AN INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL FOR HOLOCAUST EDUCATORS

PRISM

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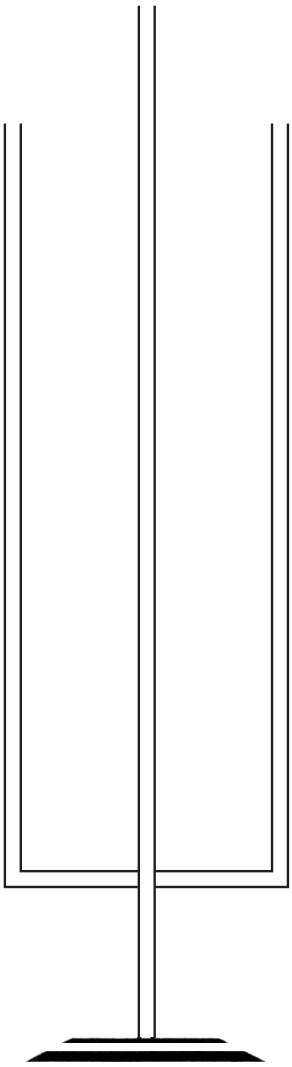

In memory of

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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THE EMIL A. AND JENNY FISH CENTER
FOR HOLOCAUST & GENOCIDE STUDIES
YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

AZRIELI GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF JEWISH EDUCATION AND ADMINISTRATION
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Call for Manuscripts

PRISM
AN INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL
FOR HOLOCAUST EDUCATORS

PRISM: An Interdisciplinary Journal for Holocaust Educators is a publication of the Emil A. and Jenny Fish Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Yeshiva University. Copies are available upon request. Contact prism@yu.edu to order. Back issues are available for download online at www.yu.edu/fish-center/publications.

EDUCATORS, HISTORIANS, PSYCHOLOGISTS, THEOLOGIANS, ARTISTS, WRITERS, POETS, AND OTHER INTERESTED AUTHORS ARE INVITED TO SUBMIT MANUSCRIPTS OR ARTWORK ON ALL ASPECTS OF THE HOLOCAUST EXPERIENCE. WE SEEK IN PARTICULAR ESSAYS ON HOLOCAUST CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT, TEACHING, AND LEARNING.

KEEP IN MIND:

- Submissions must be emailed to prism@yu.edu in Microsoft Word, using Times New Roman 12 font type, double-spaced, justified, and paginated. The American Psychological Association (APA) *Publication Manual* (6th Ed.) is Yeshiva University's required reference guide for publications.
- Poetry submissions should be sent to **Dr. Charles Adès Fishman**, our poetry editor, at carolus@optimum.net, and to Dr. Karen Shawn at shawn@yu.edu. Poetry should be single-spaced. Include your name and email address on each poem.
- Photos and artwork must be attached as separate JPEG or TIFF files and accompanied by permissions and captions. All digital image files need to be a minimum of 5x7 inches and 300-600 dpi. Essays accompanied by documentary photos and artwork are given special consideration.
- Length of manuscript may vary; we seek essays from 4 to 10 double-spaced pages, with a maximum of 3,000 words including references and end notes.
- Each issue, including all photos, will be available as a PDF on our web site, www.yu.edu/fish-center/publications, so permissions must include rights for online as well as print publication.

CONTACT DR. KAREN SHAWN AT SHAWN@YU.EDU WITH QUESTIONS, SUGGESTIONS, AND/OR QUERIES.

PRISM: An Interdisciplinary Journal for Holocaust Educators is a peer-reviewed annual. Acceptance of manuscripts for publication depends on the following factors: sound scholarship; originality; clear, concise, and engaging writing; 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.

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Contents

Introduction

We published a very different issue in 2022, filled with poetry by and about the Second Generation and accompanied by artwork from the renowned Nancy Patz. The special issue was in honor of Yeshiva University's new Emil A. and Jenny Fish Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, and it included a well-deserved tribute to our dedicated and revered poetry editor, Charles Adès Fishman.

Now, again, we publish a very different issue, because the world is different. October 7th and the aftermath have wrought profound changes that touch many of us daily and will be analyzed and measured for decades to come.

Although I had the edited and readied work of many wonderful authors for the 2023 issue, I could not attend to them after the October onslaught. First, I was too consumed by the news and by the anguished concerns from my friends and family in Israel to do any work at all. Then, when confronted with the looming publication deadline, I simply waited, unable to decide how a regular issue would be received. Would it say that it was business as usual? That was unacceptable. Would it imply that October 7th had its own place, not in these pages? Perhaps. But could a journal about the Holocaust ignore the obvious echoes in the current horrific event? I did not think so. But if it addressed them, would it seem as if we were comparing the two? Would that be valid?

And if we did choose to write about what happened in Israel and then in Gaza, from whom should we solicit essays: Historians? Futurists? Israelis? Soldiers? Hostage families? Religious leaders? Poets? Professors? All would have words of deep meaning and value, but how could I attempt such an undertaking? To whom, exactly, would I reach out? How long would I have to wait before their essays, if they responded at all, could be written, received, peer-reviewed, edited, and submitted for publication?

I was paralyzed; I did nothing at all for months.

Then, finally, I met my spring semester Fish Center graduate students, and I saw that they needed to share what they were thinking and feeling about October 7th even as we discussed and analyzed the Holocaust literature I had assigned for their course. As they talked, I realized that they could offer essays, written in the moment, raw and unedited, a record of their response to the event as it unfolded for them, even as they were learning about the Holocaust. The two ideas could be side by side, perhaps had to be side by side, and so it began.

I asked first for writing from my Fish Center students, then from others in different universities, from friends and colleagues, from writers whose work I admired. The essays I solicited and received were limited in length by the authors' design and by our space restrictions. They were limited in number because of the time pressure I was facing to publish—I was already well behind schedule—and by the demurral of several writers who, they explained, could not yet find the right words to make sense of all that they were experiencing.

As I read the works of pain and power that I gathered, I decided to avoid the peer editing process; these pieces are authentic, from the heart, and without others' mediating suggestions.

Then came more questions: I already had essays on the Holocaust enough for an issue, but I could not include many of them if I wanted to publish the newest ones. Which should I keep and which would go into the next year's issue? Some, it seemed, had similar themes, some were by or about survivors; those would be more effective companions, I felt, and the other, more academic offerings would be held back for now. I thank all of the authors who so graciously agreed to wait yet another year to see their work in print.

More questions delayed me: How do I present these new, short pieces? Should they be interspersed with essays and poems on the Holocaust to lead readers to find possible similarities? Would I position them at the back of the journal, because writing on the Holocaust is the point of *PRISM* and so should be primary? Or should these newest writings greet the reader, because they capture the moment, so much on our minds now? And how would the two subjects be connected visually?

I was relieved to see, as I read through the new submissions, that two could serve clearly as bridges. Our Fish Center director, historian Shay Pilnik, writes about the Shoah and October 7th. Historian Rafael Medoff catalogs attempts to deny what occurred on October 7th and makes a comparison to Holocaust denial. The others, by the former Israeli state archivist Yaacov Lozowick; by students Julia Goldsamt, Emily Dehmer, Lauren Goldsamt, and Julian

Schmidt; by two professors, Dara Barnat and Rachel N. Baum; by a psychotherapist, Keith Breiman; and by a colleague, Brittany Hager McNeely, fell easily into place.

There are no photos or art work with these submissions; that is highly unusual for *PRISM* but appropriate, I think, for the subject. You will see in the essays what you wish to see; the ideas will prompt images as you read. We do offer one photograph, though, taken by Julia Goldsamt; it serves to demarcate the two subjects; it speaks to me of the darkness and loss that shadow bold, hopeful new growth.

It brings to mind as well the reminder from Rabbi Daniel Fridman (2024) of the Jewish Center of Teaneck, NJ, that "this intense campaign of harassment . . . is nothing new for our people." But, he reassures us, we have "earned the title Yirmiyahu HaNavi gave us thousands of years ago: עם שרידי חרב, *am seridei charev*, the nation that has survived the sword." We will survive; we will thrive.

Some of the essays that were meant to be published many months ago appear now. They include a short story by Jennifer Robertson; a narrative by Arnie Sleutelberg, the son of a survivor; and Pnina Rosenberg's biographical sketch of Sabina Heller who, as a baby, miraculously survived. In each essay, a child was hidden and saved by loving Christians.

Our haunting cover was painted and generously gifted to us by the American artist Deborah Howard. She created it, she tells us, after learning that the child Sabina was locked in a cellar in Poland and left to die. I chose it to grace this issue because it evoked in me an immediate connection to our Israeli hostages, many of whom were and are still, at this writing, tragically locked away. Might it be possible that we will learn that some of them survived because of caring Palestinians who, like the few Righteous during the Holocaust, took the grave risk to save them?

Arnie's essay and another, by Dahlia Schwartz, grew out of two writing workshops I conducted for Second-Generation members of Michigan's Holocaust Memorial Center Zekelman Family Campus speakers bureau. These writers' poignant, vivid thoughts about their parents' experiences during and in the aftermath of the Holocaust make clear the imperative for 2G and 3G voices to help us learn. In a co-written personal narrative, 3Gs Vered Tohar and Adi Wolfson offer their thoughts on their lives as Israeli grandchildren of survivors. A bonus is their poetry, both within their narrative and as stand–alone works.

We include an excerpt from survivor Sam Ron's memoir, co-written with Caren Schnur Neile, and an essay from Laura Feibush, who explains Steve Reich's *Different Trains*, a musical score composed of train whistles and fragments of the recorded voices of survivors.

Our poets include our poetry editor, Charles Adès Fishman; Lou Ella Hickman, Annette Bialik Harchik, Amos Neufeld, and Breindel Lieba Kasher, frequent contributors to these pages, and we welcome newcomers Steven Deutsch and Nancy Lubarsky. We present a poem in its original German by Leo Strauss, a poet murdered in the Holocaust, and its translation by poet and translator Robert Schechter.

Throughout our delays, we stayed in touch with our extraordinary staff. We are grateful that our poetry editor, Charles Adès Fishman, and our art historian, Pnina Rosenberg, will resume their invaluable work with us. Our senior art director, Emily Scherer Steinberg, remains responsible for the pleasing layout and design of this publication. For this issue in particular, Emily's attention to detail and dedication to perfection ensured its success. Due to logistical difficulties, David B. Greenberg, copy editor extraordinaire, edited only certain manuscripts and not the whole journal, but continued to offer his advice and encouragement. I am indebted to them all for their patience; we could not have produced such a fine publication without them.

As we restructure and downsize, we're working with fewer board members. We thank those who have served so long and so well, offering ongoing support and guidance. They include Dr. Moshe Sokolow, associate editor; Darryle Clott, Brana Gurewitsch, Dr. Dennis Klein, Dr. Marcia Sachs Littell, Dr. David Schnall, Dr. William Shulman, and Dr. Sam Totten from the editorial board; Steven Feinberg, Dr. Leo Goldberger, Dr. Yaakov Lozowick, Yitzchak Mais, Dr. Mordecai Paldiel, Dr. Marlene W. Yahalom, and Dr. Ephraim Zuroff from our advisory board.; and Dr. Rona Novick and the Azrieli Graduate School faculty, department editors.

We appreciate and thank Mr. Henry I. Rothman and the Rothman Foundation, and the Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration, for the generous support they have given us over the past 14 years. Their contributions made publication of this journal possible. We and all of our readers are grateful.

—Karen Shawn

"The murderous attack by thousands of Hamas terrorists on the Israeli border that triggered the Gaza War has not only shattered the thin fence between civilization and barbarism," maintains Shay Pilnik, "but also upended many conceptions, military doctrines, and national security policies. In addition, it has forced us to reject the current notion that Holocaust education is merely a case study of man's inhumanity to man."

Shay Pilnik

These Are Not Ordinary Times

It did not take long for the shock and despair to remind Israelis of the darkest days in the history of our people. What happened in Re'eim, Be'eri, Sederot, Ofakim, and other kibbutzim and towns adjoining the Gaza strip was unprecedented in the 75 years of Israeli history. For Israelis, among them descendants of Holocaust survivors, the annihilation of humans on a mass scale for the sole crime of being born and identified as Jews (re)awakened a primal fear. In the aftermath, we could only compare the burnt and mutilated bodies of entire families and the scores of innocent young men and women slaughtered at the Nova music festival with those murdered at Auschwitz, Treblinka, and Babi Yar.

In ordinary times, these names remind us that the Holocaust was unique, albeit with universal implications. We insist on the imperative to teach about it, to explain, using photographs, history, literature, diaries, and testimonies, that Auschwitz was another planet, that the destruction of European Jewry was sui generis—not to be compared or equated with what came before or after.

But these are not ordinary times. Suddenly, we find ourselves confronted by scenes of graphic carnage, sickeningly familiar and now visible instantly, as they happen, around the world. Now savagery is projected before our wide-open eyes on Telegram, Instagram, X, and TikTok. These brutal scenes echo many of those captured in old black-and-white Holocaust photographs, but the old ones pale in comparison. The current barbarity strips the veneer of civilization that has for decades led us to believe that we would never again confront such unbridled sadism. When the murderers themselves filmed their vicious attacks with gleeful pride, we realized that we were witnessing rampages that far exceed the Nazis' and their collaborators' homicidal cruelty and sadism.

THE SHOAH AND OCTOBER 7TH

The Israeli Defense Force (IDF) and the government's massive and strong reactions are where, fortunately, comparisons between October 7th and the Holocaust end. The two events are not the same. We have a national homeland. We have a powerful army, and our enemies know that a high price will be paid by those whose life mission is to shed innocent Jewish blood. Yoav Galant, Israel's Minister of Defense, promised that the IDF response will reverberate in the minds of our enemies for generations to come, and we see the effectiveness of that response now.

Yet the Hamas attack, not only Israel's response to it, will affect the way Jews understand their new place in the world and how they read their own history. Holocaust education can no longer be what it has evolved to become, slowly but surely, in too many American classrooms.

For some time now, general education about this watershed has moved from the story of the Jews and the scourge of antisemitism to an overarching concern for human rights, a vehicle for teaching about the necessity to treat all humans with respect and dignity, and to stand up to racism, violence, and genocide. Holocaust education has often become, for a variety of reasons, a universal touchstone for peace and justice, even an instrument to attempt to prevent schoolyard bullying. Today, though, the utility of both the lofty, quasi-pacifist teaching and the low-level misguided instruction must be called into question. As Jews today find themselves confronting the reality that a mega pogrom on a scale hitherto executed only by Hitler's followers can happen here and now, education on the Holocaust must undergo a transformation if it is to remain viable.

The stance of relative tranquility from which we have viewed the Holocaust until now has shifted. The study can no longer be divorced from its original and crucial Jewish context, taught today too often with no mention of Jews, now called merely "victims," with no mention of the

insidious and endemic racial antisemitism that helped to make the Holocaust possible. It can no longer be merely a sequence of images from the past that became a universal gold standard of evil, of man's inhumanity to man, of victims and perpetrators. Today, more than ever before, such simplistic, universalist, misguided, ahistorical packaging has become impossible to defend.

Now, Holocaust education—in museum exhibits and tours, classroom instruction, survivor and second-generation testimonies, films, and as mandated in states across America—must return to what it should have always been: A call to safeguard the lives, well-being, and future of Jews in the world and, first and foremost, in their ancestral homeland. Holocaust education that deviates from this call, morally questionable yesterday, must today be declared dead. Holocaust education, as historian Yitzchak Mais insists, must tell not only the Nazi story but also the Jewish story, with all of its dilemmas and decisions, ruptures and despair, and its record of, wherever possible, resistance, defense, defiance, and life–affirming agency. Such education must explain how the Holocaust came to be and should underscore what Franklin Littell called the warning signs that are now essential to heed. It must keep to the path that will "anchor the Holocaust," as Yehuda Bauer notes, "in the historical consciousness of the generations that follow." We are obliged to teach in this manner for the sake of world Jewry, for the Jews and all peace-loving citizens of Israel, and, of course, for all those still wishing to embrace humanity and unconditionally condemn and reject antisemitism in this terrifying new world.

The Jewish Book Council website[1] notes that Dara Barnat's essay, published on 2/15/2024, "is part of an ongoing series that we are sharing from Israeli authors and authors in Israel. It is critical to understand history not just through the books that will be written later, but also through the first-hand testimonies and real-time accounting of events as they occur," which we know, of course, from the contemporaneous Holocaust testimonies we are fortunate to have.

Dara Barnat

Fragments From Here or The Before and The After: October to November 2023, Tel Aviv

OCTOBER 7TH

There seems to be a before. There seems to be an after. I woke up at 4:00 in the morning. *Something doesn't feel right.* I don't fall back to sleep. Tel Aviv is where I've lived for almost my entire adult life, with some back and forth between here and New York. This is the city where I am a mother, where I lecture, research, and write at Tel Aviv University. It is where our son was born on October 7th, six years earlier in a Tel Aviv hospital. Having not grown up here, I am an outsider in many ways. Yet the city is part of me and I, it. I'll never know if it was a coincidence that I woke up so early, or if something in the air had shifted and I was attuned to the shift. *Too quiet.*

———

Around 6:30 the first loud sirens rang out. Though I was awake, we were caught by surprise. *Maybe it's a false alarm.* This doesn't make sense, my husband and I say to each other. The second time they go off we get our son and our small dog, who is barking like crazy, into the hallway of our building. There is no room designed as a bomb shelter in our apartment, but the stairwell is protected, so that's where we decide to go. Various neighbors are in the hallway in their pajamas, looking somewhat perplexed. There must have been booming sounds that followed the sirens and the Iron Dome activating, but I don't remember. Still—I guess—the before.

———

Then, more quiet. I've lived here for long enough that, even after the sirens, I'm not extremely concerned. There are no other alarms in our neighborhood for about half an hour, so after some deliberating, I decide to go to the usual 8:00 a.m. class at the nearby gym. Either I believed—or wanted to believe—that things would be fine. I don't know. The gym instructor made it there. Stretches and weights. Still the before.

———

I kept my phone next to me on the gym mat, just in case (of what, I also don't know). 8:30–8:45—a flood of texts starts coming in. Colleagues, friends, family. There are sirens in other neighborhoods, though not ours in north Tel Aviv. They are in shelters. I drive home. The weather is hot. The sky blank, overcast. Still the before.

———

The news starts coming in. On TV, journalists are reporting that people in the south of the country are being attacked, hiding in shelters. There's gun fire and an invasion of armed terrorists. Families, children. They are asking, *Where is the government? Where is the military? Why are we alone? Who is coming to help us?*

———

We keep earphones in, so our son won't hear one second of the news. His Hebrew is much better than mine. He was born here, after all. We'd had an early birthday party for

him in New York, but we were baking a chocolate cake to bring to a family gathering. He was decorating a cake with sprinkles as this news was streaming in. Young people at a party were violently attacked, killed. *What?* We put a silver candle on top of the cake in the shape of a six.

———

All day, journalists are reporting that people are calling and texting. The utter brutality of the attacks. Murders, and brutal desecrations of bodies by Hamas, women's bodies. Hundreds murdered. Far beyond what my heart or mind can comprehend. Then, tens of people taken. A dozen. Over a hundred. Over two hundred. Sparing no one. Babies and children. Sons, daughters, mothers, fathers, grandparents. Jewish and non-Jewish. Bedouin people and Thai workers. A Palestinian medic. Now over two hundred and forty hostages.

———

Sometime that afternoon, there seems to be no choice but to tell our son that a war has broken out. It was both sudden and not sudden. I'm sorry, I want to say, but I'm not sure why. It was a Saturday. So that's already the after, I guess.

OCTOBER 8TH TO 12TH

In the first days after that day, it was impossible to do much else except read the news and more news and check in with people. And to organize the house for a potentially long, serious war. I wished my grandmother were alive, so I could talk to her about what was going on. I get emergency flashlights and bottled water. Nobody could say what was going to happen.

———

From time to time as I shop and try to think what we might need—*in case in case in case*—lines from a poem by Tuvia Ruebner[2] run through my mind. The list of those in Ruebner's family who were murdered in the Holocaust—a list of atrocities:

My father was murdered.
My mother was murdered.
My sister was murdered.
My grandfather was murdered.
My grandmother was murdered.

I can't articulate how I am feeling or write anything, but I viscerally feel the lines by Ruebner. The after.

OCTOBER 13TH TO 15TH

The start of the academic year is postponed. This has never happened in the twenty years that I have been a student and then faculty. I'm saddened thinking about teaching. For so many of my fellow lecturers, writers, poets, scholars, and translators, the classroom is a refuge, a space in which to cultivate (albeit imperfectly) equality, communication, and empathy, above all.

I think about two decades of conversations I've had in class about poetry, politics, and democracy, with students of so many cultures, backgrounds, and ethnicities—Hebrew -speakers, Arabic-speakers, Russian-speakers, Chinese-speakers.Reading Joy Harjo and Juan Felipe Herrera. Marge Piercy, Allen Ginsberg, Naomi Shihab Nye. Tuvia Ruebner. Muriel Rukeyser. Mahmoud Darwish. Walt Whitman—lots of Whitman. Has this all been lost?

———

I write something on Facebook about how I am grateful for the soldiers who are risking their lives for the hostages and for all of us. And I am afraid that too strong of a retaliation will lead to a humanitarian crisis and potentially worsen any chance for a secure future for generations to come.

OCTOBER 16TH TO 17TH

Time is like water. I lose track of an entire Wednesday. People talk about the shock they are experiencing. The university sends an email asking for one person from every program or department to report if someone—God forbid —is wounded or killed in the war. We decide that Dorin, our head administrator, will do it. And there are deaths from our university and others. So many others. The names coming in by text and over email, one by one. Ruebner's list.

———

I still can't write. I recall Whitman's elegy to Abraham Lincoln[3]: "When Lilacs Last in the Door-yard Bloom'd," "I mourned, and shall mourn." I realize that oh, I must be in mourning and shall forever mourn, like Whitman for Lincoln, "With ever-returning spring."

———

More news comes in about the hostages. So many people taken, most not returned. So many funerals. Posters of the hostages' faces start going up around the neighborhood and on campus.

———

Our son has no school. We try to maintain some kind of schedule for him, but it's nearly impossible. We keep the harness and leash on our dog, so we don't have to put it on every time there's a siren. She learns quickly to go to the front door when it happens. Our son holds her leash in the hallway. We see the same neighbors every time with their kids. We talk about the weather, and how close or far away the booming is this time. It's usually very loud.

OCTOBER 18TH TO 19TH

Biden arrives. I'm hoping it somehow mediates the response by the current government, which is filled with many people that I have little faith in, sadly. My mother calls and asks if we've had sirens that day. It's almost routine. The whole family abroad is scared for us. I say it's worse on the news. That is sort of true.

———

I have always been avidly opposed to the right-wing politics of this country—any country. That is not new for me or for hundreds of thousands of people here. What happened to the marches for democracy? It seems like the hashtags have gone from #noacademywithoutdemocracy to #bringthemhome in the blink of an eye. I had always hoped for two peaceful co-existing states—is that idea irrevocably shattered?

OCTOBER 20TH TO 21ST

We start lighting a third Shabbat candle every Friday night in honor of the hostages. We haven't yet had to explain the hostages to our son. We say that the third candle is for the chayalim—the soldiers. That is also true. One day he will know more. The candles glow white against the dusk. The after.

———

I don't sleep much. I worry about my family and friends everywhere. When they write to me, as many do, I tell them to be careful, too. I fear the violence that might be triggered by what is happening here. I worry about anti-semitism increasing in so many places, in schools, campuses, synagogues, and online.

OCTOBER 22ND TO 27TH

Sari comes to Tel Aviv for a few days to work on a story about the hostages. We walk on the boardwalk, forgetting that we might have to run for cover any moment. We talk about the word in Hebrew for siren—*azakah*. Ashley calls and texts from L.A. *Are you okay?* I say something like, *No, but we're doing better than a lot of people*. We talk about the war and politics and writing. She asks why we don't leave Tel Aviv—go to New York for a bit. A reasonable question. I maybe say something like, *Our family, our lives and livelihoods are here. We are rooted here in a million ways*.

———

Things start to open bit by bit. One of the instructors at the gym cries at the end of the class. A bunch of people gather around her. She has friends who were killed. There is a song she starts playing in Hebrew at the end of every class, *Na'avor gam et zeh . . . ze katan aleinu*.[4] We will get through this too . . . it's nothing we can't handle. The after.

OCTOBER 28TH TO NOVEMBER 2ND

People seem to be more anxious and on edge. A guy at the gas station yells at me to move my car, but I can't. It was blocked by another empty car. Do I simply forgive him because of this profoundly stressful time? I don't yell back, but neither do I move until I get gas. What are the boundaries and borders of compassion?

———

On the way home from the gas station, I think about Theodor Adorno and writing poetry after Auschwitz. I still can't write, which maybe has something to do with what Adorno says about poetry after the Holocaust being barbaric. The gap between this war and the poetic feels unbridgeable to me. I also ask myself whether—as a Jewish American female writer, with family who perished in the Holocaust, who makes a life in Tel Aviv—it is a type of privilege to be able to think about Adorno. Yes. And no. The after.

———

Our son starts to have school a few hours a day. The teachers are trained to get the kids into shelters at school when there are sirens. That happens many times. Parents get a text during or right after.

———

At the playground, he sees a poster of a toddler-age hostage tacked to a tree, with a yellow ribbon on it. *What is that? Is she lost?* he asks. I say it has to do with the war. I don't have time to think of what to say. He has to get into school before I have time to answer honestly, yet dishonestly. I feel as if I've failed him.

NOVEMBER 3RD TO 6TH

Yellow ribbons are tied to cars for the missing hostages. Posters of those who are missing are everywhere. Their faces are on the roundabout between my son's school, campus, and home.

———

Suddenly, all I can think about is writing something. A testimony. A personal, partial narrative of what happened from my subjective, limited standpoint. In a lot of ways meaningless, but at least my own. Perhaps in the telling itself there is power. Also, there are people starting to question and deny the violence and sexual assaults, against women in particular, on October 7th.

NOVEMBER 7TH TO 14TH

I come across a song by a singer, Rose Betts,[5] on Instagram. One of the songs has a line, *Take this body home*. I listen to the song over and over. It's one of the only times that I can't stop crying.

———

It's announced that Vivian Silver, the peace activist, was among those murdered. How does one go about making peace now? Maybe at the gas station. Maybe still through poetry, literature, and language. In the classroom. I decide to make a choice to keep trying when I can in miniscule ways. A personal, daily peace, if that matters at all.

NOVEMBER 15TH TO 19TH

News sites that I read all day announce a deal for a ceasefire and possible return of some of the hostages. I pray that this time it's true. The start of the academic year is postponed again.

———

Our son stares up at the posters of the hostages in our neighborhood. *Why is a baby in a war, Mama?* he asks. What my husband and I have decided is to say something like: There were hostages taken on a specific day, and there are people working hard to bring them back. This was a war that started before you were born, before we were born.

I would give anything to give him and children everywhere safety and peace.

———

There is more to say, less to say.

NOVEMBER 20TH TO 30TH

Some of the hostages come back, including children. Collective breaths are inhaled, exhaled, inhaled, exhaled. Some are let free. Some, but not all the women and children. We hear helicopters overhead bringing them to hospitals around Tel Aviv. Hallelujah.

———

Many, many are captive still. The situation is worse than ever. There was a ceasefire and it's about to be over. So much has gone horribly wrong. I don't know what comes next, exactly.

———

My son says to me one afternoon, *There are so many posters, my brain hurts. I say, Yes, I understand. My brain hurts, too, my love.*

———

The after, after, after.

END NOTES

[1] www.jewishbookcouncil.org/pb-daily/fragments-from-here-or-the-before-and-the-after-october-to-november-2023-tel-aviv

[2] Tuvia Ruebner's untitled poem that starts "My father was murdered" from *In the Illuminated Dark: Selected Poems of Tuvia Ruebner*, translated by Rachel Tzvia Back (Hebrew Union College Press, 2014), pp. 203–205

[3] Walt Whitman, "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd," *Leaves of Grass* (1891–1892), *The Walt Whitman Archive*, whitmanarchive.org

[4] the Hebrew-language song "*Ze Katan Aleinu*" (זה קטן עלינו) by Liraz Russo and Jordan Peleg

[5] Rose Betts, who can be found on Instagram (@rosebettsmusic) and elsewhere

Julia Goldsamt recalls the joyous folk dancing they and their family did near the Tel Aviv beach last summer, and wonders now if and how the world will ever again be able or willing "to dance as one, with one heart."

Julia Goldsamt

Dancing With My Feet

I hate dancing. But Saturday night on the boardwalk in Tel Aviv, I can't help but move my feet. Salt from the Mediterranean Sea mixes with sweat, drips off my bathing suit into the humid summer air. I dance with my sister, stepping on her feet as we watch my mom learn the steps of these Israeli folk dances. When we all stop to rest, my mom makes friends with a couple around her age, who ask where she is from. They tell her they live in Tel Aviv and come here every Saturday night, and offer their phone number in case she needs anything while we're in the city. On breaks, we run into the sea, cooling down with a quick sip of water before the beat picks up again. My grandparents sit close by on concrete steps, pointing us out with proud and broad smiles to everyone who joins them to watch the dancers. Here, no one is a stranger.

I think of this night on October 7 when I first hear the news, snippets of "1,200 dead," "biggest attack on Jews since the Holocaust," "Israel to retaliate."

I feel something akin to relief touch the horror, for my grandparents, who observe Shabbat, won't see the news until the evening. I want to wake them now, but know better than to disturb their peace, for I know this is their last night of uninterrupted sleep.

I imagine how it will play out for them. At 6:30 a.m. my grandfather will wake with the sunrise, put on his red silk tie and gray suit jacket, read his current novel in the old leather chair at the foot of the bed, and watch my grandmother, who will stay asleep until the last possible second. She'll yawn as she pulls on her stockings, wills her eyelids not to droop as she dresses, picking out her sequined hat and matching scarf. They'll grab a quick coffee in the kitchen before they leave for shul. She'll lock arms with him as they walk, and stay at his side until they take their seats in separate sections of the shul.

"What?? No . . . that can't be." My grandma, still holding on to my grandpa, will slap his arm in disbelief. The small crowd in the lobby will go silent for a minute as word spreads. Or maybe it doesn't; at their Orthodox congregation, with no TVs or radios on at home and too early for the news to be printed in the papers, perhaps no one will yet know. Maybe no one needs to.

I call my mom, tell her she should plan to wait for them to return home from synagogue the next day, prepare to comfort them, maybe prepare to break the news. She agrees, and for a moment, we both wish we, too, were asleep, unknowing.

The holiday of Sukkot has just ended and, in America, Jews are celebrating Shabbat and Shemini Atzeret, while in Israel, Simchat Torah has just begun. It is supposed to be a day of celebration, a momentous day where we dance as the feet of the Torah, taking it where it wishes to go. Congregations are in community with one another, and the world comes together in joy to celebrate the beginning of the new cycle.

It is said that on Simchat Torah, we dance with our feet. When we dance with our heads, some bobbing above others, following different steps and moving to different beats, we dance alone. When we dance with our heads, we do not dance as one. On October 7, 2023, Simchat Torah for the Hebrew year 5784, we danced with our feet, as I had on the Tel Aviv boardwalk many months before. "Here on the same earth. . . we dance[d] as one, with one heart, as a single being. [There was] no loneliness, only joy" (Likkutei Sichot, vol. 20, p. 370).

On October 8, "We Are At War" is printed on the front page of the *New York Times* above photos of the flames and rubble of southern Israel. My sister will stop dancing, start using her feet to march, the Israeli flag in her hand broadcast on the local news.

Weeks and months later, many say it is still October 7, October 50, October 220. That as the war rages on, until hostages return home, we cannot move past October 7.

I see this war as more than one day. It's every day since then as well. With all the grief and anguish among the Israelis and the Palestinians, with all the dead, wounded, displaced, and orphaned, with the numbers still rising, I see this as an opportunity for us, not to begin yet another new cycle in the Holy Land as we do in the Torah, but

rather to break the old cycle, one that has never worked, and find a new and different way to begin to seek peace. I dance with my head to consider what it would take for this to happen, to try to make sense of such tragedy, to reevaluate my place in the world and to figure out where I fit in, while my feet remind me that we are all on the same earth that we suddenly see so differently.

Although for me it is no longer only October 7, I carry the lessons of Simchat Torah with me. With family, it's always a celebration; so, on Shabbat, I choose to dance with my feet. But out in the world, I dance with my head, and sometimes these days, it feels as though I am dancing alone.

"I'm 23 years old and I'm not Jewish," Emily Dehmer tells us. "I know I'm incredibly lucky to not have personal ties to the events and war, and I want readers to know that there are still people out there who care." She adds a trigger warning: she writes about sexual assault.

Emily Dehmer

October 7th Broke My Heart

October 7th broke my heart.

October 8th through now shattered my faith in humanity. While I've been studying the Holocaust for a while, it wasn't until now that I understood how people let it happen.

I feel as if I've been sleepwalking since 10/7. Nothing feels real, and it seems like a cruel joke to be expected to keep carrying out my routine when the world is falling apart. Right away on 10/7, I wanted to be physically present with the classmates I love to support them, but I live in Minnesota and most of them are in the New York area. What words of support are sufficient in a time like this?

People in my non-Yeshiva University (YU) life have either gone on as if nothing were happening, or they recognize that the situation is tragic but don't understand why I can't get over it. Those are the better reactions of people I know. Others I know saw the massacre as an act of resistance and believe that Israel (an "apartheid," "settler–colonial" state) shouldn't exist.

I cut an Egyptian friend out of my life because he proudly stated he supports Hamas. I lost my trust in, and ability to be honest with, my therapist after I, distraught, relayed that to her and she responded that he was from a different culture and had different experiences from mine so his viewpoint is understandable; that I should stop making it about me.

"I BELIEVE YOU"

When I consider the specifics of the event and its aftermath, I can't stop thinking about Naama Levy. About Noa Argamani. About Agam Berger and every other young woman my age still held captive by Hamas. I pray with all my being that they haven't experienced sexual violence, but. . . . As a survivor of sexual assault myself, one of the statements I feel is most important to tell other survivors (besides "I believe you") is "You are stronger than you should ever have had to be." Every sexual assault survivor's experience is different, but I know deeply the self–hatred, blame, and shame that comes from being violated in that way, of the feeling of dirtiness and self–disgust that burrows into your bones and won't go away no matter how long you shower or how many years pass.

But I've been lucky enough to have most people to whom I disclose validate and believe me. I've always had access to a family I can hug. Many of the assault survivors of Hamas had their families murdered. They are told by much of the world and some of the media that they're liars. They are told that they deserved it, or—as in an actual social media post in response to the news that one of the women murdered by Hamas had been raped—"I wish this was true so that I can dance on her ashes and celebrate."

For me, they call it Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, but for the hostages, what do they call it when the trauma never ends? My nightmares might be terrifying, but at least I get to wake up safe and at home. They don't.

It shouldn't need to be said, but sexual assault does not need to be "put into context." There is no context that would make it acceptable or morally neutral. Rape is never "resistance." Nobody ever "deserves it," let alone simply because they happen to live in Israel. I am shocked and appalled that many women's and sexual assault advocacy organizations seem to have an exception clause for Jews/Israelis. I've been following a hashtag called #MeTooUnlessYoureAJew and it's despicable that many believe it to be true.

People are triggering many survivors (me included) through their hypocritical comments. What the hell happened to "believe survivors"? When I hear people doubt the Israeli experience of sexual assault, I wonder if they feel the same about me.

In my freshman year in college, I held and hugged a close friend as she sobbed while getting the phone call that her younger sister had been raped. I saw recently that she "liked" a popular social media post asserting that the alleged rapes of Israelis were "occupation propaganda." Was her sister's assault alleged? Was she lying when she told me she believed me about mine? Or is her response simply because her politics come before her humanity? Do I owe her an explanation before I "unfriend" her online

and in life? I don't want your validation and anger over what happened to me if you don't also extend it to the Israelis.

WE GO ON

Soon after the war began, I got a phone call from the YU Fish Center program director, Dr. Shay Pilnik. He asked me how I was holding up, and I replied, "Better than you all, I'm sure." He responded, "Not necessarily; we're used to this. This is the first time you're experiencing it."

Nobody should have to be "used to this," and I'm sorry that violence and the resulting justification or denial by the world is just part of the Jewish experience for many of you. The Jewish people have always been resilient; your traditions and culture are beautiful, and your individual existence is a miracle.

Dr. Pilnik also told me that "the more you align yourself with us, the more the world will treat you as one of us." It would be an honor to be aligned with such an amazing group of people. I feel most like I belong in the world when I'm with my classmates, that I don't have to hide. The bonds that my study at YU has built are deep, and I'm learning as much from my lovely classmates as I am from my professors. The greatest decision in my life was embarking on this Master's program through Yeshiva University, and I will always cherish getting to be part of the Fish Center family.

I feel like the field of Holocaust education irrevocably changed after 10/7, yet it's needed now more than ever. I'm stunned and sickened by the hate and ignorance of my generation surrounding antisemitism and the Holocaust, by their extreme lack of compassion for Jews.

A quote that I'm desperately clinging to now is from Holocaust survivor Rina Nudel: "I'm still devastated but we must always have hope. There is no other alternative." I do not know where we go from here, or where hope will be found, but perhaps what is most important is simply that we go on.

Here's to the safe release of the hostages, the destruction of Hamas, the end of the war, and a better future in a more compassionate and just world.

"As a professional in the field of Holocaust education," writes Brittany Hager McNeely, "I can't help but ask myself, how did we get here?" as she notes "a nearly 400% rise in antisemitic incidents across America" in the aftermath of October 7th.

Brittany Hager McNeely

I Am Only Job's Sister

As a non–Jew who has had the privilege to work, volunteer, and live in several different Jewish communities, I find myself struggling to find appropriate words to describe the feeling of being surrounded by the pain, fear, and sadness of my Jewish community since Hamas's brutal terrorist attack of Israel on October 7. In the introduction to his 1973 book *Faith After the Holocaust*, Eliezer Berkovits states that "we are not Job and we dare not speak and respond as if we were. We are only Job's brother."

I cannot respond to what is currently happening in Israel and Gaza as if I were a Jew. However, I can humbly offer reflections from my vantage point as a Holocaust education professional who stands firmly beside her Jewish brothers and sisters during the brightest and darkest of days.

I must admit that I was naively unprepared for the devastating response of many Americans to what took place in Israel on October 7 and in the aftermath. As the news continued, reports of Hamas's brutal slaughter and sexual violence towards Israelis became increasingly shocking and disturbing. However, within just days, the tide of moral outrage had turned: Anger at the terror inflicted by Hamas and the taking of more than 240 hostages—including women, elderly, and children as young as 9 months old—was replaced with shouted accusations that Israel was committing genocide on the people of Gaza. College campuses across America became increasingly hostile places for their Jewish students, who were left feeling physically unsafe as their peers rallied for Hamas, yelled obscenities, and in some cases became violent, oftentimes barring their Jewish classmates from simply trying to enter their classrooms.

In the weeks immediately following Hamas's attack, the Anti–Defamation League (ADL) recorded a nearly 400% rise in antisemitic incidents across America, compared to the same time period the previous year. This greatly increased aggression towards Jews, not only on American campuses but in many places around the world, is indicative of the enduring presence of antisemitism. I mourn the staggering deaths of Palestinian civilians over the past months and understand the grave concerns over ongoing humanitarian issues. However, it is deeply disturbing that alongside the cries for ceasefire there are not also cries for release of the remaining Israeli hostages, an end to Hamas, and support for Israel in its effort to eliminate this barbaric and openly genocidal terrorist group, which not only poses an imminent threat to the Israeli people but also acts with extreme disregard for Palestinian lives. Instead, antisemitic double standards against Israel are applied over and over again.

As a professional in the field of Holocaust education, I can't help but ask myself, how did we get here?

I have had the immense privilege to visit Israel on two occasions. The first was as part of a group of professionals of the Milwaukee (WI) Jewish Federation and the second, on my own, was to attend an international conference of Holocaust educators hosted by Yad Vashem. On my initial visit, I experienced Yad Vashem for the first time, knowing that it would be an overwhelming encounter, yet unaware of the mark it would leave upon me. I recall the moment I first walked into the cool, dark space of the museum and stood mesmerized by the larger–than–life display of pre–war Jewish life in Eastern Europe. I had to pull myself away from the scenes, projected onto the huge wall in front of me, of beautiful children riding their bikes, playing, laughing, remembering that I had limited time here. As I continued, weaving my way through the exhibit, I was surprised by the light from the subtle skylights that occasionally punctuated the dark, allowing a view of the bright blue sky above. This light was a needed reprieve, as the information, photos, and testimonies exhibited on the walls in the museum's darkened vestibules were overwhelming. They reminded me over and over and over again, as they should have, of the no fewer than six million Jewish lives that were destroyed by the Nazis and their collaborators—the result of virulent antisemitism, the world's oldest, and longest, hatred.

As I came to the end of the exhibit, ahead of me, exactly opposite from the beginning scenes that showed

me the rich and varied Jewish life before the Holocaust, I was confronted with a breathtaking view overlooking the Jerusalem Forest and modern–day Jerusalem—Jewish life afterward. I understood, with a gut-wrenching awareness, the critical need for a strong Jewish state, a strong Israel.

So again, I ask myself, how did we get here? American states mandate Holocaust education; we have initiatives to educate teachers on how to introduce the subject appropriately; massive efforts capture survivor testimonies in videos and holograms; and adult children of survivors tell their family stories. Why, after decades of such efforts and funding, do we see this massive increase in antisemitic incidents across America immediately following the single deadliest attack on Jews since the Holocaust? Have we spent too much time focusing solely on the historical facts, though immensely important, without a critical understanding of what came before and after? Have we created "lessons" of the Holocaust that are so universal that the study has become, as Shay Pilnik suggests in his essay in these pages (pp. 3–4), "divorced from [their] original and crucial Jewish context"?

Can educating about the Holocaust combat antisemitism? I wonder if more emphasis should be placed on understanding the Jewish people and what they have overcome for thousands of years, especially since being forced from their ancestral homeland, Israel. Perhaps education that provides deeper understanding of anti–Judaism and antisemitism before the Holocaust, as well as how Jews rebuilt their lives after 1945 with the founding of the modern State of Israel and its ramifications, would provide a starting place for critical discussion and understanding. Perhaps Holocaust education through a Jewish lens will be effective in filling the gaps through which antisemitism has continued to seep into today's American landscape where, in the midst of terror and crisis in Israel, concern for the lives of Israeli hostages is drowned out by pro-Hamas demonstrations.

As I write this, while many of my friends and colleagues prepare to light their Shabbos candles, hope for peace in Israel and in Gaza no doubt on their minds, I reflect on the many Shabbat dinners and holiday celebrations I have been fortunate to spend over the years in the warm homes of good friends eager to share their Jewish traditions with my family. These experiences fill me with immense gratitude, as I know that not every non–Jew can see, first–hand, the beauty and light that reflect Jewish tradition and the people who uphold it. I hope that my Jewish brothers and sisters can find peace and security in the presence of a strong Jewish homeland, now and for generations to come.

Lauren Goldsamt reflects on her Judaism in the aftermath of October 7th. Referring to her community, she writes, "We have cried, danced, laughed, and embraced with the shared spirit that brightens this world that sometimes tends towards darkness." She observes, "Out of the grief and fear has risen a new purpose: Jewish connection."

Lauren Goldsamt

Chai

This morning, on my way to work, I stepped onto the subway next to a young man wearing a Jewish star around his neck. I touched my own neck and pulled out the gold Hebrew letters forming the word *chai* that had accidentally been buried under my sweater as I had gotten dressed. *Chai* means life, alive, living. As I waited for him to notice my subtle communication of solidarity, I scanned the packed subway car; engrossed in their phones or resting with closed eyes, no other passenger seemed to search for the same sense of connection that I sought in every public space I entered. Eventually, the young man noticed my necklace, looked up at me, and smiled knowingly. The feeling in his eyes said to me: "I see you. I stand with you. I am you." I nodded and smiled back, reciprocating his sentiment with nothing but my silence and the curve of my lips. This interaction, invisible to those around us, contained a whole world, just as the two-letter Hebrew word, *chai*, comprised of just a *chet* and a *yud*, contains the life of the whole Jewish people.

Since October 7th, it is interactions such as this one that keep me going, that push me forward, despite the whirlwinds of immense pain and hatred that threaten to hold us back. The world that I speak of, contained in a brief moment of eye contact between a stranger and me on the subway, is the soul and spirit of the ancestry, persecution, and perseverance that tie us inextricably together today. Out of the grief and fear has risen a new purpose: Jewish connection. Since October 7th, I am watching an inspiring phenomenon unfold around me and within myself: Some of my friends, forced to go to Hebrew school as kids and practicing their religion only on holidays, are taking to their Jewish identity with a new devotion and commitment. Other friends, raised Orthodox but turning away from religion after leaving home for college, are returning to the prayers and rituals with which they were raised and sharing them with the secular and allied non-Jewish community around us.

I find myself listening to *nigunim* through my headphones on my daily commute, studying Jewish philosophy in my free time, and reciting the *Shemah* before bed. Now, every Friday night, I gather with a couple of hundred other Jews, and we sing together to welcome Shabbat. We have never met, yet we know one another. We have cried, danced, laughed, and embraced with the shared spirit that brightens this world that sometimes tends towards darkness.

In the days following October 7th, people would wonder why I was in mourning: "Do you have family members in Israel?"

"Of course," I would respond. "They are all my family."

In addition to my aunts, uncles, cousins, and friends, the last few months have taught me that I have about seven million brothers and sisters living in Israel, as well. This is the nature of the Jewish people.

I am proud to be a Jew. I am proud to belong to a tradition that values life over all else. According to the Talmud, since all of humanity is descended from a single person, taking a life is like destroying an entire world. Similarly, to save a life is to save an entire world. Thus, Judaism imparts this message: They can chant for our destruction. They can take to the streets and try to deny us our right to exist. But we will sing back louder: *Am Yisrael Chai*. We will continue to gather, to raise our voices to demand the return of our hostages, and to work towards a rebirth of peace from the ashes of destruction. The people of Israel live.

Rachel N. Baum writes about her experience with her students as they met, at their behest, for class on October 10th. "We were a community," she explains. "We cared deeply for each other. We wanted to listen. We wanted to share."

Rachel N. Baum

The Gift of Community

In the fall semester of 2023, I taught a new course for the Fish Center's Master's program in Holocaust and Genocide Studies. The course, Holocaust Testimonies, focused on what it means to give testimony, to listen to it, and to preserve it for future generations. While we often talk about Holocaust testimony as if it is a *thing*, a *product*, in this course I wanted students to see that testimony is always about *relationship*—one person trying to share something with another person. Such relationships are not simple. Sometimes the survivor is unable to speak. Sometimes we fail to listen. At times survivors recount their experiences in new ways, trying to reach us. Sometimes our questions evoke new avenues of reflection for them. We may both be changed by the encounter.

We began the course with early testimony, including the efforts of the Oneg Shabbes group in the Warsaw Ghetto and, after the war, David Boder's efforts to record the voices of survivors in the DP camps.

And then October 7th happened.

I wrote to my students in advance—Should we meet? Our class was October 10th. Should we postpone? I was not sure how they would respond. They wanted to be together.

Because our meetings are held online on Zoom, we have participants from around the world. Two members of our class were in Israel. We didn't know if they would attend—in addition to the situation there, the time of our weekly seminar was the middle of the night for them. They did come, and they shared their thoughts and experiences. They wanted to talk. We wanted to listen. Each student in the class was invited to participate. *How are you? How is your family?*

Testimony is about relationship—one person trying to share their experiences with another. The other person tries to listen, to attend, to witness. Now it was no longer the Holocaust experiences of my parents, my grandparents, my friend. It was, *Where were you on October 7th? How are you? How is your family?*

Our population is diverse, representing different expressions of Judaism, different nationalities, ages, politics. Some students were not Jewish. None of that mattered. We were united in our shock, our pain, and our concern. We cared deeply for each other. We wanted to talk. We wanted to listen. We wanted to hear.

When we think about testimony, we often envision an interview of one person by another. My experience that night, and throughout the entire fall semester, enhanced and enriched my understanding of that vision. I realized that in addition to the interviewer and interviewee, there can be a larger group of participants, the *testimonial community*, the people whose care and concern make it possible for others to speak and to know they are heard.

On that night and for the rest of the semester we were an exceptional group, there for each other not only as colleagues and fellow students, but as a community of care and, indeed, a testimonial community. I will always be grateful for that.

Julian Schmidt explains that "what follows was my humble response as I began to internalize witnesses' testimonies of October 7th, to struggle to listen fully, to hear their voices, to grasp but a grain of understanding."

Julian Schmidt

Temple of Testimony

As the dreadful week of October 7th came to a mournful end, I found myself incapable of carefully unscrambling the barbaric atrocities that the world was witnessing occur in Israel.

That week I was attempting to structure my thoughts around Dori Laub's (1992) "Three Distinct Levels of Witnessing" in the chapter titled "An Event Without a Witness: Truth, Testimony, and Survival" for a class discussion forum; I'm a student at the Emil A. and Jenny Fish Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Yeshiva University. For me, as a German–born gentile, studying the Shoah, the echoes of the past colliding with the heartbreaking and vile events unfolding in Israel were chilling. To this day the full scope of atrocities committed is not known, with immoralities still occurring while new witness testimony is being gathered.

What dislocated my mind and soul that week, and still does to this day, was the perverse absurdity with which many in the West gleefully chose willful blindness in the aftermath of witnessing evil, and its most malignant manifestation of eliminationist antisemitism in our time. Again.

Israelis were singularly targeted for being Jewish regardless of their individual philosophical approaches to Jewish tradition, interpretation of Jewish law, or political and ideological fidelity. If "Never Again" means anything after October 7th, we should remember those who were keen to move their private antisemitism into the public sphere and know precisely why they felt so comfortable doing it: Frightening as it is, it's because they felt safe, full well knowing that a plurality of citizens would condone their behavior. Overtly or covertly, many fellow citizens are rejecting Western liberalism, across the entire party–political stage. Let us shine the brightest of klieg lights on the entire stage, to expose the antisemitic actors regardless of which side they enter.

That week I wrote a poem, putting voice to my incapacity to unscramble what I had seen and heard. I shared it then and share it now with immense reverence for my fellow students, their families and friends, in Israel and abroad.

Temple of Testimony

Temple of testimony

temple of memory

into which we are granted access, into which
we are tempted.

We step over the threshold, together—to gather.

Together, I & thou enter this sacred space

to fulfill our singular roles, as guide, as friend.

Unsure in our guidance, uneven in our friendship,

we need to be both and neither, at any given time,
on any terrain.

We realize we are asked simply to be present
for each other

today.

We recognize this monumental task

to serve as a canvas for a story, a memory.

We create space for a truth to emerge—

what a witness suffered, is suffering.

Experiences exit the witness, enter
our consciousness.

A memory kept alive.

A memory released to life.

To Life!

YYaacov Lozowick writes, "Hamas attacked Israel on October 7th, 2023. On October 9th I wrote a report on the events, for family and friends outside Israel. A few days later I wrote a 2nd report, and eventually, 19 of them. Mostly I was trying to record for myself what we Israelis were going through, and trying to make sense of the events. This website, https://lozowickgazawarjournal.blogspot.com/, contains the full series." What follows are very brief excerpts, including a podcast, selected by the editor.

Yaacov Lozowick

Excerpts from Gaza War Journal

A series of long-form reflections written during the Israel–Hamas war of 2023–2024

▪ Day Three of the War with Hamas: October 9th, 2023

NUMBERS: Three days in, the number of civilians murdered is still unknown. No fewer than 900, probably more than 1,000. . . . In the Yom Kippur War, the only vaguely comparable event in our history, 2,700 Israelis died in 18 days, almost all soldiers. In the 2nd Intifada 1,000 Israelis were killed, mostly civilians, but that took three years. This time it took a day. And there are still lots of terrible days ahead of us.

HEROES: Rachel, a simple woman in Ofakim, suddenly had 3–4 terrorists in her apartment, who took her hostage along with her husband. . . . She treated them like a good Moroccan grandmother would, cooking for them and talking about their families and lives. Lulled by her hospitality, they didn't see the SWAT team that broke in through the bathroom and shot them. . . . The wags have been suggesting the IDF set up a brigade of Moroccan grandmothers under Rachel and send them into Gaza.

▪ October 15th, 2023: Second Report

The Hamas marauders broadcast lots of gleeful films of their atrocities, celebrating their bloodthirst. I refused to watch, preferring not to scar my soul. . . . There are fewer films of the many acts of heroism. The heroes didn't have time for filming. As I noted last time, in a moment when the normal defense systems collapsed, it was the rank and file who stepped up and desperately tried to stop the horrors. As the days pass, the numbers of these stories rise. . . . [Listen to this] interview with Golan Abitbul, a regular guy whose military training kicked in as Hamas men approached his home in Be'eri. "If you aren't scared, you're an idiot," he says: www.nytimes.com/2023/10/13podcasts/the-daily/israelhamaskibbutzhtml?rref=vanity.

There's a lot of talk around these days of how Shoah–like some of the stories are. I recognize the emotional urge, but it's wrong. We're humiliated and furious that Jews in their homes waited 12 hours for help, and some didn't get it. In the Shoah help never arrived. Twelve hundred Israelis, mostly civilians, died on the first day of this war; in the Shoah there were hundreds of such days. . .

▪ December 20th, 2023: 10th Report: Hostages

Two days ago, five IDF troops were killed . . . when a booby–trapped tunnel in a school exploded. Yesterday nine troops were killed in a similar situation, when Hamas fighters appeared out of a tunnel and apparently activated two booby–traps. The troops' go–pro films coming out of Gaza show missiles and weapons in homes, under beds, in children's bedrooms decorated with cheerful paintings on the walls and tunnel openings underneath. The laws of war permit the destruction of military targets, even when they're in civilian structures. As we survey the vast scope of destruction in the towns of the Gaza Strip, we must remember who turned them into legitimate military targets and then provoked the IDF by massacring civilians. Whatever you say about the desperate conditions of millions of Gazan civilians who have lost their homes, neighborhoods, and towns, remember that Hamas turned them into legitimate military targets long before Israel demanded they leave. . . .

Earlier this morning I went to the Prime Minister's Office and stood in the rain with the families of the hostages as they demand the return of their families. It's so sad, so complicated. A story for another day. . . .

▪ December 31st, 2023: 11th Report: Patriots

These are days of heightened patriotism in Israel. . . . none more important than being part of something larger than ourselves. The unhesitating commitment to saving strangers from evil on October 7th, even at the cost of one's own life. Still doing it, three months later. Parents of small children biting their lips and carrying on for months while their spouses are mobilized. Participating in the national effort, so that it survives and thrives. Even the simplest things, such as commiserating in solidarity with strangers . . . because that's who we are. . . .

▪ April 3rd, 2024: 17th Report

In 1954, 21–year–old Private Nathan Elbaz jumped on a grenade during training and saved the lives of his comrades. Generations of soldiers, myself included, were raised on his heroic sacrifice. In all our wars and between them, there have been nine such heroes. On October 7th and in the days that followed, there have been another nine.

This is still very much a place worth dying for.

Keith Breiman observes that his "core empathetic approach to the world has been invaded and upended" in the aftermath of October 7th. He rages at the Hamas attacks; his stress "is constant and pervasive," he writes, as he closely follows the Israeli news and worries about the antisemitism spreading around the globe. Yet he tries also to be "cautiously hopeful."

Keith Breiman

A World Irrevocably Changed

Since October 7th, my post-retirement morning routine has changed radically. I used to wake up, lie in bed enjoying my leisure, and then wander into the kitchen, brew a fresh pot of coffee, review my calendar, and gradually attend to my responsibilities and small pleasures that fill my day. It was comfortably repetitive and generally without stress. Now, though, I awake multiple times throughout the night and early in the morning, each time reaching for my phone or turning to the Israel news channel on TV, needing to know what has happened as I slept, hoping for good news but fearing the worst. I feel no sense of leisure. I still brew coffee, but I drink it and pace as I watch the ongoing situation in Israel unfold. I still review my calendar, but now with an eye to deciding when I will get to go to Israel, perhaps on a mission, perhaps to visit our many relatives and friends. I still attend to my ongoing responsibilities, but few small pleasures remain.

Even as we pass the 220-day mark, I wait for the one piece of information, the one decisive victory that might allow me to shake that restless anxiety that plagues me. When will the remaining hostages be released? When will the world come together in support of Israel and to condemn, in no uncertain terms, the actions of Hamas? When will the terror organizations and their leaders in Gaza be defeated? When can the Israelis displaced from their communities in the south and in the north be able to rebuild and return to their homes, and feel safe? Until now, I have not heard the words that can allay my fears that the Israelis and the Jews in America are under an existential threat.

I still fulfill my obligations, but with a heavy heart, feeling that I should be doing something more than I already do now to help my Israeli family and friends who bear the brunt of this attack each day, with no positive resolution, no end in sight. Sometimes I find myself yelling with furious anger at the screen when I hear the anti-Israel, pro-Hamas screeds that distort and deny even the most obviously true and proven reporting. Of course, the rising and virulent antisemitism here and around the world fuel both my rage and my deepest fears, for my children and grandchildren as well as for me.

My routine is still repetitive, but not pleasantly so; the stress is constant and pervasive.

In the aftermath of October 7th, my core empathetic approach to the world has been invaded and upended by the non-stop images on television of gleefully frenzied Hamas–indoctrinated Palestinians who chose to perpetrate and celebrate the murder, torture, and rape of innocent Israeli babies, children, women, and men, the burning of their bodies and their homes, the killing of their family pets.

Among these Israeli Jews was a strong contingent of cautious optimists, who chose to live near the Gaza border and have among their friends and colleagues Gazans, believing, as I did, that in this lifetime Palestinians and Israelis could live peacefully and productively close to each other and in friendship. Many of these Israelis had rich and fruitful relationships with Palestinians who shared the belief that reason and compromise could and would prevail in the country, because both groups knew that the alternative would destroy the possibility of happiness and security for themselves and their children.

Further fueling my post-October 7th outrage and current, perhaps unreasonable, desire to blame and then punish the entire Palestinian population in Gaza was that so many of the festival-goers were young, left-leaning, peace-and–love-seeking Israelis attending an apolitical celebration of music, nature, friends, and life in Israel.

What I try to hold within me at the same time, however, is a cautiously hopeful and dialectical vision of a strong and vibrant Israel peacefully coexisting with some form of an independent Palestinian entity. As we know from the difficult but productive post-WWII reeducation of the Hitler-obsessed and indoctrinated German public, there can be an opportunity for rapprochement, cooperation, and eventual affiliation even between avowed and hated

combatants if the ideology that fuels them is eliminated. Perhaps hope for success resides in a cooperative partnership among the US, Israel, and its allies, old and new, who can provide critical, life-saving, humanitarian support to those Palestinians who reject Hamas and its religion of the murder of the Jews, coupled with the active monitoring and elimination of the ongoing and virulent antisemitic, anti-Israel teachings in homes, schools and textbooks, and mosques. Similarly, belief in the possibility of peace must be encouraged on the Israel side also, which may take years, given the trauma.

I find reason for hope and optimism as well in a recently rebroadcast news story. As I was finishing writing this essay, I experienced an unexpected and uplifting shot of awe, joy, and pride at the resilience that Israelis have displayed throughout this ordeal. On the screen was a report, including interviews, of how, in early March, the Chabad of Savyon community, as a feature of their "Marrying the Warriors" initiative, had organized and sponsored simultaneous marriage celebrations for 10 couples, each with a member serving in the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), many of whom had been forced to delay their planned marriages for months. The site of the wedding was Hanger 11 in the Tel Aviv Port; the guests numbered over 1,000—each couple could invite 100 guests—their individual chupahs were beautiful, and the ceremonies were followed by all-night celebrations with music by 10 of the leading performers in Israel. As the broadcast concluded and the joyous music and dancing moved me to tears, I was again reassured that our homeland and its people will prevail.

Like Israel, I'm prepared to be threatened, but I will not be defeated. Tomorrow I'll awaken early again after a restless night, turn on the Israel news station, listen to whatever is being reported as I drink my coffee, take a deep breath and exhale slowly, and get ready to face another day in this irrevocably changed and troubled world.

"Even as Israel was still burying the victims of the October 7th atrocities," Rafael Medoff reminds us, "Hamas and its supporters began denying that the atrocities had occurred. October 7th denial, a close relative of Holocaust denial, was born."

Rafael Medoff

Denying October 7th

Like Holocaust deniers, the deniers of October 7th attempt to portray their position as a legitimate dispute over evidence. But as with the Holocaust, there are mountains of evidence to document the Hamas atrocities, including the violated bodies of their victims; videos that the killers themselves posted on social media; transcripts of the murderers' boastful telephone calls to friends and relatives; confessions by captured terrorists; security camera footage; and voluminous eyewitness testimony from October 7th survivors and emergency medical personnel. Clearly, there is something at work in the minds of the deniers other than reasonable doubts concerning the quantity or quality of the evidence.

Hamas spokesmen insisted that the atrocity reports were all "fabricated by Netanyahu" (Khaled Mashal). It was "inconceivable" that Hamas members "would perpetrate the kinds of crimes mentioned by the occupation, such as rape, killing children, or killing civilians" (Salel Al-Arouri). The abductions of Israelis were perpetrated not by Hamas, but by "ordinary people" from Gaza who came along, except for the foreign workers, whom Hamas "detained for their own protection" (Hisham Qasem). Hamas's official 18-page explanation of the attack, issued in early 2024, asserted that its forces "were keen to avoid harming civilians" because "avoiding harm to civilians, especially children, women, and elderly people is a religious and moral commitment" to which Hamas is devoted. Any such killings were "accidental."

Senior Palestinian Authority figures quickly joined the ranks of the October 7th deniers. Israel was "spreading lies, falsehoods, and fabrications regarding what happened on October 7th" (Mahmoud Al-Habbash, adviser to PA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas). Israel's military campaign against Hamas "is based on a lie. . . . They killed their [own] civilians [on October 7], and they committed all these crimes and burned the bodies, and they made up this story" (PA cabinet minister Qadura Fares). The claim "that there was murder of children, rape of women, crimes" was "tendentious propaganda" (Wasel Abu Yusuf of the PLO executive committee).

Senior figures in Jordan articulated similar views. The most notable was Queen Rania. In an interview on CNN in October, she asserted that "it hasn't been independently verified . . . that Israeli children [were] found butchered in an Israeli kibbutz. There's no proof of that." The editor of the Jordanian government daily newspaper daily *Al-Ra'i,* Khaled Al-Shaqran, asserted that reports of "the resistance and the Palestinian people as murdering children through the narrative of beheading" were part of "the falsification and fake claims that the Occupation initiated." The former Jordanian minister of education declared:

> The Israeli narrative that was spread at the start, that the Palestinian resistance massacred children and harmed the dignity of the women, this fabricated image that was spread in the first two days—it became clear to everyone that it is incorrect and fabricated.

Similar statements were made by some American Muslim leaders, including senior officials of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), the largest US Muslim advocacy group, and the executive director of American Muslims for Palestine, the parent body of Students for Justice in Palestine, the primary organizer of pro–Hamas activities on US college campuses.

Doubting the Hamas gang–rapes soon emerged as an important component of October 7th denialism. Among its earliest exponents was Briahna Joy Gray, former campaign press secretary for US Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont. She tweeted: "Zionists are asking that we believe the uncorroborated eyewitness account of *men* who describe alleged rape victims in odd, fetishistic terms." She also accused Israel of "not seriously investigating claims of rape" and chastised Israeli first responders for not collecting rape kits in the midst of live–fire danger zones. Gray also asserted on X that there was "no evidence" of Israeli hostages being raped and that "this isn't a 'believe women' scenario because no female victims have

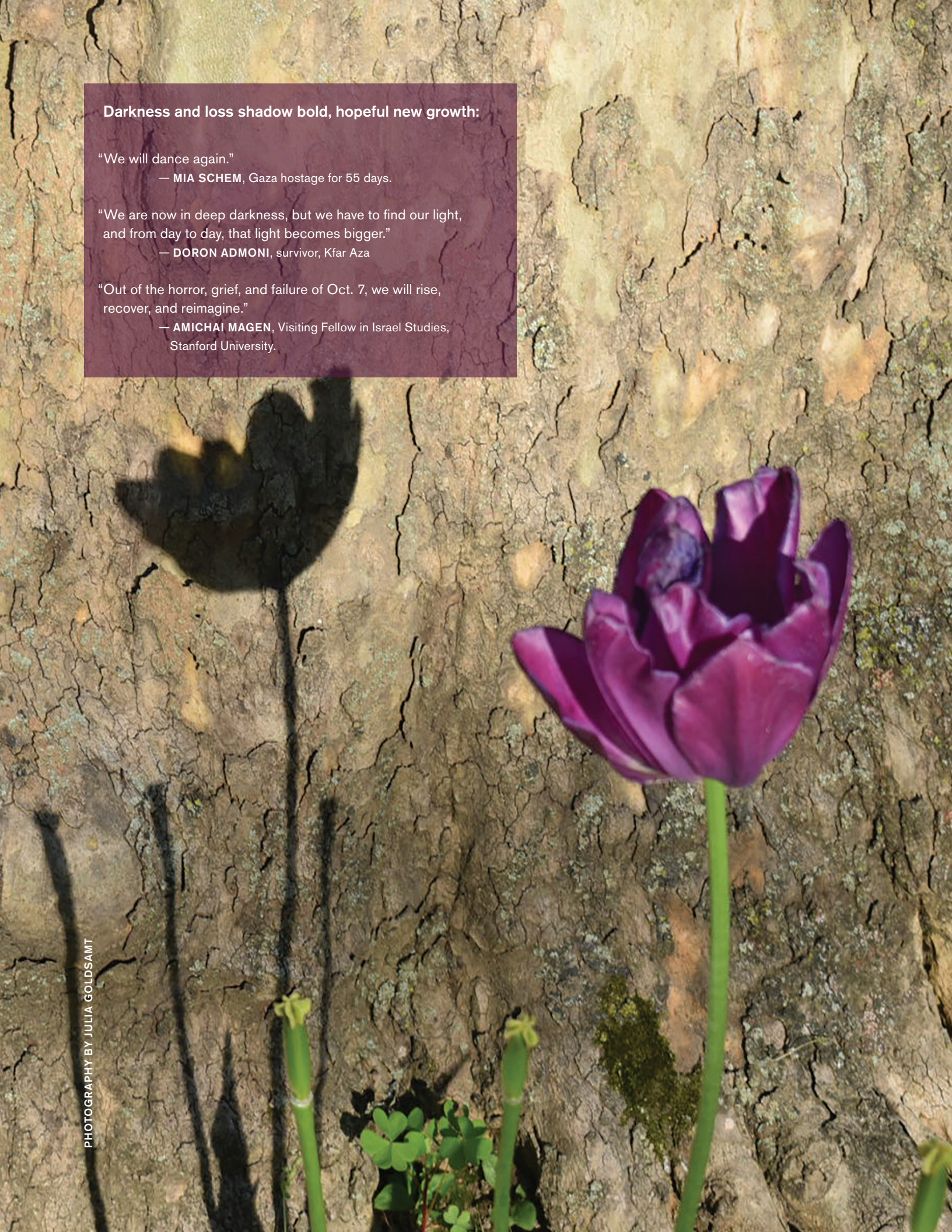
offered testimony." She did not retract those accusations even after numerous victims presented their testimony, and even after

The *New York Times* and the United Nations separately confirmed the veracity of the reports.

Of greater significance was the position taken by the chair of the Progressive Caucus in the US House of Representatives, Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal (D–Washington). In a December 4th interview on CNN, she was asked about the rapes and replied that "it happens in war situations" and anyway, Israel was guilty of "war crimes." Major women's rights organizations avoided condemning Hamas and addressed the rapes only belatedly and in general terms.

UN Women declared that "all women, Israeli women, Palestinian Arab women, as well others, are entitled to a life lived in safety and free from violence," thus implying that Palestinian women were just as much victims of sexual violence as Israelis. The #MeToo International movement condemned "acts of gender–based violence" in "places like Israel, Palestine, Sudan, Congo, and Tigray." The National Women's Studies Association allowed only that "violence and war often inflict gendered and sexualized harms on women and queer, trans, and non-binary people." While not explicitly denying the rapes, such statements were the equivalent of describing World War II without mentioning the Holocaust. This form of denialism appears to be having an impact: One poll in January 2024 found that 27% of Americans under the age of 45 did not believe that Hamas carried out rapes of Israeli women.

October 7th denialism must be considered antisemitic for the same reason that Holocaust denial is considered antisemitic: because it is based on the conviction that there is a worldwide Jewish conspiracy to control the media and manipulate governments into promoting false narratives of Jewish victimization. Of course, there are exceptions; there are individuals who, simply out of extreme ignorance or deep distrust of mainstream information sources, harbor doubts regarding the Holocaust or October 7th. But that caveat does not apply to the major promoters of denialism, whether government officials or policy advocates, whose conscious efforts to undermine the truth represent a horrifying brand of politically motivated malice laced with old–fashioned bigotry.



Darkness and loss shadow bold, hopeful new growth:

"We will dance again."
— **MIA SCHEM**, Gaza hostage for 55 days.

"We are now in deep darkness, but we have to find our light, and from day to day, that light becomes bigger."
— **DORON ADMONI**, survivor, Kfar Aza

"Out of the horror, grief, and failure of Oct. 7, we will rise, recover, and reimagine."
— **AMICHAI MAGEN**, Visiting Fellow in Israel Studies, Stanford University.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JULIA GOLDSAMT

Jennifer Robertson writes, "I have a background in Polish studies, but it was only when I lived in Poland that I became aware of the Jewish story, which at times seemed to run separate from the Polish one. I began to explore further, to read as widely as I could, to speak to people and visit sites of Jewish memory. The catalyst for this story came when the countryman whom I call Jan accosted me during my visit to the historic town of Rymanów, exactly as I've told it here."

Jennifer Robertson

A Hiding Place as Quiet as a Grave

During summer school run by Judaica Kraków and the Centre for Jewish–Christian Relations in Cambridge, England, we travelled to southeast Poland to explore lost Jewish life. The landscape we viewed from our tour bus was beautiful and peaceful, with no hint of its grim past. Meadows were bright with poppies and great white daisies. Our guide told us that many Poles in this region had rescued their Jewish friends and neighbors—some at the cost of their lives. Indeed, as we alighted from our tour bus in the historic town of Rymanów, on our way to visit a ruined synagogue, a local man waylaid me, the last one off the bus, to tell me his grandfather's story.

Jan was tall, with a countryman's ruddy face. Smells clung to him, tobacco and cattle feed. Perhaps he thought I was a rich tourist who would pay for the information he was keen to pass on. His strong regional accent compelled me to concentrate to try to understand him, while my fellow students disappeared in the direction of the synagogue.

He told me that he spoke smatterings of Russian, German, and Yiddish.

"This was a Jewish town," he said. "You should have seen the synagogue. It was beautiful, rich. I remember it all. Look," he pointed to the house opposite. "Moishe lived here, Isaac Stern lived next door. My mother took him in. He survived Buchenwald. He came back after the war, but they'd taken his house. He went to Bolivia and the USA. I helped two Jewish girls. I was young, but I put them in my horse-drawn cart, covered them with sacks, and took them to the next big town. I don't know what happened to them after that. The Germans came for me. They took me away for forced labor. But my Grandpa Franek in the village nearby, he found and sheltered a little Jewish girl—and paid for it, oh yes, he paid for it. My mother heard all about it—people talk, you know. She told me my grandpa's story when I got home after the war."

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When Grandpa Franek, who was not quite right in the head, as some people said, lifted Lilka out of his wheelbarrow in the graveyard at the edge of the village, the little girl felt happy at seeing trees and flowers, sunshine and shadows. She was 8 years old. She had already spent many months in the village and, for the last few weeks, she'd been hiding in old Franek's one-room home, sitting on the floor, peeling potatoes, ready, like a hare or deer, to dart away if danger drew near, cowering under the couch when anyone came.

She missed Mommy and her little sister with a hollow ache that gnawed like hunger, but in a different way. Mommy had taken her to the village all those many months ago. Stray dogs had chased them away. Lilka had started to scream, but Mommy held her hand more tightly and said, "Don't be afraid, don't make a noise." But Lilka was afraid. Mommy had knocked at several cottages, a quiet tap at a door or windowpane. Most people had not responded to the gentle rap; some opened but closed the door quickly when they realized who had come knocking.

Finally, Mrs. Dudka agreed to keep the child, for a certain sum. Mommy paid and promised she would come again with more money. Lilka had tried not to cry as the door had closed and she was left alone with an old woman whose headscarf was knotted around her wobbly chin. Mommy was beautiful and kind and good, but this woman . . . .

Mrs. Dudka kept Lilka indoors. She made her sit still for hours on end, holding hanks of wool until her arms ached, while the old woman wound the wool and scolded the little girl if she let it go slack. The wool scratched across the child's unwashed skin.

Lilka had to learn to scrub the floor and scour the battered pots and pans. Sometimes Mrs. Dudka beat Lilka, because she believed that was how to bring a child up.

"Had 12 of my own," she'd often say. Some had married

and gone away, several had died, some had gone off to the army and never come back, some had—. Wherever they were, there were too many of them, and when they arrived to visit, Lilka had to hide, squashed for hours behind a sofa with an old boot for when she needed to pee—"it's quieter than a pot," Mrs. Dudka said.

Lilka began to forget her former life. She outgrew her dresses. She had to discard her shoes.

"Doesn't matter," Mrs. Dudka said. "You never go out anyway."

Lilka's habitual dream was that one day she would hear a knock at the door. Mommy would come in and take her away from horrible Mrs. Dudka and her horrible hut, and everything would be all right again.

But instead of Mommy, enemy soldiers came to the next village. They commandeered fodder for their horses and provisions for their men. Mrs. Dudka took fright.

"I can't keep you anymore, it's too dangerous. Besides, your mother never brought no more money. You'll have to go."

"I have to stay here until Mommy collects me." Lilka's voice trembled.

"Well, she hasn't come, has she? So out you go."

"I've got no coat, my shoes and dresses are too small."

"I can't help that."

Mrs. Dudka dragged a garment from the drawer and tossed it to Lilka, who huddled into it. It trailed on the ground and the sleeves were too long. Once she might have giggled at how funny they looked dangling down, but she had forgotten how to laugh. The wool was scratchy and the sweater smelled.

"Here, take this, I knitted it myself. Never say I sent you away with nothing. Out you go." Mrs. Dudka opened the door.

Where to? Where to? Instinct told her to keep out of sight. She hid in nooks and crannies around the village, diving for shelter behind haystacks or bushes if anyone went past.

But one day Grandpa Franek found her. She'd shrunk back, trembling, but he said, just as Mommy had done, "Don't be afraid." He had put out his big, rough hand.

"Just come along with old Franek." He bundled her into a wheelbarrow and flung an empty sack on top. "Oh, er, potatoes doin' fine," she heard him say as she was bounced and trundled along the unpaved road to his tumbledown hut.

Grandpa Franek never beat her. He shared meals with her, giving her the better bits. Sometimes he drank too much and lay on the earthen floor like a corpse while Lilka wandered around the room and wished he would wake up and light the stove because it had gone out and she was cold.

She was as unwashed as he was, though her smells were different.

One day, he said, "Them Germans never give up, so you and old Franek, we're just going for a little ride."

"Where to?"

"You'll see."

"Are you sending me away?"

"No, no, never fret. But things are hotting up. Folks in the village are talking, like. See here, old Franek don't know too much, but he knows one thing—we got to keep you hidden right out of sight. I've found the very best place," he went on, and once more she was bundled into the wheelbarrow, covered with smelly, prickly sacking, and trundled down the road.

"See now," he said, lifting her out.

Lilka stared at the trees above her. Bright blue flowers grew in the long grass. She wanted to pick them, but Franek said, "None of that, little one. You've gotter get out of sight."

"But where?" Lilka began to feel sick. "There are no houses here."

"Now then, there's houses here for them as will never give you away," said Franek, mysteriously. "There's none so silent as the dead. See, this graveyard belonged to you Hebrew folk, but there ain't nobody left now. In you go." He hefted aside a broken gravestone. "It's a grand soft hollow, just right for a little one like you."

"For me! You mean, I've to go into that hole? Oh, no, please no, please, please," Lilka begged. Franek took off his cap and scratched his head.

"What's to do?" he asked, puzzlement in his blue eyes. "Franek'll not leave you lonely here. I'll come each evening with a bite for you, and maybe you'll run a little bit between the graves and stretch your legs by the light of the stars. There just ain't nothing else, little Lilka. In you must go."

She screamed when he slid the stone back in place.

"Oh, never cry," his voice came muffled down to her. "You'll bring them here that we don't want to come. Look, there's a corner open so you can breathe, like. I'll be back, never fear."

She kept quiet then, shivering in the damp, cold earth. She could sit up or lie stretched out, but she couldn't stand. She pulled up her knees and stared trembling into the dark. Later she heard voices: Country children sometimes pastured their cows in the long grass that had grown over the unvisited graves.

True to his word, at least in the beginning, Franek came each night. He brought her food and warm covers. It was cold and the stars spangled the sky. Lilka tried to climb out, but her legs were cramped and sore. Each night she heard the wind rattle through the branches of the trees above her hiding place. The rustle of the leaves sounded like voices, whispering, uncanny voices like evil spirits come to snatch her away. She wet herself with fear and misery.

So day and night dragged away, seasons changed, but Lilka's cramped, dark world never changed. Hunger added to her other needs, but Franek shared whatever food he had

with his "little Lilka." She looked forward to his nocturnal visits, the sound of his footsteps, his whistling breath—he was her lifeline, her only contact with the living world. After a time, some nights he didn't come and hunger tormented her, and then he'd reappear, sobered and repentant.

One day he told her that the Red Army had crossed the frontier and the bad soldiers were being driven back. She understood little, but later she heard gunfire, shouts, and screams. She trembled, sure that the bad soldiers were going to find her and kill her, and when the stone above her head was pulled back, she shrank deeper into the dark earth. The rush of sunlight dazzled her. She hid her eyes. But these soldiers wore different uniforms. And here was Grandpa Franek's wrinkled, drink-flushed face.

"It's over now, little Lilka," he burbled, his voice thick with tears and vodka. Dazed, she tried to stand. With rough compassion, these new soldiers crowded round to look.

"*Yevreika, malen'kaya Yevreika*, a Jewish girl, a little Jewish girl."

Lilka was carried away on a creaking cart. A Jewish charitable organization eventually took her into its care.

She never saw Franek again. Word got round that he'd sheltered a brat from "that lot," and villagers, angry at the new regime, set fire to the old man's one-room hut. Or perhaps it was partisans, or a group of armed nationalists. Who could say? All sorts of stories went flying around. When Jan and his family heard about his death, they could only hope that vodka had blotted old Grandpa out so that, mercifully, he was unconscious when his few sticks of furniture went up in smoke—and his life ended in the blaze.

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The story held me spellbound. By now, my fellow students had returned to the tour bus. I said a reluctant goodbye to Jan, wishing I could learn still more about Lilka and her fate. Instead, I boarded the bus and rode on with my classmates to our next destination. I never did see the historic synagogue in Rymanów. Instead, I heard how an old Polish man over-fond of home-brewed vodka had saved the life of a little Jewish girl, finding her a hiding place as quiet as a grave.

ENDNOTE

The author explains her fact-based short story, writing, "I wove Lilka's story from a patchwork of reminiscences, including child survivors' raw stories collected in *Dzieci zydowskie oskarzaja* (*Jewish Children Accuse*, Shalom Foundation, 1993) and memoirs of childhood told by adult survivors in *The Last Eyewitnesses* (Northwestern University Press, 1999)."

She adds a broader contextualization: "Poland was a dangerous place after the war. Postwar memoirs show that many Poles who had hidden Jews didn't want it to be known, for fear of reprisals. Armed groups waged war on the hated new Communist regime. Ukrainian villagers and Lemko people were forcibly deported from southeast Poland to Soviet-controlled Ukraine, with bloody consequences for their Polish neighbors, a continuation of brutal ethnic killings in Volhynia in 1943 and 1944.

"My visit to southeast Poland opened up new vistas for me and left a deep impression, not least when a stranger in a picturesque town waylaid me with his story."

"In 1999," explains Pnina Rosenberg, "Sabina Heller learned the truth about her history and her familial identity. She was traumatized, she writes, 'to find out that I was adopted and my parents went to their grave never revealing their secret.'" This narrative lends depth to our understanding of our haunting cover, painted by the American artist Deborah Howard after hearing Sabina's story.

Pnina Rosenberg

Sabina Heller: An Extraordinary Life

> The last time I saw my parents was at the station. They were put on a train. I ran. . . . A friend of my father hid me and then another friend and friends of friends till your mother took me in. And so far, I am still here. But my parents went to a place you don't come back from.
>
> —Taika Waititi, *Jojo Rabbit*

Although *Jojo Rabbit* (2019) is a fictional film, it is based on meticulous historical research. This thoroughness is manifested in the hidden Jewish girl's monologue summing up the essence of life in hiding during the Holocaust: the brutal rupture from one's family, the complete dependence on strangers, the transience and temporality of safe havens, experiencing life as a hunted animal, and the utter loneliness, coupled with the guilt for surviving while others did not.

Many of these elements are reflected in Sabina Heller's unimaginable story of hiding. For 57 years, she was unaware of her Holocaust past and her true identity. All that time, she believed she was the daughter of survivors Zofia and Zygmund Goszczewski. Although each hidden child survivor's story is unique, that of Sabina Heller's rescue and reclamation of her original identity is singular.

Heller, born Kagan in August 1941 in Radziwillow in east Poland (today Radyvyliv, Ukraine), was taken in 1942 to hide with her parents in the home of a Polish Christian family. Yet the family, fearing the death penalty for them and their children if they were caught hiding Jews, soon asked the Kagans to leave. Her parents knew they could not survive on the run with a 1-year-old, so they begged the couple to keep their baby, which they agreed to do in return for ongoing payments. When the Kagans were murdered a year later and the payments stopped, the Polish family abandoned the child, leaving her to starve in their basement (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum [USHMM], 2013).

In the spring of 1943, 16-year-old Zofia Stramska discovered the abandoned, frightened, and near-death baby girl and took her to family friends, Jozef and Natalia Roztropowicz. Although they had three children of their own, they took her into their home, telling neighbors she was the child of their cousin who had been murdered by the Nazis. They raised her as a Catholic girl named Irena ("Inka") and loved and cared for her as their own child, nursing her back to health and sheltering her throughout the war and its aftermath. In July 1945 they adopted and baptized her (Yad Vashem, 2023).

In 1948, the Zionist Coordinating Committee for Returning Jewish Children discovered Irena. A representative of the committee made a number of visits to the family and eventually convinced them to allow Inka to be returned to her Jewish heritage, about which she knew nothing. With great regret, Jozef and Natalia gave her up, bringing her to a Jewish orphanage in Lodz. Traumatized, confused, and feeling betrayed, Inka lost a kind and loving family.

A NEW FAMILY AND IDENTITY

Dr. Zofia Goszczewski, who volunteered at the orphanage, and her husband, Zygmund, soon fell in love with Inka. Perhaps believing her to be orphaned and wanting to spare her the details of her past, they told her that her name was Ina, short for Sabina, and that they were her real parents, separated from her for five years by the war. A year later, the three immigrated to Israel and a new chapter of Ina's life began.

Ina Goszczewski was raised and attended school in Israel, served two years in the army, and went to college in Jerusalem. The Goszczewskis had adopted her, but never told her (USHMM, 2013); she believed them to be her birth parents. As they never spoke about her past, she never considered herself to be a survivor of the Holocaust. Her identity was that of an Israeli, Ina, daughter of survivors Zofia and Zygmund.

In 1970, Ina met Alfred Heller, a Jewish American

survivor, when he visited Israel. They married, moved to the United States, settled in California, and raised two sons; Sabina became a 1st-grade teacher. The Polish Inka Kagan, the Polish Irena Roztropowicz, the Israeli Ina Goszczewski was now the American Sabina Heller.

DOCUMENTS UNCOVERED

Dr. Emunah Nachmany–Gafny, an Israeli scholar who researched the fate of hidden Jewish children in postwar Poland, came across documents at the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw attesting that the Roztropowiczes, the family who had taken Inka in and cared for her for five years, had long searched for her without success, and were now no longer alive. In 1999, an Israeli cousin of Sabina's discovered Dr. Nachmany–Gafny's findings and told Sabina. Through those documents, Sabina learned the truth about her early history. She was shocked, she writes, "to find out I was adopted. My parents [Zofia and Zygmund] went to their grave never revealing their secret" (Heller, 2016, para. 9). This startling discovery recalled and deepened her earlier painful sense of betrayal.

Sabina contacted the children of her rescuers and met them in 2000 in Warsaw, at a ceremony in which Jozef and Natalia Roztropowicz were posthumously honored by Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations. One of the Roztropowicz children handed Sabina a letter written by their mother in which she explained the circumstances that influenced the family's decision, difficult as it was, to turn her over to the Jewish representative who came for her.

Even with this chapter clarified, Sabina struggled with many issues. Especially salient were those involving her biological parents, "who by their incredibly brave decision to leave me with complete strangers, saved my life," but of whom she had no memory or photos. Even their first names are unknown. She struggled with anxiety, and with her newfound identity as a survivor. She wrote, "Growing up in Israel, I didn't consider myself a survivor. My parents were but I was not. I was an Israeli! It came as a great shock to me that I was, too." Nonetheless, she concludes: "I had learned to accept my life and appreciate how lucky I am to be alive when so many children during the Holocaust were not" (Heller, 2016, para. 12).

SABINA'S PORTRAIT

During the 2000s, Heller's path crossed that of the American artist Deborah Howard, who was in the midst of what would be a five-year project (2003–2008), Portraits of Child Holocaust Survivors. Howard would focus on 25 child survivors and invited Heller to be included. The artist spent an afternoon at each of these Jewish American survivors' homes, listening to their stories and "doing loose sketches of the subjects' faces . . . picking up details, recording unique characteristics, then taking photographs she could work from at home" (Chandler, 2008). The outcome is a captivating series of color and black-and-white drawings, a medium chosen by the artist because "it can be very intimate and can capture the intangible qualities of an individual" (Howard, 2019). [Fig. 1.]

Four portraits, including Heller's, are on display in the permanent collection of the Museum of Holocaust Art at Yad Vashem. All 25 are on the artist's website (www.deborahhowardart.com/holocaust-portraits.htm). There Sabina's black-and-white portrait proves to be quite different from the others: This elegant, good-looking woman is pictured with head raised, and her resigned gaze is somewhat introverted, as if she does not feel wholly part of the group. Howard attentively and delicately transmits Heller's traumatic revelations concerning her past and her identity, which had come to light only a few years before the portrait was done. Sabina may be reflecting on her life and its central enigma: Who am I?

Thus, we see that although formally Sabina belongs to Howard's portrayed group of 25, she is still struggling with difficult unsolved questions about her birth parents and her true identity, concealed by the people she believed for so many years to be her real parents. Sabina seems thus the perfect subject for Howard, whose aim was "to create portraits . . . depicting very real people who have lived extraordinary lives and also very ordinary lives" (Howard, 2019).

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FIG. 1: Sabina Heller (Inka Kagan). "Rescue." Courtesy of Deborah Howard.

The haunting words of Annette Bialik Harchik compel us to consider the million and a half children, each one beloved, who were killed by the Nazis. She shows us the effect those murders have on her. When she shuts her eyes, she sees "the faces of murdered sisters and brothers." They are always with her, "even now." Read Sister Lou Ella Hickman's poem "how would i teach" (p. 31) when you share this aspect of the aftermath with your students.

Annette Bialik Harchik

Even Now

Even now I see them,
after so many years,
waiting curled inside me,
the pale, luminescent limbs
of murdered sisters and brothers
gleaming in dark tunnels.
I see them
in the eyes
of young children,
in the faces of
children I teach,
in the photographs of Europe's
martyred Jewish children —
those dark-eyed children in old
black-and-white photos,
their pale limbs yearning
to unfurl in sunlight.
I see their unborn faces when I close my eyes —
the faces of murdered sisters and brothers always with me.

Lou Ella Hickman raises the uncertainties that we all confront as we try to teach about the Holocaust. "how would I teach," she asks. "how / would I present . . . / how / would I share . . ." Such essential questions will prompt deep reflection among educators grappling with the complex pedagogy of this subject. Consider this poem after reading Annette Bialik Harchik's "Even Now" (pp. 30) and Jennifer Robertson's "A Hiding Place as Quiet as the Grave" (pp. 24–26). Use this as well at a workshop for teachers new to this learning to prompt a necessary discussion about both how to teach and at what age students should learn about the most difficult moments of the Holocaust.

Lou Ella Hickman

how would i teach

how would i teach
the smell of madness
the slow leak from an old stove
that poisoned reason's breath
how
would i present facts, dates, names
the faces
events one by one
leading to the normalcy of unspeakable choices
how
would i share about shattering glass
the taste of smoke and ash
the brutal grip of betrayal of loss
the great anguish of the world's silence
finally
how might i live
so i could teach
remembrance
is the blessing

About his mother's survival, Arnie Sleutelberg writes, "My mother died an old woman, warm, in her own bed, unlike most of her family who died naked, screaming, on cold concrete floors in poisonous gas chambers, images that haunted her every single night, preventing her from ever having a good night's sleep." Yet, he explains, she found a measure of peace through her relationship with the Dutch Christian de Kock family who hid her, saving her life.

Arnie Sleutelberg

A Journey into Hiding; A Life Saved

FIG. 1: Edith Hes Sleutelberg at 15, Zaltbommel, the Netherlands. Courtesy of Arnie Sleutelberg.

My mother, Edith Hes Sleutelberg, was a skinny little girl, a child still, even at age 15 [Fig. 1].

She was shy and didn't venture far from home. She had an idyllic childhood, she used to tell me—loving parents, grandparents, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins—and a good school and a vibrant synagogue. She lived in a small town in the Netherlands, where her cousins were her best friends. They liked to swim in the cold Rhine River, run around in the local park, and have fun.

All of that changed when the German Nazis invaded her town. She was terrified.

"The sky was black with planes," she said. Jewish children were no longer allowed to go to school. Her parents had to close their clothing store on the Waterstraat; she could no longer go into the park to play with her friends. They could no longer shop except for one hour in the afternoon, after many items they needed had already been sold. While some kind merchants put food under the counter to save for her mother, times were very hard. She had to wear a yellow star printed with the word "Jood."

Because she could no longer attend school, my mother volunteered to work for a seamstress every day to have something to do. In the shop one day, a woman, seeing her star, said, "Edith, I didn't know you were Jewish." My mother responded with a smile, "All my life!" That evening, the woman contacted my grandfather, Arnold, seeking permission to find a hiding place for my mother. My grandparents, who had come to understand that soon all of the Jews of their town would be forcibly taken from their homes, arrested, rounded up, and put on trains to be taken away to places unknown, had been considering going into hiding, so they were grateful to this kind woman for her help. In the end, she found separate hiding places for each member of the family. (Sadly, my mom never mentioned her name, so we could never thank her for her help, but we are eternally grateful to her.)

The yellow star was a mark of death. In my mother's case, it saved her life and the life of her family.

My mother was a homebody. Only once did she try sleeping overnight at her aunt and uncle's house with her cousins, but at bedtime she wanted to go home. Preparing her for going into hiding, then, away from home, alone, with strangers, was heart-wrenching for my grandparents. They told her to count on being away for only six months, but that was an eternity for my mother, who had never been away from home for even a night. Yet she had no choice.

You see, my 15-year-old mother, yet a child, was being

hunted. An army of men with guns were actively looking for her, eager to capture, shoot, and kill her. Why? Because she was born to Jewish parents. She was Jewish, and that alone marked her for execution. The single bullet, the firing squads, the poisonous gas chambers—all were intended to murder her, along with a million and a half Jewish children just like her. In fact, the Nazis' goal was to murder every single Jew in the world: infants, children, parents, grandparents. They failed, but they did manage to capture and murder some 6,000,000 Jews, including children just like my mom.

On the night before she would disappear into hiding, her mother spoke to her about many things that mothers and daughters discuss, giving her advice about growing up and becoming a woman. Both of them cried as the time of their separation became closer. It must have been the hardest decision her parents had ever made—to send their daughter away from them with the hope of saving her life.

Imagine her journey into hiding: In the middle of the night of October 3, 1942, her parents woke her and told her to dress in all the clothing she could wear, because she could carry nothing with her. She put on nine layers, so many that she was hardly able to walk. She ripped off the yellow stars that had been sewn on her outerwear, and sobbed as she said good-bye to her parents.

A helper named Gerard van Angelen put her on the back of his bicycle, peddled her to the Waal River, and put her into his row boat. Terrified, she was rowed in silence in the dark of night across the wide river, with swift currents and large waves threatening. On the other side, in the town of Haaften, another stranger, Krijn de Kock, waited with a bicycle hidden in the tall reeds. At his direction, she sat on the cross bar of the bike as he bumped along a dirt road. Finally, he stopped and she slid off the bike, frightened, tired, and in despair.

FIG. 2: The de Kock family farm, "Pella," in Haaften, the Netherlands. The attic where Edith was hidden was above the second-floor front windows. Courtesy of Arnie Sleutelberg.

Here was "Pella," the de Kock family farmhouse, where the de Kock family—mother, father, and six children—would welcome her warmly and tuck her into their cramped attic [Fig. 2].

The de Kock family was gentle, welcoming, empathetic, kind, and loving. They tried to make my mother feel like one of their family. They called her "sus," sister. The mayor of Haaften, Johan, prepared a false identity card in case anyone discovered her in hiding, giving her the name Johanna de Kock. She would become the youngest of the de Kock children and they all doted on her. Though to be safe she could never leave their house by day and could go outside only late at night to walk among the fruit trees to get some fresh air, she was, nonetheless, integrated into their family life as much as possible. If anyone came to the house, she had to be sure to stay in the attic, but one of the six children would be there with her. She was never alone. The family bought her a spinning wheel on which she made yarn, then knitted or crocheted it into gloves, mittens, socks, scarfs, sweaters, and hats, and this was how she filled her time [Figs. 3 and 4].

FIG. 3: The spinning wheel bought for Edith by the de Kock family. They gave it to Edith some 50 years ago; she kept it for 30 years before giving it to her son. Courtesy of Arnie Sleutelberg.

FIG. 4: The mittens pictured are ones she crocheted from the yarn she spun while in hiding. Courtesy of Arnie Sleutelberg.

Often, during the years the Nazis occupied the Netherlands, soldiers would take over people's homes, expelling the families whenever they needed housing. One day they came to evict the de Kocks. After a conversation, however, it was agreed that the Nazis would have complete use of the main floor while the family moved to the upstairs, with my mother hiding silently above them in the attic.

For nearly a month, three Nazi soldiers lived on the main floor of the de Kock farmhouse. During those weeks, the family and my mom all lived in fear and anxiety as those seeking to murder her were living in the same house. Had the Nazis discovered that this family was hiding a Jew, the de Kocks would have been arrested and deported, along with my mom.

These consequences were well known to the de Kocks before they took in my mother. Their deep faith in God, though, compelled them to take the risk. They felt commanded by God to welcome the stranger, to provide for the less fortunate, to shelter the homeless, to protect the innocent, to keep faith with those in need. They took their religion seriously and acted as they believed God expected them to act.

My grandparents had thought that the hiding would be for no more than six months. But my mom's time in hiding turned out to be two years and seven months, time away from the home she loved, separated from her parents and brothers, away from her aunts, uncles, and cousins, removed from everything familiar, living with strangers, kind and generous though they were.

After the Nazis were defeated, my mom was free to come out of the attic and start her life anew. Days after May 4, 1945, she was reunited with her family. Miraculously, all five had survived, along with her Tante Hete, but all of the rest of the family—her grandmother and all of her aunts, uncles, and cousins—had been murdered.

Despite the beneficence of the de Kock family, the years of hiding had changed and scarred my mother. She was no longer a child, she was a woman: a woman full of fear, anxiety, and worry, unable to trust the world fully ever again.

Yet she was able to fall in love, marry, and have children and, as my sister and I grew up, my mother's story came out in small snippets. We would ask her something; she would respond until breaking down in tears; and that was it until next time. Over the years, though, we were able to learn more and more. She spoke of her grandmother, and how her father's inability to convince his mother to join them in hiding haunted him the rest of his life. She spoke of her cousins, her best friends, who were "taken away." Whenever and wherever we traveled, she would look in the local phone book for the names of her cousins in the vain hope that any had survived. She lived always with survivor's remorse, asking, "Why did I live when they all were killed?" She observed every October 3, the day she went into hiding, as a somber day of fasting and mourning.

Yet there is a silver lining. She survived. In her marriage and in her two children she was able to find some measure of happiness, and this was possible because very courageous, deeply religious Dutch Christians took my mother into their home, cared for her, came to love her, and guided her into womanhood. They took this grave risk on themselves because their faith in God required them to save an innocent child, simply because it was the right thing to do.

They, my mother, and my family have remained close over the years. We and they consider one another family. The de Kocks and Gerard van Angelen, the helper who spirited her across the river to safety, were recognized by Yad Vashem as Hasidei Umot HaOlam, the Righteous Among the Nations, for their heroic bravery, steadfast convictions, compassion, and selflessness.

Near the end of her life, after cancer had spread to her lungs and brain, my mother found peace. She said to me, "I've had a great life. You've had me a long time. There is nothing to feel bad about. You go and live your life; find happiness. I love you."

I often think about Gerard van Angelen and the de Kock family—Krijn and Engeltje de Kock, Jan, Corrie, Altje, Engeltje, Krijn, and Leendert. My mother owed her life to them—and so do I.

Survivor Sam Ron passed away in October 2023 at the age of 99. He used to say, when telling his story, "All I ask is that you listen and learn. If you listen, I will be happy." Listening and learning were at the core of Sam's life and his memoir, *A Jewish Journey: Surviving and Thriving in Poland, Israel, and the United States* (Hamilton Books, 2023). Co-author Caren Schnur Neile explains that this excerpt from his book "follows a structure that differs from typical memoirs. Ron and I chose as the book's format an imaginary Q&A session that reflects many of the questions students have asked him during his years of educating them in schools and on the March of the Living. This selection was Sam's response to the question "What was it like for you as a boy in Poland?"

Sam Ron with Caren Schnur Neile

Listen and Learn: Sam Ron, Holocaust Educator

Sam Ron, age 14, Kazimierza-Wielka, Poland, 1938. Photo courtesy of the author.

"Hey, Rakowski! Dirty Jew!"

It was an epithet I had heard directed to others, but never to me. All I knew about antisemitism in our little Polish village of Kazimierza–Wielka was what we'd seen and heard happen to others: The ugly name–calling, particularly around Easter. The sections of town where we weren't welcome. The boycotting of Jewish–owned businesses. The authorities even assessed our taxes at a higher rate than they did the non–Jews.

That morning I had been sitting in my fifth–grade classroom, minding my own business. That wasn't easy with 50 other boys and girls around me, many of them shoving and giggling and chatting when the teachers' backs were turned. I liked school, and I did well. I remember I was doing the writing assignment the head teacher had given us, dipping my pen into the inkwell each time it ran dry, as people used to do before the invention of ballpoint and fountain pens. Scratch, scratch, scratch a few lines, then dip. Scratch, scratch, scratch, then dip again. In more modern parts of Poland, in the big cities of Warsaw and in nearby Krakow, the inkwell had already pretty much fallen out of use by 1934, an indication of just how backward our village still was, despite the big new school building and the modern sugar factory.

Maybe the Jew–haters had left me alone because our family, which had been in town for generations, owned a lumberyard, and we were respected for that, and for the electricity that our major client, the sugar factory, connected to our house. Maybe it was the fact that unlike the two other Jewish kids in school, whose first language was Yiddish, I spoke perfect Polish, because my parents used it

regularly in business. Maybe it was because our family wasn't so religious, although we did keep kosher and observe the holidays. I didn't have to wear a yarmulke, or *payo*s, those curled earlocks that some Jewish boys hid behind their ears when they went out into the Gentile world. We were Jews, sure, but we didn't look and act as different from the others as some of our people did.

Whatever the reason, I knew my family was lucky. I had heard my parents talk about what was going on in nearby Germany, as the Nazis made antisemites feel increasingly easy about speaking against us and inciting violence. I knew it could happen here, too. Just because our town, Kazimierza–Wielka, was named after the 14th–century King Kazimierz III, who was relatively good to the Jews, that didn't mean that we were safe. (Wielka means "big" in Polish. The nearby town was Kazimierza–Mala, for "small.") Although Jews had lived in Poland nearly a thousand years, they were often merely tolerated, and sometimes not even that.

There were four main areas of town—the Gentile farms, the sugar factory with all its buildings, the estate of the great nobleman Lubinski, and the Jewish quarter—and our kind wasn't welcome at every gathering in the first three. In our town of 3,000, maybe only 60 families were Jewish. It was above all a Catholic country.

I looked up at the cross on the schoolroom wall, and I thought of the prayers I had heard the priests lead that morning. I knew them well, because although they taught religion in school only on Saturdays, when we Jews were home for our Sabbath, the prayers were said every morning. *Hail Mary full of grace.* I could recite it in my sleep. Theirs was supposed to be a religion of love, but the Church taught that Jews had killed Jesus, and that we used Gentile children's blood to make our matzoh on Passover. What could I, little Shmuel Rakowski, do to combat all that propaganda?

Dirty Jew!

Every student and teacher was looking at me, waiting to see what I would do. Our head teacher was known as the biggest antisemite in town, the head of them all, although he had always been good to me, his best student. Now I could feel his eyes, too, piercing my skin. Still, no one's pricked me more than those of the two Jewish girls who kept to themselves in the back of the room, Bella Weiczenberg and the Oshinski girl. How was I going to react? Would I just take it, like so many of our people, young and old, did all the time, had done through casual humiliations and murderous pogroms for centuries?

I was not a big kid, but I had confidence, even then. My parents had instilled pride in my little brother and me. Even at that young age, I knew who I was. I was the eldest son of the most prominent Jews in town, respected for their successful business and connections. My father was an ardent Zionist, believing that the Jews deserved our own country in Eretz Yisrael. During elections for the Zionist Congress, our home was a nest of activity, meetings and papers, and a whole big to–do.

I remembered the little I had heard about my namesake, my mother's father, Shmuel Menachem, whom I'd never known. What would make him proud? I thought of the movies—still black-and-white and silent, in those days—that I went to in our town, with heroes like John Gilbert and Douglas Fairbanks. Should I cower, or should I fight? If I fought back, would I get punished, even though I was justifiably defending myself? Would I get hit with a baseball bat, like they did to the kids who got in trouble in *cheder*? But if I did nothing, how would I feel about myself? And would they ever leave me alone?

All this sounds like I deliberated for hours, but really it took seconds for me to make up my mind. I thought of a line from the Catholic Hail Mary prayer I had heard just that morning: *Pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.* Then I reached out to the hole in my wooden desk for the inkwell, which was the size of a small coffee cup, and I tipped it over the kid's head.

As I did, I yelled out, "Look who's dirty now!"

The room, which had been buzzing like a hive moments before, was suddenly silent. Nobody moved. Everyone stood paralyzed as the black viscous fluid slithered from my tormentor's hair to his shocked face and down half of his white shirt.

I held my breath.

And then, as if on cue, the room exploded into applause and cheers. Even the head teacher had an expression of pure delight on his face as he handed the filthy boy to his assistant to take out of the room.

"Get him cleaned up, will you?" he asked, barely able to contain his laughter.

For the rest of the day, students from that class and others—because in a small town, news spreads like a virus—came up to congratulate me, or just looked at me in astonishment from afar, whispering to their friends and pointing.

"He's the guy! Did you hear what he did? Shmuel Rakowski!"

I made my way home among the horses and buggies, past the butcher, the tailor, the restaurants, bars, drugstore, synagogue, churches, even a bagel–maker from out of town, who, I am willing to swear, made the best egg bagels on the planet, brown as pretzels and sweet as sugar beets. It was a Monday, and the women were doing their shopping in the *rynek*, hair wrapped in colorful scarves, wearing skirts and work boots; the children playing in the street. Farmers and horse traders, merchants of every kind, called out to the passing customers, hawking their wares.

With all that tumult, it was no surprise that the news of my altercation preceded me back to our new, two–story,

Sam Ron, age 26, Eilat, Israel, 1950. Photo courtesy of the author.

red wooden house with the large white windows, right on the main street of Sienenkiewicza in the Jewish section, adjacent to the lumberyard. With nine people in our home including my aunt and uncle, cousins, and grandmother, there was always somebody home, and if not, I was related to 26 families in town, with 56 first cousins.

I stopped to get a drink of water from the well, and my mother emerged from the front door to greet me. She was a modern woman, a very practical and matter–of–fact businesswoman, not given to huge displays of emotion.

"Shmulik," she said simply, as I came toward her. Then she took me in her arms and kissed my forehead.

"Your father and I are very proud of you. Everyone deserves to be treated with respect. You showed them that."

"I wasn't very respectful when I poured that ink," I said with a grin.

With a shrug, she turned toward the door, a smile playing on her lips.

"I was born in this town. So was your father, and both our mothers. To live here, we do what we have to do. Whatever happens to us in the future, I know you will survive."

I was too young at the time to know exactly what she was referring to, but I knew it sounded good.

"I was born in Israel to survivors of the Shoah," writes the poet Amos Neufeld. "From early on, I felt compelled to try to fathom and honor the difficult history of my family and community. Writing poems gave me a point of entry to a world of losses—and a way to begin to understand my parents and, somehow, to know and grow closer to all those family members who were murdered, to honor them by remembering them."

Amos Neufeld

You Could Not Save Your Parents

(for my father, Ernest Neufeld)

You chose not to try to escape but remain —
the earth dark, sky burning, thinking you'd somehow
shield them: their home taken, forced into the ghetto,
your parents would not suffer the chaos of pain

alone — not ash strewn in the whirlwind of war.
But held in slave labor, you could not save
them from a ghetto, cattle cars, a mass grave
shoveled naked into the abyss. How did you bear

heartbreaking loss, bodies of ash, soul-scarring horror?
Gassed, burned — deaths unfathomable. And though
you survived earth's flames, you remained with them. How
could you not? A loving son — never far.

But helpless despite how hard you tried to caress
perishing plumes of smoke — or live fully pierced by loss.

"When I first listened to Steve Reich's *Different Trains*, a beautiful yet arresting piece of music composed in 1988 for string quartet and cassette tapes," explains Laura Feibush, "I had never heard anything like it. I was, by turns, charmed by its melodies, inspired by the ideas it provoked in me, and made anxious by its unusual layering of sounds. As soon as I heard this haunting composition, containing such contradictions, I knew I needed to think about it more—to better understand how it wove together looping, mesmerizing 'phase music,' and the fragmented, recorded voices of Holocaust survivors to create one composer's profound auditory contribution to Holocaust art and memory." Laura suggests, "Before or while reading this essay, readers may want to listen to all or parts of Steve Reich's *Different Trains*, available for free on YouTube and Spotify."

Laura Feibush

Learning Through Sound: Listening to Steve Reich's *Different Trains*

This essay is structured by the questions I asked myself when trying to understand *Different Trains* (C. Fox, 1990, pp. 2-8). In this piece, I invite readers —whether educators, music-lovers, or those simply wanting to learn about how to interpret auditory artifacts—to walk with me as I explore this piece of music. I also invite those who educate about the Holocaust to make note of the questions I ask here, as they can be applied not only to music but also to a range of different sound artifacts altogether: archival interview recordings, documentary soundtracks, even remarkable new technologies like the interactive hologram of Sam Harris at the Illinois Holocaust Museum. While mine are by no means the only questions that can be asked of a piece of sonic material, they may help provide an entry point for teachers and students to engage with the powerful auditory objects that archive, represent, and communicate the Holocaust.

Throughout this essay, one question is foundational: Why use sound to teach about the Holocaust? That is, what can we learn through sound more intensely, more effectively, than through any other media form? Through this investigation of one piece of Holocaust art, I outline broader possibilities for what sound has to offer Holocaust studies and teaching.

IS THERE A STORY BEHIND THE PIECE?

With a thorny piece of music such as *Different Trains*, context is key. As a child living in the United States during World War Two, the composer Steve Reich regularly rode trains between New York City and Los Angeles to visit his parents, who were separated and living on opposite coasts.

In his composer's notes for *Different Trains*, Reich (1988) states: "If I had been in Europe during this period, as a Jew I would have had to ride very different trains" (Boosey & Hawkes, para. 2) (www.boosey.com/pages/cr/catalogue/cat_detail?musicid=2699). Already, Reich's explanations give an interested audience member clues about how to listen. Structurally, *Different Trains* is divided into three large movements, named "America—Before the War," "Europe—During the War," and "After the War" (Boosey & Hawkes, para. 6). Reich's movement titles, too, provide guidance to a listener trying to become oriented within a long, multi-part piece. Through these few details alone, Reich outlines a story that gives shape to the piece's layered waves of sound.

Even if the creator(s) of a sonic artifact have left an explanation, however, the impact of the artifact itself may exceed what the original archivist or composer intended. Indeed, a richly crafted piece of art often sustains the artist's intended interpretation, if he or she had one in mind, in addition to many others. While it can be helpful to learn about an artist's intention, sometimes an explanation is simply not forthcoming. Fortunately, there are additional questions to ask that allow a listener to make meaning from a piece of music or other auditory object.

WHAT IS IT MADE OF?

Approaching a strange–looking piece of furniture in some-

one's home, a visitor might ask: What materials were used to make this? In the case of music, one might ask: What sounds, exactly, am I listening to? *Different Trains* consists of a live string quartet in a grouping familiar to most audiences, comprised of two violins, a viola, and a cello. [Fig. 1] However, the string quartet plays alongside something less familiar, at least in the world of chamber music: playing simultaneously are cassette tape recordings of interviews with several people. The interviews are whittled down to mere snippets: short phrases or even just a word at a time. In the first movement, the piece features recordings of the voice of Reich's childhood governess, a woman named Virginia; and the voice of a retired Pullman porter, Lawrence Davis, who worked on the type of train on which Reich traveled in his youth. They can be heard speaking phrases such as "crack train from New York" and naming years: 1939, 1940, 1941.

The second movement incorporates the voices of three Holocaust survivors, Rachel, Paul, and Rachella, whose interview fragments outline a threadbare yet unsettling story of their own train travel during the war, no less troubling for being familiar to those who have studied the Holocaust. One says: "Lots of cattle wagons there / They were loaded with people / They shaved us." (All lyrics are from C. Fox, 1990, Table 1). Even without digging too deeply for interpretive meanings of the words included in movements 1 and 2, the lyrics within them present a jarring contrast.

While trains in America before the war seem to be associated with progress—Lawrence Davis admires a "crack train," calling it "one of the fastest trains"—trains in Europe during the war are literally presented as vehicles for dehumanization: They are "cattle wagons" being "loaded" with people who would soon to be shorn and branded.

The third movement mingles with the previously heard voices, bringing those of the survivors into the same space as Virginia and Lawrence. One of the new voices can be heard saying: "Then the war was over. Are you sure?" Memories of disbelief at the close of the war entwine with a sense of forward motion, as Rachella says: "Going to America / to Los Angeles / to New York."

Why include interview fragments in a piece of music in the first place? Chamber music in the Western tradition often includes the voices of trained singers, but it is surprising to hear spoken voices. Even more surprising is to hear the voices of those who are not actors or singers, but rather just people, speaking in an ordinary way. In *Different Trains*, by bringing together both archival and musical sounds, Reich layers forms of sonic meaning onto one another to create an unusual collage of ethnography and art. Amy Lynn Wlodarski (2010) calls this a "secondary witness," reminding readers that Reich's work is not a direct conveyance of the survivors' testimony, but his own rendering of those testimonies into something new (p. 104). Rather than honoring the lines that have long delineated ethnographic interviews from art, *Different Trains* visualizes the two as existing more on a spectrum than in separate containers.

What other materials are in play in *Different Trains*? The second movement of the piece includes an ongoing wailing of sirens. In all three movements, cassette tape recordings contain the blare of train whistles—American trains in the first and third movements, and European trains in the second. If any readers here are train enthusiasts, it will come as no surprise to them that the whistles of the American and European trains sound quite different. For me, though, and for most listeners, it is a reminder that the soundscapes of different places can be as particular as fingerprints. In his investigation of bells in the soundscape of 19th–century France, Alain Corbin (1999) urges readers to "overcome our habitual neglect of this sphere of sensory experience and take account . . . [of the] auditory messages that would of course have been repeated time and time again" (p. 93). Reich heeds this advice when he samples recordings of American and European train sounds from the 1930s and 1940s.

Indeed, the different train whistles are a tool that Reich uses to create a sense of place for the audience. Sound has a remarkable ability to evoke the feeling of an environment: Think, for instance, of the hushed voices in a library, the echo of a sanctuary, or the hubbub of a busy restaurant. Even unaccompanied by a visual aid, if confronted with those soundscapes, most listeners would quickly and vividly sense the type of space being suggested. It's a technique often used by podcasters (and before them, radio producers) needing to quickly "set the scene" as a narrative unfolds across different locations.

Yet what is Reich doing by incorporating such unusual "instruments"—train whistles and sirens—into his music? Whistles and sirens are important noisemakers, evoking both the legal and the physical infrastructure of American and European society, but few people would be likely to group them with the refined expressive capacities of orchestral instruments. The important point is this: The cassette tape portion of *Different Trains* expands the toolbox of what is usually used to make chamber music. The unusual sounds challenge the listener to consider: What instruments belong to classical music? Why do some instruments belong to this beautiful yet rarefied sphere, while other sounds do not? Brandon LaBelle (2019) reminds readers that "tuning the ear to the sound source, noise may cause trouble by bringing forward a challenge to the permissible" (p. 63). In *Different Trains*, Reich explores the boundary where music crosses into noise. In doing so, he invites audiences to consider why such exploration might be warranted and where it might be necessary to

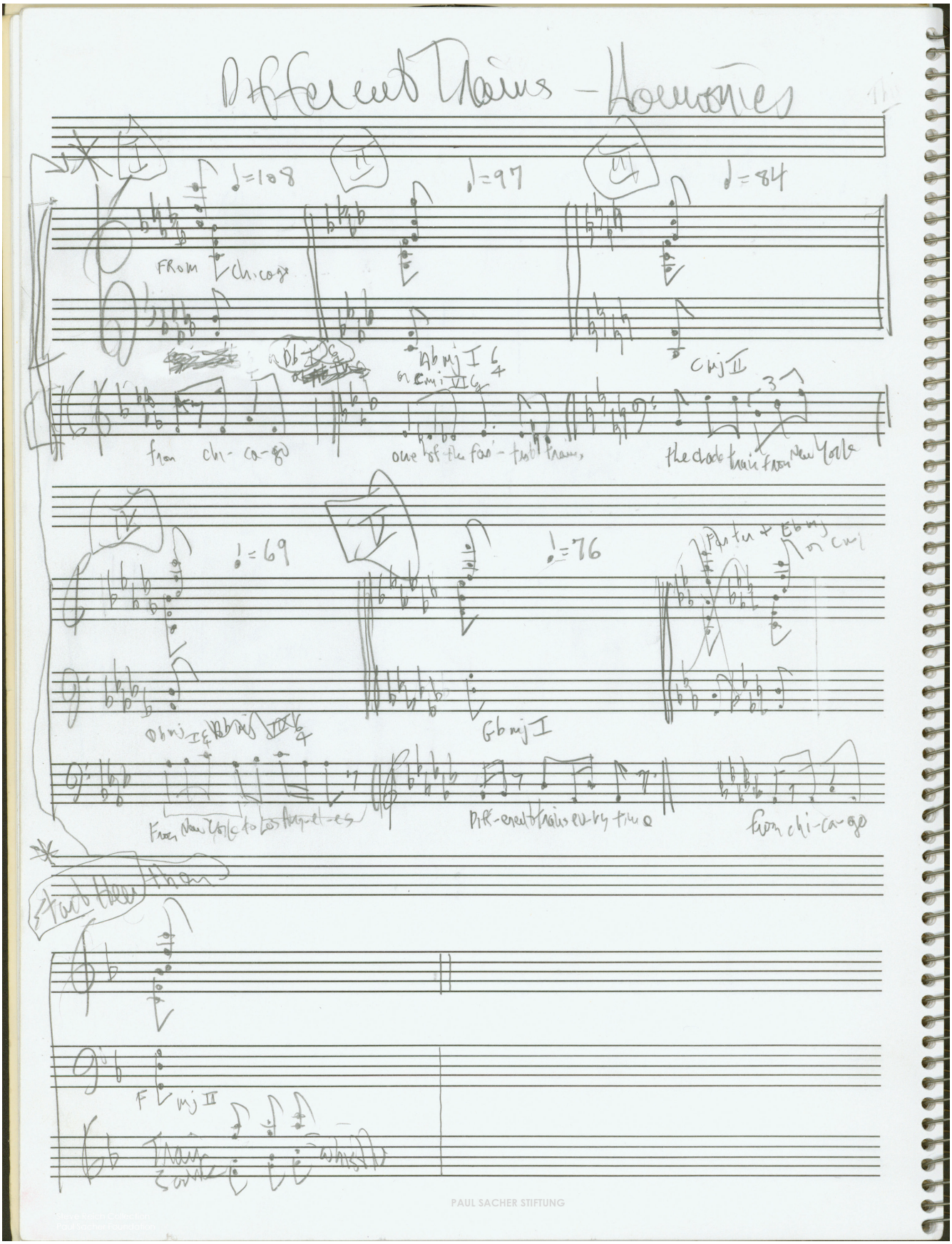

FIG. 1: Steve Reich (b. 1936). *Different Trains* (1988), for string quartet and tape. Sketch for *Different Trains—Harmonies* in Sketchbook 1987–1989. Courtesy of the Steve Reich Collection, Paul Sacher Foundation, Basel, and Matthias Kassel, with kind permission.

challenge what is usually permissible in chamber music, drawing instead from sound vocabularies beyond those of the traditional orchestra.

HOW IS IT COMPOSED?

In listening to Reich's eclectic piece, one may start to notice a pattern in the relationship between the spoken words and the music itself. At times, when a speaker articulates a phrase not heard before, it seems to trigger a shift in the music, from one short, looping melody to the next. At other times, the music shifts first, followed shortly thereafter by a new speech fragment. Fox (1990) notes that "Reich always assigns an instrument to the task of either anticipating or echoing each phrase" (p. 7). In cases of both types, upon closer listening, we hear that the melodies played by the instruments actually mimic the cadences of the speakers' voices. For instance, when Virginia says "from Chicago" in the first movement, one of the strings clearly imitates her pronunciation of the city name, emphasizing the long middle syllable of "Chicago." Fox notes that "the speed of each voice's delivery is always respected" (p. 6).

Reich uses speech melodies throughout *Different Trains* to create musical phrases. They are rhythmically and melodically engaging, to be sure. In creating speech melodies, though, Reich also enacts a powerful way of listening, actively dwelling with the voices of Lawrence, Virginia, and the three Holocaust survivors. His listening is not a passive act. On the contrary, Reich responds by creating music that incorporates what he hears.

There may be many ways to interpret Reich's use of speech melody to create the music of *Different Trains*. My thought is this: Through speech melody, Reich brings the speech of his interviewees into the realm of music, attending to the tiny melodies within their words, and directing the instruments of the string quartet to emulate them. This profound act of listening has the effect, for me, of lifting up and honoring the voices he includes in the piece.

HOW IS IT PERFORMED?

In its performance, *Different Trains* combines live music with a previously–recorded element. While live performance tends to be fleeting, coalescing in one singular event full of skill, focus, and energy, a recording represents something different. Using editing (in Reich's case, by actually cutting and splicing tape), a recording can be painstakingly crafted, revisited, even manipulated. By placing live music alongside recorded elements, Reich layers two types of temporalities together. After all, a recording of something—or someone—automatically refers to the past, to the moment in time when the recording was made.

What can a listener make of this performance choice, combining both live and recorded modes? The answer may lie in practical considerations: Reich's interviewees obviously can't be present at each and every performance of the piece. Another interpretation may lie in the way recording highlights memory. Memory, and making aspects of the past urgent and real, lie close to the heart of Holocaust study and education. Reich, in using recordings of interviews with survivors, invokes the play of memory: how memories change over time, and how, as captures of the past, they weave into the fabric of our present.

I have said that the people Reich interviewed for *Different Trains* can't possibly be present at every performance of the piece. Can they, though—at least, in a sense? Including the recorded voices of Virginia, Lawrence, and the three survivors conjures the presence of the people to whom those voices belong. After all, voices powerfully refer to the existence of a body, of a whole person. N. Katherine Hayles (2007) notes that "long after writing dissociated presence from inscription, voice continued to imply a subject who was present in the moment and in the flesh" (p. 76) until telephone, radio, and phonograph broke that link in the 19th century. Voices, at once of the body and extending beyond it, are sonic artifacts rich in information, in part because they tell the listener so much about the speaker. Just from a voice, a sensitive listener can determine almost instantaneously the age, gender, emotional state, and even the health of the speaker. As such potent indicators of presence and identity, voices are a powerful affective tool in Reich's artistic and expressive repertoire.

WHO IS STEVE REICH?

Steve Reich is associated with—and known for—a style of music called "minimalism," which had its peak in the 1960s. This type of music is often seen as a reaction to the styles of classical music that dominated in the previous decades. In contrast to the values of emotional expression and narrative (as with a journey through the keys and movements of a symphony, or an opera that musically conveys a story), minimalist music often strives for a kind of "intentionless" or random quality (Wlodarski, 2010, p. 105). This approach was famously exemplified by composers such as John Cage (1952), who created melody lines based on random selections from the *I Ching*, or the writing of musical notation not by strategically creating major and minor triads or other traditional tonal structures, but by laying maps of the stars onto staff paper and tracing clusters of stars to create a score.

The specific type of minimalism that Reich uses in *Different Trains* is called "phase" music. Based on the repetition of short musical motives or "chunks," phase music often employs these repetitive units with little or no sign of development (as one would often hear in a piece of classical music), until a different transformation occurs (Fox, 1990, p. 4). Sometimes that transformation is a very

gradual shift over time, while in the case of *Different Trains*, the transitions are sudden, one phase jumping to the next. Phase music is more of a hypnotic or trance-like experience rather than a constantly engaging journey; it asks us, the audience, to do a different type of listening.

WHAT TYPE OF LISTENING DOES THIS PIECE ASK ME TO DO?

Listening is far from homogeneous, and it is not always simply receptive. Reflecting on our own lives, we understand that there are different types of listening. Listening to a lecture in class while quietly writing notes is different from the participatory listening a person might employ with a close friend recounting a humorous or upsetting event. A therapist listens to a patient in a different way from that of a judge listening to a court case. Kate Lacey (2013) argues that

> listening seems passive only from a perspective that demands a rather straitjacketed version of reciprocity, where a listener has the opportunity to become a speaker whose voice will carry equally far and resonate in just the same space, and without any delay or distortion. (p. 166)

In opposition to this simplistic "straitjacketed" understanding of listening, Lacey reminds readers that listening is always negotiated, effortful, and shaped by the intention with which it is undertaken.

With this in mind, what type of listening does *Different Trains* provoke?

Listening to music is often enjoyable, but it doesn't have to be. People listen to music to help themselves focus, exercise, or take their mind off things. Other times, they listen to remind themselves of a different time in their lives, or to guide their meditation practices. In this sense, listeners actually use music to help them do things. While listening to *Different Trains* may be an uncomfortable experience at times (consider the discomforting sounds of sirens and the shrill cries of the European trains), the action of listening to it is worthwhile for various reasons. *Different Trains* challenges the habitual listening of its listeners. Reich uses the space of the piece to put the listener through an experience.

Listening to *Different Trains* can be harrowing. It might even feel like a form of work. At times, Reich makes the audience strain to hear what the interviewees are saying. While the clarity of dialogue is invariably prioritized in film, here, Reich allows the interviewees' words to remain unclear at times. This approach may cause the listener to lean in and strive to listen more closely to the words. *Different Trains* prompts a commitment to listening, even if what we are listening to is not beautiful, or if its particular beauty challenges our prior notions of what musical beauty sounds like.

WHAT DOES LISTENING TO THIS SONIC OBJECT PROMPT?

When an audience member is moved by something, often that emotional response is enough. However, I find myself asking: What's next? Does listening to music like *Different Trains* provoke action, some kind of definite response? Can I enact my listening in a meaningful way, as Reich does by creating speech melodies? While it is challenging to measure the direct impact of listening to music like this on other parts of our lives, perhaps the exercise of intentional listening we practice with a piece like Reich's can affect the way we speak and listen to others, even if just for a short while afterwards.

It may even bring us to approach our current circumstances a little differently. Each time a person presses play on a recording of *Different Trains*, he or she makes present for a few minutes, alive again for a few minutes, one artist's attempt at a representation, a working–through, of the Holocaust. Similarly, reflecting upon and learning from the Holocaust is a practice that needs to live with us, to be made alive again and again. After all, studying the Holocaust is not relevant only to Jewish communities. While of course rooted in Jewish experience, the Holocaust is something that everyone can and must learn, especially to understand how different communities can come under threat, and how societies cope during and in the aftermath of trauma and cataclysm.

When I introduced *Different Trains* to a group of my undergraduate students recently, their initial reactions reminded me of my own. Quiet at first, their faces seemed to say: Where do we even start with this thing? In the following weeks, with *Different Trains* in mind, I challenged each of my students to conduct his or her own set of interviews (with people of their choosing, often parents and friends) and write an essay in which they reflected on the voices they had captured. In their writing, I noticed something that I have seen time and again when teaching about sound or music: that students tended to run out of words faster when describing sound. While students often come to college having learned ways of approaching written texts in prior English courses, they often have not been exposed to ways of approaching auditory material analytically. To some extent, a desire to provide a way in for those writing analytically about auditory materials for the first time inspires this essay's framework of questions.

Sound, the purview of voices, environments, and music, provides an almost overwhelmingly rich modality for teaching about the Holocaust. The possibilities for teaching with different sonic objects are vast. Taking the time to develop a vocabulary and framework for writing about

sound opens up possibilities of what we may be able to learn through sound more profoundly than through other modes. After all, it is the world of sound that contains voices and their testimony in interviews, and auditory aspects of language such as accent and prosody. Sound lends itself to a consideration of audio technologies of circulation and recording, music and its many sources (from violins to train whistles!), and dimensions of acoustic environments—as I have considered them, above, in my investigation of *Different Trains*. It invites us to consider sonic rhetorics such as noise, vibration, echo, and remix.

With all these affordances in mind, sound provides a sea of options for educators: To stay focused, I invite my readers here to bear one idea in mind throughout their listening and lesson–planning: It's not just about what we are listening to, but how we are listening. By considering who we are as listeners, something that will undoubtedly change over time, like Reich in *Different Trains*, we may develop our own relationship to the memory, legacy, and cultural artifacts of the Holocaust.

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END NOTE

[1] The published edition (score and audio-cd for performance), is available from Steve Reich's publisher, Boosey & Hawkes: Steve Reich (b. 1936), *Different Trains* (1988), for string quartet and tape. Score with audio, London/New York: Boosey & Hawkes.

In this poem, unusual for its subject matter, Steven Deutsch writes elliptically about his family's experience on the ill-fated MS St. Louis. He tells us that although he learned about "the MS St. Louis many years ago, it stayed with me—possibly because I was trying to understand how my parents might have felt." In chilling understatements, the poet writes that "smiles / are hard to come by" after the passengers were refused entry to the US, "and my dad and mom / are more / than just seasick."

Steven Deutsch

MS St. Louis

My brother turned
thirteen this week —
he had been called
to the bimah
to read from the Torah
salvaged
from our synagogue
in Berlin.

But, just the day before,
he had decided
not to.

At ten,
I must start
studying,
although my brother
says, "Why bother,
since we are sailing
East again?"

The mood
on board the boat
has changed
since we left
the lights of Miami
behind —
smiles
are hard to come by
and my dad and mom
are more
than just seasick.

The rabbi says
we should forgive
those who have
forsaken us,
but my brother says,
"The rabbi is older
than Methuselah
and we will
bury him at sea
before too long."

Dad told us,
"There is so much
we have been
blamed for
that they fear a contagion —
like the Black Death
arriving by ship
in Messina in 1347."
My brother shakes
his head to agree.
"To help a Jew
is to become
a little Jewish,"
he says,
"and who would
ever choose to be
Jewish?"
But the boat
steams on
and, soon,
we will see
Gibraltar
again.

Translator Robert Schechter introduces us to Leo Strauss, "the son of a Viennese composer, Oskar Strauss. Little is known about Leo before he and his wife were interned in Theresienstadt. There, he wrote and performed in cabaret shows. 'The Village of As-Though' is a lyric he wrote in German [see p. 48]; its bouncy rhythm is elevated by humor and wordplay, perhaps to disguise its darker meaning from the Nazis. Beneath the humor we glimpse the hardships of a life where people are denied basic necessities but nonetheless try to live as if they still enjoyed them, if only in their minds. Tragically, Strauss and his wife were deported to Auschwitz and murdered."

Leo Strauss

The Village of As-Though

Translated by Robert Schechter

There is a little village,
a tiptop town I know.
I have no name to call it.
I call the place As–Though.

Not everyone's permitted
within the as–though walls.
Only those anointed
when the race of as–though calls.

They live their lives in As–Though
like something not abstract,
and treat each as–though rumor
as though it were a fact.

On streets, the as–though people
all gallop to and fro —
with nothing much to do there,
they do things there as though.

A coffeehouse? Why surely!
It's like our own cafes.
Folks feel as though they're present
when the as–though music plays.

Now and then, some bigmouth
begins to strut and crow —
at home, he was no bigshot,
but here he acts as though.

For breakfast and for dinner,
they drink an as–though cup,
and Saturdays, oh Saturdays,
eat as–though steak right up.

The folks form lines for soup bowls
as though soup were inside
and praise the as–though turnips
as though vitamin–fortified.

People lie on floorboards
as though upon a bed,
and think about their loved ones
with no news in their head.

They bear their heavy burden
as though they will not bow,
and speak of bright tomorrow
as though they lived it now.

Leo Strauss

Als-ob

Ich kenn ein kleines Städtchen,
ein Städtchen ganz tiptop,
ich nenn es nicht bei Namen,
ich nenn's die Stadt Als–ob.

Nicht alle Leute dürfen
in diese Stadt hinein,
es müssen Auserwählte
der Als–ob–Rasse sein.

Die leben dort ihr Leben,
als ob's ein Leben wär,
und freun sich mit Gerüchten,
als ob's die Wahrheit wär.

Die Menschen auf den Strassen,
die laufen im Galopp.
Wenn man auch nichts zu tun hat,
tut man doch so als–ob.

Es gibt auch ein Kaffehaus
gleich dem Café de l'Europe,
und bei Musikbegleitung
fühlt man sich als ob.

Und mancher ist mit manchem
auch manchmal ziemlich grob —
daheim war er kein Grosser,
hier macht er so als ob.

Des Morgens und des Abends
trinkt man Als–ob–Kaffee,
am Samstag, ja, am Samstag,
da gibt's als Als–ob–Haschee.

Man stellt sich an um Suppe,
als ob da etwas drin,
und man geniesst die Dorsche
als ob Vitamin.

Man legt sich auf den Boden,
also ob das wär ein Bett,
und denkt an seine Lieben,
als ob man Nachricht hätt.

Man trägt das schwere Schicksal,
als ob es nicht so schwer,
und spricht von schöner Zukunft,
als ob's schon morgen wär.

In this intimate personal narrative, Dahlia Schwartz takes us into a memory care unit as she tells us about Raphael, her survivor father. "Only meager traces of my father's memories remained accessible," she writes, "not nearly enough to allow us to reconstruct his life in Poland, the years he never spoke about. Even so, on these visits, there was always the hope that some new fragment might rise to the surface." She explains, "I accumulated moments, vignettes so fraught with meaning that I would need to take them home to unpack slowly." We urge you and your students to do just that with this poignant reflection.

Dahlia Schwartz

Memory Care

My mother tells me that when I was a toddler, she'd put me in my highchair to watch *Star Trek* while she made dinner. I have no memory of that, but I do love *Star Trek*. Perhaps that is why, when I recall my final visit to my father's memory care facility, I imagine my mother, myself, and my daughter clad in solid-colored yellow, red, and blue shirts. Like the crew of the Enterprise, we were on a mission: to communicate with my father, Raphael Schwartz, across the unstable void created by dementia. Each of us had her role to play. My mother, the historian, recorded videos with her phone or tugged at my daughter's arm to replay previously taken footage. My role was less well defined. Scientist? Philosopher? Writer? I accumulated moments, vignettes so fraught with meaning that I would need to take them home to unpack slowly.

My daughter, Ayla, the anthropologist, was subdued, well aware of the potential pitfalls inherent in interacting with the unfamiliar. She observed everything carefully, but from a slight distance, uncharacteristically silent. Earlier, in the car, I'd tried to absorb the sound of Ayla's voice as she discussed bone formation and Harris lines, the osteologic relics of illness and deprivation in childhood, invisible except in cross-sections and radiographic images. Were there Harris lines etched into my father's bones, into the bones of every child who had survived the Holocaust, indelible and indecipherable inscriptions of the past?

I'd miss the sound of Ayla's voice. After the visit with my father, she'd be heading back to college to study bioarchaeology. Bioarchaeology, I've learned, is the discipline that seeks to extract information about the lived experience of humans from the skeletal remains of those humans.

At the memory care facility, the only human remains we encountered were what remains of humans when neuritic plaques and amyloid proteins invade gray matter, eating away at memories and knowledge. After a decade of this relentless erosion, only meager traces of my father's memories remained accessible, not nearly enough to allow us to reconstruct his life in Poland, the years he never spoke about. Even so, on these visits, there was always the hope that some new fragment might rise to the surface.

We found my father alone in a room with books, puzzles, a radio, and a television. He knelt on the floor tinkering with the radio, attempting to get it working, but it remained silent. Raphael had been an engineer before he retired, as was his older brother, Yakov. I've wondered whether their knack for engineering was innate or had developed during the war, when they tried to survive in the cracks and crevices of Nazi-occupied Poland [Fig. 1].

FIG. 1: The Schwartz (Berger) family in Ludmir before the Holocaust: Esther and Yitzhak in rear, Raphael and Yakov in front. Courtesy of Dahlia Schwartz.

At one point, I had learned, Raphael, Yakov, and their parents dug a 9-by-15-foot crawl space just tall enough to sit in. Three more people joined them, 10 feet below a busy apartment building, lying in that dark space for over a year with a couple of sacks of potatoes and wheat. They kept digging, creating one space for waste and another space deep enough to reach brackish but potable water. To cook, they contrived an oven, funneling the smoke into the building's chimney and using a mirror to ensure that they lit a fire only when someone else in the building was already cooking. Above ground, the Germans parked a tank over the tiny, hidden entrance to the crawl space.

This experience instilled in my father not only a penchant for engineering, but also an unassailable faith that any problem could be solved with whatever materials might be on hand. When I was growing up, instead of dirt and a mirror, it was toothpaste and toothpicks that were always on hand. A hole in the drywall? Stuff it with pieces of broken toothpick, fill the gaps with toothpaste, and paint over it if necessary. "As *gut* as new," my father would say when the job was finished. Except, from certain angles, we could see slightly off-color splotches.

That day in the memory care facility, we watched him attempting to fix the radio, driven perhaps by an acquired instinct dictating that his survival depended on getting things to work. At first, he fiddled with the radio's dial, and at least his pursed lips and simmering frustration at the lack of sound were familiar. Then he turned his attention to the plug. The idea wasn't without merit, but we could see that the execution would be doomed to failure: He was trying to plug the device into itself.

So, leaving the radio to its fate on the end table, we helped him stand up and walked him over to the couch in front of the television screen. The television was blissfully silent, frozen on the setup menu and displaying terse information and options that hardly seemed adequate to fix what wasn't working.

When we first put my dad into memory care, he appeared to understand when I reminded him that I was his daughter, and he could hold a meandering conversation. By the time of that last visit, he barely spoke at all and didn't recognize anyone but my mom. He dozed a lot or sat expressionless, connecting to the world sporadically, in unpredictable ways. I tried to fathom understanding the idea of radios but not daughters. What shards of self remained buried in the convolutions of his gray matter?

As if in answer, my father started muttering to himself, his thick accent obscuring the words. I leaned in to hear. Like a mantra, he repeated two phrases: "Loss of signal. No connection." I wondered whether he was trying to convey his perception of what was happening to him, whether at some level he understood that the distance between functioning neurons had grown too vast to bridge. I looked around for an aide to ask. My eyes caught on the glowing white letters burning themselves into the television display. On the television screen beneath the start-up menu, an error message flashed: "Loss of signal. No connection."

Somewhere in my father's diseased brain, amid the ruins of memory and self, enough connections remained that he could still read. Before the dementia, he read a lot, mostly news and paperback biographies or historical accounts. Some people consume books. My father dismembered them. When he got a new book, he'd bend the covers back, breaking the book's spine. Then, he'd tear out about 50 pages at a time, placing a section in his pocket to pull out whenever he had a few minutes. Over time, the carcass would be stripped, and the few sections that made it home were missing random pages and in no particular order. The empty volume would collapse in on itself, eaten away from the inside. Once read, the remnants of the book were dispersed, deposited in the nearest trash bin or left by the couch, a diaspora of discrete moments lost to one another.

My memories of him are the same—discrete incidents scattered in time, a dot–to–dot with missing numbers. Sometimes I can make enough connections to create something recognizable, something with a beginning, middle, and end, with cause and effect, with meaning. Sometimes, not so much. Solving this puzzle feels immensely important to me. I am keenly aware that my father was among the last remaining survivors of the Holocaust, that "never forget" has a corollary: Always remember.

But remember what? The Holocaust existed in our house not as a tangible, intelligible presence, but more as an invisible, odorless gas, permeating everything, discoverable only by its effects on the people it surrounded, the people who survived by inhaling it with every breath.

I'm slightly face-blind. So I've become adept at piecing together people's identities by examining the traces that we leave in our wake as we live our lives. For me, identities have little to do with what people look like. Instead, individuals exist in my mind as conglomerations of conversations we've had, stories they've told, experiences we've shared. When I look at photographic portraits, my gaze slides past and around the faces, and I become fascinated with the shapes in the blurred backgrounds. The people stand out only because of their crisp outlines in a world of bland, hazy colors.

My father is like one of those portraits, a child who came of age in the negative space delineated by Germans and ghettos, liquidations and mass graves. I can make out some of what I see in the background surrounding him, defining him. Starvation and soldiers. A shallow hole beneath a German tank. Incomprehensible days as a slave for the Germans, picking through clothes left behind by

the naked bodies in mass graves, the naked bodies left behind by teachers, friends, relatives, shopkeepers from his village.

I'm lying, of course. No one could assemble a self from pieces like these. Still, the instinct to survive takes any jagged fragments it finds, packs them into the hole where a self should be, and smooths everything over with mud and fear. *Gut* as new.

Almost. Traces of the past could be found if one knew where to look. Instead of giving advice, my father made pronouncements in a booming voice, life lessons gleaned in childhood. Like Moses parting the Reed Sea, his aphorisms split the world in two—us and them, power and weakness, safety and danger. My identity grew into the negative spaces carved out by each generality.

"Might makes right." Ghandi became my hero.

"Don't stand out." I had a big, fat Jewish gay wedding, long before they were popular.

"Only family is important." I left home at 17.

"You kids have it good . . ."

I had to concede that point, as the unstated conclusion to the sentence was: ". . . compared with what I went through." But for added emphasis, my father would tell the Tale of the Stick, a glimpse into his childhood that has the timeless abstraction of a parable. Nothing anchors it to a specific point in time or space. Nothing foreshadows the destruction to come.

It begins as so many Jewish stories do: "We were poor. More poor than you can imagine." How poor? So poor that before the war, my father's favorite and most precious toy was a stick he had found. On occasion, he and his older brother, Yakov, would be sent to stay with relatives in another village. Before they set off, my father, little Rafi, would lean his stick against their house in a carefully chosen spot so that it would never be lost. On his return home, the first thing he would do was retrieve his stick from that spot.

And that's the Tale of the Stick. In retrospect, not so much a story as an isolated moment in time, a poverty of childhood experience, an unnumbered dot on a blank page connected to nothing.

While I was still a child, he told me one other story of his life in the war. During the snowstorm of 1974, one of my brothers was sick and needed antibiotics. We'd spent the morning digging through several feet of snow, carving out a narrow path connecting the porch to the mailbox. The roads were impassible. My father decided to walk through the empty streets to the pharmacy, and accompanying him promised more adventure than being stuck at home.

We said nothing as we walked. The thick snow smothered all sound except the crunch of our boots. Like a stone puncturing the glassy tranquility of a pond, my father's voice disrupted the silence. His words came from another time and place. His accent thickened as he spoke, so that the Hebrew words for "grandpa" and "grandma" blended seamlessly with his English.

"This is like during the war. I was with your saba and safta and Yakov. We were running from Germans, through the snow. I was so cold and tired that I fell on my knees and begged my parents to slit my wrists and leave me to die."

I was 10 years old that day. He was even younger in the story. I can't recall what my 10–year–old mind did with this bequest of a memory other than to store it away in hopes of a day when I might make sense of it. But certainly the image of my father as a boy, kneeling in the snow, waiting for his parents to slit his wrists, sends ripples into my present.

Examining my memories of his memories is like digging through ruins. Perhaps my role in this is more like that of my daughter, an archaeologist pondering the significance of fragments that remain after clearing away the detritus of successive civilizations. I look to secondary sources for context. From my Uncle Yakov's Shoah Project interview, I learn about the underground hiding spot. From books on the subject, I collect numbers, the sort one always collects about the Holocaust—the incomprehensibly large and unfathomably small. Of Ludmir's 20,000 Jews, only 70 lived through the war. The vast majority of the remainder were forced to lie down in mass graves and shot by German soldiers.

What can I do with the few bits of information that I have? I line them up in order, but even so, nothing resembling a narrative emerges. So much of what was is lost forever, impossible to retrieve. I know how much is missing because all I have is what remains.

That, too, is untrue. I have no idea how much is missing. I'm not some archaeologist from the movies, kneeling by a dusty tent, meticulously sifting through dirt, and painstakingly gluing together tiny shards of an amphora that blossoms from the fragments. When my investigations are finished, I'll have no ancient jar, safely ensconced in the well-lit case of a museum, displaying the jagged outlines of missing pieces.

Dementia is a disease of missing pieces, a disease both highly discriminating and ruthlessly indiscriminate. Autonomic functions like respiration and circulation can be preserved for years, while precious memories undergo accelerated erosion. If my father's life is like a series of data points, a dot-to-dot puzzle, then the disease progression of dementia is the inexorable process that renders certain dots invisible, impossible to access.

The problem of missing information here is not solely because of dementia. If indeed my father's life is like a dot-to-dot puzzle, then my father left out a lot of dots. One of his favorite aphorisms among those he dispensed in the booming voice of an army captain was: "The right hand shouldn't know what the left hand is doing." I, apparently, was the "right hand."

FIG. 2: Raphael, Esther, Yitzhak, and Yakov, ca. 1947, probably shortly after they arrived in Israel. Courtesy of Dahlia Schwartz.

My first job after college required an extensive background check, and among the questions addressed to my parents was: "Have you ever gone by another name or used an alias?" That's when I learned that my family name is Berger and not Schwartz. Schwartz is the last name of a family who left unused travel papers in Mandatory Palestine when they returned to Eastern Europe and were killed. Money flowed from New York to my safta's sisters in Palestine, who acquired the documents and somehow got them to my saba and safta. At the time, my father and his family had assumed the name Biernatzki and were living in Warsaw. My father and Yakov attended Catholic school, where no one knew they were Jewish. Berger, Biernatzki, Schwartz. Money, New York, Palestine, travel papers. More disconnected plot points scattered on the page [Fig. 2].

I have a vague sense that my father's family traveled on a Greek ship to Palestine, running the blockade put in place by the British to keep Jews out after the war. In my mind, I see the huge packet steamship Exodus from the 1960 film and a young Paul Newman in a vaguely British uniform. Interpolating from a limited set of data points is a process particularly prone to error, confounding factors, and confirmation bias. [Fig. 3]

FIG. 3: Raphael Schwartz in Israel after the war ca. 1952. Courtesy of Dahlia Schwartz.

What I do know is this: Rafi Schwartz eventually came to America by ship and studied mechanical engineering in Detroit. There, he met my mother on a blind date during which she concluded that he was arrogant and she didn't like him. Between that moment and the next data point I have, something must have changed, because they got married, decided to stay in this country, and raised three children.

Like most immigrants, my father never lost his accent. For her master's thesis, my mother attempted to connect the linguistic artifacts in my father's pronunciation of English with his geographic history, as if phonemes, like memories, persist in their effects on us. The accent in question is vaguely Eastern European, with vowel shifts typical of native Russian or Ukrainian speakers. A barely fricative "r" sound and limited palette of vowels are mementos from Israel, and the whole is filtered through a Midwesterner's indifference toward vowels.

He had every right to that accent. As he reminded me during my first visit to see him in memory care, he was fluent in five languages: Polish, German, Yiddish, Hebrew, and English. He used his fingers to enumerate the skills that constitute fluency, starting with his thumb, as Eastern Europeans do. "I can speak them." Thumb. "I can read them." Index finger. "I can write them." Middle finger. Then, extending his ring finger triumphantly: "And I can swear in them."

By then, whatever narrative of self he had constructed was disintegrating. Had I in fact been the team's archaeologist, I'd have reported that the strata of my father's life could not be distinguished from one another. *Star Trek* persists in my thoughts as an apt metaphor. In this week's episode, time and space collapse inward; weighty memories become unmoored, gravitating toward one another until they are no longer separate and distinct. Listening to him became an exercise akin to taking a multiple-choice test. He sat in a memory care facility in Florida and worried aloud about bombs falling on my mother. I thought: "Was that Poland or Israel?" He asked constantly whether his work was getting done. That was an easy one—his decades working at Ford and Chrysler. He complained of strangers in the night moving furniture and taking things. I linger over that one. Was it related to coming home after the first pogrom in Ludmir, not knowing whether his parents were alive, and discovering that his home had been ransacked? Or perhaps it had to do with cowering in a crawl space, struggling in the darkness to interpret noises from above? If this were a real test, I wouldn't answer that one until the end. On another afternoon, he insisted that we all needed rifles, because "if we don't shoot them first, they will shoot us." I considered Ludmir, Warsaw, Israel, and antisemitism in the United States. But "all of the above" was not an acceptable answer.

The collapse of his internal world mirrored the collapse of his concept of the outside world. Just before we put him into memory care, we all spent Thanksgiving in Miami. By that time, every conversation with my father revolved around one of three topics: his exercise routine, the long saga of his dental care, or with decreasing lucidity, politics. After dinner, I asked him for his thoughts about Trump and Putin, hoping to preempt the 10-minute speech that began: "First, I ride the bicycle." He said that his real concern was Russia. With complete conviction, he told me that after taking Ukraine, Vladmir Putin planned to cross Russia's border with Israel. This was worrisome to him because Germany and Canada also bordered Israel. Once Putin had control of Israel, Russia would push east into Canada and then into the US. I could understand why he was getting lost more frequently on his daily walk.

I imagined time flowing backward, a weirdly Pangean scenario in which the continents drift back together, fitting like puzzle pieces. Sometimes, by observing the present, we can peer into the past. Sometimes, though, the present itself is incomprehensible.

Here is a story that is almost like a parable. Almost.

Early in the pandemic, my father contracted COVID. The memory care facility sent him by ambulance to the hospital, which had no beds available and turned him away. There was no running this blockade, so he was taken to another hospital that did have open beds, but nevertheless returned him to the memory care facility because there was nothing they could do for him. The memory care facility, in turn, wanted to return him to the hospital. This is not so much a parable as the tragically failed quest narrative of a wandering Jew. In the end, he died without having seen any of his family for the first several months of the pandemic.

I am at a loss as to how to situate this knowledge. I'm back where I started, trying to fit together a collection of ruined memories into something that looks like closure. Perhaps I can shove them all into the hole left behind when the Holocaust shattered any possibility of a comprehensible narrative and fill in any gaps with words.

During that last visit with my father, sitting in the room with the books, the puzzles, the broken radio, and the television screen, my father started muttering again. I didn't realize it until later, but he was once again reading from the menu of options on the television screen. I leaned in close to hear what he was saying. "Home. Home. Home. Home." And then, after a slight pause: "Exit."

Israeli poet Breindel Lieba Kasher offers two poems that capture the aftermath for survivors. In the first, she tells us that "father and all the / Yiddish writers / never fit." They were, she writes, "brown wool refugees." In the second poem, we learn that her father cannot escape the past; he "drags / his bag of ashes / from one world / to the other."

Breindel Lieba Kasher

Lullaby

Father and all the
Yiddish writers
never fit
In America they were
darkness collectors
lonely foreigners
brown wool refugees

Atlantic gray
summer nights
strolling the boardwalk
the outsiders meet
like a secret
they keep together
Arm in arm
lipsticks and accents
humming lullabies
for the dead
children
Close your eyes

Between Worlds

Father drags
his bag of ashes
from one world
to the other
He sends me
to Yiddish school
I have no interest
I just want to
twist again
like the
American kids

With poet Nancy Lubarsky, we tour ruin bars, which are "bars in the old Jewish Quarter of Budapest, fashioned out of hollowed, bombed-out apartment buildings." Ask your students how they plan to keep Holocaust memory alive in their generation. Or might they soon be among "the twenty-somethings" who "wander in for cheap / beer and cocktails" and do not "see the shadows or ghosts"? Compare with Vered Tohar's "Krakow" (p. 61).

Nancy Lubarsky

Budapest: Szimpla Kert Ruin Bar, 2018

We arrive early. Soon this place will be
stifling, packed with hipsters. But for now
we have a table to lean on. I keep my eye on
the twenty-somethings. The tattoos, the t-shirts

with graphics and pithy sayings, the hair—part
shaved with sharp angles. They wander in for cheap
beers and cocktails, lean against the bars, built with
worn doors. The brick walls—shell of an old apartment

building—reach up several stories. A freestanding
staircase, fashioned from wrought iron fences, leads
toward a roofless second floor. Absorbed in each
other's banter, they don't see the shadows or ghosts

that seep through fissures and cracks. They don't hear
stories, voices—the full lives of previous tenants, who
lived too far south to hear boxcars whistle through
Prague, or learn if there was any truth to the rumors.

Hitler, in his last desperate days, had no time to
transport Jews to the camps. They were marched from
these walls, through these doors, past these fences, until
they were lined up along the Danube, tied together for
eternity with a simple rope. One gunshot and they
tumbled in. All that remains—worn shoes, in various
shapes and sizes, left on the shore. Now, cast in
time—an iron monument to senseless death.

"The Shoes on the Danube Bank" is a memorial erected in Budapest by sculptor Gyula Pauer to honor the Jews massacred during the Holocaust by the Fascist Hungarian Militia of the Arrow Cross Party in Budapest. Courtesy of Nancy Lubarsky.

In this poem, Charles Adès Fishman writes of visiting Munich in 1966 "to see Dachau's / mass graves." Six years later, on September 5, 1972, the Munich Olympics would be the scene of yet another massacre of unarmed, innocent Jews, this time 11 Israeli athletes, when eight armed members of the Palestinian group Black September broke into their sleeping quarters. Ask students to read Lou Ella Hickman's poem "how would i teach" (p. 31) and reflect on Nancy Lubarsky's "Budapest" (p. 54) as they consider how to commemorate the unconscionable slaughters to which these works allude.

Charles Adès Fishman

Munich

I, too, went to Munich It was 1966,
the year the Arno overflowed, a year before
the turning point of the Six-Day War
when Israel wouldn't lie down to die
but stood tall on the field of nations

Six years before Munich something
had changed: Israeli troops were victorious
Israeli planes invincible and Jews walked again
in Jerusalem and blessed its stones its light
that had become not just golden but free

I, too, celebrated and felt my Jewishness
wrap like a shawl around me It was six years
before Munich when my brothers would march
into the stadium of history and be carried out,
each with the colors of his country shielding him.

I, too, had traveled to Munich to see Dachau's
mass graves its red geraniums and cobbled streets,
its Hofbräuhaus and obscenely blue sky I, too,
had hoped for transformation

Vered Tohar and Adi Wolfson explain that "as two adult poets, third-generation grandchildren of survivors in the fourth and fifth decades of our lives, who have already become parents to the next generation, we wrote this essay to outline the place and role of the Holocaust in our work and in our lives. We explore why we choose to write poetry about the Holocaust, how we go about it, and how present the topic is in our lives." See two additional poems by these writers on p. 61.

Vered Tohar and Adi Wolfson

We, the Third: Personal Journeys of Third–Generation Poets

In his seminal poem "The Vow," composed in Mandate Palestine while European Jewry was being ravaged by the Holocaust, the poet Avraham Shlonsky (1943) bids us "to remember—and nothing forget." This behest in its later reiteration, "remember and never forget," is still instructive to this day of how the State of Israel and Israeli society shape the personal and national memory of the Holocaust. However, 78 years after the end of World War II, Israeli society is also still struggling with the questions: What should we remember, and how? What should we forget, and why? After all, remembrance and forgetting—both on the personal and the collective fronts—represent two opposing forces, both of which are essential to our continued existence.

THE ZERO POINT OF THE HOLOCAUST

The concept of "second–generation survivors," referring to the trauma transferred by Holocaust survivors to their children, began to be developed and gain prominence in the 1980s (Epstein, 1988). This transfer was principally, and paradoxically, characterized by the culture of silence created around the subject of the Holocaust. In response to their parents' silence, children of survivors, as they became adults, often turned to literature, poetry, music, film, and theater as a means to express their childhood experience, growing up in the shadow of parents dealing with post–traumatic stress. Today, the cultural discourse around the Holocaust includes not only the second but also the third generation, the grandchildren of survivors. In addition, Israeli contemporaries of these grandchildren, who have no direct biological connection to Holocaust survivors themselves but who have sociologically inherited the memory of the Holocaust through the education system, organized trips to Poland, and Holocaust–related content in Israeli media and politics, also directly participate in this discourse.

However, as point zero of the Holocaust retreats further and further into the past, the creative output of grandchildren of survivors begins to take on more varied shapes and facets, ranging from collective–national to personal–private memory, and from the documentary to the imaginative. As the memorialization of the Holocaust continues to move in this direction, we begin to ask ourselves more pointed questions, such as: How much space does the Holocaust take up in the lives and artistic works of the third generation? What does the Holocaust mean to them? How did the education system, expeditions to Poland, and cultural creation in Israel shape their Holocaust memory and even their adult identities?

Despite the fact that self–documentation and self–reflection are both common in postmodern writing—their goal being to overcome the basic assumptions of the self, to understand them, and to share them with one's environment—it is clear to us that such an attempt cannot withstand the test of generalization; this essay therefore constitutes only an open–ended invitation to a discussion of this phenomenon.

We wrote the poems included here after we visited the death camps in Poland, individually and on different occasions. These visits served as creative triggers for each of us, even though the Holocaust was already ever–present: at home, in conversations with our grandparents and parents, and in the world at large. Something in our encounters with Polish soil ignited the need for each of us to write, as well as the need to decipher that writing, to speak about it, to understand its origins, and to make it a point of discussion. Poets are rarely required to explain

themselves. Nevertheless, in this case, we would argue that the discourse about our work is just as important as the work itself.

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Vered Tohar
TREBLINKA

You waited for me with patience for so many years.
You knew I would eventually arrive;
you knew I couldn't keep myself away forever.
After all, you know me better than anyone else.
Even before I was born
you already lived in the porosities of memories
you were transplanted in my womb;
you infiltrated my ovaries.
You always knew:
when I finally returned to you
I would be relieved.
Mainly relieved.

• • • • •

Adi Wolfson
THE ZERO HOUR

First Second Third Generation
you were a triumph mother a scion and I
a memory: who am I?

The count continues Fourth Fifth
Sixth a free people in our land*
what will be our end?

What will be
with me?

*from *Hatikva*—Israel's national anthem

• • • • •

THE METAPHOR OF THE "EMPTY CHAIR"

The 70 cast–iron and bronze chairs scattered around the Plac Bohaterów Getta in Krakow, Poland, a memorial known as the "Square of Chairs," constitute a monument intended to emphasize what has been left behind by those who are no longer there. The memorial, situated on the very square where the Jews of Krakow's ghetto were rounded up to be shipped off to the camps, symbolizes not only the fact that the people who left this place are no longer among us and will never return, but also that what the victims left behind is nothing but hollow symbols, empty of meaning. The "empty chair" belongs to those who have vanished from sight, but whose memory is meant to remain etched upon the collective Polish (and some would say German) consciousness until the end of time.

A similar artistic statement was made by the creators of the "Shoes on the Danube Bank" memorial (*Cipok a Duna Parton*) in Budapest. This composition consists of a multitude of cast iron shoes in different sizes and styles, each one different from the rest, placed right on edge of the embankment on the Pest side of the city. They are likewise testaments to lives that were there one moment and gone the next, lives that were cut short in an instant in a horrendous act of hatred and cruelty. Just like the empty, abandoned chairs, the empty shoes represent those who went missing and are still missing from the city; their presence, however, is preserved in the collective Hungarian memory as an eternal and painful reminder thanks to its signifier—the memorial [See Nancy Lubarsky's photo, p. 54—Ed.].

These two minimalist memorials guide the onlooker to remember the Holocaust through the small and homely details of daily life—the chair and the shoe—but also, and more importantly, through emptiness and absence. The memorials affect viewers via their imagination, inviting them to fill in the gaps by way of deduction. They create the contour of a body no longer there, reminding one of matter that has gone from this world. Moreover, the material composition of these objects, cast out of metal, makes them cold, hard, alien even. This not only calls attention, by contrast, to the absent, warm human bodies, but also brings to mind a kind of anti–matter and anti–volume that take the place of matter and volume through the transformative process of annihilation.

Another example of anti–matter and the employment of empty space as a metaphor for the awareness of loss can be found in the "Empty Library" exhibit in Bebelplatz, Berlin. This exhibit is located in the square where the Great Jewish Book Burning took place on *Kristallnacht*, and memorializes the traumatic event in the form of an empty room situated underneath the square, where empty library shelves await the return of books that no longer exist. The display depicts the absence of matter, even though books are symbols of the human spirit, and it too creates a contour of the missing subject, which illustrates its existence by way of its absence.

The three monuments we have mentioned—the empty chairs, the abandoned shoes, and the empty library—are situated in the heart of bustling urban spaces, in city centers, places millions of people, both locals and tourists, pass through every day. These exhibits fit into the urban landscape so seamlessly that they risk a reaction of indifference or even disregard by passers–by. Their locations are very different from the concentration and death camps established in Poland, often remote areas intentionally removed

from population centers, which have played a central role in Holocaust tourism for decades.

Unlike the abovementioned memorials, which exert a metaphorical power on the viewer, the camps found on Polish soil provide the visitor with a tangible, "authentic" experience of the Nazi murder machine, in the form of barbed wire fences, barracks, bunk beds, gas chambers, and incinerators. Visiting these camps can be likened to going through a time tunnel into a frozen bubble containing a piece of the past: Everything looks as if it has just now come to a standstill. The visitor can see the complete process of annihilation, which appears to have been only interrupted, potentially to resume at any moment. The power of the former, on the other hand, is in their minimalism, in their ability to shed light, through small, marginal, even negligible details, on the biggest crime ever perpetrated in human history against an ethnic group. Even more important, however, is their ability to indicate the difference between remembering in the sense of going back to the past, and remembering in the sense of moving forward.

The chair, the shoe, and the library are all images that symbolize the great and unimaginable event that was the Holocaust. The chair represents the material; the shoe, the physiological body; and the library, the spiritual and cultural heritage lost in the great cataclysm. Collectively and individually, these memorials seek to shape a consciousness of absence. They are metaphors created by plastic artists to deal with the issue of memory, recall, and remembrance, but they also raise the issue of forgetting, which is an integral part of the mechanism of human memory.

Is it possible that something similar to the metaphorical model presented by the creators of the "empty" memorials can explain the processes we ourselves undergo? Because the shards of memory that have been handed down to us as the third generation are partial, obstructed, censored, or fictionalized, for all sorts of reasons, is it fair to say that what remains is a deep absence—an absence we are compelled to try and fill through poetry?

The absence, the gap, and the lack are, to our minds, the cornerstones of our work when it comes to the subject of the Holocaust in particular, but also more broadly. Furthermore, these lacks, gaps, and absences do not prevent us from writing. They are not a barrier; on the contrary, they drive us to look for ways to express the gaps and perhaps to fill them in.

WRITING POETRY AS A WAY OF TAKING RESPONSIBILITY

In reference to the concept of testimony, Shoshana Felman (2008) writes that

> to testify is thus not only to narrate but to commit oneself, and to commit the narrative, to others: to take *responsibility*—in speech—for history or for the truth of an occurrence, for something which, by definition, goes beyond the personal, in having general (nonpersonal) validity and consequences. (p. 157)

Taking up Felman's statement, the claim we would like to develop here is that even though the poetry we write is not testimony in the literal sense of the word, it does first and foremost seek to go back, to tell the human story, and to commit the essential truth of events to writing, thereby transferring them from the realm of the personal to that of the general or collective. Such poetry does indeed take responsibility for memory, but also strives to examine the role of memory and how it can serve as a basis for shaping better, kinder people, who are more aware of and more sensitive to others and society at large.

Writing about the Holocaust, for our generation, while constituting a locus for the commemoration of the personal–familial–individual, is also a statement about the presence of the Holocaust in our world today. In reaching our readership and participating in public discourse, we take on ourselves the role of activists for the memory of the Holocaust. This public role aims to make a broader social statement and looks to the future rather than just the present. Our poetry seeks to interpret and even fill in some of the voids and blanks still left gaping since the Holocaust and to serve, perhaps, as an "anti-matter" to the memorial trips (youth expeditions to Poland, the March of Life, "Witnesses in Uniform" trips organized by the IDF, etc.) in which Israelis return to touch the past and its atrocities and become witnesses again, even though the Holocaust ended some 79 years ago.

Our lives today are informed by two kinds of Holocaust memories. On the one hand, we have the private–familial memory, generated by contact with survivors within our own limited circles, namely our biological grandparents and family members of their generation, as well as our second-generation parents and relatives. On the other hand, there is the collective–social memory created by Holocaust discourse in Israeli society, in the media, and in politics. This collective memory is also shaped by exposure to historical research, to works of art (music, theater, cinema, literature) and institutional content (educational curricula, school trips, ceremonies, trips to Poland, army classes, roots projects, etc.). Collective memory may even prove more powerful and influential than private–familial memory in shaping our personal experience of the Holocaust, since most of our grandparents have long since passed away. As the third generation, we are parents to children who, at this very moment, are themselves becoming aware of their national history and internalizing collective memory. In parenthesis, let us note that our fourth-generation children, even more than us, are exposed to a Holocaust experience that is almost

exclusively second-hand, since the number of survivors still living among us is dwindling. In turn, their children, our grandchildren, the fifth generation, will naturally be even further removed from the source.

As members of the third generation, the biological grandchildren of survivors, we did not, of course, witness the historical event. We were also lucky enough not to experience the post–traumatic symptoms of the survivors with whom our second–generation parents grew up. At most, we are witnesses to our grandparents' private life stories, even if these are stories made up of fragments, fundamentally mangled tales. Thus, our third–generation journey through our grandparents' Holocaust memories is a journey across a multitude of fog screens. Their story was transmitted to us mostly orally, rather than in writing, and told to us over and over again at different ages, in different words, in different ways, by grandparents, parents, and other family members. In fact, it can really be considered only second– or even third–hand testimony. Those who told us their stories felt the need to speak, and found in us a willing audience, but at the same time, we can assume that they also wanted to protect us from the full horror of the truth. The Holocaust was both told to and withheld from us. That which was told we have kept with us, that which was not we have pieced together ourselves through other means. In this sense, our art is also a means of seeking completion.

As a result, we are left dealing with the paradox of trying to remember and preserve the past based on the memories of our predecessors. This situation is not entirely bleak since this is how both private and societal or national myths are established. In fact, some of the most traumatic events in the history of the Jewish People, which took place in ancient and medieval times, have shaped our collective memory in exactly the same way: for example, the destruction of the First and Second Temples, the expulsion of the Jews from the Iberian Peninsula, the 1648 Khmelnytsky massacre, and others. The mythical dimensions of all these memorialized events grow in proportion to their distance from the present.

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Vered Tohar
AUSCHWITZ

Perhaps the weight of the guilt
defeated the material sciences.
The earth is cracked here;
her belly bursts with human corpses.
Oh, mother nature
the troubles have slit your face
because you saw
but could not respond.
You are still here, years since then,
lying sprawled over the eternal planes
astounded to again meet
those who come seeking
something that no longer exists.

• • • • •

Adi Wolfson
RETURN TO AUSCHWITZ

In Auschwitz you delivered me anew.
At the navel of the *Appelplatz*
pain and happiness were severed as one.
In the impassive, freezing camp I found you different
as once again time pulsed through our veins.

On the way to Birkenau
in those first steps
when your hand gripped my hand
something was given back to us both
something not yet resolved
nor forevermore.

• • • • •

THIRD GENERATION POETRY AS INVITATION

Memory has two faces, one positive and one negative. On the one hand, it helps define identity and socio–cultural belonging. It even contributes to the constitution of identity and its preservation. In this sense, one can say that memory is personally and collectively constructive.

On the other hand, memory can also threaten the integrity of identity, destabilize it in irreversible ways, be painful, debilitating, devastating, and destructive. That is why forgetting, as a balance to the effects of memory, can be a positive and welcome phenomenon in some contexts. This dual system of memory and forgetting, which creates an equilibrium of forces, can be found represented already in Greek mythology, in the image of Lethe, the river of oblivion, and Mnemosyne, the river of memory, flowing side by side in the realm of Hades. However, beyond their existence as natural, physiological mechanisms, memory and forgetting—and indeed memorialization and obliteration of memory as well—are subject to personal and public forces.

Anne Whitehead (2009) argues for the importance of the "art of memory," alongside "the art of forgetting," specifically in the context of war and global catastrophes (pp. 153–157). Whitehead claims that the profusion of memorial museums and monuments in the public sphere, as well as the increased incidence of public, institutional

apologies, confessions, and admissions of guilt, are means of transferring the responsibility for memory into the public arena, thereby removing private individuals' responsibility to remember.

This raises the question: What is the role of the individual, as part of the collective, in remembering and memorializing history, and what is each individual's responsibility in the process of constructing the memory of the collective past? Whitehead maintains that the transfer of responsibility from the individual to the public creates links between forgetting and forgiveness.

Is it possible, following this line of reasoning, to claim that we, as third generation who writes about the Holocaust, refuse to forgive? That our insistence on preserving fragments of memory in our poetry expresses a resistance to the natural process of time? Have we taken on a personal responsibility not to let our familial and/or national past fade away? Or has our grandparents' post–traumatic stress been passed down to us as well? According to Yolanda Gampel's (2010) writings about the intergenerational transference of trauma, the latter is very much a possibility. However, we believe that our writing about the Holocaust turns, in large part, toward the future and not just the past.

The world we live in as the third generation is very different from that of the second generation. We go on heritage trips in the hopes of finding our roots, but due to the distance of time, we find almost no remnants that could verify the stories we heard told in our childhood. We accompany our children through the "indoctrination chain" of the Israeli educational system's Holocaust curriculum, but are able to stand back and observe the process with sober and critical eyes. We no longer shy away from buying German–made cars or appliances, considering relocating to Berlin, or flying over to Warsaw for a bit of pre–Christmas shopping at the mall. We followed "Eva's Stories" on Instagram, search for our family origins on JewishGen.org, and, as members of the global village, have routine, normalized relations with colleagues from all over Europe, including the ex-Soviet countries whose lands had once held death camps. Our generation has broken many taboos relative to our parents, and so the Holocaust is absent–present in our lives differently from the way it was present in our parents' lives.

Our poetry is therefore an invitation to a journey. It is not a journey of concrete, material displacement, but a voyage of mind: out of our own private experience into the great myth of the Holocaust, and from there, onward to the present and the future.

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END NOTES

[1] I thank Michael R. Burch for editing the poems.

[2] Translated by Aloma Halter and Michael R. Burch.

"Through poetry," Vered Tohar and Adi Wolfson tell us, "we first and foremost seek to understand ourselves, to describe the motives and processes informed by our Third–Generation experience, here and now. We look to understand how our generation, which was born in Israel, grapples with the Holocaust memories of our grandparents, and the ways in which belonging to the Third Generation has shaped our identity as human beings and as writers." Read the essay by these Israeli grandchildren of survivors (pp. 56–60) to contextualize the following two poetic works.

Vered Tohar

Krakow

Krakow is peaceful now:
An air-conditioned hotel,
a noiseless elevator,
background music.
Krakow is peaceful now.
The glass has been swept away,
the smell has vanished,
it's been a long time since then.
Tomorrow will be a lovely day; the bartender smiles at me.
You should go out, get to know the city.
But I already know the city,
I wanted to tell him.
My blood still sparkles here
between the pavement's gaps.

Adi Wolfson

A Sign

Grandma, I remained your
remembrance even though
I can't remember
the lines of your face
the coarseness of your hands
the rasp of your voice
I became your witness

Now forever
I'll endure the yellow star
on the shirt pocket
in the school bag
on the board of my heart

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Help us continue to publish this journal, which serves Holocaust educators and the lay public at a time when the call to remember is more critical than ever.

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