in which memory shapes who we are and who we become.

BOOKS ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST FOR STUDENTS IN GRADES 4–8

We have not annotated such classic texts as *The Diary of Anne Frank*, *Number the Stars*, *Journey to America*, *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit*, and *Island on Bird Street*, because they are widely read and their value and suitability are well known. We chose books that we love that are not widely known but are available, often sitting untouched on library shelves. Our goal is to encourage the use of in-class libraries by expanding elementary and middle-school options for excellent, age-appropriate texts.

Adler, D. A. (1995). *One yellow daffodil: A Hanukkah story* (L. Bloom, Illustrator). New York: Harcourt Brace. (Grades 4–6). Annotated by Karen Shawn.

Lloyd Bloom's illustrations are reason enough to buy this book. Luminous, almost three-dimensional, they enhance each page. The story is worthy of these paintings. Morris Kaplan is the sole survivor of a family that perished in Auschwitz. A generous, gentle man, he takes pleasure in selling flowers. Two of his favorite customers are Ilana and Jonathan Becker, neighborhood children who come each Friday to buy flowers for Shabbat. When they invite him to join them for a Hanukkah celebration, he refuses, saying he doesn't celebrate the holiday anymore. But they insist, and his visit forces him to confront long buried memories and feelings.

He joins the Beckers and tells them of his family, of a yellow daffodil whose bloom offered him hope, and of his loss. "After the war . . . I had no one," he says. Mrs. Becker holds Morris's hand in hers and says, "Now you have us."

While I am not comfortable with the trend to make the Holocaust a part of every Jewish holiday, I recommend this book. It is authentic in its portrayal of loss yet utterly without sensationalism or graphic detail. Appropriately sad and yet hopeful, it allows young readers a glimpse of one survivor's tragic past and the comfort of feeling the strength of his present.

Borden, L. (2005, 2010). *The journey that saved Curious George: The true wartime escape of Margret and H. A. Rey* (A. Drummond, Illustrator). New York: Houghton Mifflin. (Grades 5–6). Annotated by Carson Phillips. See also: Lesson plans. (n.d.). [Website for educational resources and lesson plans]. Retrieved from www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com/features/cgsite/journey_lp.shtml.

Delightfully illustrated, colorful, whimsical watercolors complemented by archival documents and photographs result in an abundance of visual resources that enhance

this narrative text. Although the website suggests lesson plans for grades 3–4, this book is better suited for grade 5 and higher; the richness in details and narrative requires a more mature student. The title assures readers of a positive outcome to this story.

The book is segmented: Part 1 details the lives of the two Jewish authors, Hans Augusto Reyersbach (H. A. Rey) and Margarete Waldstein (Margret Rey), who grew up in Germany. The reader is introduced to their life in Brazil and Paris and the start of World War II, culminating in the German occupation of Paris. Part 2 describes the couple's dramatic escape from Paris on bicycles. The refugees are helped along the way by kind French individuals, eventually securing permission to pass through Spain en route to Lisbon, where they board a ship for Brazil. During a routine search of their documents, the couple show a Spanish official their precious manuscript titled *The Adventures of Fifi*, easing the tension on the long train journey. The story concludes with the Reys' safe arrival by ship in New York, where Fifi changes his name to Curious George. The book ends with a postscript on the success Curious George enjoyed in North America and a summary of the authors' life in the US.

The Journey That Saved Curious George is a wonderful introduction to the study of the Holocaust. Complex topics such as wartime and refugees are presented in a sensitive and age-appropriate manner. The narrative does not overwhelm young readers; rather, it presents information in stages, allowing comprehension of complex situations. The reader follows not only the Reys but also Curious George on their journey to freedom in this winning account that introduces young readers to themes of loyalty, friendship, and courage in perilous times.

Deedy, C. A., & Sorensen, H. (2000). *The yellow star: The legend of King Christian X of Denmark* (H. Sorensen, Illustrator). Atlanta: Peachtree. (Grades 4–6). Annotated by Dana Humphrey. In straightforward yet stylish language, this myth depicts the beloved Danish King Christian and his courageous decision to protect his people from the Nazis. In Denmark, the story explains, all Danes had one thing in common: They were loyal to their king, who was so loved that he daily rode his horse through the streets of Copenhagen without a bodyguard. Things began to change, though, when the Nazis overran the country. The king defied the Nazis and ordered their flag removed from his palace.

When the Nazis ordered the Jews of Denmark to wear yellow stars, so the myth goes, the king formulated a plan to protect them. He had his tailor sew a yellow star on his coat. The next day, on his daily ride through the streets of Copenhagen, he wore this coat and “the subjects of King Christian understood what they should do.” The illustration on the next page shows all the people in the street

wearing yellow stars, and the text explains: “Once again, there were only Danes.”

This is a true picture book: The powerful illustrations tell the story as much as the words do. The reader has to infer much of what is happening through the pictures, just as the Danish citizens must do in the story. Bright, bold heavy oils portray the Danes; in contrast, dark black-and-white images depict the Nazis and war.

As the title indicates, this is not a true story but a legend about the Danish king. In the author's note, facts about Danish Jews and the rescue efforts of the Danish people are offered, and the reader learns that no Jews in Denmark were forced to wear the yellow star, so the people never had to wear one in solidarity.

The historical inaccuracy of such a myth can be problematic if left unaddressed, but the book can initiate valuable discussion about resistance and taking a stance. It evokes the essential questions of “What if this had happened? What if we followed that example today against all violations of human rights?”

Emanuel, M., & Gissing, V. (2001). *Nicholas Winton and the rescued generation: Save one life, save the world*. London: Vallentine Mitchell. (Grade 7 and up). Annotated by Lolle Boettcher. See also: Vera Gissing interview. (2006, April 22). [Interview by Sidney Bolkosky]. Washington, DC. Retrieved from deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/2027.42/50623/4/gissing.pdf.

This book introduces us to an ordinary man who never asked to be thanked. He did what he thought was his duty as a human and pacifist. In 1939, Nicholas Winton, a stockbroker from London, set about trying to save the doomed Jewish children of an about-to-be-invaded Czechoslovakia. His efforts saved 669 of them. [See *PRISM*, Spring 2013, pp. 68–74—Ed.]

In 1939, some 15,000 Czech Jewish children lived; by 1945, only 769 were left alive, all but 100 thanks to Winton, who had gotten them to the UK before the European borders had closed. One of these children was Vera Gissing, who co-wrote this marvelously engrossing book, her testament to one man's selfless spirit and his desire to do what he considered right. This excellent resource illustrates that every person bears the responsibility to respond to a crisis or take action for a people in peril. Winton's definition of living a life of purpose is that one not only does no harm but also seeks out those who need help or assistance and answers that need. The film *Nicholas Winton: The Power of Good* (www.powerofgood.net/) is an excellent companion, as is the newest film on this hero, *Nicky's Family* (2012) (www.menemshafilms.com/nickys-family). While this book is readable by middle-school students, the complexities of the historical-political changes in pre-war Europe will need to be taught as background.

Feder, P. K. (1995). *The feather-bed journey* (S. Schuett, Illustrator). Illinois: Albert Whitman. (Grades 4–5). Annotated by Karen Shawn.

When Rachel and Lewis destroy Grandma's pillow, they don't understand why she tries to gather the loose feathers. "Once this was my mother's feather-bed," she tells them, and begins to explain, gently, her family's experience.

"Sad times came to us. War began. Certain people from Germany, called Nazis, came to Poland. They didn't want Jews in Poland. They didn't want Jews anywhere."

In the ghetto, the feather-bed keeps her warm. The dangers there are great, though, and her parents fear for her life, so they send her away to hide, first with a Christian farmer for two years and then in the woods, where she hides with others for two more years. She and her mother survive the Holocaust and reunite; after the war, safe in America, they write to the kind farmer to thank him. In response, he sends them the feather pillow, made from the remains of their feather-bed, which they had given him in return for his help.

The plot is contrived, a composite of many stories told to the author by her mother. The little grandson, Lewis, is a jarring, annoying character. The story, though, is gentle and told within the context of a loving, supportive Jewish family. It provides a good introduction to the concepts of the Nazi occupation, the hiding experience, and the rescuers, especially when paired with Shulamith Levey Oppenheim's (1995) *The Lily Cupboard* (HarperCollins) and Amy Hest's (1990) *The Ring and the Window Seat* (Scholastic). In an epilogue, Feder concisely summarizes the Holocaust in Poland. Stacey Schuett's excellent paintings help readers see the ghetto, the woods, and the displaced persons' camp.

Glatsteyn, Y. (2006). *Emil and Karl* (J. Shandler, Trans.). New Milford, CT: Roaring Brook. (Grades 6–8). Annotated by Patrick Connelly.

Originally written in Yiddish in 1940, *Emil and Karl* was intended for Jewish children living in America. Glatsteyn wrote the novel to raise awareness of the plight of children living under Nazi rule. Today, this unique artifact teaches and inspires readers young and old with the moving story of the titular characters, 9-year-old boys in Vienna. Students as young as 11 will find the book engaging and simple to read. Harrowing situations, such as witnessing Nazi soldiers drag away the boys' parents and the abuse of Jews forced to scrub the pavement with bare hands, are offset by descriptions of the altruistic behavior of a few good people whom the boys encounter. The heart of the story, though, is the camaraderie they share; *Emil and Karl* is primarily a story of friendship in a time of hate. To quote Shandler (p. 194), "The first readers of *Emil and Karl* learned from the novel—as we do today—of the importance of friendship, of tolerance, of bravery."

Heuvel, E., van der Rol, R., & Schippers, L. (2007). *The search* (L. T. Miller, Trans.). New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux. (Grades 7–8). Annotated by Carson Phillips. Developed by the Anne Frank House in cooperation with the Jewish Historical Museum; originally published in Dutch as *De Zoektocht*.

Exquisitely rendered, this graphic novel introduces young readers to the subject of the Holocaust in an age-appropriate, engaging manner. The project developers have gone to great lengths to ensure historical accuracy, consulting content experts from across Europe as well as students and teachers of secondary-school programs in the Netherlands. (All names and organizations are listed on the inside back cover.)

In this sequel to *A Family Secret*, Esther Liebowitz (née Hecht) comes all the way from the US to Amsterdam for her grandson Daniel's bar mitzvah. She decides to take her family and her grandson's school friend to visit the Dutch farm where she was hidden during the Holocaust. Esther's personal account of life during that time unfolds. The post-liberation accounts reflect a diverse range of experiences, including Esther's immigration to the US, one friend's aliya, and another's decision to remain in Europe.

The graphic-novel format ought not be mistaken as that of a comic book. The Holocaust is introduced in a complex manner, addressing issues of complicity, resistance, rescue, the concentration camp system, and the challenges of rebuilding a life after liberation. One of the elements of this book I liked most is that Judaism is presented as a living religion; scenes of Daniel's bar mitzvah are concisely explained. The Holocaust era is depicted with accuracy, complexity, and sensitivity, creating a broad picture of the rise of fascism and the persecution of European Jewry. Even the title, *The Search*, is multi-layered, as it refers not only to Esther's search to bring a sense of closure to what happened to her family during the Holocaust but also to a search for an old family photo album by one of her friends. Readers are introduced to the role of archival documents and photographs in depicting the past and to their immeasurable intrinsic worth to survivors who lost everything in the Holocaust. This wonderful introduction will engage readers of diverse levels and backgrounds.

Johnston, T. (2004). *The harmonica* (R. Mazellan, Illustrator). Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge. (Grade 5 and up). Annotated by Dana Humphrey.

Inspired by a true story, *The Harmonica* opens with a Jewish family "poor as pigeons" living in Poland before the Nazi invasion. When the father somehow manages to bring a harmonica home for his young son, their lives are filled with the wonderful melodies of Schubert and with dancing. Soon, though, the Nazis invade Poland and the family is torn apart; the young son ends up alone in a concentration camp with only his precious harmonica to re-

mind him of his previous life with his parents. Thinking of them, he plays his harmonica in the camp to “keep from losing hope.” One day, the camp commandant hears of the boy and harmonica. He loves Schubert and orders the young boy: “Play, Jew!”

Each night, after working all day, the frail and starving boy plays his harmonica for the commandant, who throws him scraps of bread when he finishes. Guilt and wonder consume the boy. He aches with guilt that he receives bread from the commandant while others starve. He wonders how the commandant, who beats prisoners for no reason, can recognize the beauty of music. He begins to hate himself for what he is doing. One night, however, a fellow prisoner thanks him for the music; then, as the boy plays each night for the commandant, he thinks of his parents and of the other prisoners and plays for them, “with all my heart.”

Beautifully written, this book depicts both the harsh reality of family separation and a message of survival and hope. The mixed media illustrations convey the changing mood of the story. One illustration portrays the commandant, eyes closed, flanked by two guard dogs, listening to the music. One hand holds a whip, the other touches his heart. The author and illustrator silently pose the essential question of how this man can be so cruel and yet understand the beauty and language of music.

An endnote identifies the young Polish harmonica player, Henryk Rosmaryn, who also is featured in the video *As Seen Through These Eyes* (a wonderful companion to the book), where he tells his story and plays a harmonica.

Kacer, K., & McKay, S. (2009). *Whispers from the ghettos*. Canada: Puffin. (Grades 7–8). Annotated by Carson Phillips. This anthology of personal narratives from 13 Holocaust survivors, including Kacer's father, Arthur, is the second in the *Whispers* trilogy, by Canadian authors Kathy Kacer and Sharon McKay; the first is *Whispers from the Camps* and the third is *Whispers in Hiding*. The stories, presenting a diverse range of experiences, give voice to individuals through dialogue. Rather than present entire accounts, the authors have wisely chosen to present singular powerful moments of survival, capturing one significant moment in the experience of each subject. Each story ends with a concise account of the survivor's life after liberation. Recounted in a variety of formats (prose, poetry, performance pieces), the narratives engage readers in an age-appropriate manner.

These are real life accounts of (in)humanity and struggle, and despite language and content appropriate for the middle schooler, the entire account of survival may overwhelm some younger children. Each story is poignant, sensitive, and deeply personal, inspiring readers to learn more. The authors have included an accurate and age-appropriate glossary of terms as well as a map of the

concentration camp network in Nazi-occupied Europe, tools that anchor the narrative in a historical context.

Many of the survivors were between 8 and 14 years old during the time they recount; middle school students connect with these memories. This powerful testament of survival provides accounts of hope during humanity's darkest hour.

Lakin, P. (1994). *Don't forget* (T. Rand, Illustrator). New York: Tambourine. (Grade 4). Annotated by Karen Shawn.

This life-affirming book, with evocative pastel illustrations by Ted Rand, is a perfect follow-up to David Adler's (1987) *The Number on My Grandfather's Arm* (URJ Press). It is appropriate for any child who has had the unsettling experience of seeing and learning about the numbers on the arm of a survivor.

Sarah is shopping for ingredients for an orange sponge cake to bake for her mother, but she hesitates to go into Singer's. “The Singers were nice. But their secret was not. . . . Sarah knew not to stare at the blue numbers tattooed on the Singers' left arms,” aware that “the Nazis gave them the blue numbers and put them in the concentration camp—just because they were Jews.” That comment is the only reference to the Holocaust.

Mrs. Singer, understanding Sarah's discomfort, helps her to understand that “the numbers should never be a secret. . . . If no one knows about bad things, they can happen all over again. Don't forget.” Reassured, Sarah stays with Mrs. Singer and bakes the cake (the recipe is included). The strength of this book is that it allows children to acknowledge the discomfort or concerns they may have had in similar situations.

Levine, K. (2002). *Hana's suitcase*. Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whitman. (Grades 6–8). Annotated by Lolle Boettcher. See also: *Hana's Story* (n.d.) [Teaching resources, teacher guide, and lesson plans]. www.hanassuitcase.ca/blog/. (A portion of this synopsis was adapted from a review by Michelle Prawer of Allen & Unwin Book Publishers.)

This compelling story attempts to piece together the life of Hana Brady, who was imprisoned in Theresienstadt for two years and then deported to Auschwitz, where, at 13, she was murdered. Halfway around the world from the devastation of Europe and 50 years later, Fumiko Ishioka, museum curator of the Tokyo Holocaust Center, is inspired by the testimonies of survivors at a conference in Israel and becomes determined to teach Japanese children of the plight of millions of Jewish children during the Holocaust. She acquires a few artifacts from Auschwitz, including, by chance, Hana's suitcase, which becomes a featured artifact in the museum.

Fumiko searches widely for information regarding the owner of the precious suitcase. She travels to Poland

and Czechoslovakia, but finds little until, at Theresienstadt, Fumiko learns that Hana's older brother, George, is alive and living in Canada. Her letters to George inspire him to travel to Japan. The result of their meeting is this moving story, a testimony to the life of Hana and others lost in the Holocaust, and a testament to the value of pursuing one's goals. The text exemplifies the power of research in attempting to reconstruct the lives of those who perished.

I recommend this book for middle and secondary school students. Despite the simple language and a hopeful beginning, the chapter design, alternating flashbacks with current times, is confusing. Ultimately, students learn that Hana did not survive.

Oren, R. (2009). *Gertruda's oath: A child, a promise, and a heroic escape during World War II* (B. Harshav, Trans.). New York: Random House. (Grade 8 and up). Annotated by Diane Fingers.

This is the fascinating, true account of Michael Stolowitzky and the tremendous faith and courage of Gertruda, his nanny; Karl Rink, an SS officer who belatedly learns the real intentions of the Nazi Party; and Dr. Berman, a highly respected Jewish physician who risks his life to save others in his ghetto.

Michael's family lives in Poland, where his father is a very wealthy and respected businessman. Life seems perfect until a tidal wave of antisemitism begins to destroy everything in its path. Gertruda, an out-of-work Catholic teacher, comes to the Stolowitzky house to be Michael's nanny, but the job she accepts turns into much more than expected. As she tends to Michael's every need, she comes to care for him deeply, and, with his mother's death impending, she promises to take Michael to Palestine to raise him as her own. Gertruda's bravery and the devotion she and Michael share take them on a harrowing and remarkable journey with an unlikely and unusual happy ending.

The stories of Gertruda, Michael, Karl, and many others are told from each individual's point of view but soon begin to overlap. The interactions of characters take on a depth and significance that encourage the reader to understand each person's motivations. The author has used vivid writing to capture an inspiring story without using overly graphic text.

Patz, N. (2003). *Who was the woman who wore the hat?* New York: Dutton. (Grade 6 and up). Annotated by Beryl Bresgi.

In an author's note, Nancy Patz [our cover artist—Ed.] tells the reader that she saw a woman's hat at the Jewish Historical Museum in Amsterdam and was haunted by the idea of who might have worn it. In this short prose poem, she reflects on the woman's identity. Her artwork, pencil drawings, and collage evoke the time period, creating a photograph-like reality in some of the pictures while cap-

turing the mystery of the woman's identity in others.

The book's value and impact lie in its ability to take an artifact and examine it from both an objective and a subjective perspective. We see the hat—just a plain hat on a stand—and the sense of wondering, the idea that the artifact symbolizes a life, engages the reader. The artist explores the possibilities of this life through other objects that the woman may have used—cooking utensils, a pocket-book—thus encouraging the reader to meditate on the personality and life behind the simple artifact. This wonderful story will engage a range of students in the notion that each statistic, number, or artifact from the Holocaust has a story and personality—a life—connected to it.

Polacco, P. (2000). *The butterfly*. New York: Philomel. (Grade 5 and up). Annotated by Karen Shawn.

This beautifully illustrated picture book tells the true story of the help given by the author's aunt, Monique, and her great-aunt, French Underground member Marcel Solliliage, to a French Jewish mother, father, and child.

Sevrine is a Jewish child hiding with her parents and others in the basement of the Solliliage home. Lonely, she creeps upstairs in the dark to sit at Monique's bedside and play with her cat. One night, Monique awakens to find Sevrine in her room, and the two young girls become secret friends. When a neighbor sees them from his window, however, Solliliage insists they flee to save their lives and, with Monique and her cat, helps bring Sevrine to safety. Sevrine survives the Holocaust, and the girls' friendship continues.

Gentle yet gripping, this fictionalized account of true events will engage students as young as 10 and encourage them to learn more about the Holocaust in France and the work of the French Resistance.

Rubin, S. G. (2000). *Fireflies in the dark: The story of Friedl Dicker-Brandeis and the children of Terezin*. New York: Holiday House. (Grade 5 and up). Annotated by Tova Weiss.

This is a treasure of a book! Easy enough for an advanced fifth grader, yet interesting to all ages, this lovely story relates the life of the Viennese artist Friedl Dicker-Brandeis, who was sent to Terezin and used her art skills to work with children imprisoned there. The introduction includes very brief background on Hitler and Nazism, general enough not to terrorize a young reader but including some important details. The book is filled with illustrations—mostly the drawings and paintings of children in Terezin—along with Friedl's work and photographs of Friedl and some of the children to whom the reader is introduced.

The chronological progression of Friedl's story includes discussion of the secret schools set up in the camp; the Girls' Home in building L410; the musical fireflies of the

book's title; the children's opera *Brundibar*; the Boys' Home in building L417 and the writing of the "magazine" *Vedem*; the infamous Red Cross visit; and much more. Much testimony brings to life the rich culture that the starving, overworked, and often ill prisoners in Terezin managed to cultivate. At the same time, the dark side of life in the ghetto/concentration camp comes through without overwhelming a young reader. The book is a loving testament to "the power of art to sustain hope"; to Friedl; and to the artists, both children and adults. I recommend it with no hesitation for grade 5 and up.

From Bill Younglove: While Rubin's book certainly can be understood by children in late elementary school, I highly recommend its use in middle school, as well—and possibly beyond. The work is fully researched with extensive citation (print, video, oral recordings, CDs, and websites); the author even asterisked works suitable for young readers. The index, which conveniently numbers the illustrations, allows the reader to move back and forth between the printed text, testimony, and graphics, which together comprise one meaningful whole. *Fireflies* does, indeed, reveal how flashes of kindness from one artistic person can spark joy, even in a world bent upon destroying its future artists.

From Dana Humphrey: Several titles serve well as companion pieces: the collection of poems and drawings *I Never Saw Another Butterfly: Children's Drawings and Poems from the Terezin Concentration Camp, 1942–1944*, edited by Hana Volavkova (1994); the video *As Seen Through These Eyes*, featuring an entire section on Terezin; the book *The Cat With the Yellow Star: Coming of Age in Terezin* (Susan Goldman Rubin and Ela Weissberger, 2008), which tells the story of the children's opera *Brundibar*, performed 55 times by the children of Terezin; and *Brundibar* (Kushner, 2003) itself, another version of the Czech opera brilliantly illustrated by Maurice Sendak.

Smith, F. D., & Grossman, M. (2000). *My secret camera: Life in the Lodz Ghetto*. San Diego, CA: Gulliver. (Grade 7 and up). Annotated by Dana Humphrey.

A poignant collection of 17 photographs taken in secret by Mendel Grossman tells the story of daily life in the Lodz Ghetto. Unlike most photographs we have of ghetto life, which were taken by the Nazis, these pictures show life from the viewpoint of the Jewish inhabitants. Grossman, who worked in the photographic laboratory of the ghetto administration, where he took photographs for work permits, hid his camera in his coat and, at grave risk, took pictures of day-to-day events in the ghetto, hiding the photos and their negatives before the ghetto was liquidated in 1944. Although Grossman did not survive, many of his photographs did.

Through his camera lens we see uncertainty in the faces of those waiting for deportation, the questioning eyes of a young boy bundled against the cold, and the exhaustion of laborers. We see a young girl proudly wearing a bow in her hair; gaunt but smiling workers making matzah in a secret bakery; and families laughing and posing. Grossman gives us the contrasting life of the ghetto: cruel reality, harsh living conditions—and the human spirit that refuses to break.

Text written by Smith accompanies the photos; the words are presented as if Grossman himself were explaining each photograph. The text seems forced and does nothing to enhance the stories told by the photographs themselves. An appended note gives detailed information on Grossman and explains the survival of his photographs.

Talbott, H. (2000). *Forging freedom: A true story of heroism during the Holocaust*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. (Grades 6–8). Annotated by Tova Weiss.

Forging Freedom is a highly readable book about the experiences of Dutch rescuer Jaap Penraat as he saves his Jewish neighbors and friends. Told by his American friend, author and illustrator Hudson Talbott, the book relates Jaap's story in an engaging style appropriate for good readers from grade 6 and up.

Jaap first learns about the rise of Nazism through older people's conversations and, later, through a telling incident in which a Jewish neighbor bequeaths works of great literature to the Penraats after hearing about the book burnings in Germany. "They [the books] contain ideas. . . . They will make you think . . . They don't want you to think for yourselves. But don't give in to them, boys. No matter who else does," says Mr. Mandelbaum.

When the Nazis occupy Holland, Jaap refuses to get involved in Nazi youth activity and ultimately helps make false identification cards: He is artistic, and his father, a book publisher, has the necessary equipment. These cards help hundreds of people in the early stage of the occupation. As life for his Jewish friends becomes more dangerous, Jaap conceives of a plan to get them out of Holland, connect them with the French Underground, then move them on to America. Using the forged papers, Jaap and several friends accompany these men on their journey—risking their own lives—but when they stop in France, they leave the train to carry out the rest of their mission. Jaap alone saved 406 men during 20 such train trips. The book is very attractive, with wonderful illustrations, and is a good introduction to the story of rescue.

Unterman, P. E. (2012). *Through Eva's eyes*. Kansas City: Landmark House. Also retrieved from www.throughveaseyes.com. (Grades 4–7). Annotated by Karen Shawn.

This true story about Eva Unterman was written and

illustrated by Eva's granddaughter Phoebe when she was 12. It is remarkable for its clear and engaging narrative; its attention to the details of Eva's life before the Holocaust; and its vivid description of life in the Lodz Ghetto, including the aching hunger and freezing cold; and of the family's deportation to Auschwitz and, later, to Stutthof, where her grandmother was murdered. The story follows Eva and her mother as they are taken to work in a munitions factory in Dresden, where they survive the city's bombing. Forced to walk to Terezin, they survive; are liberated by the Russians; and, miraculously, are reunited with Eva's father. An epilogue brings the family's story up to date.

This unusual and beautiful book is a gentle and careful introduction to one survivor's story through the pen of a grandchild who listened carefully. Its childlike tone is authentic and the details, while not at all graphic, are precise and evocative. It may encourage other talented children to inquire about and perhaps to write their families' Holocaust stories.

SECOND THOUGHTS

Boyne, J. (2006). *The boy in the striped pajamas*. New York: Random House. Annotated by Carson Phillips.

Boyne's caveat that his story is "a fable" is insufficient to rescue this book. From the outset, what Boyne wanted to convey, much less achieve, with this narrative is unclear. If his goal was to provide a vehicle with which to teach about German complicity in the Holocaust, there are numerous other, better, age-appropriate books to use. If his goal was to write about enduring bonds of friendship, his narrative would have been better situated in another historical, or even imaginary, context.

There is something eerily dismal about setting a fable—if indeed one can call Boyne's text a fable—within the context of Auschwitz–Birkenau. Fables, by definition, inhabit the realm of the imagination unimpeded by the limits of historical reality. In the deliberate setting of a Nazi death camp, the natural power of a fable is diminished, outweighed by the historical realities rightly demanded when one studies the Holocaust.

Bruno is a 9-year-old German boy whose family leaves Berlin when the father receives a promotion. Their new home in the countryside is less grand than the one left behind in Berlin, and Bruno misses his friends. Naturally inquisitive, he investigates his surroundings and discovers "a farm" located behind a fence, not far from his new house. Upon closer inspection, he sees odd-looking people on the farm who wear what seem to be striped pajamas. Bruno soon develops a friendship with a Jewish boy called Shmuel, and, at the end of the book, hoping to understand more clearly Shmuel's life on the farm and to help Shmuel find his father, he burrows underneath the fence to join him, with fatal consequences.

The narrative is utterly implausible, and Boyne's language is cloying, contrived, and grating. His attempt at cleverness falls flat when he uses "Out With" for the name of the camp (Auschwitz—get it?) or "the Fury" for the Führer. This is not a fable with anthropomorphic animals and imaginary realms; it is one with flat, one-dimensional characters set in the Holocaust, resulting in disastrous storytelling. Our protagonist Bruno is so naïve and simple-minded that one wonders how he manages to get dressed in the morning. Nothing in the character development, setting, plot, or theme encourages critical thought or any understanding of the events or the magnitude of the Holocaust in young readers.

Avoid this book and choose one of the invaluable Holocaust-era diaries written by real children, e. g., Chava Pressburger's (2007) *The Diary of Petr Ginz* (Atlantic Monthly Press); Mary Berg's (2007) *The Diary of Mary Berg: Growing Up in the Warsaw Ghetto* (Oneworld); Jacob Boas's (1996) *We Are Witnesses—Five Diaries of Teenagers Who Died in the Holocaust* (Scholastic Paperbacks); and Alexandra Zapruder's (2002) *Salvaged Pages: Young Writers' Diaries of the Holocaust* (Yale University Press) [see Tambuscio et al., pp. 101–106—Ed.]. Through those real-life diaries, your students will discover the meaning of friendship, loyalty, social justice, and other pertinent themes. Boyne's text merely trivializes them.

END THOUGHTS: "A THOUSAND FACTS AND FIGURES"

Stories of the Holocaust do not replace or conflict with its history; rather, they help us to understand it more fully, making its complexities personally significant. "In the literature of the Holocaust," Albert H. Friedlander (1968) has written, "there is conveyed that which cannot be transmitted by a thousand facts and figures." The stories recommended above individualize and personalize events and places, limit a young reader's exposure to potentially traumatic material, and humanize the grim statistics, providing the gentle introduction necessary if we want our children to seek to learn more.

REFERENCE

Friedlander, A. H. (1968). *Out of the whirlwind: A reader of Holocaust literature*. New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

Bernard Mann wrote this lament-poem, he tells us, for "Tommy Berman, famed Israeli marine microbiologist. Rescued as a 5-year-old from Prague at the onset of the Holocaust on a *Kindertransport* and fostered in Scotland, Berman became a founding member of Kibbutz Amiad in Lower Galilee and one of the founders of the Yigal Alon Kinneret Limnological Laboratory. He helped found Voices Israel, a league of English writing poets, and served for two terms as its president. He was also an advocate of Israeli–Palestinian peace and understanding. On a visit to the Galapagos Islands in April 2013, Tommy accidentally fell to his death from a cliff near the city of Puerto Ayora." See the 2013 issue of this journal for two poems about the *Kindertransport* that Tom shared with us.

Bernard Mann

He Who Was Lost at the Edge of the Sea

For Tom Berman

How can one not find the imprint,
engraved in the bedrock of the Kinneret
and in the heart-depths of family and friends
and in the deepest strata of people and ponderers
of the life of lakes and oceans and seas,
of the poet who told
their stories?

You could always see in his eyes
how the touchstone of the leather suitcase
resurrected the faces of mother, father in
that tragic parting in Prague — the few children
who would live to the train on the left,
mama and papa and all other Jews
to death on the right.

And he who was saved toiled
in the rock and soil of Amiad, and,
with Deborah, brought three daughters
into their beautiful world,
and then, with craving and curiosity, labored to solve

the secrets of the Sea of Kinneret,
the lyre that holds notes and clefs on
the enigmas of life and death
and survival in the shallows,
and in the deep.

And how could I not remember
the gift of his book of poems that afternoon
in Amiad, with sunlight filtering through foliage
onto the panes of their western windows,
and his telling me of Voices? And how can I not
recall the pleasure of reading more of his verses
and thinking back on the wry humor
he fashioned, his counterpoint
to the impenetrable?

And how is it possible that in the week
the discovery unfolded of a fabulous giant cairn
at the bottom of the sea he loved above all others,
a myriad of boulders stacked together
in the very distant past, a revelation that must
have stirred him mightily yet again, how is it that
in that same week, bitter fate brought him
to the edge of a vast ocean
that lacked the kindness of all the seas
he had ever explored, and failed to
forgive one . . . merely one
innocent misstep?

"This deeply sensitive man, who felt the pain of the Shoah and the loss of his family his entire life, was also one of the most important scholars of the Shoah and a weighty moral voice," writes *PRISM* board member David Silberklang in this eulogy for the highly esteemed historian Professor Yisrael Gutman. "The world is a much dimmer place without him." We agree. We are all diminished by the loss of this man.

Yisrael Gutman: A Scholar, a Teacher, and a Gentleman



Professor Yisrael Gutman, April 18, 2013, at a Yad Vashem symposium.

Thirty-four years ago, as I began my MA studies in the Institute of Contemporary Jewry at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, I followed my interest in Polish Jewry by registering for a seminar that engaged in a comparative analysis of Warsaw and Vilna during the Shoah. I was the youngest, most inexperienced, and least knowledgeable person in the class. Indeed, the vast knowledge and experience of some of my fellow students was very humbling. These gaps, however, did not faze my professor, Yisrael Gutman. He sought and inspired seriousness, a thirst to learn, critical thinking, and sympathy and respect for the Jews in the Holocaust. With that, he immediately captured my imagination.

I connected instantly with Yisrael; I saw him as one of my mentors. He was both immensely knowledgeable and immensely warm. Yisrael was a devoted teacher, which was plain to see in every class and in every conversation with him. Although he was not my advisor for my MA thesis or my Ph.D. dissertation, he always made himself available for a discussion of these or any other subject.

Yisrael Gutman was a man of remarkable talent and an almost unbelievable personal history. He was active in the Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir Zionist youth movement before and during the Shoah and in the Jewish underground in the Warsaw Ghetto, and he fought in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. His eye was injured during the uprising, and in its aftermath he was imprisoned in Majdanek and then in Auschwitz–Birkenau and Mauthausen. He often commented that he had been relatively weak as a youth, and it was his experience in the camps that had made him strong.

After the war, he immigrated to Eretz Israel, where he settled on Kibbutz Lehavot Ha-Bashan. He wrote several books about his experiences, and in 1961 he testified at the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem. Yisrael received his Ph.D. in 1975 from the Hebrew University and worked for years both at Yad Vashem (as director of research and head of the Academic Committee) and at the Institute of Contemporary Jewry, where he was one of the most admired professors. His careful teaching and training were rewarded by an unusually great number of doctoral students who finished their work with highest honors. Yisrael also was a founder of the Moreshet Anielewicz Memorial Center; an academic advisor to the United States Holocaust Memorial Council; a member of the Academic Committee of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum; the founding academic head of the International Institute for Holocaust Research at Yad Vashem; the chief historian of Yad Vashem; an academic advisor to Yad Vashem; a member of the International Auschwitz Council; the initiator and editor of the *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*; the chief historical consultant to the new Holocaust History Museum at Yad Vashem; and a member of the editorial board of *Yad Vashem Studies*.

Yisrael was one of the most influential historians of the Shoah in the world. He was the most prominent and significant of the survivor historians, known for his meticulous research, penetrating analyses, and engaging writing. He played a seminal role in laying the foundations and building the edifice of Holocaust studies in Israel and in ensuring that the Jews in the Shoah be seen as a subject of history with their own agency and not only as victims of Nazi actions. He was one of the world's leading experts on the Warsaw Ghetto, the daily life of Jews in the ghettos, Jewish leadership during the Shoah, the role of youth movements, the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp, Jewish underground activity, Emanuel Ringelblum and the Oneg Shabbat underground archive, and much more.

Following the collapse of communism in Poland, Yisrael became a celebrity there among young scholars who sought to liberalize Polish scholarship and discourse and to confront the truth of Poland's recent past. He was sought after for advice, articles, conferences, committees, public lectures, and awards. In 1995 he received an honorary doctorate from the University of Warsaw, which he viewed as symbolically significant, since this was a place that he could not have entered as a prewar Jewish citizen of Poland. Indeed, Yisrael Gutman's prestige and influence in post-Communist Poland and all around the world were legendary, as reflected in the large number of condolence letters that I alone received, on behalf of Yad Vashem, from scholars on five continents when he passed away.

There is much more to say about Yisrael Gutman's contribution to the field, but I would like to conclude with some personal observations.

For me, Yisrael Gutman was a mentor and a giant of a Jewish person. He taught me the basics of comparative analysis; document analysis; and the need for human sensitivity in historical research, especially regarding the Shoah. He also connected me professionally to my first job as an editor of an academic journal. After reading my paper for one of his classes, he recommended me to Yehuda Bauer as a knowledgeable student and potentially capable English-language editor. That journal was *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, and thanks to Yisrael's recommendation I joined an exciting project—creating a new scholarly journal in English. Yisrael also involved me in writing entries for the *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, and several years later, when I became the historian of the team that was preparing Yad Vashem's new Holocaust History Museum, he told me many times how happy he was that I had accepted the job and how confident he was in my ability to help mold the conceptual historical outline of the museum. Throughout our three years of work together on the project, Yisrael ignored his far vaster experience and the fact that I was his former student and as yet without a doctorate and related to me with the kind of respect reserved for a peer,

even when we disagreed on historical details or interpretations.

In June 1996, Yisrael asked me to take on the editorship of *Yad Vashem Studies* in place of the retiring Dr. Aharon Weiss. I did not yet have my Ph.D., but Yisrael expressed his unequivocal confidence in me. I came to know him much better in this job, as we discussed many journal-related issues over the years. In little things and large, his historical acumen and eminent humanity stood out. I saw this, for example, in the deep respect, kindness, and near reverence with which he related to his older colleague on the editorial board, Professor Leni Yahil, and in the sharp, incisive comments he had on articles and issues under discussion. His very significant contribution as a member of the editorial board of *Yad Vashem Studies* and his personal interest in me left a lasting impression.

In one of our private meetings in his office during our work on the museum development project, I noticed a stack of Pages of Testimony on Yisrael's desk. I asked him whether he had completed them, and he said, "No." I commented, in my naïve audacity, that he really should fill out the pages, since he was the only person who could ensure that his family be remembered. "I know," he responded, "but I can't."

Some time later he recalled fondly the Saturday night get-togethers of his entire extended family at his grandparents' house. Of the 89 people who gathered there regularly, he noted sadly, "I'm the only one who survived." One day shortly after that conversation, he entered my office and asked about photographs of children killed at Treblinka that he had heard I had on my computer. He wanted to see the faces; perhaps his little sister Genia was among them. As we looked at the photographs together for some time, he commented sadly that he was not even sure he would recognize her if he saw her. It had been so long, and his memory of his family's faces had become so blurred.

This deeply sensitive man, who felt the pain of the Shoah and the loss of his family his entire life, was also one of the most important scholars of the Shoah and a weighty moral voice. He did not shy away from the most difficult subjects, even, and especially, when they had a direct personal connection. He was better able to balance scholarly distance with human involvement in this most difficult of subjects than most scholars and students who had not personally experienced the hell of the Shoah.

There are those rare times in a person's life when one is lucky enough to get to know a giant, someone whose influence can shift the tides and influence people across the globe. Yisrael Gutman was one of those giants, and the world is a much dimmer place without him.

—David Silberklang

Editor

KAREN SHAWN

Karen Shawn, Ph.D., is visiting associate professor of Jewish education at the Azrieli Graduate School and editor of this journal. The founder of the Holocaust Educators' Consortium, an international, interreligious Community of Practice, Shawn has spoken and written extensively on Holocaust education. She is co-editor of *The Call of Memory: Learning about the Holocaust Through Narrative* (Shawn & Goldfrad, 2008), an anthology and an accompanying teacher's guide; and a recipient of the Covenant Foundation Award for Excellence in Jewish Education (2000). To contact her, e-mail her at shawn@yu.edu.

Associate Editor

MOSHE SOKOLOW

Moshe Sokolow, Ph.D., is Fanya Gottesfeld-Heller Professor and Associate Dean of the Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration at Yeshiva University, specializing in the history and philosophy of Jewish education and curriculum development in Judaic studies. He is the author of *Studies in the Weekly Parashah, Based on the Lessons of Nehama Leibowitz* (Jerusalem, 2008) and editor of *The Azrieli Papers*.

Contributors

LISA BAUMAN

Lisa Bauman teaches English and Holocaust literature at St. Thomas Aquinas High School in Overland Park, Kansas, and holds a master's degree from Kansas University. She is an educator in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's Regional Education Corps, and a USHMM teacher fellow. Lisa has presented workshops on teaching the Holocaust at multiple universities, conferences of the National Council of Teachers of English, and Belfer National Conferences at the USHMM. To contact the author, e-mail her at lisa.a.bauman@gmail.com.

JUDITH TYDOR BAUMEL-SCHWARTZ

Judith Tydor Baumel-Schwartz, Ph.D., is the director of the Schulmann School of Basic Jewish Studies and the Fanya Gottesfeld Heller Center for the Study of Women in Judaism and a professor of Jewish history at Bar-Ilan University, Israel. The author of numerous books and articles, she specializes in topics pertaining to gender, Jewish religious life, the Holocaust, memory, and the State of Israel. Her most recent book is *Never Look Back: The Jewish Refugee Children in Great Britain, 1938–1945* (2012, Purdue University Press). To contact the author, e-mail her at baumelj@gmail.com.

LOUIS DANIEL BRODSKY

Louis Daniel Brodsky has written 82 volumes of poetry, including the five-volume *Shadow War: A Poetic Chronicle of September 11 and Beyond*. His volume *You Can't Go Back, Exactly* won the Center for Great Lakes Culture's (Michigan State University) 2004 award for best book of poetry. The founder of *Time Being Books*, which has released 109 books of poetry since 1988, he also has authored 15 volumes of fiction and nine books on William Faulkner. To contact the author, visit his website at www.louisdanielbrodsky.com.

CYNTHIA LYNN CAPERS

Cynthia Lynn Capers is the former associate director of education and changing exhibitions at Holocaust Museum Houston. She has co-curated several exhibitions, including *The Impact of Racist Ideologies: Jim Crow and the Nuremberg Laws* and *Uprooted*. In her exhibition and curriculum work, she focuses on how to talk about social cruelty, genocide education, and the connection of the Holocaust to other historical events. To contact the author, e-mail her at cynthia.capers@gmail.com.

STEPHEN J. CIPOT

Stephen J. Cipot is a scientist with the United States Environmental Protection Agency as well as a writer, runner, poet, and assistant with the organization Operation Wounded Warrior. He served on Nassau County's (New York) poet-laureate nomination panel; was awarded a residency by the Edward Albee Foundation; and contributed to the success of the first Dylan Thomas Tribute Tour. Cipot's poetry has appeared in many publications, among them *The Paterson Literary Review* and the forthcoming *Korean Expatriate Literature* (2014), a bilingual collection. To contact the author, e-mail him at stephenjciopot@hotmail.com.

VALERIE HÉBERT

Valerie Hébert, Ph.D., is an assistant professor of history and interdisciplinary studies at Lakehead University, in Orillia, Ontario, Canada. The recipient of research grants and fellowships from the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the Holocaust Educational Foundation, and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Hébert has published on the Nuremberg Trials and on Rwanda's Gacaca Tribunals. She currently is researching the connection between atrocity photography and human rights consciousness. To contact the author, e-mail her at vhebert@lakeheadu.ca.

JERALDINE R. KRAVER

Jeraldine R. Kraver, Ph.D., is a professor of English and the director of English Education at the University of Northern Colorado. She has been a fellow at the International School for Holocaust Studies at Yad Vashem, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and the Auschwitz Jewish Center. Dr. Kraver's work has appeared in *The CEA Critic*; *English Journal*; *Teaching American Literature*; and *L.I.T.: Literature, Interpretation, Theory*. To contact the author, email her at jeraldine.kraver@unco.edu.

CORY JOHNSTON

Cory Johnston is the assistant editor of *The Literary Review*. He is a graduate assistant at Fairleigh Dickinson University and is on the staff of the Writing Center of Passaic County Community College, both in New Jersey. His writing recently has appeared in *Spittoon* and *Gently Read Literature*. To contact the author, e-mail him at coryjohnston@gmail.com.

DAVID H. LINDQUIST

David H. Lindquist, Ph.D., is an associate professor at the College of Education and Public Policy and a co-director of the Institute for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Indiana University–Purdue University Fort Wayne. He also is a museum teacher fellow and regional museum educator for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum; a fellow of the Teacher Fellowship Program of the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors; and a distinguished teacher of the White House Commission on Presidential Scholars. To contact the author, e-mail him at lindquid@ipfw.edu.

BERNARD MANN

Bernard Mann is a poet and writer whose poems have been published in such journals as *Ardent*, *New Millennium Writings*, and *Voices Israel* and in anthologies including *Tom Howard* and *Cyclamens and Swords* (2013). His fiction includes the short story "Sea Change" and a novel in progress on King David and his time. Mann is a practicing landscape architect, planner, and designer; his other writings include *Rivers in the City*, a volume on enlightened waterfront design, and articles on environment and urbanism. To contact the author, e-mail him at davidlegcy@aol.com.

RAFAEL MEDOFF

Rafael Medoff, Ph.D., is founding director of the David S. Wyman Institute for Holocaust Studies in Washington, DC, which focuses on issues related to America's response to the Holocaust. He is the author of 14 books about the Holocaust, Zionism, and American Jewish history, the latest of which is *FDR and the Holocaust: A Breach of Faith*. To contact the author, e-mail him at rafaelmedoff@aol.com.

ROCHELLE L. MILLEN

Rochelle L. Millen, Ph.D., is professor emerita of religion at Wittenberg University. Her recent publications include "Land, Nature, and Judaism: Post-Holocaust Reflections," in *Holocaust and Nature* (2013, *LIT Verlag*, Germany), and "Simone Weil: A French-Jewish Intellectual Journey in the 1930s and 1940s," in *Different Horrors, Same Hell: Gender and the Holocaust* (2012, University of Washington Press). Millen serves on the USHMM Committee on Ethics, Religion and the Holocaust and is on the board of the Ohio Council for Holocaust Education. To contact the author, e-mail her at rmillen@wittenberg.edu.

SARAH TRAISTER MOSKOVITZ

Sarah Traister Moskovitz is the daughter of Polish-Jewish immigrants who left relatives behind in the 1920s; all of them disappeared in the Holocaust. Her book *Love Despite Hate* (1982, Schocken) brought new attention to child survivors of the Holocaust. In 2003, as a scholar in residence at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC, Moskovitz began translating all the Yiddish poetry in the Ringelblum Archives, which is now available in English on her website www.poetryinhell.org. To contact the poet, e-mail her at smoskovitz@csun.edu.

NANCY PATZ

Nancy Patz has written and illustrated 12 popular picture books. Her work *Who Was the Woman Who Wore the Hat?* (2003, Dutton) won the Sydney Taylor Award, among other prizes. Patz lectures frequently at Holocaust Museum Houston and to Holocaust education groups. Her 2010 Jewish Museum of Maryland solo exhibit featured her book *18 Stones*, which contains portraits by Patz alongside prose poems by Susan L. Roth. Patz's artifact drawings in this issue of *PRISM* will be exhibited at Goucher College in the fall of 2014. To contact the artist, e-mail her at nancypatz@verizon.net.

CARSON PHILLIPS

Carson Phillips, Ph.D., is the assistant director of the Sarah and Chaim Neuberger Holocaust Education Centre, in Toronto, Canada. Appointed to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance in 2009, he is the recipient of numerous scholarly awards, including the 2013 BMW Canada Award for Excellence from the Canadian Center for German and European Studies. He has presented and published his research in Austria, Canada, Germany, and the United States. To contact the author, e-mail him at drcarsonphillips@gmail.com.

DOREEN RAPPAPORT

Doreen Rappaport is a writer and poet whose published works have received critical acclaim and awards. Her numerous honors include the *Washington Post* Children's Book Guild Award for Lifetime Achievement for non-fiction and awards from the Association of Jewish Libraries, the National Council of Teachers of English, the American Library Association, and Bank Street College. Rappaport's *Beyond Courage: The Untold Story of Jewish Resistance During the Holocaust* was cited as one of the best nonfiction books of 2012 by Kirkus Review. To contact the author, e-mail her at rapabook@aol.com.

JENNIFER ROBERTSON

Jennifer Robertson lives in Edinburgh, Scotland. She has lived and worked in Russia, Poland, and Ukraine. Robertson has a lifelong interest in things Jewish and has authored books for adults and children including *Don't Go to Uncle's Wedding: Voices From the Warsaw Ghetto* (2000, Azure). Her work has been published in anthologies including *Warsaw Tales* and *Bucharest Tales* (2010, 2011, New Europe Writers). Her latest short story collection is *Wojtek and Other True Wartime Tales* (2014, Fleming Publications, Glasgow). To contact the author, e-mail her at jsrjuniper3@gmail.com.

PNINA ROSENBERG

Pnina Rosenberg, Ph.D., is an art historian specializing in the art and legacy of the Holocaust. She lectures on these subjects in the Department of Arts and Humanities of the Technion and the Max Stern Yezreel Valley College, Israel. She has presented numerous papers at international conferences; has published books, articles, and exhibition catalogs on various aspects of Holocaust art and memory; and is a contributor to the *Encyclopedia Judaica* and the *Jewish Women Historical Encyclopedia*. To contact the author, e-mail her at pninarose@gmail.com.

MATTHEW ROZELL

Matthew Rozell teaches history at his high school alma mater in upstate New York. A USHMM teacher fellow, Mr. Rozell writes about teaching the Holocaust at <http://teachinghistorymatters.com>. He is a recipient of the NSDAR Founders' Medal for Education and the Organization of American Historians Tachau History Teacher of the Year Award and was recently named alumni educator of the year by his college alma mater, SUNY Geneseo. For the work discussed in his contribution to this volume, Rozell and his students were named ABC World News persons of the week on September 25, 2009. To contact the author, e-mail him at marozell@gmail.com.

STEVEN SHER

Steven Sher is a renowned teacher and lecturer whose writing has appeared in over 300 publications worldwide and in 14 books, including, most recently, *Grazing on Stars: Selected Poems* (2012, Presa Press) and *The House of Washing Hands* (2013, Pecan Grove Press). His work, which explores Jewish family life and ritual, finding the holy in the mundane, has been featured by Symphony Space (Selected Shorts) and Poetry in Motion. Sher has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize and was an Oregon Book Awards finalist. To contact the poet, see his website at www.stevensher.net.

DAVID SILBERKLANG

David Silberklang, Ph.D., is Senior Historian at the International Institute for Holocaust Research at Yad Vashem, and editor of the scholarly journal *Yad Vashem Studies*. He teaches Jewish history at the Rothberg International School of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and at the University of Haifa graduate school. He has published widely on the Holocaust and his book *Gates of Tears: The Holocaust in the Lublin District* will soon be published by Yad Vashem. To contact the author, e-mail him at david.silberklang@yadvashem.org.il.

BONNIE SUSSMAN

Bonnie Sussman teaches Advanced Placement United States Government, Advanced Placement Economics, and a Holocaust course at Bishop O'Dowd High School in Oakland, California, and is a member of the Regional Education Corps of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. She has conducted workshops on teaching the Holocaust throughout the United States and in Poland and Lithuania, and has received numerous local and national teaching awards for her work in the field. To contact the author, e-mail her at bsussman@bishopodowd.org.

ZAHAVA Z. SWEET

Zahava Z. Sweet was born in Poland and survived the Holocaust. Her poetry has appeared in the anthologies *Blood to Remember: American Poets on the Holocaust* and *Mothers and Daughters*, and in a variety of magazines. She has translated poetry by Julian Tuwim, the poet of her childhood, for the Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles. Her own book of poetry, *The Return of Sound*, was published in 2005. To contact the poet, e-mail her at sweet.design@verizon.net.

COLLEEN TAMBUSCIO

Colleen Tambuscio teaches at New Milford High School in New Jersey. She has an MA in Jewish-Christian Studies from Seton Hall University and is an educational consultant to the New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education. She was named a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Mandel fellow in 1998 and serves as a regional museum educator for the USHMM northeast region. She is the founder and president of the Council of Holocaust Educators. To contact the author, e-mail her at ctambuscio@aol.com.

MARK THORSEN

Mark Thorsen, Ph.D., is a social studies teacher at Ponderosa High School in Parker, Colorado, and an adjunct professor in the University of Denver's teacher education program. His dissertation was a finalist for the American Educational Research Association's Qualitative Dissertation of the Year Award in 2010. Mark is a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum teacher fellow and co-founder of Colorado Holocaust Educators, which conducts teacher education in the mountain-states region. To contact the author, e-mail him at mthorsenphd@gmail.com.

MARY TODD

Mary Todd, Ph.D., is executive director of the Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi. Previously founding dean of the Honors College and professor of religious studies at Marshall University, and academic vice president at Ohio Dominican University, she is the author of "A Historian Pieces Together the Engelbrecht Puzzle," in *Lutheran Forum* (fall 2010), the story of a Lutheran clergyman whose 1937 essay on combatting antisemitism won first prize in a contest sponsored by the Jewish journal *Opinion*. To contact the author, e-mail her at dr.omah@gmail.com.

MARY LEE WEBECK

Mary Lee Webeck, Ph.D., is director of education at Holocaust Museum Houston. She frequently presents on Holocaust topics and has a special interest in work that integrates art with difficult learning. Before work in the museum world, Dr. Webeck taught social studies and language arts/reading in Indiana public schools as well as courses in literacy, social studies, research methods, and genocide studies at Purdue University and the University of Texas at Austin. To contact the author, e-mail her at mwebeck@hnh.org.

ANN WEISS

Ann Weiss, Ph.D., is a writer, traveling exhibition curator, public speaker, educator, photographer, filmmaker, and director of *Eyes From the Ashes* Educational Foundation (2000), a nonprofit organization that conducts and encourages research, interviews, and teaching, using the past to try to create a better future. She is the author of *The Last Album: Eyes from the Ashes of Auschwitz–Birkenau*. To contact the author, e-mail her at annweiss@thelastalbum.org.

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NANCY PATZ

I have drawn and painted the artifacts in pen and ink, pencil, and watercolor from images on the websites of the following museums:

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www.hmh.org
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www.jewishmuseummd.org
- Museum of Jewish Heritage—
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MATTHEW ROZELL

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COLLEEN TAMBUSCIO, LISA BAUMAN,
AND BONNIE SUSSMAN

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Yeshiva University
AZRIELI GRADUATE SCHOOL OF JEWISH
EDUCATION AND ADMINISTRATION
2495 Amsterdam Avenue, New York, NY 10033
www.yu.edu/azrieli



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