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Survival Anxieties, Traumatic Performance and Stages of Memory: Witnessing Loss in the Final Days of Holocaust Survivors

DISSERTATION

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in Drama

by

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DEDICATION

To

my parents.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Survival Anxieties, Traumatic Performance and Stages of Memory:
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Doctor of Philosophy in Drama

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Professor Anthony Kubiak, Chair

This project is about the multilayered landscape of Holocaust performance. It addresses the performance of memory, loss, memorial and theatrical representation as an inquiry into the nature of the Holocaust's traumatic legacy and its ongoing importance in defining Jewish community and identity in the twenty-first century. The project particularly focuses on how loss manifests itself in various performances of memory that seek to address the event's irrecoverable experiences. As such, it looks at performance in its many facets, covering the terrain of psychological performance regarding memory, trauma, mourning and witnessing, historical and contemporary theatrical performances, and the physical space of memorialization. The project's discussion of Holocaust loss follows the trajectory set out in its title as it moves from the "survival anxieties" surrounding Holocaust memory and its legacy, to "traumatic performance" in an analysis of historical Holocaust theater and contemporary Holocaust drama, and the "stages of memory" existing in both the physical arena of Holocaust memory and the temporal stages marking its passing. It also addresses the loss of the final generation of Holocaust survivors and

aims to begin a conversation around the inheritance of a legacy of loss, particularly as experienced by third generation descendants, or grandchildren, of the survivor era who witness this loss as they come of age.

The project's central analysis lies in the study of theater and performance during the Holocaust and contemporary dramatic texts that speak to the act of Holocaust performance and the difficulty of portraying an event so steeped in its traumatic aftermath. Therefore, the testimonies, plays and memorial sites discussed all rely on forms of layered performance and concealment to talk about the loss they represent. In itself, the project inherently conceals the experience it seeks to document, as proven by my performance of sifting through the materials I discuss, making its framework integral to its performance of analysis and how it contains the unnameable quality of the loss it examines. The project ultimately moves towards a conscious understanding of the implications of Holocaust loss on its descendant generations and the anxieties that accompany searches into its memories and experiences.

INTRODUCTION

This project is about the multilayered landscape of Holocaust performance. It addresses the performance of memory, loss, memorial and theatrical representation as an inquiry into the nature of the Holocaust's traumatic legacy and its ongoing importance in defining Jewish community and identity in the twenty-first century. It has been more than seventy years since the Holocaust came to an end, but the thematic popularity of the Holocaust still maintains a strength in its call for remembrance, and it is the continuing attempts to document the event that fuel this project. At its core lies the loss of the Holocaust experience as embodied by the last living Holocaust survivors, and the ways in which we perform Holocaust loss and remembrance. I refer here to loss as it pertains to the testimonies that will soon cease and the absence of this generation of survivors that have long served as a link to the experience. It denotes an impending absence of experience, which widens the already existing gap between present conceptions of the Holocaust and the Holocaust as a historical event. The project particularly focuses on how loss manifests itself in various performances of memory that seek to address the event's irrecoverable experiences. As such, it looks at performance in its many facets, covering the terrain of psychological performance regarding memory, trauma, mourning and witnessing, historical and contemporary theatrical performances, and the physical space of memorialization. While these areas of focus may seem fairly disparate, they all share a common link in their layered approach to Holocaust memory and loss, which lies at the base of Holocaust representation as it strives to arrive at the root of its trauma.

Over thirty years ago Holocaust survivor and scholar Primo Levi expressed a concern for the increasing difficulty survivors faced in relaying their experiences to younger generations: "For us [survivors] to speak with the young becomes ever more difficult. We see it as a duty and, at the same time, as a risk: the risk of appearing anachronistic, of not being listened to."[1] The Holocaust has featured prominently in academic studies, arts and entertainment for decades and, contrary to Levi's proposed risk, scholars and artists continue to turn to the Holocaust to tell its story and uncover new ones. As we witness the loss of the last survivors, Levi's concern is taken up by younger generations who see it as their duty to listen, record and remember. Research for this project began from a place of concern for this final loss of survivors and, as its title suggests, it addresses various areas of performance with an overall consideration for how we continue to witness Holocaust loss with the disappearance of survivors. It is a loss denoted by the transition into an era where survivors will no longer be able to share their experiences firsthand, which marks a definitive break with the event into an era of pure Holocaust representation. The transition is the ultimate manifestation of the post-Holocaust era, leaving behind the generation who spurred communities and nations worldwide to carry on its memory through memorializing its history and paying homage to its victims. This transition is a historical inevitability and can be witnessed across numerous communities descending from histories of ancestral trauma, yet, as the memory of the Holocaust has become so deeply rooted in contemporary constructions of Jewish identity and community, it raises the important questions of how the Holocaust will be received once its last living links to the event are gone. The passing of survivors, therefore, represents not just a loss of a generation, but the loss of *the* loss. Exactly what that loss is, though, remains elusive as it points to the trauma of the event and the altering of its legacy, but

never quite reaches the core of the anxiety that drives remembrance and the documentation of its history. I suggest this is what stands at the root of Holocaust performance, as it attempts to uncover this loss by digging deeper into its traumatic roots.

The project's discussion of Holocaust loss is grounded in three specific areas of inquiry, and follows the trajectory set out in its title. It moves from the "survival anxieties" surrounding Holocaust memory and its legacy, to "traumatic performance" in an analysis of historical Holocaust theater and contemporary Holocaust drama, and the "stages of memory" existing in both the physical arena of Holocaust memory and the temporal stages marking its passing. While these main areas of interest are discussed separately in each chapter, they are by no means bound to their individual subject matters. For example, the discussion of traumatic performance in the search for lost roots in Chapter One is just as prominent in the spectator performances that take place at the memorial sites discussed in Chapter Four, and Chapter Two's discussion of the concealment that occurred in concentration camp theatrical performances can also be seen in the cabaret themed Holocaust drama discussed in Chapter Three. Each of these areas of performance boast traumatic undertones in their attempts to reveal deeper aspects of the Holocaust experience that simultaneously point to the loss of that traumatic root, while the act of remembrance, trauma and loss is consistently evident in the wide spectrum of performance that infuses the search for loss and meaning in the layered fabric of Holocaust memory. In consideration of the role of memory in maintaining the Holocaust's legacy and its influence on contemporary Jewish identity, this project is also largely reflective of my own understanding of Jewish identity in relation to the Holocaust, which is why I narrow my focus to the study of Jewish victimization, though the broader themes or remembrance can still be applied to the six million non-Jewish

victims of the Nazi genocide. Growing up in the Los Angeles Jewish community, the Holocaust stood not only as a horrific event that befell European Jewry, but as a reminder of the importance of maintaining Jewish tradition and faith, as if to honor its victims and survivors in holding fast to the identity for which they were persecuted. It was less a cautionary tale and more a reinforcement of observance as an act of remembrance and preservation. Regardless of religious observance levels, the Holocaust often stands as a link to the Jewish community, strengthened by the memory of the event as its most recent and large scale persecution. For this reason, the loss of the last survivors sparks a renewed interest in how descendant generations of the Holocaust era will define themselves, and what effects this will have on generations born after their final passing.

I approach the task of witnessing this loss from the position of a Jewish third generation descendant of the Holocaust era, or a grandchild of the survivor era. As the last generation to grow up and come of age among survivors, the third generation is crucial in witnessing this loss in the transition into a post-survivor era. Following the survivors and their children, or second generation descendants, who laid a vast groundwork for Holocaust documentation and remembrance in the last seven decades, it is the third generation who will now be responsible for maintaining this information. They will inherit not only the loss as has already been established by the devastation of the event, but a legacy of loss as determined by the loss of survivors who represent the event's final testimonies. The relationship between survivors and third generation descendants is very little, if at all, documented. Therefore, this project further aims to begin a conversation about the third generation's connection to the Holocaust, and to express any existing traumas and anxieties over witnessing this final loss.

Very few works by or about the third generation exist, as it is a generation still unfolding in the final days of survivor loss. We might consider here, as a model, those stories of third generation descendants from other ancestral histories of trauma and, more specifically, genocide. For example, the 1915 Armenian genocide occurred shortly before the Holocaust and is temporally one of the closest historical genocides that recently experienced a transition into a post-survivor era. However, while generational comparisons might be made about the search for familial histories or coming to terms with identity in the aftermath of communal trauma, comparisons must be read in light of the circumstances of each historical event and the conditions surrounding its aftermath. In the case of the Armenian genocide, the scars of loss and trauma resonate not only with the loss from the event, but from the additional struggle for international recognition of the genocide as carried out by the Ottoman Empire. Similarities are evident for homosexuals persecuted during the Holocaust, for which recognition is still fairly new, as homosexuality remained a crime in Germany until 1969,[2] and the number of homosexuals persecuted still remains uncertain. To build a bridge towards understanding the trauma of third generation Holocaust descendants, we might then look at works by second generation descendants of the Holocaust, many of which address the second generation's difficulty in growing up amidst the silence of their survivor parents who would not or could not speak about their experiences.

In the novel *Everything Is Illuminated*, one of the most popular works by and chronicling a third generation Holocaust descendant, Jonathan Safran Foer writes himself into his story, where a young man named Jonathan Safran Foer sets out on a trip to Ukraine to uncover his family's history. Through a collection of stories reaching back to the fictional Jonathan's ancestry

that parallel his present day journey, and a narrative given by Jonathan's Ukrainian tour guide named Alex, Foer explores the possibility of creating narratives against the grain of not knowing and coming to terms with Holocaust loss.[3] As seen in many narratives of second generation descendants of Holocaust survivors, Jonathan's search is spurred by a desire to connect with his roots and uncover some of the mysteries of his ancestral past. In Liev Schreiber's film adaptation, Jonathan is portrayed as a fastidious keeper of memories, where he saves artifactual remnants of his life in clear plastic bags, which he later hangs on his wall in an inter-tangled web of memories.[4] He physically engages in the process of memory making, seeking to draw connections with his grandfather's persecution in the Holocaust and ultimately holding onto vestiges of his grandfather's trauma as passed down to his grandson. Foer's novel and subsequent film present an example of the intergenerational transference of trauma, as manifested in Jonathan's drive to explore his grandfather's past. As an example of a third generation work that explores the anxious attempts to unravel the past, *Everything Is Illuminated* shows the potential of third generation narratives to establish a post-Holocaust Jewish identity for those descendants coming to grips with its passing memory. Jonathan's adventure back to his grandfather's homeland resonates in the anxious attempts of descendants to gather information for the maintenance and survival of Holocaust memory, while also recognizing their position in witnessing the passing of the survivors.

Along with artistic or literary works, studies of the effects of Holocaust trauma on third generation descendants is fairly limited, though theoretical studies of transgenerational trauma, like those produced by psychoanalysts Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, are useful in considering how trauma manifests in younger generations and how it alters their relationships to

survivors and generations in between.[5] In this line of thought, works such as Foer's are important in presenting the final attempts at understanding the past of a fading generation, and illustrates the potential of written and artistic works to break through unarticulated traumas, as suggested by scholars like Gabriele Schwab in her work on transgenerational trauma.[6] As one of the few examples of third generation literary works, *Everything Is Illuminated* conveys the anxious search to uncover past experiences and provides a similar standpoint from which I engage with my own family history and its relationship to the Holocaust, and how I witness my performance of mourning and loss in the process.

While the first part of the project is dedicated to the study of transgenerational trauma as presented in a personal history and in an analysis of second generation works, its central analysis lies in the study of theater during the Holocaust and contemporary dramatic texts that speak to the act of Holocaust performance, and the embedded performances of trauma and the irrecoverable Holocaust experience. The theater of the Holocaust era, as captured in contemporary drama, encompasses the wider attempts of memorial sites, memoir or other creative means of remembrance to supplement the search for loss and the truth behind the Holocaust experience with more artifice. This study takes a particular interest in theater because of its physical representation and expression of loss and trauma, and the creation of memory through an immediate physical experience in place of the event that post-Holocaust generations are told to remember, but could not witness. The plays in this project, however, do not subscribe to the guidelines of theatrical melodramatic or sentimental pieces that attempt to create a realistic picture of the Holocaust. I set realistic interpretations aside in exchange for plays with more self-reflective approaches, so the works discussed in this project instead depend on satire, humor and

metatheater to convey the circumstances of the oppressive Nazi regime and the unimaginable circumstances of the concentration camps. They maintain a responsibility for the losses they examine as they draw distinct lines between the history they explore and the performative mode of Holocaust remembrance. With the exception of *Cabaret*, as discussed in the third chapter, these plays are not as popularly performed, arguably because of their often dark humor in conveying the camps and Nazi brutality. Yet, it is for this reason that I rely on them to describe the difficulty of representing the Holocaust because of its past and impending losses, and the ongoing traumatic injury of the Holocaust expressed in the conveyance of its past.

Holocaust drama occupies a small niche in academic study, though scholars such as Robert Skloot and Elinor Fuchs have cultivated a small base for Holocaust plays in their curated anthologies, and Skloot's detailed account of over 25 Holocaust plays in *The Darkness We Carry* has long served as a scholarly reference point for Holocaust drama,[7] though its publication almost thirty years ago leaves large gaps in the amount of works produced since then, and particularly those works written by younger generations witnessing the transition into a post-survivor era. Even more recently published collections like Irene Watts's two volume series of Holocaust drama yields plays primarily written in the later twentieth century, though a few works date as late as the early 2000s, giving a glimpse into works by younger generations.[8] These works by writers such as Jonathan Garfinkel reveal how younger generations are viewing the Holocaust decades later, paving the way for third and even fourth generation writers to voice their concerns over the changing terrain of the Holocaust legacy. In Garfinkel's case, this results in the cabaret style portrayal of Nazi criminal court trials, bringing to question the importance of memory in convicting Nazi perpetrators decades after the trials at Nuremberg and Adolph

Eichmann's execution.[9] Beyond drama, other areas of Holocaust performance produced by younger generations have also gained momentum in the past few years, from László Nemes's Academy Award winning film, *Son of Saul*, to artists Yael Bartana's film series, *The Polish Trilogy*, the latter of which I will discuss later in Chapter Four. As for the subject of Holocaust drama performed at the time of the Holocaust, Rebecca Rovit and Alvin Goldfarb's study on Holocaust theater, *Theatrical Performance during the Holocaust: Texts, Documents, Memoirs*, contributes a wide breadth of knowledge about artistic activity in Nazi occupied Europe, including pieces by survivors who participated in the ghetto and camp theaters. Additionally, Rovit's study on the Jewish Kulturbund Theatre provides insight into the highly regulated performances of the Jewish theater collective.[10] This project's study of theater in Theresienstadt in Chapter Two draws particular influence from Rovit's work, as well as Lisa Peschel's intensive study of the productions that occurred there and the artists who contributed their talents.[11] While Rovit and Peschel address these performances from a largely historical perspective, I am more interested in the relationship of these performances to their reflective nature of loss and suffering, particularly in the multilayered meaning of performing camp satire in the camps, and recreating these performances on the contemporary stage. Roy Kift's writing addresses this specifically in relationship to Theresienstadt performances, and particularly in his play, *Camp Comedy*, which examines the thin line between reality and illusion in the historical camp and in the camp's contemporary dramatic representation.[12] I will discuss this in greater length in Chapter Two, but as far as Holocaust theater is concerned, Kift's attention to the delicacy of camp representation reflects one of the single most major concerns of Holocaust scholars over the last several decades.

Looking at written works produced about the Holocaust, we might first consider how to communicate atrocity through writing, something which Maurice Blanchot addresses in *The Writing of the Disaster*, where he discusses the process of capturing the inexpressibility of disaster by accounting for the silences emerging from the experience, and the limits of speaking about an event that destroys meaning.[13] While highly applicable to the Holocaust survivors' task of giving testimony, it also nods toward the attempts of descendant generations to reconcile with the traumas emanating from the event, as they produce narratives in response to survivor testimonies. This is indicative of the ongoing traumatic reaches of the Holocaust legacy, as further supported by Holocaust writing and representation itself. Numerous Holocaust scholars have taken up the task of addressing the nature of writing about the Holocaust, including Berel Lang, Lawrence Langer, Terrence de Pres, George Steiner and Saul Friedländer. From the use of language in talking about the Holocaust (Steiner), to observations about the uniqueness of oral, as opposed to written, testimonies in their raw and unedited form (Langer),[14] this wave of Holocaust scholars writes about the Holocaust in consideration of the writer's role in producing work, as they attend to what Lang notes as a "moral as well as aesthetic justification"[15] for their work. To represent the Holocaust in writing therefore requires a responsibility for depicting its history, and ultimately wrestles with the difficulties of representability and the rationale behind writing about the Holocaust in the first place. These discussions laid out in the later part of the twentieth century pave the way for continuing attempts to capture the Holocaust experience, such as the presentation of the Holocaust in written histories (Friedländer), or how seemingly taboo forms of expression might reveal deeper insight into the traumatic history they seek to convey (Des Pres).[16]

In dramatic Holocaust writing, attention to facts and detail in creating a truthful depiction must yield to the risks implied in physically presenting what is often considered unimaginable and unrepresentable, as derived from the sentiments of such prominent Holocaust survivors and scholars as Elie Wiesel and Primo Levi. Often alluding in their work to the unknown element of pain and suffering for those who were not there to witness the camps and the Holocaust's terrors, they attend to the difficulty of translating the depth of the Holocaust experience to those who were not there. From this, along with literal interpretations of Adorno's famous words on the barbarism of writing poetry after Auschwitz,[17] the Holocaust takes on an air of being unfit for representation, which risks putting it on a moral high ground, as it naturally establishes limits of what is appropriate to depict, or what can never be depicted in the realm of historical versus personal experience. Yet, the act itself of exploring the grounds of Holocaust writing and other forms of representation break through notions of the Holocaust as unimaginable, translating it into terms that resonate with descendant generations that could foreseeably extend to the representations of other communal histories plagued by oppression, genocide and trauma. Dramatic performance is particularly effective in communicating Holocaust loss and trauma, while also acknowledging the difficulty of translating the loss of experience to the stage and the risks that involves, namely those of trivializing the event through inappropriate forms of representation or inadequate attention to the gravity and resulting trauma from the subject depicted. How to determine the limits of appropriate Holocaust representation is of course subject to how we choose to pay witness to the event and how we engage with memory, which is a key factor in the Holocaust's dramatic interpretation.

A collective of writers, notably Skloot, Claude Schumacher, Gene A. Plunka and Edward R. Isser address these risks in their studies of Holocaust drama, often noting the dilemma of portraying the concentration camp and the other-worldliness of the camp space. We can draw here from Giorgio Agamben's theories of camp life and the state of exception, where the camp operates under its own unique form of jurisdiction.[18] This position raises the stakes of Holocaust drama in physically portraying the dehumanization that took place within the camps and ghettos, particularly in light, once again, of survivor claims that the camps cannot be fully comprehended by the camp outsider. For this reason the stage is a prime example of the manifestation of loss in its presentation of the Holocaust through an absence of the event portrayed. It conceals the sentiments of non-representability under its layers of performance that propose to portray the traumatic event, but ultimately reveals the artifice it openly presents to the audience. We can further see this taking place in performance spaces beyond the stage, such as memorial sites and museums that propose to elicit Holocaust memory through simulated experiences and artifactual displays. They share the physical element of performance with the theatrical stage by suggesting a preservation of memory through a tailored view of the Holocaust.

In the final hour of gathering testimonies to account for survivor memories, the underlying issue that remains is the object of the search for the lost Holocaust experience. What do documenters hope to uncover about the Holocaust experience in recording survivor testimonies that has not already been said? What do artistic and theatrical productions wish to divulge to audiences watching a representation of an event? What do memorial sites seek to reveal about the event in staging memories for audiences who were never there? These questions all point to a loss concealed under the layers of presentation, whether that is reading between the

lines of testimonies for some greater truth about the Holocaust experience or searching the archives for information that will somehow relieve the burden of the Holocaust's traumatic legacy. The testimonies, plays and memorial sites discussed in this project all rely on forms of concealment to talk about the loss they represent, but not what that loss truly is. In my researching and writing of this project I, too, am subject to this conundrum, as the search for loss reveals itself in my own performance of sifting through the content I discuss. It is embedded in my analyses as emblematic of the greater search for Holocaust loss. The project is therefore reflective of my writing around the exact loss that I propose is concealed in the various performances addressed. It inherently conceals the experience it seeks to document, making its framework integral to its performance of analysis, and how it contains the unnameable quality of the loss it examines. The project moves towards a conscious understanding of the implications of Holocaust loss on its descendant generations and the anxieties that accompany searches into its memories and experiences. Below I give a brief summary of the following four chapters, which are built around the central theme of loss that is reflected in the irrecoverable memories and experiences of the performances they discuss.

Chapter One, "A Meditation on Holocaust Memory and Inherited Loss," looks at the loss of Holocaust survivors through the lens of transgenerational trauma, and assesses the challenges of Holocaust descendants as they inherit a legacy of loss. Structurally speaking, the chapter illustrates a search for the loss of Holocaust experience as it pertains to survivor memories that go unspoken, and reflects the search for loss that is embedded in the greater scope of this project. The chapter begins by considering the importance of Holocaust memory in the Jewish community as a testament to the influence that Holocaust trauma plays in contemporary

understandings of Jewish identity and victimhood. I expand on this through an autobiographical account of my experience as a third generation descendant of the Holocaust, and my search for lost memories and histories in my own family as a way of accessing traumatic ancestral roots.

The chapter also considers the state of perpetual Jewish mourning and how this affects the transference of trauma from one generation to the next. What is crucial here is the transference of testimony and the silences and gaps it encompasses, both in the telling and withholding of memory. The psychoanalytic theories of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok are key to this discussion of transgenerational trauma, which is examined through three different works based on the relationship between survivors and their second generation descendants. Anna Blay's multilayered memoir, *Sister, Sister*, and Art Spiegelman's graphic novel, *Maus* both capture the losses felt by second generation descendants and provide a framework through memoir based works from which to address the potential traumas of third generation descendants. I additionally include a fictional work, Michel Leclerc's film, *The Names of Love*, which addresses the relationship between a second generation descendant struggling with his identity and his survivor mother who has maintained a silence about her past. I draw from these examples to put forward the idea of the changing landscape of Holocaust memory, and the possibility of transferring the memory of individual loss to a collective, non-specific loss in characterizing the trauma and mourning that have persisted with the continued call for Holocaust remembrance.

Chapter Two, "Stages of Theresienstadt: The Stakes of Holocaust Representation in Contemporary Drama," discusses the theatrical stage as a space for articulating loss, posited through the model of the propaganda focused concentration camp, Theresienstadt. Theresienstadt

held a large number of Jewish artists who were imprisoned there to produce art and theater for exploitation by the Nazis, and whose creative works would serve to prove to the public the adequate conditions they were provided in their seclusion from the rest of Europe. The surrounding analysis addresses the complicated relationship between illusion and reality in the camp and in the embedded theatrical performances of Jewish artists within the camp's larger theatrical performance, which aimed to conceal its true nature. The chapter focuses on various modes of performance in relation to Theresienstadt, considering the difficulties of representing the Holocaust in contemporary drama and theater, as well as looking at historical performances from the camp and the staging of the camp itself as a major hub of propaganda production. I look closely at two examples from the camp, including the camp's 1944 staging for a Red Cross delegation who were sent to the camp to report on its conditions, and a propaganda documentary that was commissioned as a result of the Red Cross visit's success, as determined by the Nazi victory in receiving satisfactory reviews.

The camp's staging is inherently theatrical through its scenic embellishments and the scripted and rehearsed tour for the visitors, which is doubly captured in the two plays discussed to bridge the discussion of Holocaust representation and the stage. First I look at Roy Kift's *Camp Comedy*, which interrogates the levels of reality and illusions in Theresienstadt as Jewish prisoners apply themselves to the task of filming a propaganda documentary. The play uses metatheater to critique the presentational mode of Holocaust theater in a layered performance that draws connections between the performance of prisoners in the camp and the portrayal of those prisoners and their performances on the contemporary stage. The play's use of historical performance material from the camp adds to its embedded structure as it peels back layers of

representation. This analysis is followed by Juan Mayorga's play, *Way to Heaven*, which focuses on Theresienstadt's staging for the Red Cross. Like *Camp Comedy*, it looks at the mechanics of stage performance in the camp to convince the public of its merits, while also serving as a commentary on its own theatrical performance of the Holocaust.

Chapter Three, "Cabaret Performance in Holocaust Drama," revisits the theme of theatrical concealment in a discussion of four plays and one musical that use the device of cabaret style theater to frame various aspects of the Holocaust, including the rise of the Nazi party in Germany, life in the concentrations camps, and Nazi criminal trials. A brief history of Berlin cabaret in the early twentieth century grounds the iconic imagery of the cabaret on the contemporary stage, and examines the fall of Berlin cabaret with the onset of the Holocaust, and the murder of the many Jewish artists who participated in the art form. I start off the play analyses with Joe Masteroff, Fred Ebb and John Kander's hit musical *Cabaret*, followed by Kenneth Bernard's dark comedy *How We Danced While We Burned*. I next return to Roy Kift's *Camp Comedy* to address it cabaret themed elements, and then move onto Eugene Lion's *Sammy's Follies*, and Jonathan Garfinkel's *The Trials of John Demjanjuk*. This chapter aims to focus on some lesser known and lesser performed theatrical works to shed light on the canon of Holocaust drama. I am most concerned with the genre of cabaret portrayals because of their self-referential theatrical presentations, in which the cabaret frame of each of these plays embeds Holocaust narratives through a self-reflective structure that comments on the difficulties of Holocaust representation, and singles out the illusion of the narratives presented onstage.

Finally, Chapter Four, "Memorial Performance: The Site of Memory," concentrates on the performance of loss at memorial sites, and discusses how representations of loss through

artifacts and interactive exhibits cover up the loss that cannot actually be shown. The Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C., and Yad Vashem in Jerusalem all contribute to a discussion of how visitors navigate the terrain of the Holocaust at sites which employ the use of iconic imagery to create an 'authentic' Holocaust experience. The chapter approaches the museums through the lens of Omer Bartov's theory of industrial killing, suggesting that the same large scale mechanical apparatuses of industrial warfare that led to the possibility of mass genocide in the Holocaust are evident in the mechanical apparatuses that move bodies through the space of the museum.

The chapter also focuses on museum locations as a way to embed the historical event into a national narrative, but also considers the contested space of memorial grounds, particularly in the case of Yad Vashem which acts as an authoritative voice of the Holocaust, but exists at a distance from where the event actually occurred. I further explore this argument through a look at artist Yael Bartana's film series, *The Polish Trilogy*, as it focuses on themes of memory, memorialization, nationhood, national identity and the right of return in a bid to return 3,300,000 Jews to Poland. I end the chapter with an analysis of Anne Szumigalski's play, *Z: a meditation on oppression, desire & freedom*, which is set in the grounds of a functioning concentration camp and its later reincarnation as a memorial space. The play expands the chapter's discussion of memorial site locations to the contemporary stage and reinforces the performative space of memorial sites as portrayed through memory in relation to historical era, all within the context of physically performing the Holocaust on the contemporary stage.

CHAPTER I

A Meditation on Holocaust Memory and Inherited Loss

> "It's infuriating, really. Memory abandons us when we need it, assaults us when we avoid the past."
>
> —Jonathan Garfinkel, *Ambivalence*[19]

The Holocaust and a Legacy of Loss

The 27th day of the Hebrew month of Nisan marks Yom Hashoah, the day of Holocaust remembrance. The day of observance plays an important part in the web of Holocaust remembrance for the international Jewish community, recognizing a horrific period in Jewish history. The Holocaust historically ended when the Allies defeated the Nazis and the concentration camps were liberated, yet this was only the beginning of life after the Holocaust. Since then its traumatic effects have woven their way into Jewish identity and become a symbol of Jewish victimization and suffering. For this reason, the end of the Holocaust is not so easily defined and it might be said we are still feeling its haunting traumas that weigh on survivors and persist in their generational descendants as they attempt to piece together an ancestral history of loss and death. This chapter will address the difficulties that face Jewish descendants of the Holocaust as they guard its legacy and witness the final loss of the survivor generation.

Holocaust remembrance is often summed up with the phrase "never forget,"[20] which

serves as a reminder of a violent past that works towards rebuilding community in its aftermath. In her study of Holocaust remembrance in the United States in the decades immediately following the Holocaust, Hasia Diner chronicles the widespread activity among American Jews who integrated the loss and destruction of the Holocaust into their understanding of Jewish identity.[21] By incorporating memorial prayers into religious texts and services, creating memorials in synagogues, incorporating Holocaust lessons into Jewish youth education and creating national days of remembrance, Diner shows how the Holocaust became a permanent fixture of Judaism in the United States, based on the process of memorializing its losses. Survivors and their children, the second generation descendants, have been key in the memorialization process, and as a result these prayers, memorials and observances have laid the groundwork for younger generations learning about and carrying on the memory of the Holocaust. However, the Holocaust's legacy has reached a crucial point at which the time left for survivors is nearing its end.

Since the Holocaust, many survivors have documented their testimonies and the creation of organizations dedicated entirely to preserving Holocaust testimony have resulted in massive digital archives readily accessible to the public.[22] Though testimony is easily available, the possibility of recording new testimony and hearing testimony firsthand will soon cease. As younger generations become the guardians of the Holocaust's legacy, their relationship to this history will inevitably change. Particularly for third generation descendants, the grandchildren of survivors and the last generation to come of age among the last Holocaust survivors, approaches to remembrance and Jewish identity must shift tides to create space for a witnessing of the final loss and, furthermore, to address the traumas of the loss itself. Holocaust trauma resulting from

survivor experiences has long sustained the call for remembrance, but with the loss of these survivors, the meaning of Holocaust loss shifts to emphasize the disappearance of these individuals as primary links to the event. Holocaust survivor Władysław Bartoszewski[23] writes that to think about how the Holocaust was possible "is a most difficult task for Jews because they are still mourning—and will indeed always mourn—their millions of murdered relatives."[24] Are Jews to mourn the Holocaust indefinitely? Bartoszewski's statement is highly antithetical to Jewish practice, because, as Peter Novick notes, "Judaism has consistently disparaged excessive or overly prolonged mourning."[25] In Jewish practice mourning is even kept in check with religious observances that specify a confined period for grief, from the days immediately following the death of a loved one to the marking of the gravestone a year later. The *Kaddish*, a memorial prayer, is said on a routine basis for the first year following the loss, but after that is limited to a few select days a year. Judaism determines when and how long mourning as a formal religious observance may occur, but in contrast to this defined period, Holocaust remembrance has cultivated a never ending grief for a loss that, over time, has become more elusive. What are Jews mourning? Are we still mourning the victims, towns or traditions destroyed by the Nazis, or have we moved into a new period of mourning for the loss of the last living survivor? We are coming upon a new era in the aftermath of the Holocaust where recorded testimonies will be the only ones available, and the survivor as the last living link to the event will soon disappear.

Survivor traumas have endured over the decades and rippled through descending generations as second generation children faced the effects of their parents' Holocaust experiences, and now third and young fourth generation descendants are coming of age. The death of these final survivors severs the link between the primary witness and the event, altering

the relationship between the past and present. Therefore, it is necessary to consider how the loss of this generation not only sparks a mourning for the individual survivors, but for the loss of their untold testimonies, experiences and traumatic symptoms that inform the call for Holocaust remembrance and communal healing. These are the losses that haunt descendant generations. I do not mean to deny the effects of traumatic loss in other historical examples of genocide, but in consideration of the cultivation of Jewish identity in the face of Holocaust loss, I am concerned specifically with how the loss of the survivor generation will effect the community which bares the mark of its trauma. Transgenerational trauma, as I will later discuss in this chapter, is significant in the lasting effects of the Holocaust, and it is through the changing approaches to remembrance that these traumas will grow or dissipate for Jewish third generation descendants as they witness the passing of survivors and become the keepers of the Holocaust legacy.

A History, Part I

Questioning the nature of the relationship between survivors of a catastrophe and their generational descendants is not a new phenomenon, but determining that relationship is important in making observations about the loss of the survivor generation as representative of the greater loss of the catastrophic event. Particularly because the meaning behind that loss is never clearly articulated, assessing where one falls in the chain of Holocaust remembrance helps in reading remnants of the past event and in cultivating an understanding of Jewish identity in the context of loss. As a Jewish third generation descendant of the Holocaust, my understanding is built around a felt absence, and the search to give meaning to that loss. Novick asks: “about our centering of the Holocaust in how we understand ourselves and how we invite others to

understand us: 'Is it good for the Jews?'"[26] To respond, Holocaust remembrance has certainly stood as a rallying cry for the Jewish community in honoring those who perished by carrying on with tradition, but it has also embraced a permanent sense of victimhood that concentrates on the unarticulated loss. Growing up in a Los Angeles Jewish community, this was evident in my Holocaust education, which came at a young age. Perhaps younger than most, my attendance at a Hebrew school in a conservative synagogue meant the Holocaust would play an integral part of my understanding of Jewish history and identity. Though introduced slowly at first, by seventh grade all students had a general understanding of European Jewry under Nazism, which they could then apply to the intensive Holocaust learning unit designed for Bar and Bat Mitzvah age students. In secular school we learned about the Holocaust as a facet of World War II, but in Hebrew school, the Holocaust took center stage and all roads led to the oppression and genocide of the Jews. In the early years of Hebrew school, children's Holocaust literature, Anne Frank and days of remembrance were the main affiliations made with the Holocaust. That something bad had befallen our ancestors was ingrained in our young minds, and our duty to our Jewish community was emphasized through our ill fated history. Our ancestors had suffered, and we were in charge of carrying on Jewish tradition because they had suffered.

To be handed this information was like entrusting us with something sacred. We were conditioned for the graveness of the subject matter early on, but were made to wait to receive a more detailed education until age twelve or thirteen when we would symbolically step into the role of adults in the Jewish community.[27] My teacher's reminder of "they tried to kill us, we won, let's eat," grounded the rich array of Jewish holidays in an oppressive history, but the Holocaust always stood out as a defining event in the construction of Jewish identity. We memorized

timelines from our Holocaust studies textbooks and read survivor stories. Our secular school history books contained pictures of war heroes, but our Hebrew school textbooks were filled with pictures of top Nazi officials, alongside Jewish leaders, because we could not remember the past without remembering those who inflicted so much suffering. We learned about the Righteous Among the Nations, those gentiles who risked their lives to save Europe's Jews, and took exams to test our new knowledge. Suddenly the Holocaust which had been hovering in the background for our previous years of religious study hit us like a whirlwind as we made room for this intensive history lesson. I was oddly excited to begin my official Holocaust education, but if reaching the age of thirteen meant I was mature enough in the eyes of my Jewish community to learn about the Holocaust, what was I to do with it? How was I to carry out my responsibility of Holocaust remembrance, following instructions to never forget when I could not remember something I never experienced?

A Holocaust education meant being entrusted with important information that we were responsible for as the next generation of Jews descending from the survivor era. It also meant we were to learn the meaning of victimhood, which was accompanied by an immense amount of guilt for what our ancestors had endured. This was never said aloud, but was made clear through our curriculum and in our interactive lessons that broke up the monotony of our textbook learning. In one lesson in particular we stepped into the roles of Jews living in Nazi occupied Europe. Each week we made decisions, based on a scripted narrative and multiple choice options about how our "characters" would proceed. On the first day of the activity we learned about rising anti-Semitism affecting our characters in their European towns. I opted for my character, a young man, to remain in his home country, despite options to leave, and as a result my character

was one of the first to die. I thought long and hard about my decision to remain, trying to imagine what I might have done had I been in Europe then, and pretending I did not know what was about to befall the Jewish population. My knowledge made it difficult though, and I could not help feeling a little guilty as I led my character into a death trap. The lesson made a game of the Holocaust, and though it facilitated interactive learning, it instilled a displaced sense of victimhood through a deceptive Holocaust experience. It relied on fictional scenarios to give us our own sense of loss as we embodied Jews who faced Nazi persecution, and introduced us to feelings of guilt as we accepted responsibility for the fate we caused our characters. I was genuinely upset when my character died, even though I knew I had not actually taken anyone's life. At the time the activity was a welcome alternative to history lectures, but looking back I can see the seriousness of placing students in the role of Holocaust victims and the effect it had on my understanding of human suffering during the Holocaust.

In Holocaust education the question of how much to divulge to young ages is a prominent factor in determining curricula. Is it necessary to describe the intricacies of the killing system in the camps, or to show pictures of mass graves and mutilated bodies? How much is too much? Similar to teaching about slavery in the United States or Native American genocide, the grittier details are often glazed over to shield the young from the gruesome facts of death and human cruelty.[28] The danger of traumatizing young students with images and stories are therefore exchanged for watered down histories and activities to engage students, while keeping them at a distance from disturbing, yet important, material. My American Hebrew school education introduced me to the Holocaust at a young age, but this was never a part of my general, government mandated education. Years later when I began teaching Holocaust drama to

university students, very few, if any, had much experience with Holocaust education beyond its attachment to studies of World War II in high school history lessons. My experience with Holocaust education in Hebrew school was understandably more concentrated than secular institutions, but I wonder whether the role playing activity was any more effective in teaching its history than general textbook learning might have been. I also question the effects of its emotional content as a teaching tool, especially when it forced us to imagine the circumstances surrounding our fictional Nazi persecution and required us to make life decisions against the backdrop of a scripted handbook.[29]

In establishing a hands-on learning approach, the role playing game presented the Holocaust experience as a source of amusement, which trivialized its portrayed event. It conditioned us to play the victim, but also required the unnecessary embodiment of history, which ultimately led to feelings of responsibility and guilt for the Holocaust through our fictional victims. We learned to participate in history primarily with our emotions, which left little room for differentiating between our emotions as constructs of a manipulative game and as a manifestation of a victimization we could not touch with the textbook simulation. In a similar memory I recall a school wide presentation of children's Holocaust literature that was assigned to each grade. My class presented our book wearing the yellow Star of David on our clothing to represent the persecuted characters of our book. We wore the stars with pride and excitement, but like the role playing Holocaust game, we again marked ourselves as victims. The six pointed yellow piece of fabric is one of the most iconic images of Holocaust persecution, and we literally placed it on our bodies to identify with those victims represented in our book. We carefully wrote the word "*Jude*" in black marker on the yellow felt cutouts before attaching them to our shirts, so

that we could display the symbol of victimhood, once used to identify Jews in Europe, as a whimsical costume piece. While arguments might be made about claiming historical identity through donning the star, we were too young to recognize the significance of marking ourselves with this sign of oppression, or to understand the fear and degradation experienced by real victims forced to wear the star. We happily made the choice to pin the stars on ourselves, but ignored the weight the stars carried in their historically forced display and the meaning behind identifying the Jews they marked in a crumbling Europe.[30]

Holocaust education is an important tool in following the instruction to "never forget," but activities that require students to never forget through reenactment risks diminishing the severity of the event and reduces the urgency with which students address the task of making decisions in the face of oppression. While it is perhaps best to shield young students from various aspects of the Holocaust in early education, that benefit is subverted if educators teach the Holocaust through lessons and activities that build on emotions resulting from attempts at recreating the Holocaust experience. It downplays the high stakes political, social and oppressive structures that led to the Holocaust and places a premium on the emotional aspect of decision making, which focusses on victimhood and personal salvation instead of the contributing factors behind oppression and its resultant realities.[31] My Jewish identity was reinforced with a sense of victimhood, but my education never accounted for the potential backlash these portrayals of victimhood might have on its students. It created a reference point for the Holocaust experience, but did not differentiate between its fictional portrayal and the reality of death and suffering. Instead of bringing us closer to an understanding of the Holocaust through reenactment, it distanced us from the event and further obscured its memory.

I find it is no coincidence that I was given a more intensive education the year I stepped into Jewish adulthood, but even prior to the "official" seventh grade Holocaust unit, I had already begun developing a relationship with my ancestral history. From a young age I took a keen interest in the subject and young adult Holocaust literature filled my bookshelves. I devoured stories of daring escapes from Europe, camp imprisonment and children who went into hiding. Of all of these, I felt an attachment to the stories of Jews in hiding. I was drawn to how the small space of a closet or attic became a character's whole world, and with that fascination I fed a constant desire to act out the stories I read. In no way could I completely understand what it must have been like to live a life in hiding, but I began to make hiding spaces in my own home, scouting out the best locations where I could disappear for an hour or two. From blankets to books and flashlights, I secured my secrets spots in closets behind clothing or in the storage closet beneath the staircase. I thought of Anne Frank and her diary as I sat in darkness and breathed in the musty smell of the carpet, perched upon a folded blanket and tapping my pink plastic flashlight when it flickered. I moved about in silence and made sure to enter and exit when nobody was looking. I also kept a diary where I scribbled out notes and tried to imagine what it would mean to have my life turned upside down by the Nazis. Children commonly create forts and secret hideouts, but my hideouts were imbued with a deep sense of fear and longing associated with the Holocaust victims I tried to emulate, and when I entered them a tenseness ran through my body, so much that I could feel my chest tighten and my breath quicken. Alone in those dark spaces I felt connected to the stories of the past, knowing that the characters were no different from myself in their Jewish identity, and though my disappearances into hiding were filled with a sense of excitement, they were ultimately rooted in my fascination with the danger

and fear Jews faced in Nazi Europe. Despite the similarities I saw between these Jews and myself, I knew that my life in Los Angeles, where I could freely attend religious lessons and synagogue, did not reflect the hardship that I had come to understand as something that defined the Jewish people. My acts of hiding were entertainment, as were the Jewish characters in my books. I looked up to them and took pleasure in plotting out my own scenarios of hiding and escape.

If these characters were my role models, Anne Frank was my ultimate hero. I aspired to be brave and creative like her, but I knew my reality was vastly different and the risk of being found in my hideouts was not a matter of life and death. Much like the inconsequential outcome of the Hebrew school role playing game of the characters we portrayed, my endangerment was only subject to my imagination. I felt physically safe in my hideouts, yet fear still followed me in and it was not uncommon that Nazis appeared in my dreams. I remember waking up from nightmares of running from Nazi guard dogs and dodging bullets. One vivid dream of being shot in the ankles by Nazis in my own backyard has always stayed with me. Hidden deep in the closet I did not risk being discovered by the Gestapo, but as safe as my hiding spaces may have seemed, they could not keep out the infiltrating fears that I associated with a past I never lived through, but was deeply affected by. The imaginary world that I constructed in close quarters was a realization of how that past shaped my identity and revealed the imaginary to be more real than I had thought. The past was not something I could remember, but it was also something I could not hide from.

As quoted in this chapter's opening, author Jonathan Garfinkel writes: "It's infuriating, really. Memory abandons us when we need it, assaults us when we avoid the past."[32] Garfinkel

observes the difficulty in trying to recall long lost desired memories, while those that we might rather forget make it impossible to be ignored. They creep up and demand to be remembered and embraced as if to prove the past will always catch up with us. The memories that we deem less desirable are sometimes the most important when it comes to establishing one's own personal identity, and these are the ones that keep us returning to a past we might rather forget. I adapt this to my own relationship with Holocaust memory as a child, though my difficulty surfaced in trying to remember a memory I never had. I desired to know facets of my family's past, and when I ignored them, the feelings of fear, pain, guilt and fascination only grew stronger. They held me accountable for what I could not remember, but felt responsible for recovering and protecting. I did not take the direction to "never forget" lightly, and this only led to more confusion when trying to hold onto an ancestral past that continues to disappear with the last of its surviving generation. I began making my own memories through seeking a connection to the past.

I created space to facilitate my obsession with the Holocaust, and in doing so opened up a space inside myself by trying to emulate an experience I could never know. It resulted in a deep feeling of loss for what I could not recreate and a longing to understand it. It accompanied the fears that were evident in my hideouts and dreams, and resulted in an anxious drive to learn more about the Holocaust. My collection of young adult Holocaust literature was no longer enough. My books gave me visuals of the history my community repeatedly told me to never forget, but the overwhelming responsibility of this demand left me with the feeling that forgetting was impossible. My reality was tied to an experience I never knew, yet I felt so strongly connected to it. This history had somehow become a part of me and I could not separate myself from the

weight of its impact anymore than I could escape the anxious drive of needing to know more of a time in history that I could never fully grasp, for I knew this was impossible for one who was not there.

My escapes into hiding may have been fanciful, but they confronted me with the fears of the past living inside me. I was unknowingly carrying on a legacy of the Holocaust by trying to infuse my body with memories I did not possess, through acting out what I had only read and seen in books, images and films. Histories, survivor testimonies and fictional narratives informed my own embodiment of victimhood and the complicated relationship with a history that I could not entirely comprehend. My hideouts were a place where I could physically indulge my curiosities about my persecuted ancestors and where I could insert myself into their lost narrative. At that time, hiding in the closet was just a game, but the implications of the game resonated with the Holocaust game of victimhood I would later play in Hebrew school. It confronted me with the loss of an event far beyond my understanding, and the guilt of not being able to account for the nature of that loss, because I was not there. That loss remained a constant presence for me as my interest and fascination with the Holocaust continued, and though I ceased hiding in closets when I got older, it was not long before I returned to a more intensive study of the Holocaust in college. My research at the time was narrowly restricted to arts and theater of the Holocaust, but I was particularly drawn to the clandestine artistic activity that occurred in the concentration camps (I will address this in the next chapter). Once again I was taken in by stories of hiding and found myself returning to the feelings of loss and fear I explored in my childhood hideouts. Old questions about my ancestral history resurfaced and I began the process of digging up the old anxieties I hid there long ago.

Over the years I continually found my way back to the subject of the Holocaust, always wrestling with the loss of a family history and the anxious desire to know more. I felt a deep sense of grief, especially when I thought of the dwindling survivor population, but what caused this grief and what was I missing? Was I mourning my family or their traditions? The loss of the old Jewish shtetl or a Yiddish speaking community? Was I grieving over an interrupted genealogy or a displaced community? Jewish life in Europe before and during the Holocaust were so distant from what I knew as a Jewish American girl, so why were these things so significant to me and my understanding of Jewish identity? My inability to recognize or articulate this loss manifested in a heightened anxiety over a history I was told to remember, but physically could not. The films, memoirs and histories I devoured could not ease my inability to understand what stood at the core of Holocaust memory and only reinvigorated my drive to know more. My family history became a priority as I sifted through the feelings of fear and loss that that arose with Holocaust study and the task of carrying on the Holocaust legacy.

A History, Part II

When I tell people I study the Holocaust, one of the most common questions asked, just after the question of whether I am Jewish or not, is whether anyone in my family was in the Holocaust. To be "in" the Holocaust casts a wide net. Was one of my grandparents in a concentration camp? A ghetto? Did a great grandparent take the family into hiding? Did they make a daring escape like the movies often portray? These questions are meant to show interest, thought they also suggest a challenge as to what qualifies me to write about the Holocaust and its traumatic effects. The conversation is usually studded with a few silent pauses and a stated

recognition that my work "must be depressing." While this last assertion has its truths, what interests me most is the terrain I move through each time as I explain my history and navigate the speechlessness of my inquirer. From an early age I accepted that the Holocaust was something only talked about in lowered voices. I heard little about how a great uncle received his tattoo from Auschwitz or how my grandfather escaped with his family from Poland. It was not until much later that I started asking questions, feeling the need to break the silence about my family history and recognize the loss the Holocaust brought up for me. None of my grandparents were imprisoned in concentration camps. I did not grow up with family stories of camps or hideouts, but I could not deny the sharp sense of loss I felt every time the subject of the Holocaust came up. This was an experience I could not put into words and I struggled to understand the meaning behind my feelings of loss. All I knew was an anxiety that arose when confronting an event so steeped in silence, just like the silences that filled those conversations about my research and ancestral history.

This is what I know. The silence I knew growing up came from my paternal grandfather who escaped Poland with his family in the early 1930s. I never knew the man who died when my own father was young. I took an active interest in my grandparents' lives, but my absent grandfather's history held the biggest mystery for me. We did not speak of my father's father much. I knew a name, a place of origin, but beyond the *yahrzeit* (memorial) candle my family lit for him a few times a year, he was a ghost of a heritage, a looming presence in my understanding of my family history. From the little I heard about him growing up I came to understand him as the man responsible for my last name, unlike the non-Jewish surname of the grandfather I knew, the man my grandmother took as her second husband. Rotstein, meaning "red stone," always

makes me think of antique red bricks. Perhaps I descend from a long line of bricklayers or stoneworkers, but while these occupations suggest building a foundation, I am unable to piece together a more coherent foundation for my family, except for a brief explanation that they must have fallen victim to the Nazi genocide. A more gruesome vision of red blood dripping from stone walls occupies my thoughts, but the details of how my family died, whether by gunshots, the gas chambers or other vile acts of torture remain unknown to me. When I was younger my last name embarrassed me, as it was easily identifiable as Jewish and was rarely pronounced "correctly," considering my family had long ago adapted an Americanized pronunciation from the German. Furthermore, we were not German and the inability to account for my Polish roots in my name made me feel displaced. I wanted a less conspicuously Jewish sounding name, but in trying to understand my history, I came to see it as a solid connection to a man I never knew.

I understood that my father's father was my blood relative, but never associated him as my grandfather. Grandfather Sol, Grandpa Sol, *Zaide* Sol was never a reality. His absence from my life created a breach in my understanding of him and my own family history, tainted by murderous erasure. I knew that Sol's family left Poland because the Holocaust was simmering in Europe, waiting to erupt in ghettos, concentration camps and mass murder, but I never fully understood what was left behind when he escaped. The family had to sever its roots and start anew. That is where my family comes in. That is as far back as anyone can remember.

The story of my paternal grandfather's escape from Poland is murky. With the sole exception of his immediate family and an aunt's escape from Poland before the Germans invaded, the rest of the Rotstein family was wiped out, imprisoned, transported, murdered, massacred. But I am not really sure of the details. Perhaps some escaped, but family lines were

broken the day my grandfather left his place of birth and some fate determined that he should live and the rest meet a violent end. Despite efforts to put pieces of the family together, all lines of relations have since been lost. Not a name, not a face. It is rumored that the family went into the hundreds. One family has four or five children, they marry and have more children, and soon the numbers reach exponential levels so high that one household cannot possibly hold one family dinner. My great-grandfather left Poland for Cuba in the early thirties.[33] Conscious of dark powers brewing in Europe, he went ahead and sent for his family to follow. So his wife, my great-grandmother, set out to meet her husband with their three young boys in tow. In the version of the story that I know, the children were to be charged an adult fare for the ship that would take them out of Europe, but as the expense was too great for the family, the children were made to pass as younger than their ages. This explains the confusion over my grandfather's true date of birth, something which followed him to the marking on his gravestone, for his family feared someone might catch on and send them back.[34] Despite all the time that passed after his family emigrated from Poland, the marking of an oppressive past remained.

My grandfather's family was not sent to a concentration camp. They did not go into hiding in Europe. They safely made it to California after a long journey. Yet, this journey of escape through long sea voyages, hard times in Cuba and the loss of a family back in Poland emphasizes the great lengths they went to in order to survive. Their story of escape does not resonate in camp brutalities, but in the detachment from one life in exchange for another, with the only chance of survival in new lands, in new languages and the understanding that returning to a familiar life in Poland was no longer possible. Growing up without Sol heightened my awareness of my lost family heritage. His absence became a stand-in not only for a missing link

in my immediate family, but in the greater network of the Rotstein family, and the stories of loss that cannot be told and that I will never hear. My family history before the war is a collection of the nameless and faceless.

Unable to hear about or know the specifics of the past led me to frantic searches for answers. Attempts at family trees, question and answer sessions with family members and photograph and archive searches became my way of trying to connect with the past. Genealogy websites with their promise of a wide web of connections proved a constant disappointment, as did the limited memories family members possessed of their lineage. I was driven to mourn the loss, but found I was mourning the loss of information, as I was greatly detached from the actual loss. My grandmother's death led me to extreme searches for new facts when we unearthed boxes of family photographs, though they yielded no new information. While I was aware of the fate of my family, the inaccessibility of their stories sparked a feeling of displacement, one grounded in an erasure of family history and an unmet desire for information. Instead of gathering testimony I am forced to construct a history out of the few known facts and to rely on imagination for the rest. Experiences of other Holocaust victims supplement the absence of knowledge for my family's experiences, and their history of persecution becomes pure guess work, even employing imaginative scenarios in creating narratives. This process depends on an idea of collective memory, in the sense that my understanding of my family rests in speculation based on the experiences of others, borrowing testimonies of other survivors to construct a picture of the past. It expands the means of a collective understanding of the Holocaust, and relies on what was said to fill in the silences for those who could not speak. A collective memory,

or perhaps more specifically, a communal memory, it uses individual testimonial experiences of the Holocaust to piece together persecution and death on a collective scale.

In survivor testimony there is a common assertion that the outsider to the camps can never truly understand what occurred there under Nazi power.[35] This is true for any past event, but phrases like "you can't imagine," "it's not possible to understand," or "I can't even explain" reinforce the distance between the survivor and the outsider to the Holocaust. It accounts for the heightened circumstances of brutality and dehumanization that victims faced, while also creating a barrier between the survivor and post-survivor generations in detecting the nature of loss. Survivors addressing these traumas often run into difficulties articulating their experiences, leading to the often noted silences and gaps that accompany their testimonies. Communal memory can act to fill in the space of silence, but this does not erase the traumatic implications of what is left unsaid, particularly as it is witnessed by post-survivor generations who take on the weight of the mourned loss.

If Bartoszewski's previously discussed comment on the continuous state of Jewish mourning is taken literally, then mourning passes from generation to generation in a continuation of trauma through the experience of witnessing—both survivor testimony and the silences that exist for those who cannot articulate their experiences. I will discuss the concept of transgenerational trauma in greater depth later in this chapter, but for now, looking at how descendant generations engage with this legacy of trauma might foretell how a process of collective mourning will build on the weight of memories, while also strengthening Jewish identity and instilling compassion in future generations. Mourning as a conscious recognition of loss in the Freudian sense demands a defined period, determining that "when the work of

mourning is completed the ego becomes free and uninhibited again."[36] A continuous mourning does not allow the ego this freedom. The loss acts as a mark of a mourning community, just as Bartoszewski says Jews will always mourn Holocaust victims. It is inscribed on the inner psyche of the community, ingrained in a traumatic history.

In order to feed my anxious desire to engage with the past and try to make peace with its irrecoverable losses, I sift through history. I feel compelled to gather information as I did when I was a child, reading memoirs and histories, visiting archives and memorials and talking to survivors. I find comfort in the search, though it is not necessarily the results, but the process that brings satisfaction. My relationship with the Holocaust as a third generation descendant is a difficult one, fraught with the desire to know what cannot be known and to recover a loss that cannot be recovered. To better understand this relationship I look to previous generations affected by Holocaust trauma. Tracing the transgenerational progression does not fix this relationship, but shows me how I fit into the chain of Holocaust trauma and how I can use it to understand my role in carrying on the memory of the Holocaust, especially as I witness the final passing of survivors. It gives me a greater sense of purpose in my attempts to piece together a lost history, and creates connections with other descendants of historical injustices who seek to uncover and find peace with their own shattered histories.

The overlying sentiment of the Jewish community in the aftermath of the Holocaust still reverts to what was lost, but for descendant generations, the loss has been misplaced in the lack of words to recreate the experience. It is irrecoverable because there was nothing to be recovered in the first place. Characterizing a never ending mourning therefore opens the mourning period to a multigenerational involvement and the inability to move past the initial event, confined to

survivor testimony. The anxious anticipation of the loss of survivors presents later generations with a conscious loss, but this pain may be better linked to anxious attempts at remembering, recording and memorializing what was initially lost. An anxiety derived from the need to recognize loss creates links with the traumatic circumstances which enact this conscious mourning, enabling its transference from one generation to the next. The current loss of survivors heightens attempts to gather testimonies before their passing, reinforcing the mourning process as survivors pass down an ever evolving trauma to descendant generations.

Testimony and the Second Generation

My search to find the root of my own Holocaust related anxieties has resulted in recognizing the tangled web of Holocaust trauma that extends far beyond the initial loss of survivors. The transgenerational chain of trauma demonstrates how the aftermath of the Holocaust continues to influence its memory and inform younger generations on how to mourn and embody acts of memory. This is a difficult task because the transference of trauma is unpredictable, and initial survivor traumas manifest in different ways. While some survivors found ease in talking about their experiences immediately after the Holocaust, many found the act of articulation extremely difficult, and in some cases, impossible. Gabriele Schwab writes: "Trauma attacks and sometimes kills language,"[37] and this is widely apparent among Holocaust survivors who went years without speaking about their experiences, or never spoke about them at all. This is not to say all survivors suffered this same fate. The large body of testimonies recorded directly following the Holocaust prove the contrary, but in considering the relationship of descendant generations to the Holocaust, the role of silence in the lack or postponement of

survivor testimony helps to define the difficulty of not knowing an ancestral experience that has come to weigh so heavily in Jewish culture and identity.

I recognize silence as an impediment to the already difficult task of conveying a Holocaust experience, which entails many gaps of its own in communicating the experience of persecution to one who was not there. In *Haunting Legacies: Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma*, Schwab examines transgenerational trauma primarily through written texts, suggesting that writing is a way to break through the silences that trauma imposes. In thinking about my relationship to the Holocaust as a third generation descendant, I cannot ignore the large body of work documenting the relationship of second generation descendants to their survivor parents. I see the contributions of the second generation as a stepping stone from which to address and examine the third generation's relationship to survivors and their pending loss, which helps to inform my understanding of the third generation's role in the legacy of Holocaust memory. For example, Art Spiegelman's widely popular graphic novel, *Maus*, which I will later discuss in greater detail, explores the effects of trauma on both Art, a second generation descendant, and his survivor parents. While Art records his father's Holocaust experience over multiple sessions, his mother's experiences were condemned to silence and made completely inaccessible with her suicide. Art's expression of anxiety and frustration over piecing together his father's narrative results in the drive to dig deeper into his parents' pasts. The threads of trauma are evident in his compulsion to detail his father's history, and in his frustration over the silences surrounding his mother's past. This manifests in his work as he tries to convey his own relationship with his parents and an event that he was not there to witness.

In works such as *Maus*, I can trace similarities between Art as a second generation descendant and myself in our anxieties concerning lost family narratives and the compulsory search for information about our families during the Holocaust. Art's proximity to the trauma victim, however, is only removed by one generation, while my position as a third generation descendant removes me from survivors by an entire generation gap. I am in no way suggesting that all descendants of Holocaust survivors suffer trauma, just as I am not claiming all survivors suffer difficulties in speaking about their experiences, but I am concerned with survivor silences and their effects on descendant generations. In a memoir titled *Sister,Sister*, a second generation descendant, Anna Blay, compiles the Holocaust narratives of her mother, Helena, and aunt, Janka.[38] The memoir unfolds memories of the two sisters, but in addition, Anna inserts her own narrative of growing up amidst her mother's silence surrounding the Holocaust and the traumatic ghosts she encountered as a child. Anna's memories cut in to create a conversation with her mother and aunt's survivor narratives, revealing the links between her mother's trauma and her own perceptions of her mother's silence growing up. The memoir is also a celebration of expression, in a testament to Helena's ability to give language to her experience after so many years of silence. In a recorded video testimony given for the USC Shoah Foundation, Helena expresses the difficulty with which she speaks, alluding to the years she could not bring herself to address her past. Though her daughter recorded her story in the memoir, the video captures the continued difficulties that pervade Helena's speech.

In her testimony Helena smiles at the camera.[39] She laughs as she recounts stories of growing up in Poland, her face glows as she remembers her parents, her siblings, her childhood. Her voice is cheery until her expression grows somber and her story comes to a halt. "I don't tell

this to anybody," she says after requesting the interviewer not ask her any more questions, "I don't know why I'm telling you. I should't, maybe." She continues with her story, a memory of being beaten by a female guard in the ghetto, until once again she must pause: "My English now is very bad, because I am upset."[40] In her search for words Helena enacts her loss, not only of family, property and freedom, but of the ability to translate her painful memories into words. She can recall experiences, but the traumas of her past complicate their translation into speech. Though filled with pauses and hesitancies, her testimony speaks beyond the words she does not say and reveals a rich fabric of memory.

In the years immediately following the Holocaust Helena admittedly did not speak about her experiences. She could not. The resulting traumas of the event held her in a captive silence, until later in life she could piece together her past through spoken narrative. Silence heightens the task of interpreting testimony, such as in Helena's earlier days when she could not speak at all, or in the pauses and difficulties associated with speech, found in her later spoken testimony. The presence of silence suggests an awareness of a testimonial space that is left unfilled, a known absence that remains unidentifiable. These absences provide insight into how they frame narratives, while opening up the frame of reference for traumatic narratives in the interpretive process, particularly in how traumatic experiences hinder the ability to translate an experience into words. It accounts for the difficulties in giving testimony, but does not deny the witness the ability to do so. Rather, it addresses the difficulties of creating narratives to explain traumatic experiences and the degrees of accuracy they can achieve.

In his lecture entitled "Ethics and Memory," Elie Wiesel states: "It is not because I cannot explain that you won't understand; it is because you won't understand that I can't explain."[41]

Wiesel alludes to the problematic transfer of experience, and while he does not deny the feasibility of testimony, his statement assumes a silence in the act of giving testimony, maintaining the existence of gaps in experiential transference. This is further tested by the witness to the survivor's inability to grasp the difficulty in transferring the Holocaust experience to one who was not there. Testimony, then, becomes a transference of silence, as it embodies silences in its spoken manifestations. The experience presents itself in a balance between the two extremes of articulation and silence. When Helena expresses her poor English due to her distress, she demonstrates a breakdown of language in which words can no longer contain the emotional traumas that encompass her narrative. Yet, these silences accurately portray the magnitude of the traumatic effect on the victim. Her testimony therefore rests in silence until she can find words to continue her story. It is not a matter of difficulty in remembering the events, but in finding a way to relate her memory of them. The difficulty yields a silence, or narrative break.

Yet, what happens in the space of this break? Interpreting testimony calls for a witnessing of the witness, where a secondary party can then receive and engage with testimony to create new accounts from witnessing the witness to the original event. As the interpretive chain lengthens, the difficulty of depicting traumatic experiences heightens and the process raises questions of interpretation, expressibility and the possibility of understanding. In her memoir about her mother and aunt, Anna, too, weaves in her own narrative as representative of a second generation descendant, placing her own memories of growing up alongside her survivor parents and aunt and uncle, and alluding to the ever present secrets and silences that defined her own upbringing. Together, the narratives of the first and second generations create a memoir that reveals the generational transference of trauma.

Anna's traumas surface from the constant knowledge that darkness pervaded her parents' years in Poland, and brings them to consciousness through the memories that speak to her identity as a second generation witness to her survivor parents. By interweaving her mother and aunt's narratives she finds a way to break the barrier that halts her mother's speech, and with her own memories fills in the traumatic silences which break up her mother's testimony. She picks up where her mother leaves off, and continues the chain of testimony. As a child Anna did not hear her mother speak about her experiences and instead of witnessing her spoken testimony, witnessed a narrative of silence. Anna played the role of witness in an unconventional way, becoming attuned to the absences in her mother's experiences which, even years later when her mother could create a narrative, echoed in her pauses and claims that she should not continue. Writing about the Holocaust and survivor experiences is a trying task, yet Anna does this through engaging with her mother and aunt's narratives, while also incorporating the foundation of traumatic silence that guided her childhood upbringing.

By witnessing her mother's traumatic silences in the past, Anna is able to create her own traumatic narrative, rooted in her mother's inexpressibility, and her own difficulty in understanding the all consuming silences in her family. Her position as a secondary witness to her mother's trauma prompts her curiosity about her family's past and leads her to create new testimony of her experiences growing up in the midst of an unspoken family history. She therefore takes on a dual role of secondary witness to her mother, but also primary witness to her own displacement in the home, resulting from her mother's trauma. What is not said weighs heavily on her, and the missing links of an expressed narrative denote a problematic transfer of expression in the communicative process from mother to daughter. Anna's narrative interjections

indicate her estrangement from her family history in her childhood, yet continue to remedy the difficulties in her mother's later testimony, when Helena does find the words to talk about her past.

Anna's narrative speaks over the silences in the family, filling in for the mysteries behind family photographs and felt absences in the home. These memories connect with her mother and aunt's narratives through traumatic transference, as an extension of her own self coupled with her mother's silence. Her perceptiveness to her childhood home's somber atmosphere alludes to the transference of what was lost, and her own internalization of the traumas found in her mother. Her mother's unspoken memories create a dense surrounding of emptiness, which Anna must excavate for the traumas their absence created. The conscious knowledge of her parents' pasts resonates in her confronting the nameless faces in family photographs and the eerie silences which fill the house. Through interacting with these, she unconsciously internalizes their associations with her family's traumatic past, reinforcing her awareness of loss and spurring her own traumatic haunting. Her mother, on the other hand, buries the loss within herself.

In Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok's definition of incorporation, traumatic loss is entombed in a psychic crypt, where it is held in a perpetual state of silence. The burial in the crypt, which stands in for the loss object, takes place in secret and renders a splitting of the psyche. The loss is concealed so that it exists without the trauma victim's conscious knowledge. Opposed to the process of introjection, which engenders growth and the opening of the ego in a working through of the loss, incorporation creates a dependency on the loss object, which results in a psychic tomb.[42] From this comes the potential for transgenerational phantoms, which are the hauntings of descendant generations by the traumatic ghosts of an ancestor. Abraham writes the

phantom is “a metapsychological fact: what haunts are not the dead, but gaps left within us by the secrets of others.”[43] The phantom provides a framework for which we can look at Helena and Anna’s relationship, interrupted by phantoms of a loss Helena cannot properly introject. Though Helena found the ability to speak about the Holocaust later in life, her initial incorporation of her traumatic loss spurred a long period of silence which manifested in her daughter’s haunting. Anna’s memories allude to her sense of loss, fear and confusion surrounding her family’s silence when she was a child, and though her mother did not speak about her experience, she felt a palpable presence of something unsaid.

In a memory of walking through her cousin’s home, Anna enters a bedroom which houses two portraits. “There are no ornaments or objects lying around, but instead the whole room is dominated by two large photographs hanging on the wall behind the bed.”[44] Upon contact with the portraits Anna becomes audience to their mystery, held at bay by their silent power and her understanding of their dismal fate. “They are ancestors, I am told, who perished in Russia. Perished, died, passed away. I look into their eyes and try to understand. Here, in this room, they live on. They are a presence in the house, exerting their influence on the family that lives here and on the little girl who gazes at them.”[45] She is captivated by their commanding presence, yet they reinforce her sense of loss in her understanding of her family history. The mystery of the past lives on in silence and only creates a greater distance between her and the event which led to the traumas the portraits personify. “I feel only sadness. I want to understand more about these ancestors, and about those whose faces I can’t see. But no one ever speaks to me about the past.”[46] Anna’s feeling of loss from not knowing her family’s past results in confusion and a

desire to know more. This knowledge holds the promise of answers to an unexplained past, but also of relief from the untold stories that fill her surroundings and echo inside her.

The unsaid resonates in Anna through family secrets of the Holocaust, yet the same event cannot affect her in the same way, because she was not there. With transgenerational haunting there is no traumatic experience for the descendant to work through because the trauma belongs to someone else. Abraham writes: "Since the phantom is not related to the loss of an object of love, it cannot be considered the effect of unsuccessful mourning, as would be the case with melancholics or with all those who carry a tomb in themselves. It is the children's or descendants' lot to objectify these buried tombs through diverse species of ghosts.What comes back to haunt are the tombs of others."[47] Not only does Anna feel a loss in the story behind her ancestors, but she is also at a loss for the words her mother cannot speak. Her mother's traumatic silence haunts her, but as these traumas are inaccessible to Anna, she must endure her mother's ghosts. The secret nature of Helena's incorporation of the loss conceals the root of her pain from Anna and thrives on its existence as distinctly separate from the ego. Torok writes that with introjection, "Secrecy is imperative for survival,"[48] because the contents of the psychic crypt are unknown to the victim. The passing on of phantoms to descendants follows this pattern of secrecy and, therefore, the crypt acts not only as a burial place, but as an encryption of the object, making it inaccessible through making it indecipherable. The phantom can be released, but this requires an acknowledgment of what is otherwise unconscious through the revealing of the ancestor's trauma. Helena began to speak about her experiences fifty years after the Holocaust, but by that time Anna had already embodied her mother's trauma, haunted by the ghosts that reemerged from the gaps in her silenced testimony.

The gaps pronounced in testimony act as pathways for phantom hauntings, transferring from survivors to descendants, forcing a confrontation with the unspeakable that invade their psyches. Anna's recorded memories in her memoir confront the phantoms which emerge from these silences, while also shifting the narrative approach from her mother and aunt to the connection between the two generations. She must act as both victim and witness, just as her mother was both victim and witness to the original event of the Holocaust. Anna exemplifies this in a childhood memory of playing with friends where she is forced to wrestle with the dilemma of her identity: "We play some strange games at school. Every playtime I go with a few girls to the dark sunless side of the building, where there is only asphalt and no trees. We play fantasy games of soldiers and prisoners. 'I'm the soldier,' one tall girl says to me. 'You be the mother, and she,' pointing to another small girl, 'will be the baby. You must smack your baby, otherwise I'll shoot you.'"[49] Anna's domination by her inherited traumas resonate in her submission to the tall girl, though forcing her to question her position: "'No, no!' I protest. I feel tormented by the dilemma. But I am drawn back to the game day after day."[50] Her trauma returns her to the position of her mother's powerlessness during her persecution, with the desire to repeatedly play out her victimhood. Through the game she physically embodies the fears of her mother's past, reinforcing her own position as a victim of her mother's trauma.

Though she is kept at a distance from her family history, Anna is keen to the absences in her surroundings from the lack of talk about the past and the tacit exchange of knowing between her relatives. She writes: "I feel the emotions, vibrating and pulsing around me. I sense their anxiety and their grief. I feel the weight of their memories pressing in, haunting, tormenting."[51] Recognizing her surroundings places her within a knowing framework of her family's silences,

yet refuses her the privilege of access to their guarded secrets. Even at her young age her reception of what she terms "sense impressions"[52] are enough to convey the unrest housed in her family's collective crypt. She does not suffer from the same experiences as her mother, and therefore does not exhibit the same encrypted silences, but her mother's silence dictates the continuation of a concealed history, which Anna's unconsciously internalizes.

When Helena finally does speak decades after the Holocaust she fills in her former silence with words to capture her experience, but cannot escape silence all together, as expressed by her hesitancy in speech in her video testimony which is filled with pauses and curtailed thoughts. "I don't know why I'm telling you. I shouldn't, maybe,"[53] she says, considering whether to hold back her testimony. Her hesitancy widens the gap in her narrative to protect the memories she buried, resistant to consciously pass them on to the listener. Her testimony, though, can only ease the years of unspoken words which filled her home and haunted her daughter. Her conscious fears of the consequences of passing on her memories are no match for the fears she unconsciously passed onto Anna in her years of silence.

In capturing her mother's words on paper, Anna opens up Helena's testimony by linking it with Janka's and creating a conversation between two generations. By writing these memories down, the gaps in her speech become gaps on the page, switching back and forth between the sisters, and breaking up the past with Anna's interjected memories. Anna can never capture the entirety of her mother or aunt's experiences, but by placing herself into the narrative she expresses the unspoken traumas that plagued her home for years and emphasizes the intertwined relationship between the Holocaust survivor and second generation descendant. Each transition in the text between the sisters and Anna denotes a gap in narrative, and Anna fills in these gaps

with writing that addresses the silences she grew up with. As she fills up the space on the page she fills in her own memories for those her mother and aunt cannot recover.

Anna's investigation into her family reveals the exchange of trauma and memory that ensues before and after her mother gained the ability to give testimony. Her use of text allows her to reveal the transference of phantoms from the first to second generation and the trauma that befalls the second generation in witnessing the inability of their parents' generation to utter their experiences. Growing up a witness to silence, Anna is left to piece together her mother's past with her own experiences, just as she fills in the blank spaces on the page with her own writing. Her mother's testimony later in life helps to fill in some of the silences and, along with Anna's memories, the women are able to create a narrative describing the dual experiences of growing up during and after the Holocaust. Anna writes based on the memories her mother and aunt were willing to share, but their verbal limitations still speak to her need to build a narrative around what is not said.

In a childhood memory Anna recalls her mother and aunt: "They are preoccupied with their own anguish. I construct my own fantasies."[54] Her departure from their anguish continues into adulthood where she must construct her own fantasies around the absence of family history and lost ancestors. She balances on the fine line between her surviving family members sharing their experiences and burying them, the latter of which many second generation descendants face in the hauntings by their parents' phantoms. Anna cannot reconcile with the torture her family endured, but she can find a way to process the stories and silences she witnesses. Her constructed fantasies do not remove her from her position as a witness to her family's trauma, but allows her to insert herself into the chain of Holocaust trauma and its transgenerational narrative.

Narrating Testimonial Silence

Anna's account of her family's trauma relies on written narratives, weaving its way through the two sisters' memories of persecution and Anna's memories of her silent hauntings. Yet, accounts of Holocaust experiences are vast, from chronological histories and fact driven memoirs to historical fiction and drama. These representations serve as a link for spectators to become witnesses, and to work through the silences left over from the traumas of the event. The second generation witness who lives in the silence of a survivor confronts the impossibly of piecing together a past based on spoken memories, and therefore remains in the presence of the descended phantoms. For example, in *Maus*, graphic novelist Art Spiegelman chronicles his attempts at compiling stories of his father Vladek's Holocaust experience.[55] He literally draws out Vladek's experiences during and leading up to the war, telling of his persecution, imprisonment and escape from the Nazis. With each illustrated picture cel he expresses more than just the words written in speech bubbles, mimicking the dense silence that filled his upbringing. The pages boast of the words that go unsaid in each frame, where the gaps that separate each cel further depict the richness of the narrative they present. Art uses his narrative to chronicle his own relationship with his father and the haunting silence resonating from his mother's death.

Never having heard his mother speak about her time during the Holocaust before her death, Art finds unrest in her silence and further despairs when he hears that Vladek threw out her only written memories. Art's phantoms, however, are perhaps doubled as he occupies the position not only of a second generation witness, but also that of a replacement child who was born to fill the void of a lost child. On replacement children, Schwab writes: "One cannot

compete with a dead child, and yet one cannot avoid the ghostly competition handed down with parental fantasies. This tacit competition with a dead sibling is a classical syndrome of replacement children. It is also a prevalent form in which parental trauma is transmitted to the next generation and often to generations to come."[56] Art was born after the death of his parents' first child, Richieu, who died during the Holocaust and growing up, Art felt the silent haunting of his dead brother. With the exception of a photograph in his parents' bedroom, Art remains distanced from Richieu, as his haunting presence is maintained through his parents' silence. Art wrestles with Richieu's looming presence like Anna and the nameless portraits she finds in her cousin's home.

The autobiographical nature of Spiegelman's work addresses his role as victim and witness, and demonstrates how he uses his craft to create a narrative that captures the gaps in his his parents' memories. It demonstrates his troublesome relationship with them and positions him in the transgenerational chain of trauma and victimhood. He exists as a legacy of his surviving parents, yet struggles with the meaning of his own existence in the face of his brother's death, his parents' persecution and their later deaths. He expresses a need to draw from Vladek all that he can while he has the chance, feeling the pressure in his position as witness to the witness to create a comprehensive narrative of the experiences his father endured. Incorporated into his inherited trauma is an anxiety fixated on recording events, his mother's lost journals and drafting his father's memories, which clashes with the difficulty in getting Vladek to cooperate in their recorded sessions.

Art manages to record a large amount of material from Vladek before he passes away, but the anxiety he experiences in trying to construct his narrative resonates in the traumatic legacies

which haunt second generation descendants. The ability to write authoritatively based on unspoken experiences is impossible, but does not disallow for the possibility of creating narratives. With the inability to know and change history, working against silence by creating unspoken narratives serves as a way to work through silence, and therefore trauma. Particularly for descendants of the survivors, stepping into the world of the imaginary allows these witnesses to choose how to remember the trauma, by determining the circumstances in which events occurred and providing a setting where they can interact with the events that were never fully explained.

In Michel Leclerc's film *The Names of Love*,[57] Arthur Martin, the grown son of a Holocaust survivor, chooses to remember his mother's past in a story that she never told. Growing up, Arthur lived in the presence of his mother's silence, yet distanced himself from her testimony and his own Jewish identity. It is not until his mother's frail state after a suicide attempt that Arthur hears her speak about her past. In a visit to her in the hospital Arthur expresses his frustration about her silence: "Mom...why did you never tell me about your parents? I wish you told me about them. So I could at least imagine them. You understand?" She stares with a blank expression as he speaks, and just as he is about to walk out of the room, she responds: "I was in his taxi when it happened. He'd taken the exam. They have to take taxi-driving exams." Arthur stares at her, attentively listening, asking: "When what happened? Mom...When what happened?" His mother continues: "He often took me in his taxi. I loved it. That day..."[58] She stops speaking when a nurse walks in. Arthur leaves the hospital with the unfinished story, and a few days later finds out that his mother has succeeded in committing suicide, taking the truth of her past with her to the grave. Arthur constantly replays the sentence

in his mind, sure that "she was about to say something important, I think." The visual flashback suggests this was the day of her father's arrest by the Nazis, yet the uncertainty of the moment hangs in the interrupted story, both the nurse's interruption, and the traumatic interruption of silence.

The unfinished testimony continues to haunt Arthur, who grew up disconnected from his Jewish identity. As a child Arthur made the decision to disengage with his family's Holocaust legacy, feeling immense guilt after using his grandparents' concentration camp deaths as a way to get attention from girls. He grew up trying to embody the common ordinariness of his name, disassociating from his grandparents' distinctly Jewish surname of Cohen. With his mother's death Arthur loses both his mother and the encrypted secrets of her past, including how her parents were arrested, deported and killed in the camps, and her own upbringing in an orphanage where she was disguised as a gentile. Her passing and double burial of herself and her concealed experience take a toll on Arthur, who then distances himself from all of his loved ones. In his despair he continues to question his identity as a child with an unspoken Holocaust legacy. As he begins to come to terms with his identity, aided by his relationship with a free-spirited young woman named Baya, he begins to accept his mother's absence and the loss of her narrative. In a last attempt to account for the unfinished story his mother passed down to him Arthur tells her story with a positive spin, detracting from the trauma of a Nazi arrest and transport by changing the ending to his mother eating whipped cream for the first time. A story he once told to his classmates as a teenager and for which he was consequently laughed at, it suggests remembering the times when those who perished were happy and not just their deaths. The image of his mother in the taxi reappears and she smiles at Arthur as she eats a spoonful of whipped cream.

He smiles back. Arthur gives his mother the happy childhood she never had by choosing to remember her enjoying a simple pleasure.

In contrast to the melancholic and suicidal woman he knew, Arthur works against the silences which governed his life and provides a voice where none spoke. With her suicide halting the transference of the root of her trauma to her son, Arthur's mother literally uses her own body as a shield to protect her son from knowing the truth, though unaware of the trauma she will pass on by sealing the burial ground of the secret in herself. Just as Art in *Maus* despairs from the loss of his mother's journals, Arthur suffers from the entombment of his own mother's memories. The fictional Arthur mirrors the real Art's anxious attempt to uncover his mother's memories, recognizing a compulsive need to engage with the root of the trauma and breach the barriers that separate the first and second generation witnesses.

Arthur works to rewrite a history, creating a memory out of absence. The fictional memory must suffice for his lack of information, and in return brings him comfort in remembering his mother. In contrast, Spiegelman continues to focus on this lack, and fills his graphic novel with the absences he experiences. He recognizes the strength of absence in the silence from his mother and inverts its lack in exchange for a strong presence in his narrative. Arthur builds his memory on the imaginary and Spiegelman creates his drawings from an anxious yearning to know the past. He supplements uncertainty with the copious amount of research done to properly portray the camps in his drawings and to help piece together Vladek's narrative. He also reflects on his own inheritance of a Holocaust legacy, feeling the compulsion to produce the graphic novel and construct a narrative for his father. His attention to detail shows his desire to present a truthful representation, evidenced by his letter to the New York Times,

requesting that they move *Maus* from the fiction to non-fiction list.[59] In contrast, Arthur finds peace with the ghost of his mother and her transferred traumas by deviating from the truth and providing a response to his longing for her unspoken past.

Generational Transitions

Historical representation in any form always demands a balance between factual account and narrative structure, but when it comes to using representation as a means of addressing and potentially soothing a traumatic past, this balance is made more delicate. *Maus* specifically addresses this through Art's meticulous attention to detail as a result of the inner turmoil he faces in piecing together his father's history. His personal narrative of displacement and loss informs his search for the past and cements his position within the transgenerational chain of trauma. Anna Blay's interwoven narrative in the written memories of her mother and aunt similarly mediates the balance between the factual and fanciful by exploring palpable silences that concealed the traumatic wounds of her family. Art and Anna do not just seek to record testimonies, but engage in the process of intervening in the tradition of silence that fills the oeuvre of Holocaust history and representation, and answers the call to "never forget" by establishing their own roles as second generation descendants of Holocaust survivors. Their efforts to document the past are seemingly just as important as their attention to their own place in their parents' narratives. They strive to remember by paying witness to their parents' testimonies, as well as witnessing their own struggles with identity and trauma in their upbringings and daily lives. Alternatively, as the one fictional narrative depicting a second generation descendant in this chapter, *The Names of Love* is particularly effective in examining

the Holocaust through Arthur's struggle to confront his mother's silenced past in order to better ground his understanding of his Jewish identity and the legacy of trauma received from his mother. Working through this struggle ultimately allows him the ability to give his mother's story a happy, though fanciful, ending, which further frees him to maintain more successful relationships in his personal life.

The stories of second generation descendants examined in this chapter provide varying approaches to working through inherited trauma by exploring the reaches of writing, art and performance. Yet, if phantoms exist for the second generation, how might they pass down to the third? My own experience as chronicled in the first part of this chapter is only a small part of the third generation's relationship with the Holocaust legacy, but with the continuing disappearance of survivors into the era of no survivors, this will take on new meaning in the process of confronting Holocaust history and the place of descendant generations in preserving and carrying on its memory. For those affected by its traumatic legacy the duty is not a choice, but a crucial part in maintaining Jewish identity in the sphere of cultural and religious inheritance. As I witness the passing of the last survivors I feel time ticking away as the Holocaust fades farther into history and we near an age where the Holocaust exists solely in a world of representation. Yet, is it possible the line of transgenerational Holocaust trauma will soon come to an end? Abraham suggests transgenerational trauma has the potential to pass down through multiple generations,[60] but could the absence of survivors shift the relationship of descendants to the event and the loss it represents? How then, will the Jewish community define itself when the primary links to the Holocaust, those who have contributed so much to its communal identity, have passed? As I contend with this final loss I actively witness my own role in the time of

transition, acknowledging the changing landscape of Holocaust memory and the effects of its legacy on its generational descendants. I also to look to the potential of Holocaust representation to inquire and inform about the Holocaust, and to offer healing in the face of broken lineages, lost traditions and communities.

CHAPTER II

Stages of Theresienstadt:

The Stakes of Holocaust Representation in Contemporary Drama

> "In a crazy situation, madness is the only measure of normality, and when the show's at an end, who's to guarantee that the show's at an end? That life on one side of the curtain is any more real than the capering on the other?"
>
> —*Camp Comedy* by Roy Kift[61]

Introducing Holocaust Theater

Roy Kift's *Camp Comedy* depicts the theatrical stage of Theresienstadt concentration camp, a camp famous for its mass production of Jewish art and theater.[62] Based on real people and events that occurred in the camp, the play navigates layers of history and representation by chronicling a group of Jewish prisoners as they write a film script for the Nazis, perform sketches for their fellow prisoners and face the consequences of their work. Though influenced by Theresienstadt's history, the play is grounded in a discussion of theatrical illusion and the difficult reality prisoners faced. It considers art and its ethical implications in the camp, while simultaneously interrogating its own mode of dramatic presentation. Truthful depiction has long dominated discussions about the theater's ability to represent historical events on the stage,

where recalling those events through dramatic representation raises questions of authenticity behind the staged action. Kift notes that during the writing process he found himself "continually stopping work to consult documents for fear of betraying 'reality' and laying [himself] open to accusations of lies and distortion."[63] While the play clearly recalls Theresienstadt's past, its self-referential framework avoids historical reenactment and instead directs focus to the reality of the stage and Holocaust representation. By looking at performances in Theresienstadt through contemporary Holocaust drama, we can see how the stage uses illusion to cover up the absence of the lost Holocaust experience, one which is increasingly diminishing with the loss of survivors. The theater cannot recover lives or voices, but it can create new spaces to articulate the feeling of loss for post-Holocaust generations living in the shadows of the Holocaust's legacy.

Theresienstadt was a unique camp where Jewish prisoners were encouraged to produce art to bolster Nazi propaganda. This meant that prisoners were constantly caught between Nazi exploitation and the spiritual will to create and infuse life into the camp. The epigraph above from *Camp Comedy* comments on this conflict, questioning the reality of performances in the camp's unordinary circumstances. It opens up the discussion to the authenticity of contemporary Holocaust drama and wrestles with the reality of the stage as a practical mode of representation. Giorgio Agamben's theorizing of the state of exception is useful here in thinking about how to convey a space where "madness is the only measure of normality."[64] For Agamben, brutality becomes normalized in a space where laws are suspended, and the concentration camp "is thus the structure in which the state of exception—the possibility of deciding on which founds sovereign power—is realized *normally*."[65] The camp's madness takes on illusory qualities as it is

founded upon the inversion of conventionally recognized power, where to understand the camp as a reality is limited to those who lived it, as the camp outsider is too far removed from the Holocaust experience to fully comprehend its full effects.[66] The camp's unordinary circumstances create an ambiguous reality where "every question concerning the legality or illegality of what happened there simply makes no sense."[67] In a camp such as Auschwitz, this is understood through the context of the massive prisoner death tolls in the gas chambers or the brutal treatment of prisoners assigned to labor details. There is no disputing the illogical proceedings of the camp. However, in Theresienstadt where propaganda was a key objective, prisoners were forced to cover up their misery by creating art for public viewing. The camp therefore existed between a space of brutality and one of false impressions. To capture this duality, Holocaust representations must then consciously address the camp as a space on the threshold between reality and illusion.

The question of how to represent the Holocaust in literature encompasses this debate of whether Holocaust representation is indeed possible, and in the theater the prospect of conveying the concentration camp is subject to the reality of the stage. Staging camp life is largely contingent upon facing the circumstances under which camps operated, and while this is recalled in many survivor narratives, the staged portrayals of dehumanization, pain and death are no match for actual prisoner experiences. The stage therefore creates an alternate world of the Holocaust, adorned with imagery and context that stands in for what cannot be translated from experience to narrative. Countless analyses of Adorno's "To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric"[68] posit the Holocaust as a unique experience, untouched by any other in history. While this is true as far as any event maintains its unique qualities, this frame of thought renders it

untouchable, transforming it into a fiction. The danger here lies in opening the Holocaust up to gratuitous depictions of death and violence, based on a disavowal of its place in history alongside the political, oppressive, and industrial structures that made the genocide possible. If it is set apart from the rest of history, it silences the historical operations that led to its occurrence, thereby silencing the survivors who share their testimony. Scholar Leslie Epstein suggests that works of Holocaust fiction, particularly novels, often use imagery that is not present in eyewitness testimonies, and claims the descriptions in Holocaust fiction are often highly detailed and filled with images of violence and gore which can never compete with the barebones descriptions of a survivor's memories.[69] This illustrates the difficult relationship between the act of witnessing survivor testimony and that of translating an experience that is presented as inaccessible, such as in the theater where this might be taken to extremes considering the sensory experience of the theater and the intimacy created between the audience and performers.

In the introduction to his book *Holocaust Drama: The Theater of Atrocity*, Gene A. Plunka writes that scholars such as "Adorno and Wiesel have posited a literature of silence about the Holocaust to avoid its trivialization and its frequent lack of respect for the dead," while other scholars "have insisted that the most significant way to pay homage to the dead is through an obligation to bear witness."[70] A literature of silence protects Holocaust representation from the consequences of trivializing the event and exploiting real experiences to produce heightened emotional response in audiences, but has the potential to limit engagement with post-Holocaust generation perspectives of the Holocaust and creative ways to bear witness. As discussed in the previous chapter, silence surrounding the Holocaust risks continuing its traumas in descendant generations. A balance is needed between these two approaches in discerning appropriate ways to

address the Holocaust in order to allow artists and audiences to bear witness, while at the same time resisting overly sentimental Holocaust portrayals that appeal only to audience emotions and do not consider the critical nature of the representation process. In the fourth chapter I will discuss this in the context of Holocaust memorial spaces, but for now, in addition to Epstein's assertions on Holocaust novels, we might consider as an example Roberto Benigni's 1998 film, *Life is Beautiful*, in which a father imprisoned in a concentration camp convinces his son that camp life is merely a game and distracts him from its realities through comedic stunts. He turns the camp into a circus with the intention of protecting him, but the portrayal of the camp does not subscribe to the harsh conditions described in survivor testimonies, as soft lighting gives it a somewhat cheery and dreamlike atmosphere as the father stretches his son's imagination. The film is advertised as a tragicomedy, but revels in sentimentality which drives the tearful reunion between the son and his mother at the end of the film, even in the absence of the father whose antics could not prevent his own death.[71]

The film inevitability takes artistic liberties in portraying camp life, but ignores the improbability of a child's ignorance to his surroundings, especially when the son is proven to be exceptionally bright in the first part of the film. Though the son shows a readiness to give up on the game's ultimate prize of an armored tank, he is persuaded to remain in the game when his father packs his bag and offers to take him home in a risky bluff. While I do not deny the film's success in communicating its message of beauty in the human will to survive, it arrives at this goal through the child's shielded perspective. The father's determination to protect his son depends on how he can manipulate the view of the camp's surroundings, which is echoed in the film's portrayal of the camp to its viewers. However, the father's death is presented as an act of

self-sacrifice, where he must die for his son. The son does survive through the end of the war, but it is more important to understand that life and death in the camps was not a tradeoff. This is not to say that prisoners did not commit valiant acts for the good of their fellow prisoners, but, as in the context of the game the father creates, death in the camp was beyond the control of its victims, and no amount of strategy could ensure a winning outcome.

Setting the Holocaust Stage

No creative medium can fully convey the experience of hearing testimony firsthand, and likewise can never transmit the experience of the Holocaust to a spectator. In Holocaust literature it is not the camp that exists in this state, but the representation of the camp. Eyewitness testimony serves as the first link to the Holocaust experience, but the process of testifying rests in a precarious state, subject to the confines of individual memory and the influence of collective recollection and the ability to construct and organize narratives. The representation of these testimonies, individual or collective, remain in flux, pushing against the boundaries of what is known about the event. Adorno writes: "The more total society becomes, the greater the reification of the mind and the more paradoxical its effort to escape reification on its own."[72] In the same way that he posits societal structuring as a binding force that cannot escape itself, writing about the Holocaust transforms the past into the world we experience on the page, a world that muddies the past with images of extremity. For those who did not experience it, each representation creates a totality that becomes its own reflection of the Holocaust. The state of exception becomes the rule for camp depictions, and the suspension of rules becomes the norm for mimicry of the real. The page embodies lawlessness by virtue of its representational status.

Holocaust drama takes this a step further by transferring the words on the page onto the physical environment of the stage. In his book, *Stages of Annihilation*, Edward Isser categorizes Holocaust drama as a sub-genre of Holocaust literature, defining it as "works that represent or allude to the racial policies of the Nazis."[73] Under this definition exists a large amount of thematic and stylistic material, from anti-fascist plays of the early 1930s to depictions of camp life and explorations of transgenerational trauma. I would narrow this scope to plays that deal with the Holocaust as a major thematic element, though Isser's definition does point to the widespread influence of the Holocaust in drama, and more generally in literature and the arts. Drama, though, has proven a constant medium by which artists seek to address the history, testimonies, memories, traumas and fears of the Holocaust. Likewise, prisoners in Theresienstadt used plays and sketches to depict their own surroundings, which I will discuss in the context of Kift's play. Since its emergence Holocaust drama has particularly revealed the imagery of the concentration camp, moving literature's *l'univers concenrationnaire* into a physical space and creating an immediate confrontation between the audience and the imagined realities of the camp. The theater is tasked with creating a physical world of the camp, and setting its own rules for how the camp works in its fictitious setting. In his introduction to *Camp Comedy*, Kift stresses "the play should not be presented as a piece of documentary realism or, for that matter, in any other uniform style. Each scene has its own particular theatrical demands."[74] The play upholds the theater's mission to create an illusion that does not document history, but documents its own experience in interrogating that history. We cannot bear witness to the past, but we can bear witness to the process of documentation and how we continue to document ourselves in remembering the Holocaust. This is most important in consideration of generational ties to the

Holocaust and the continuation of Holocaust memory, as well as critical discussions of loss, trauma and genocide. In *Camp Comedy*, Theresienstadt is the subject of documentation as prisoners use theater to chronicle their own misery and survival.

Theresienstadt operated as both a transit camp and a center for propaganda, where Nazis exploited Jewish art and theater. Jewish works were displayed to the German public and the grounds were staged to create the illusion of a peaceful and safe haven for Jewish residents. *Camp Comedy* draws upon these illusions and creates a reality for the stage that becomes part of an evolving Holocaust narrative, one which continues from survivor testimonies to representation among post-Holocaust generations. Spectators therefore participate in viewing an imagined event that many have deemed unimaginable. The play bears witness to the events in Theresienstadt by examining modes of representation, both in the camp and onstage, and its multi-layered performance also reflects the layers of witnessing and memory that accompany the Holocaust's historical, cultural and communal legacy. The play remedies the impossibility of bearing witness to the past by focusing on the creation of illusion, while also questioning this illusion through its meta-theatricality. The clash between reality and illusion in the play's representation of Theresienstadt parallels the historical camp's existence as a propaganda tool, constantly bathed in illusion. By presenting artifice in Theresienstadt, *Camp Comedy* introduces the difficulties of its exploited prisoners while interrogating the process of representing the historical camp as a piece of fiction.

A Brief History

Located sixty kilometers north of Prague, Theresienstadt was originally built as an eighteenth century garrison town. When the Nazis entered the grounds they designated the walled fortress a ghetto and planned to relocate Czech Jews there. It received its first prisoner transport in November 1941, made up of all male carpenters and craftsmen who labored under harsh conditions to transform the walled town into a Jewish prison. Built to hold around 6,000 soldiers, the camp's population reached nearly 60,000 prisoners.[75] Operationally, it served many functions, including that of a transit camp which held prisoners until they were sent off to other labor and death camps, including the gas chambers at Auschwitz. Most famously it operated as a propaganda camp, and from the earliest prisoner transports, the Nazis filled the camp with prominent artists and musicians whose works they cultivated under the *Freizeitgestaltung* program. Prisoners took part in this "structured leisure time" following long days of labor,[76] where they received opportunities to create and perform artistic works which were then subject to Nazi exploitation. Prisoners were encouraged and instructed to create works for public consumption, though many artistic projects were also created in secret, where prisoners could express themselves away from the eyes of the Nazis.

In 1944 the camp underwent a large scale staging to pass the inspection of a visiting Red Cross commission who came to investigate the Nazi treatment of Jews. Freshly painted buildings, newly planted flowers and scheduled performances by prisoners all contributed to the meticulous Nazi plan for the Red Cross's visit. If they could fool the Red Cross into thinking they treated their Jewish prisoners well, surely the approval of such an organization would help in convincing the rest of the world too. The camp improvements were merely superficial

attempts at making the camp grounds appear accommodating, which included transporting thousands of prisoners to other camps to make the grounds seem less crowded.[77] Survivor Ivan Klíma recalls "They even built an outdoor pavilion on the square for an orchestra that was supposed to play the music of another 'racially inferior' people—jazz."[78] In his journal, a young inmate named Pajík describes the events leading up to the Red Cross's visit. In three entries dated just days before the visit, he describes the preparations:

> 9 June 1944: The route which the Red Cross Commission will take is exactly set. This route leads through our hall and gym. It is cleanly scrubbed and painted. The houses are only cleaned up below. This is Terezín! During the visiting day of the Commission, there will be a luxurious lunch. In Program (the classes, etc.), we only have three hours.
>
> 17 June 1944: Father and I walk through Terezín and we both admire the relative beauty of this town. When I think about my arrival in Terezín, and Terezín then and now, I must conclude that there is a tremendous change. There are benches everywhere, the houses are neat, etc. On the other hand, when I see through the windows of *Kavalířka* [a building housing the elderly], the people – all old people, all crowded together – the correct impression of Terezín comes back to me. The Commission ordered that children must be regularly instructed and that we are to have vegetables and other benefits twice a week.

> 21 June 1944: On Friday, there will be a Commission arriving. What is going on, one can't believe. Beautiful apartments, Epstein [the Jewish administrator] gets a car, the children must sing, and in the offices there are signs: 'No smoking during work.' Rahm [the SS Commandant] has entirely changed. We obtain a ration, each one of us, of one liver pate.
>
> 22 June 1944: Beautification reaches the highest point. Each table has a flower pot. The sidewalks are washed and therefore we cannot even walk on them. Everything is in tiptop order. A new library is being set up.[79]

Pajík's detailed description shows how the "beautification" process incorporated aesthetic and strategic preparations before the arrival of the commission, such as repainting building facades and setting a predetermined path for the commission to follow. The Red Cross was to see only what the Nazis allowed, and any unpleasantries were hidden from view. The camp augmented the scenes of tranquilly and concealed the prisoners' suffering, such as those hidden in *Kavalířka*. Despite the usual food shortage, larger quantities of food were shipped into the camp for the visit to make the Red Cross believe they had sufficient rations and nutritional standards. A massive cleaning campaign aimed to make the camp look hygienic, and only the healthiest and strongest looking prisoners were put on display. The others were sent away on transports.

Inmates were scheduled to participate in activities to display their supposed creative and physical freedoms. Among the activities featured were a soccer game and a production of the children's opera, *Brundibár*. Prisoners sat in parks and outside of buildings which had undergone exterior refurbishments to appear full of supplies, such as food and books. As described by scholar Aaron Kramer, "What the Red Cross saw was a diabolic public relations diorama: make-believe shops, a bank that printed funny money, a coffeehouse, and a great deal of cultural activity."[80] A sign on the school door even read "closed for vacation,"[81] though the school was nothing more than a facade. Brad Prager also describes the use of prisoners as actors, where "people who had never played chess in their lives were told to sit in front of chessboards and the ghetto was turned into a Potemkin village."[82] The Nazis effectively used the inmates as pawn pieces, whom they watched closely to assure they did not interrupt the picture of blissful life in Theresienstadt. The camp's staging lent itself to the Nazis' depiction of camp life, which gave the Jews a temporary identity in contrast to the dehumanization they faced on a daily basis. The Nazis routinely implemented discipline and inflicted punishment, but now they conducted the well oiled machine of oppression right under the Red Cross's nose. Along with the rest of the camp, the Red Cross witnessed a momentary time lapse where voices and bodies seemed to come alive.

Following the visit's success, which was measured by their ability to fool the Red Cross and merit a good report, the Nazis ordered Jewish prisoners to produce a camp documentary entitled *Theresienstadt: Ein Dokumentarfilm aus dem jüdischen Siedlungsgebiet*[83] to reach even greater audiences. Though it never reached public audiences due to Germany's losses near the war's end, existing fragments of the film demonstrate the careful attention the Nazis gave to

scripting and choreographing prisoners. Their staging of the camp created a carefully constructed narrative that placed the Nazis in the spotlight without ever taking the stage. *Camp Comedy* picks up on the theatrical nature of the camp and chronicles the film's production. It focuses on the technical and moral dilemmas Jewish prisoners faced in its creation. The action primarily revolves around the film's director, Kurt Gerron, a renowned Jewish cabaret and film actor selected specifically by the Nazis for the role. Though Kift claims resistance to presenting the material in any particular documentary style, his interpretation of the filmmaking process relies on a core group of historically based prisoners who contribute to the play's hovering between the fictional depiction of the camp and its historical reality.

Performance Stakes

Creating art in Theresienstadt was a risky business and *Camp Comedy* looks behind the scenes at a group of artists caught up in the Nazi propaganda game. It examines their attempts to save as many prisoners during the filming process and looks at artistic works that incorporated themes of resistance to bolster community morale. If the Nazis detected any dissent in Jewish prisoners' works, consequences were deadly. Transports routinely took prisoners "east," most notably to Auschwitz. The *Freizeitgestaltung* program encouraged artistic engagement and production, but the will to create was subject to the oppressive camp structure that upended conventions of normality and operated under its own lack of rules. *Camp Comedy*'s opening scene introduces this lack of rules through the character of the Impresario, whom Kift describes as "ageless, volatile, and dangerously arbitrary. A creature of lunatic extremes, physically, mentally, sexually and vocally."[84] Alone onstage he shuffles three urns as if playing a confidence

game. The sole focus on the game beckons attention and invites the audience to trust him as he leads them into the world of the imaginary concentration camp.

The Impresario, or "Imp," lacks any attributes that describe a trustworthy figure. His name alone alludes to his devilish character and his con game reflects the lawlessness and arbitrary nature of the concentration camp. Yet, despite this deceptive air the Imp does not make any claims that the stage presents the real Holocaust. Instead he confesses it is all an illusion: "This is no longer the summer of 1944. No longer a transit camp for Jewish prisoners in a garrison town called Theresienstadt. No longer a ghetto in the middle of the Czechoslovakian countryside. This is not imprisonment, agony and....*(He can't get his mouth round the word.)* But for two short hours: freedom, laughter, life! Deranged and derailed, spinning free from the fetters of logic and reality into a world of carefree illusion."[85] By stating what the stage is not—a transit camp, a ghetto, etc.—he situates the play outside of realistic representation, and instead prefaces it as a distortion of reality. Calling attention to the illusion onstage immediately breaks the illusion of the camp, leaving the audience in a conscious state of awareness that what they are viewing is only as real as the immediate theatrical experience, distinctly separate from the Holocaust it depicts. It is a reminder that even though the stage is a vehicle for representation, the experience of the theater can still be deceiving, and it is up to the spectator to distinguish the theatrical event from what it represents.

The play reveals the camp as one big theatrical production, lost in the confusion of reality and staged illusion. The camp's artistic culture captures the seemingly impossible nature of the camp, situating it as the norm and the only known life for prisoners. To outsiders, the reality of the camp might seem an impossibility, but, as Kift notes, "In Theresienstadt, the inmates had no

contact with the outside world: or, to put it another way, their world *was* the camp."[86] Theresienstadt's walled grounds containing tens of thousands of Jewish prisoners was no longer an impossibility, and living life by camp standards became their only reality. Their lives became a constant performance dictated by the camp's oppressive conditions and confinement within a world that sought to conceal its brutality from the outsider. The staged quality of the propaganda hub enacted a double duty on prisoners who had to hide their suffering behind their musical and theatrical performances. While it might be assumed that Theresienstadt prisoners were luckier than those of other concentration camps because they had access to entertainment and artistic outlets, these works were highly censored and their freedom to create was a direct result of the Nazis' oppressive and exploitative tactics.

Jews who found solace in art were subject to the consequences of their actions, caught between the desire for expression and the will to survive. Survivor Mirko Tuma explains the psychological effect of the camp despite its artistic output: "Mentally and spiritually, of course, Terezín was the worst hell of the German hells because delusions and hope and macabre pretensions were nourished there. In other camps the Nazis wanted the prisoners to manifest their Dantean suffering by screaming in infernal pain and terror, while in Theresienstadt the prisoners were required to smile as if they were in a photographer's studio."[87] They were contained within the walls of the prison grounds, which forced them to contain their feelings and suffering behind the giant mask the Nazis placed over the camp. The emotions and freedoms displayed to the public were already etched into the individual masks they wore, condemning them to a silent suffering as they stood in the spotlight.

While prisoners faced the backlash of smiling behind the guise of the creative works, many also found great strength and importance in the spiritual component of artistic expression. Despite Nazi restraints, some prisoners took advantage of their creative opportunities by creating art in secret and infusing themes of resistance into their works. Parodies of the camp or operas that mocked their oppressors and ended in the underdog's triumph gave the prisoners a distraction from the miseries of hunger, disease and overcrowding. For example, in the children's opera *Brundibár*, by Hans Krása, two young children are aided by some friendly animals and orphans in recovering stolen money from an evil organ grinder named Brundibár. Brundibár was an obvious reference to Hitler and, as Jožа Karas recalls: "The audiences were well aware of it when the children sang the final song of victory over the mean Brundibár, who in their minds, represented Hitler himself. As a matter of fact, Honza Treichlinger [the boy portraying Brundibár] even resembled him with his dark hair parted on the side and a black mustache."[88] Not long after the performance Krása, Treichlinger and many of the other children were sent to the gas chambers in Auschwitz.[89]

Brundibár, which was performed for the visiting Red Cross commission and showcased in the propaganda film, is a prime example of how prisoners took advantage of the arts to counter Nazi exploitation of their works. The chorus of young voices that sung out the defeat of Brundibár bolstered individual and communal moral, suggesting the possibility of small victories in the camp and potential greater victories that might lead to freedom from the Nazis. In recalling theater in the camp, survivor Zdenka Ehrlich Fantlová writes: "The Czech theater in this camp was no mere entertainment or social distraction, but a living torch showing people the way ahead and lending them spiritual strength and hope. For many, a cultural experience became more

important than a ration of bread.'"[90] The power of art, and specifically theater, created threads of hope for prisoners who daily faced Nazi brutality. Their ability to tap into a mental and spiritual creative space resisted the camp's horrors and oppressive environment, and productions such as *Brundibár* created hope for those who participated and attended the performances. However, the power of art in the case of Theresienstadt still holds a complex relationship with the Nazi motives of propaganda. Even though prisoners subverted exploitation by inserting themes of resistance into their works, the Nazis still condemned them to silence and death. The small triumphs made by Jews who produced works still offered a shred of hope to encourage their fellow prisoners in daily camp life, but the moral grounds on which these works were created must have added to the difficulty of making art in the camp.

In *Camp Comedy* we see prisoners play out this moral battle between suffering and spiritual nourishment that emerges from making art in Theresienstadt. The moral dilemma weighs heavily on Gerron and his documentary team as they struggle to lengthen the project in hopes of saving lives, while at the same time trying to save their own lives by contributing to Nazi propaganda. Upon informing Gerron that Hitler has chosen him to direct the film, camp Kommandant Karl Rahm tells him: "We wouldn't want to force anything on anyone, would we?"[91] but despite his implied generosity he makes it abundantly clear that Gerron has little choice in the matter and that resistance would result in dire consequences. Rahm gives the appearance of fostering Jewish freedom and prosperity, cushioned in the illusion of Jewish free will. This becomes even clearer when Rahm explains his intention that Gerron must "convince himself. He has to find a reason to believe it's his choice even if it's not. He has to believe in it, body and soul."[92] Rahm ensnares Gerron in his trap, giving him the illusion of free will, but

Gerron's artistic authority is limited to the greater Nazi propaganda scheme, only allowing him to appear in control of his decisions.

Gerron meets with the camp's Jewish authorities to discuss the morality of his given task, but instead of receiving sympathy he is met with the reality of his situation. "Pull yourself together man! A concentration camp is not a center for the propagation of ethical behavior. It's about survival. First and last, survival."[93] Jakob Eppstein, fictional head[94] of the *Judenrat* (Jewish Council), explains that Gerron has no choice but to follow Nazi orders, yet points out his unique position: "There's no way they can get rid of you without endangering the whole project. Objectively it's repugnant. We all know that. But in a situation like this, which of us has clean hands? Only if we blind ourselves to the rights and wrongs of a situation do we descend to the level of rats."[95] In Theresienstadt, the awful truth behind survival often meant serious moral sacrifices. For the case of the *Judenrat*, who were given the task of deciding who to put on train transports out of the camp, this meant breaking up families and condemning fellow prisoners to likely deaths. In his detailed account of the transports, Norbert Troller writes: "No one envies the Council of Elders their power over life and death. We know that they spend sleepless nights, burdened by the responsibility to make impartial selections. The 1,000 persons to be selected from 10,000-15,000 are not just numbers as we all know, not faceless masses. At stake are our brothers, our essence, all of us."[96] The *Judenrat* was constantly shuffling bodies on their deportation lists which they were forced to submit to the Nazis. The lists are just one more example of the supposed autonomy the Nazis gave the Jewish prisoners, when the gesture really forced the Jews to make the decision about who to condemn to death. The occasional appeal by a prisoner for a loved one to be saved might yield positive results, but at the end of the day there

was no question that anywhere from one to two thousand prisoners would be bound for deportation. In his discussion with Gerron, Eppstein understands his place, but does not deny the hope that his actions might save lives or at least ease prisoners' fears.

Eppstein dismisses ethical considerations in favor of survival, and when it comes to representing the Holocaust in contemporary literature and theater, writers and artists must constantly address what is ethical in representing the Holocaust. Isser writes: "The sensitivities surrounding the Holocaust are such that any representation is inherently a political and ethical statement—in essence a moral judgment—on both the perpetrators and the victims."[97] Audiences of contemporary Holocaust drama must look beyond the illusion of the performance and recognize the realities of the stage from the history they tell. Holocaust drama provides the audience with a space where they can confront these fictional depictions in an immediate physical setting, yet the struggle for truth results in the incorporation of these imagined realities into the evolving Holocaust narrative that transforms as perceptions of history change with witnessing new representations of the event. Eyewitness testimony blends with fictional accounts until the fictional narratives and imagery become difficult to distinguish from factual accounts. This is particularly important in representing the Holocaust because of the proposed difficulty of representing the lawlessness of camp life and survivor experiences. It becomes a question of determining what we can understand of an experience that has encountered so many rifts in translation, and the ability to convey the nightmarish qualities of genocide that widens the gap between witnessing and testifying.

On the night before Gerron receives orders from Rahm, the Imp muses on the troublesome reality of the camp. "Sleep," he says as Gerron struggles to rest, "A blessed release.

Maybe. But when you wake again, staring into the morning gloom, how can you be sure the nightmare you've just fled from might not after all have been preferable to the one you've arrived in? Or, if the only one you've arrived in might be a preface to something even worse?"[98] Akin to Puck's final monologue in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the Imp questions the reality of the camp in all of its propagandist illusion, while also questioning the reality of the stage. He asks: "Where do the dreams end and reality begin?"[99] In *Take Up the Bodies*, Herbert Blau writes about the theater in the context of dreaming, where "we often favor the dreaming for the wrong reasons."[100] In accordance with Freud's claim that the dream is often characterized as an experience instead of as a way of thinking, Blau suggests we mistakenly "put the premium on experience and thereby ignore the nature of dreams."[101] The Imp's dream speech suggests a merging of the worlds of dreaming and consciousness, with the mental thought process of dreaming seeping into the physical experience of waking life, and vice versa. For Gerron there is no waking up from the nightmare of the camp. The experience of waking reality consumes the state of dreaming and the mental process of the dream meets the nightmare of consciousness.

In his memoir, *Man's Search for Meaning*, Viktor Frankl writes that while prisoners dreamt of simple desires such as food and cigarettes, "the dreamer had to wake from them to the reality of camp life, and to the terrible contrast between that and his dream illusions."[102] The stage in *Camp Comedy* is an awakening to those horrors of history, but also the realities of its trauma. Frankl continues that upon seeing a fellow prisoner tossing about in a nightmare, he "became intensely conscious of the fact that no dream, no matter how horrible, could be as bad as the reality of the camp which surrounded us, and to which I was about to recall him."[103]

For Frankl, the dream illusion is still preferable to the waking miseries of the camp's reality, but because the subject of the dream seems more realistic than any of the camp's horrors, the dream takes on a measure of reality that the camp cannot match. Reality hovers between these two states of consciousness, much like the stage in *Camp Comedy*, which operates between historical illusion and immediate experience. As for the performances staged in the camp, the dream world is wrapped in the theatrical experience where prisoners in the camp watched their realities unfold through the campgrounds and oppressive situations these works depicted.

In *Camp Comedy* reality and illusion of both the camp and stage come to the fore with the inclusion of original sketches and songs performed in Theresienstadt. Evoking the Hamlet effect, they add to a layered viewing where the audience watches itself watching, and where witnessing occurs through watching a performance steeped in the camp's theatrics. It catches the audience in the act of viewing what is not there, by replacing the absent experience with a staged one. It therefore covers up the absence with a remnant of the original theatrical experience, suggesting we are getting at the core of the camp, while instead only creating more layers to the viewing process. This can also be seen in conjunction with the current state of Holocaust memory, as I previously discussed in Chapter One, in witnessing the final passing of the survivor generation. The heightened state of awareness of the Holocaust legacy in response to the disappearance of the last living witnesses encompasses the process of searching for authentic memories and artifacts. It results in a frenzied attempt to touch upon the core of the Holocaust experience by making connections with the past, but inevitably creates more layers to the act of witnessing, which adds to the distance between the past and present. The contemporary stage and the final gathering of testimony are both steeped in the process of actively witnessing a bygone

experience through layered performances of searching, witnessing and staging remnants of the past.

Theresienstadt Performance Re-Imagined

In *Camp Comedy* the incorporation of original works from Theresienstadt creates links between history and its representation, while also exploring the illusions prisoners created through infusing resistance into their works. The play features works by prisoners Leo Strauss and Manfred Greiffenhagen. Strauss, the son of an opera composer, was popular in Theresienstadt's cabaret scene[104] and his work seen here directly addresses the camp's oppressive conditions. One sketch entitled "Theresienstadt Questions" lightheartedly, yet boldly, mocks the camp and its conditions and policies, and therefore the Nazis enforcing those policies. When prisoners staged camp life, they created a space where they could critique their surroundings with more freedom than they might have been allowed otherwise. The stage acted as a buffer zone that softened any criticisms of the Nazi establishment, and while this did not mean prisoners were free to say anything they wanted onstage, it allowed for minor rebellions. In the sketch two characters discuss their fears and discomforts in the bleak camp environment. The short exchange between a "Cleaner," a longtime prisoner, and a "Lady", a new arrival, takes the form of a question and answer session that employs humor to reflect the prisoners' sentiments. The following verse touches on issues of sanitation, hunger and disease:

Lady: Has the town a healthy climate?
Or do lice and bugs begrime it?

Does one eat well at mid-day?

Can you keep disease at bay?

Cleaner: Food is short for hearty eaters

Those who eat best are the cheaters.

If you want to stay most fit

Get among the long-term sick.

Both: Theresienstadt, hooray, horary!

The most humane ghetto in the world today.[105]

The positive response to Theresienstadt's poor conditions gives the phrase an ironic twist, and the cheerful ending to each exchange repeats throughout the sketch with different adjectives to describe the camp's virtues. "Humane," "elegant" or "accommodating" are not words one would usually choose to describe a concentration camp, but the positive adjectives juxtaposed with a grim reality produce a distorted view of the camp that adds a dark humor to the text. The truth behind the sketch must have resonated with prisoners, and as Kift notes: "For many members of the audience the shock of recognition must have given their laughter a bitter edge."[106] Had the prisoners not known life inside a camp, their response of laughter might have been to the absurd and seemingly unfathomable conditions the sketch depicts, but seeing the camp represented on the actual campgrounds presents an obscured view that places the actual camp within the framework of theater. The self-reflective presentation raises an awareness of the camp's

theatrical function. For an audience seeing these sketches in *Camp Comedy*, and who did not witness the Holocaust, experiencing the sketch through the lens of the play reveals the layered structure of witnessing that catches the audience watching themselves, and creates an accessible portal to Strauss's text and the camp it illustrates.

In another sketch entitled "Postcard," Gerron literally sings out an invitation to all those suffering to join him in Theresienstadt, stating "It's only when you're living in a place like Theresienstadt that you really appreciate what those poor people out there must be suffering. I'm going to write and tell them. I am!"[107] He sings:

> Friends and loved ones, do you suffer
> From a life of want and fear?
> Things at home becoming tougher?
> Pack your bags and join me here.
>
> Do you live in trepidation
> Is your life a vale of tears?
> I'm off'ring you some consolation.
> Pack your bags and join me here.[108]

The sketch appeals to the suffering and war ravaged, and though it never gives a clear description of the camp, the repeated last line in each verse makes the camp appear a haven from the rest of war-torn Europe. As victims of Nazi exploitation and propaganda, Theresienstadt's prisoners

were caught up in the camp's artifice. Like the Imp's dream speech, the sketch begs the question of what is real and what is illusion. Theresienstadt was originally advertised as a "spa town," meant to give Jews a place where they could live in peace away from the turmoil of the rest of Europe. The reality, of course, was a prison where leisure was exchanged for suffering. Here, instead of the Nazis advertising the camp, it is Jewish prisoners sending the invitation and singing its praises. In the following two verses a promise of leisure diverts attention from the fear and suffering associated with growing strife in Europe:

> When neighbors see the star you're wearing
> Do they start to hiss and jeer?
> Had enough of hostile staring?
> Pack your bags and join me here.
>
> Do you dream of ease and pleasure
> Tea and coffee, wine and beer
> Concerts, theatre, endless leisure?
> Pack your bags and join me here.[109]

The first verse draws attention to the mandatory yellow star Jews were forced to wear for identification in Nazi occupied territory, whereas the camp is promoted as a place where the identity marker will no longer be a source of differentiation. The solution to discontent outside

the camp is found in the second verse, which highlights the camp's supposed entertainment value and makes it seem like a resort, filled with fun and leisurely activities. It is not until the last verse that the illusion is broken and the truth behind the camp's appearance is revealed:

> Here's a wacky world of show biz
> Full of laughter, fun and games.
> The only thing I'd like to know is:
> How we all get out again.[110]

The answer, we now know, was through transports to the death camps. "Postcard" sets the trap of illusion that can only end in dismal reality, and the rude awakening in the last line reveals the camp's facade. Prisoners did not know when their suffering would end, but their ability to participate in camp entertainment offered a distraction from their surroundings. Though it was only a temporary pause from the horrors of starvation, disease and death, the experience that art, music and theater provided was vital in its ability to mentally and spiritually transport prisoners outside of their miserable environment. The illusion of the stage in Theresienstadt served a very real purpose in boosting morale and offering relief. By staging Strauss's sketches, historical reality and its dramatic portrayal find common ground in the depiction of illusion and the illusion of representation.

In recalling theater in Theresienstadt, Klíma writes: "The works that, with the perspective of time, appear to be the deepest and most artistically remarkable are the ones which at first glance appear to speak of a completely different situation, of a different reality, but, at the same

time, seek to express the despair of solitude in a world where death reigned."[111] Gesturing to that despair presented an illusion that drew out the truth of the camp's terrors, and the solitude which separated the prisoner from the outside world. Sketches such as "Theresienstadt Questions" and "Postcard" simultaneously elicit humor and horror as they draw on the camp's surroundings, but without those direct references, death and horror must be communicated in other forms. The lack of articulation must translate into an experience that transcends the stage and reaches prisoners on the greater stage that is the camp. In *Camp Comedy*, when the Imp first introduces Gerron he coaxes him onto the stage by shouting out the opening line to the song "Karussell," as if to cue his entrance with the song he famously performed.[112] The song is seemingly about a carousel, but it is sung continuously throughout the play, and begins to reveal a deeper understanding of the camp. Upon entering the stage, a shy Gerron finally finds his footing and he and the company sing:

> In time out of mind, so long, long ago
> When we were just kids beginning to grow
> There was one thing we longed for like hell
> If our folks wished us out from under their feet
> Or simply wanted to give us a treat.
> Why! All us kids would begin to yell
> Carousel, oh please, carousel!

We're riding on old wooden horses

Round and round in a clippety-clop

Longing to get fizzy and dizzy

Before the roundabout grinds to a stop.[113]

Beginning with the excitement surrounding childhood reminiscences of a carousel, the song soon takes a sharp turn and reveals a metaphor that illustrates the uncertainty prisoners faced in the camp. The image of the carousel becomes a strong reminder of the repetitive motions of the concentration camps, including the roll calls that could last hours or even days, manual labor, soup lines where prisoners reserved meager rations, Theresienstadt's *Freizeitgestaltung* and the halting realities of rail transports and death. The thrill of the carousel comes from its movement and music, but also from the surprising halt in its repetitive motion at the end of the ride. While death may have been the halting stop of the daily merry-go-round in camp life, its routine occurrence risked becoming part of the repetitive motion.

An allure of the carousel's rotation rests in its circular motion which only allows for partial visibility of the whole mechanism from the ground at any given time. The same is true for the vantage point from the carousel platform. Its continuous motion constantly conceals and reveals itself and its surroundings. By incorporating the motif of the carousel through a revolving stage, the echo of the song and propaganda, *Camp Comedy* examines the relationship between illusion and concealment, and forges connections between propaganda and illusion. Creating an illusion through propaganda in the camp inevitably concealed what the Nazis did not want the public to see, and creating an illusion on the camp stage concealed the prisoner's disdain for the

Nazis through songs and sketches of metaphorical resistance. *Camp Comedy*, as a theatrical piece developed outside of Theresienstadt, along with its thematic structure built on illusion and concealment, further distinguishes links between the propaganda camp and the theater. Propaganda in Theresienstadt concealed camp realities by revealing fanciful notions of camp life to the public, and the theater inherently conceals what is not visually present onstage. "Karussell" serves as a constant reminder of what propaganda, and particularly *Theresienstadt: Ein Dokumentarfilm aus dem jüdischen Siedlungsgebiet*, was doing in concealing prisoners' pain and suffering to the pubic in favor of revealing a thriving camp community.

As the company continues in song, the song's chorus begins to mimic the repetitive motion of the carousel, and the fanciful joys of the childhood ride yield to the constant supply of jolts and the uncertainty of where or how the ride will end. While the journey supplies a dose of excitement, sweet memories of the past collide with memories of pain and suffering:

> And the hurdy-gurdy music
> We'll never ever forget.
> When the images fade before our eyes
> The memory lingers yet.
> [...]
> We're riding round on old wooden horses
> Round and round in a clippety-clop
> Where we land at the end of our journey
> We'll only find out when we stop.[114]

The first of these two verses recalls the sights and sounds of the ride, but when placed in the context of Theresienstadt, its meaning deepens to include the memory of the Holocaust, and the traumatic experiences that haunts the memory of its victims. The “hurdy-gurdy music” refers at first glance to the carousel’s music accompaniment, but in Theresienstadt it also recalls the music produced in the camp, as both a promise of spiritual strength and a haunting reminder of forced propaganda labor. The second verse returns to a slightly altered version of the first chorus. Wooden carousel horses are no longer toys, but wooden train cars whose final stops most likely mean death. Using the carousel as a metaphor for the railroad transports requires the implementation of illusion to mask a dismal journey with a playful scenario. However, as seen in the following verses, the illusion is not lost to folly, but surfaces in the call for a diversion from reality.

For most of the time our life is so hollow
What we all need is a passion to follow
That’s what gives it some sense
Careers, the markets, blonds, brunettes
Movies, football, cigarettes.

Not to mention “kabaretts"!
We’ve all got our favorite bents
Don’t rob us of thrills and amusements
Illusions, oh please, please illusions![115]

The first verse suggests various forms of entertainment to fulfill the hollow life described, which lacks art, enjoyment and purpose. In the camp, entertainment was a means of fulfilling this void, and the second verse makes clear that the theater was of particular importance here. The cabaret theater, which I will discuss in greater length in the next chapter, provides the illusion the song calls for by serving as a distraction from camp life, but also illuminates the reality it disguises. "Karussell" connects the Imp's call for illusion on the contemporary stage with the illusion the stage presented in the historical camp. The song conceals the camp's brutality through metaphor, but also reveals the dangers of its unpredictable, yet routine nature. Despite the discipline under which the concentration camp system operated, including strict schedules and daily routines, prisoners could experience upheaval at anytime with transports, labor reassignments and death. The song mimics this through the image of the carousel, which spins until an abrupt stop breaks the predictable motion. It covertly critiques the camp through providing a playful image of leisure, while the lyrics openly call for an illusion that reveal the prisoners' underlying fears. The ability of songs and sketches to conceal discontent and resistance through theater and music provide an ultimate testimony for its artists, capturing the traumas of the camp and performing them in their own hostile environment. Presenting them in *Camp Comedy* offers an opportunity to witness the past through staged performance, infusing the new with the old and revealing narratives through the sketches. They convey testimony through the experiences they dually mask and illuminate, providing alternate forms of testimony to more traditional eyewitness narratives. The immediacy of the works that were written for audiences in the camp communicate the time in which they were written, expressing sentiments of prisoners experiencing oppression in the present, as opposed to survivors recalling the past. This is

significant in their placement in the fictional play that references a historical event, in that the sketches do not need to recreate the past, but are remnants of the past themselves.

The characters in the play eventually meet their end when they are forced onto a train inevitably bound for Auschwitz.[116] Duped by the Imp who promised that Gerron and his wife would get out of the camp alive, Hanka, an incarnation of the Imp who serves as the film's production manager, hands each of them urns, reminiscent of the vessels the Imp shuffled in the play's opening scene. Gerron and the company begin to sing "Karussell" as the carousel revolves, and with its rotation the characters disappear, leaving only their urns behind. Hanka is joined by Kommandant Rahm and platoon leader Haindl as they kick and scatter the ashes about the stage. The stage revolves again to reveal Hanka sitting with two more urns, presumably the remains of Rahm and Haindl, when a cleaning woman appears to start sweeping the ashes. She sings "Karussell," against Hanka's protests, and the stage revolves a final time to reveal the company singing the final chorus:

> We're riding on old wooden horses
> Round and round in a clippety-clop
> Where we land at the end of our journey
> We'll only find out when we stop.[117]

The stop at the end of the song coincides with the end of the play, but the revolving stage suggests there is no end to the effects of the Holocaust and we are still wrestling with its aftermath. As discussed in Chapter One, over seventy years have passed since the concentration

camps were liberated, and traumas still abound for post-Holocaust generations searching for the irretrievable loss of the mass murder that befell the Nazis' victims. By the fact that we serve as an audience to the play, we are told that the carousel has not stopped, and that the journey continues as we gather testimonies, establish memorials and witness the spectacle of remembrance. The mad dash to gather testimony before the last of the Holocaust survivors disappear elicits a profound sense of loss and anxiety over the difficulty in articulating the loss felt among post-Holocaust generations. I note here the particular bearing this has on the third generation, whose upbringing amidst the mass institutionalization of the Holocaust informed their Jewish identity. As they witness the loss of survivors and their stories, new anxieties emerge surrounding the urgency of Holocaust remembrance in a post-survivor era.

Exploring the Holocaust through theater provides a way to confront these deep seated losses and soothes anxious attempts to recover them by creating a space to communicate their irrecoverable nature. The continuous search for traumatic relief is seen in the carousel's circular motion, revealing the presence of traumatic anxieties while hiding their root causes from cognition. The anxieties arising for post-Holocaust generations are grounded in the event they were not there to witness, which is covered up with layers of testimony and interpretations of the Holocaust experience. It prompts the search to continue through gathering information about an experience buried in the past, but that still resurfaces to haunt its descendant generations. Each new interpretation of that history buries the original experience even deeper in history, obscuring the source of trauma and the anxiety associated with preservation. We search for recognition of the Holocaust experience in testimonies to artifacts, and the theater creates a space that articulates, not what is left unsaid, but the search for what will never be said. It carves out a

space to express sentiment over the irretrievable, or the object of the endless search. *Camp Comedy* is particularly effective at doing this because it openly reveals its theatrical apparatus as an illusion, and within the historical context of Theresienstadt it confronts the realities of performance for prisoners and how we perceive those performances through representing them in contemporary drama. The stage helps to mourn the lost voices of Theresienstadt's theater and the loss the historical performances embody in their expression of oppression and death.

Another Vision of Theresienstadt

Camp Comedy uses the self-reflective apparatus of theater to represent Theresienstadt and its propaganda activity in one of its largest propaganda stunts. The film, along with the Red Cross camp tour in 1944, required a large scale re-staging of the camp and depended on the participation of prisoners to sell the camp's lie to the outside world. *Camp Comedy* uses the documentary film as its propaganda vehicle, but the film was only commissioned after the success of the Red Cross visit. In another example of the camp's propaganda theater, Juan Mayorga chronicles Theresienstadt's careful staging in his play, *Way to Heaven*. The play opens with testimony from a Red Cross representative who recalls his visit to an unspecified concentration camp. The play is factually vague, never mentioning the name of the camp, but historical references clearly recall the 1944 Red Cross tour of Theresienstadt. Through a series of scenes it explores the representative's memory of the camp, a Nazi commandant's staging of the camp grounds and the interaction between the commandant and Jewish prisoners in the process of scripting and rehearsing the visit. Scenes chronicling the commandant's attention to detail while writing the script reveals the careful planning process, similar to that illustrated in *Camp*

Comedy. Once again, propaganda provides the framework that underlies the camp and operates alongside the staging of the camp on the contemporary stage. It paves the way for a discussion of the theater's role in the camp and how that translates to representing the camp on the contemporary stage.

In the opening scene the representative explains his initial desire to work for the Red Cross and recalls meeting with the German commandant and touring the camp. The commandant introduces him to Gershon Gottfried, the Jewish community leader who also leads the tour. He observes Gottfried when they meet and soon begins to notice something strange about him: "It was as if... Not just then, but when he was talking about the weather or when he was passing me the bread. The Mayor [Gottfried] spoke like a machine."[118] The seemingly automated behavior might have easily led the representative to inquire further into the Jewish mayor's character, but even though he admits he felt something odd in Gottfried's presence, his final report stated that camp conditions were satisfactory and did not mention his initial observation. Gottfried's noted speech becomes clearer as the play progresses, showing how his cooperation in front of the representative plays into the greater machine-like operation of the entire camp (something I will expand on in Chapter Four). The representative neglects to see beyond the camp's facade and ignores any peculiarities that might alert him to the individual cogs in the camp system. The commandant successfully charms the representative and overshadows any of his suspicions. He reveals only what he wants his visitor to see, concealing information and impressing upon him his own knowledge of culture and philosophy. He uses his carefully curated collection of exactly one hundred German books to show his intellectual prowess, while expressing a longing for non-

German writers he read before the war. He is more concerned with presenting himself as a likable man, meticulously crafting his own image against the backdrop of the camp.

The Representative's monologue testifies to his camp visit years after the Holocaust, but he still falls victim to the Nazi's staged spectacular as he relays events in his monologue: "Everything that people say was there, I saw none of it."[119] He becomes defensive as he claims he was just doing his job, focusing on his task to produce a report. "Let's not overestimate what I could have done. I was only charged to write a report and put my name to it. Even if I had written something different, what would have changed? Could I have written anything other than I did? My mission was to look and see."[120] He succumbs to the picture created for him, and excuses his efforts based on the bare requirements of his job to observe. He does not differentiate between looking at what he is shown and taking the initiative to see beyond what is presented. His loyalty to his original report further positions him at the mercy of Nazi propaganda: "Today, standing in this place, I feel horror. But I will not apologise for having written that. I would write it again, word for word. And I would put my name to it again. I wrote what I had seen, and I never said it was a paradise."[121] He shows no remorse for his words or shame for ignoring the reality behind the scenes, but by stating he would write the same report again he intimates he would repeat history.

The commandant shows only a snapshot to the representative, carefully choosing what elements of the camp to reveal and concealing the rest. Like the carousel motif in *Camp Comedy*, the photographic snapshots in *Way to Heaven* serve as a reminder that what the camp representative sees is only a part of the whole, and the camp staged in the play is only a small part of the greater Holocaust narrative. The play itself is representative of the legacy of the event,

constructed around the absence of the original experience, just as the theater is constructed around the absence of the historical event it dramatizes. When the representative gives his testimony he chooses how to remember and narrate his encounters. He only reveals information that will keep him in a neutral position and help maintain his innocence in the massacre of the Jews: "I hand't seen anything that was out of the ordinary, and I couldn't invent what I hand't seen. I would have written the truth if they had helped me. A gesture, a sign."[122] He holds fast to his claim that he could not see past what the commandant wanted him to see, but his reliance falls short in his observations about Gottfried's mechanical actions and the commandant's evasiveness.

The representative further remarks: "The people looked at me in a strange sort of way. I put it down to the fact I wasn't wearing a uniform. They looked at me like anybody who wasn't one of them, but not a German either. I had the impression they were avoiding me. It was a sunny day, and people were out and about."[123] Memories of the town residents' oddities discredit the representative's claims that he saw nothing unusual. He silences any concerns or suspicions in favor of producing a clean cut report that allows for no ambiguity, recalling the weather and activity on the streets instead of the reality of the people he witnessed, and diverting attention like the commandant does with his talk of culture. He frames his report like a photograph, cropping the edges and refining its focus, so that even years after his visit, he can still cling to the image of the snapshot. Standing by his written word years later, he perpetuates the belief that the camp showed him all he needed to see. His unwillingness to look beyond the camp's facade proves his submission to illusion, and his resistance to question his intuition leads him to propagate the myth of the camp's humane conditions.

"What would have changed?"[124] he asks, when considering what might have been had he written a different report. He grounds himself in the understanding that he, with one visit and one report, could not have changed history. While this may be true, his integrity in his interaction with the propaganda theater diminishes based on his willingness to give into blind faith. He claims: "I wrote what I'd seen,"[125] but his steadfast allegiance to his report makes it clear that seeing is not enough to warrant the truth. He is swayed by the Nazi created illusion, making him a pawn in their game. He perpetuates their lies through his willingness to be duped and thereby credits Nazi theatrical power with the ability to last beyond the liberation of the camp. His refusal to question the camp's idiosyncrasies situate him in the role of a passive bystander who too easily submits to the power of illusion and who disregards what he might experience if he willingly looked beyond the immediate picture. We can also extend this to the platform of the contemporary stage to question the truth of the stage and to recognize how the portrayal of propaganda creates multiple layers of representation. This is paramount in understanding the layers of representation in the camp, which is emphasized in a group of scenes chronicling Jewish prisoners rehearsing scenes for the tour.

Following the representative's monologue, a collection of short scenes provides a glimpse into camp life. Young boys play with a spinning top, a male and female couple talk on a bench and a young girl plays with her doll. Appearing normal at first, each scene soon begins to repeat itself. The children repeat their lines and stand at different angles. The sound of a distant train distracts the woman from her conversation, and another repetition features the couple with the woman exchanged for another. It soon becomes clear that these are not just ordinary people but Jewish prisoners following carefully written scripts. The recycling of lines and minor tweaks to

each scene reinforce the theatricality of the tour preparations and the emphasis on illusion. The scenes take on an eerie quality once their purpose is revealed, and the representative's initial observation about Gottfried's mechanical speech gains clarity. Here we see the mechanics of the operation in action as the commandant ensures that the prisoners' acts are picture perfect. When the commandant first recruits Gottfried to aid him in preparations for the Red Cross visit, the commandant tells him: "we are going to transform the whole area. But much more important, and more difficult, is the way in which we transform ourselves."[126] He emphasizes the need to ensure all elements of the camp work together to form a proper illusion and, most importantly, that the prisoners play their part in the illusion. He exemplifies the transformation he speaks of in his romanticized view of the camp, where he envisions a harmonious picture of prisoner cooperation to frame the ideal portrait of camp life. He does not consider that too perfect a picture might wreck the illusion by making it seem unfeasible, but the Red Cross representative's comments at the beginning of the play only prove the visitor was not prepared to see beyond the commandant's camp stage.

It is clear by this point that all of the prisoners, including Gottfried, are acting under duress, and in this case we might consider the repercussions of performing under these circumstances, when the other alternative is an almost certain transport to the death camps. When he recruits Gottfried to help him prepare for the Red Cross, the commandant tells him: "We have chosen you to be an interlocutor.... Your cooperation will be rewarded. Naturally, if you choose not to assume this responsibility, we shall find someone else. However, a negative reply would prove very disappointing."[127] Eppstein tells Gerron in *Camp Comedy* that participation in writing the documentary is about survival, and the commandant echoes this sentiment in his warning to

Gottfried. Adaptability is crucial for survival, and the commandant uses this to his advantage. The exchange of one woman for another in the prisoner scene montage also shows how bodies in the camp are replaceable, and therefore expendable. The camp magnifies life's impermanence and unpredictability on a large scale, which is then reinforced by the play's focus on the propaganda stage, as well as its own portrayal on the contemporary stage. The theater is a reminder of the impermanence of the Holocaust experience as something we try to preserve through testimonies, artifacts, literature and art, and the theater's immediacy is a prime example of how the memory and legacy of the Holocaust are constantly shifting.

The commandant wishes to capture the camp in one stagnant moment for the Red Cross, preserving it for as long as the representative is there to bear witness. He resists the constant change of the theater, instead relying on the transformation of prisoners into machines that repeat the same experience over and over to perfection. He exploits one abnormal moment of calm in the camp through the Red Cross visit and the photographs the naive representative takes to preserve the illusion he unwittingly accepts. The Imp in *Camp Comedy* openly admits to the illusions onstage, but the commandant in *Way to Heaven* depends on concealing the reality of starvation, disease and brutality through a theater he intends to make last beyond its original performance. He uses that moment to dispel rumors as fantasy and builds trust with the representative through shared fears and discomforts: "The rumors, I've heard them too. Monstrous rumors. Please don't take it as a reproach. Fantasy overtakes us all once in a while. You have imagined terrible things and you believe you should do something about them. It was your goodwill brought you here. And your nightmares. Walking skeletons in striped pyjamas. I've had the same nightmares. But who can sleep easy these days?"[128] He uses the nightmare to

suggest that the camp's rumored horrors are but a fiction, while really creating a fiction of his own to cover up the reality of its horrors. He is overtaken by his own fantasy, which the representative's report then perpetuates.

Way to Heaven refrains from the immediacy implemented by *Camp Comedy*'s use of camp performances and its cabaret setting, instead relying on the acts of witnessing and testifying to immerse the audience in the space of the staged camp. It uses the structure of memory to jump between the representative's testimony, given after the Holocaust, and the events of the Red Cross tour as they happen. It never presents a conscious awareness of itself as a performance, as the Imp does in *Camp Comedy*, but the representative's opening monologue is effective in framing the play's events in a narrative that slowly reveals the camp as a theatrical stage ground. It peels back layers until the barebones of the operation are revealed, and in the process reveals the play's illusion as part of the theatrical spectacle in the camp. The commandant's monologue and preparations for the tour, including writing the script and rehearsing prisoners acts, reveal the camp's layers in highlighting propaganda activity, while simultaneously concealing the experience of persecution that is lost to the testimonies that are not shared onstage. The play is shown through the eyes of the representative and the commandant, and while scenes feature Gottfried and the other prisoners, their perspectives are never shared. The illusion of both the propaganda and contemporary stages meld to express the difficulty of expressing Holocaust loss, and in this case results in the silencing of the Jewish prisoners' voices. The play highlights the theater's ability to create a space in which to address the Holocaust through pointing to the theater's inherent concealment of the events that cannot be shown, as well as the events that were historically buried under layers of theatrical propaganda.

CHAPTER III

Cabaret Performance in Holocaust Drama

> "Every attempt at demystification is another illusion, adding another layer of mystery to the opaque."
>
> —Herbert Blau, *Take Up the Bodies*[129]

Cabaret Performance

In popular entertainment the image of cabaret theater is often characterized by scantily clad performers who sing songs to an audience in a small crowded hall. They sit around small tables as they drink wine and lose themselves in the theatrical spectacle. Images of Sally Bowles and the rosy-cheeked Emcee of the 1966 musical *Cabaret* have come to dominate popular depictions of cabaret, with a particular emphasis on cabaret in Berlin where the musical takes place, and which boasted a vibrant cabaret scene in the years leading up to World War II. *Cabaret* is set amidst the rise of the Nazi party in Germany, and though it takes place before the Nazis officially came to power, its themes of fascism and anti-Semitism allude to the impending unrest in Europe and situates it within the category of Holocaust drama. The contrast between the cabaret's creative atmosphere and the dismal suffering of the Holocaust hardly points to a likely paring of the two, but the history of cabaret is closely linked with the numerous Jewish artists who performed on its stages and who, after being banned from public performances, continued to

perform in private and later in the ghettos and concentration camps. As part of the artistic scene of early twentieth century Europe, cabaret is commonly depicted in Holocaust drama, which moves the iconic entertainment form to the contemporary stage.

In this chapter I will discuss a selection of Holocaust plays that specifically use the cabaret as a framing device to present various aspects of the Holocaust. These plays are less concerned with the venue of cabaret than they are with its function as a counter-narrative to the play, as they create layered narratives through humor and meta-theatrical critique. First I will look at Joe Masteroff, Fred Ebb and John Kander's musical *Cabaret* to assess the cabaret as an inner space of privacy and safety amidst the rise of the Nazi party in Germany. Next I will look at Kenneth Bernard's *How We Danced While We Burned* and return to Roy Kift's *Camp Comedy* for a discussion of cabaret in the concentration camp, where theatrical performance is used as a metaphor for survival. I will end with Eugene Lion's *Sammy's Follies: A Criminal Comedy* and Jonathan Garfinkel's *The Trials of John Demjanjuk: A Holocaust Cabaret*, two plays which look at the criminal trials of Nazi perpetrators and use the self-reflective cabaret frame to reflect the audience's role in the process of witnessing. With the exception of *Cabaret*, little has been written on these plays, which also have less impressive production histories. Perhaps this is due to the comic content that often accompanies the cabaret setting, and assumptions made about cabaret as a sordid entertainment vehicle that clashes with traditional levels of decorum that govern Holocaust representation. Despite this, the self-reflective nature of these plays make them useful tools in examining dramatic representations of the Holocaust and in assessing the difficulties that accompany Holocaust representation and remembrance.

To begin, a general understanding of cabaret will be useful in defining what cabaret is and how it is adapted for use in these plays. As an artistic institution the cabaret was paramount in fostering the numerous artistic movements that arose in Europe from the late nineteenth to early twentieth century and, as such, went through many transformations from its humble beginnings at Le Chat Noir in 1881 Paris. In her history of cabaret, Lisa Appignanesi describes cabaret as both "a meeting place for artists where performance or improvisation takes place among peers, and cabaret as an intimate, small-scale, but intellectually ambitious revue."[130] Peter Jelavich describes the "ideal" cabaret as consisting of a collection of short numbers in various genres, presented on a small stage in a small hall.[131] The audience sat around tables, where "The intimacy of the setting allowed direct, eye-to-eye contact between performers and spectators."[132] The numbers were presented by professionals and "dealt in a satirical or parodistic manner with topical issues: sex (most of all), commercial fashions, cultural fads, politics (least of all)."[133] Additionally, a figure called a *conferencier* "interacted with the audience, made witty remarks about events of the day, and introduced the performers."[134] Because of the intimacy between performers and the audience, and the short, self-contained numbers, the role of the performer was clear as being nothing more than a performer and there was "never any pretense made of an identity between actor and role. Rather, as in a Brechtian drama, the performer remains a performer, no matter what is enacted."[135]

Germany's cabaret scene sprang into action at the beginning of the twentieth century with the publication of a collection of *Deutsche Chansons*, which were German songs modeled after their French counterparts.[136] With the changing political landscape of Germany through the Wilhelmine and Weimar eras, cabaret went through many changes as artists negotiated its

purpose and role in the sphere of entertainment and social and political engagement. Following World War I, the Weimar Republic lifted state censorship and the cabarets experienced a renewed sense of freedom. However, as the Nazis rose to power that freedom soon disappeared along with the Jewish performers who previously contributed their talents to the cabaret scene. Due to Germany's charged political atmosphere, Berlin cabaret is often mistaken for containing highly politicized content, but in its simplest form cabaret was less concerned with political satire than it was with the trends of the day, including the fashion of the cabaret itself.[137]

By 1933 the Berlin cabaret ceased to exist as the same beacon of creative activity and entertainment that flourished during the Weimar era. When the Nazi party officially took control over Germany, harsh restrictions were put on the production of arts, theater, literature, press, film and radio, with serious punishment for anyone daring to present material the Nazis deemed inappropriate. In 1933 under the Nazi Minister of Propaganda, Joseph Goebbels, the Reich Culture Chamber was established to oversee Germany's arts, music, theater, press and literary scene. It required membership for participation in any of the fields, but was highly restricted to only those deemed "Aryan" by the Nazi party.[138] This of course excluded Jews, who instead received permission to form the *Kulturbund Deutscher Juden*, the Cultural Association of German Jews. The Kulturbund theater was subject to many restrictions, including that performances only be exhibited in private,[139] and though its establishment provided Jews a measure of protection in the arts, this did not ensure the survival of the Kulturbund program itself, let alone its members who would eventually be excluded entirely from the streets of Germany and moved to the ghettos and concentration camps as part of the Final Solution.

While the changes that cabaret endured over time often left it without a clear vision—was it a vehicle for entertainment, artistic or political ideology?—cabaret performance in the concentration camps and ghettos had a very clear purpose in boosting spiritual morale and building resistance. Along with the production of theater and arts in the camps, cabaret became a vital life force for its performers and spectators. The camps did not provide resources for the "ideal" cabaret setting Jevalich proposes, which begs the question of whether this was even cabaret at all. Performances were perhaps closer to theatrical revue shows, though they "managed to retain a blend of art and entertainment, of humor and seriousness, even in those impossible circumstances."[140] The drastic changes to the art form severely compromised the intimate creative atmosphere it once enjoyed in Berlin's small cabaret halls, but the power of art to strengthen the will for survival was monumental for the prisoners who participated and served as audience in the camp cabarets.

The plays in this chapter adapt the cabaret setting as a storytelling device. They depend less on traditional notions of cabaret and more on the iconic elements that denote intimacy, escape and the removal of the fourth wall. Immersion in the cabaret setting draws from the suggested safety of the artistic space and seclusion from the outside world. This safety though, is only as real as the illusion of the staged cabaret. The cabaret "artists" in the plays remind the audience that the performance is an illusion, nothing more than theater. Yet, when they dismantle the truth of the story they frame, they do not outwardly deny their own existence as cabaret artists. They reinforce dramatic irony for the audience, but double the illusion of the cabaret by holding the audience in their confidence. This doubling is key in approaching the memory of the Holocaust, in recognizing the irrecoverable nature of the loss that is being remembered and what

is not being said. In the epigraph of this chapter Herbert Blau writes: "Every attempt at demystification is another illusion, adding another layer of mystery to the opaque,"[141] suggesting that seeking to uncover the loss will only add to its illusory quality. In these plays, the cabaret adds another layer of illusion to reveal the absence of the Holocaust experience from the stage, but cannot articulate what that absence is. It therefore operates within a larger framework of theatrical concealment, constructing the outer edges of the staged illusion in its positioning outside of the plays' central narratives. The cabaret serves as a home base, and while one can always return to the cabaret, it is still only a part of the staged illusion and its safety is a mere deception.

Diversion in *Cabaret*

In the opening number of the musical *Cabaret*, the Emcee of the Kit Kat Club welcomes the audience with the song "Willkommen" and introduces the cabaret as an escape from the outside world: "Leave your troubles outside! So—life is disappointing? Forget it! In here life is beautiful."[142] The number sets up the cabaret as a playful space that protects its audience from the harsh realities of life outside. *Cabaret* takes place before the Third Reich comes to power and its central characters do not acknowledge the rising political tensions in Germany until the end of the first act. The musical's uptempo numbers, romances and comical characters are key elements that mask the looming Nazi powers and conceal political realities from view. The Kit Kat Club is far from the traditional style of Berlin cabaret, but its reliance on a space of intimacy and entertainment sets the tone for the private space of the cabaret theater, which acts as the outer narrative to the play within a play structure. It serves a dual purpose, where the self-contained

presentation of its numbers distances it from the action of the inner play and also reinforces a connection with the audience and establishes their role in the performer/spectator relationship. The cabaret provides a place where characters can go to escape the realities of their daily lives, but also breaks up the inner play's narrative with musical numbers. Theses numbers capture the seeming freedom of the space and provide commentary on the political landscape beyond its walls, which the characters do not always see. In this sense the cabaret is its own character that speaks the truth of the outside world. Furthermore, the creation of an external narrative gives deeper insight into the events of the inner play.

The cabaret's musical numbers are most effective in expressing underlying issues of anti-Semitism and the loss of "safe" space in Germany, but it continually positions these dangers on the "outside," while designating the "inside" of the cabaret as a safe space. The musical sets up multiple inside spaces to protect its characters from the impending political dangers, but as the action progresses, these definitions lose traction and the distinction between the safety inside the cabaret and the dangers outside disintegrate. The musical's inner play centers on Clifford Bradshaw, an American writer who moves to Berlin to find inspiration for his novel. Upon moving into his flat, he is immediately distracted from his work by an English chorus girl named Sally Bowles, who moves in with him and introduces him to a life of excitement and spontaneity. The majority of Cliff and Sally's scenes take place in their flat where the two are at first oblivious to the political dangers outside. Moving scenes into the Kit Kat Club makes room to comment on the troubles experienced in the flat, such as Cliff and Sally's money problems and Sally's unwanted pregnancy, while also mirroring the political unrest emerging in Berlin.[143]

If the cabaret and the flat represent the "inside," then the political presence of the growing Nazi party represents the "outside." The real danger is the movement of the Nazi party from the outside to the inside. This is most evident in the cabaret, which mirrors the outside political turmoil by infusing political themes into its musical numbers, and therefore raises the question of safety inside the cabaret and in the nature of its diversion. At the end of the first act Cliff's landlady, Fraulein Schneider, and her fiance, Herr Schultz, celebrate their engagement in Herr Schultz's fruit shop. The party begins with merrymaking and song, but the fun is cut short when a Nazi sympathizer advises Fraulein Schneider against her marriage to the Jewish Herr Schultz. The scene ends as the party guests sing a reprise of "Tomorrow Belongs to Me," a song first sung earlier in the act by the cabaret waiters and the Emcee. The song is a testament to Germany's beauty, but hints at a greater unseen glory: "Oh Fatherland, Fatherland, show us the sign/Your children have waited to see./The morning will come when the world is mine,/ Tomorrow belongs to me."[144] At the beginning of the second act, a group of cabaret chorus girls goose step off the stage to a militarized version of the song. Akin to a lullaby earlier in the act, its reincarnation with the martial drum beat and the goose-stepping chorus girls makes clear the impending danger of the Nazi regime, and infiltration of the outside political action into the cabaret.

By chronicling the rising political danger, the cabaret acts as a microcosm of Germany, and particularly Berlin. Originally serving as an escape for Cliff from his previous cities of residence where he could not find any creative inspiration for his novel, Berlin provided numerous forms of entertainment and enjoyment, but it could not divert his attention forever. The reality of the political atmosphere breaks the illusion of his prolonged vacation, upon which he

finally acknowledges Berlin's growing dangers. Berlin cannot withstand the influence of the rising Nazi party, just like his flat cannot protect him from his doomed relationship with Sally. Cliff makes plans to leave Berlin, but Sally is still unwilling to accept the reality of her surroundings. For her, the cabaret still holds the magical ability to escape her troubles, and in the eleven o'clock number, performed right after she has an abortion and hears that Cliff is leaving, she sings: "Life is a cabaret, old chum,/Only a cabaret, old chum,/And I love a cabaret!"[145] The song states that life is only a performance, but she is so engaged in the cabaret's illusion of beauty that her aversion to any problems beyond gives way to delusion.

In the final scene Cliff boards a train for Paris and from a notepad reads what are presumably the first words of his novel: "'There was a cabaret and there was a master of ceremonies and there was a city called Berlin in a country called Germany—and it was the end of the world and I was dancing with Sally Bowles—and we were both fast asleep...'"[146] He transforms his experience into a fiction, which reinforces the cabaret spirit that Berlin represents for him, even as he leaves it behind. As Cliff exits the stage the Emcee asks the audience, "Where are your troubles now? Forgotten? I told you so! We have no troubles here. Here life is beautiful—the girls are beautiful—even the orchestra is beautiful."[147] The opening scene of the cabaret reappears, but the glamour of the original scene is exchanged for girls in German uniforms with swastika armbands. The political danger the cabaret originally kept out has now moved in, and the difference between the carefree inside and the troubled outside are now one and the same. This is further extended to the audience's role in the play through the use of a large prop mirror, which turns to reflect the audience at the beginning and end of the play. When the audience "again watches itself watching,"[148] it embeds another level of representation into the

play. It incorporates the audience as part of the staged act it witnesses and, as scholar Thomas Adler notes, further "comments upon the form of the musical play itself, urging that musical comedy as it has been understood traditionally—as entertainment disseminating an escapist ethic—be rejected."[149] By critiquing its own presentational mode, the musical dismantles its illusion of escape, which imitates the form of the cabaret it depicts. This self-critique is similarly seen in *Camp Comedy*, which uses real cabaret acts from Theresienstadt to comment on the camp environment that is absent from the stage. It provides a distraction from the play's central narrative, which mirrors the distraction it provided prisoners from their daily miseries in the camp. In Chapter Two I discussed Camp Comedy's focus on the camp's prisoners who are forced to write a documentary film script for Nazi propaganda, but here I will elaborate on the storytelling mechanism of the cabaret.

Camp Cabaret in *Camp Comedy* and *How We Danced While We Burned*

In *Camp Comedy* cabaret theater provides a critique of Holocaust representation through a doubling of the Theresienstadt cabaret onstage. The play is set in the Carousel cabaret of Theresienstadt, which references the real *Karussell* cabaret of Kurt Gerron. The "cabaret artists" are introduced in the first scene where the Imp, the emcee, presents the camp as pure illusion. The characters maintain a self-awareness that reflects the nature of the staged performance, but when they enter scenes depicting the film making process, they assume a greater level of seriousness and appear blind to their presentation through the cabaret. They become completely immersed in the inner play's narrative and can only comment on their immediate surroundings of the camp. The play's musical numbers are performed both by the characters in their self-aware

states, and by the performers when they are "rehearsing" for the film. I will refer to the setting of the self-aware performers as the outer framework to the play and the film production scenes as the inner play. Unlike the Kit Kat Club, the cabaret in *Camp Comedy* does not shield its characters from political turmoil, but is an all encompassing metaphor for the illusion of the stage and the performance of the cabaret itself. The Imp reveals the illusion of the camp from the start, but never points out the illusion of the cabaret as a staged construction. Instead, the cabaret as a performance mode is referenced through a discussion of the characters in the inner play. In the following excerpt, Anny and Michel, two cabaret artists appearing as prisoners, debate the ethics of participating in making the propaganda documentary:

> Anny: Save your breath. Martin told me. You're wrong to think anybody who has never been inside a concentration camp is going to question what they see when it's on film. Black and white reality. The camera cannot lie. Especially if the director himself is a Jew.
>
> Michel: Listen, Anny, what I'm doing in the script is basically no different to what we're doing in the cabaret. Is it? Trying to fool the audience they're in another world. Keep everybody smiling until it's time to be schlepped off in the trains.
>
> Anny: Oh, but there's a very big difference, Michel. In the cabaret we *all* know it's a lie. And what's wrong with that? If it helps to remind us there was

> once another, better, reality before we were caught up in all this brutal lunacy.[150]

Michel had originally intended to make the film as farcical as possible, by making conditions "so artificially idyllic that nobody in their right mind would possibly believe it,"[151] but with no reference point for the actual camp, Anny knows that the camera will only show people on the outside what the Nazis want them to see and that the film's direction by the Jewish Kurt Gerron will make the film more plausible. The real documentary film never reached public screenings, but when the Nazis similarly staged Theresienstadt for the visiting Red Cross no one objected to the camp conditions. The attention to detail was enough to sway its visitors and even if there was suspicion, it was not enough to make them further question the pristine setting or actions of the prisoners. The performance covered up the camp's reality and no one said anything. In the first act a very drunk Imp examines a report from the Red Cross: "What did I tell you? When the unbelievable becomes reality, anything's possible."[152] The circumstances of the camp would have been unbelievable for anyone on the outside, but because of the Nazis' success in staging the camp, the masked unbelievable circumstances were able to persist as a reality for the prisoners. Anny recognizes the possibility of this happening with the film and takes a stand against those participating in its production.

When Michel points out that Anny's participation in the camp cabaret uses the same tactics to create an illusion, she refutes his claim, stating that the spectator knows the cabaret is an illusion. The performer is always a performer and any illusion created within the performance is not accepted as reality. The danger of the film is that the camp will be accepted as it is shown,

and the film's lie will only bolster the reality of the camp's mission to hold prisoners and transport them to the death camps. Anny's description of the cabaret is representative of the Berlin cabaret which maintained a level of intimacy to keep the audience abreast of its illusion. In *Camp Comedy* the audience knows the play is a fiction, but in representing a facet of Holocaust history through the vehicle of cabaret, that history is literally concealed by its embedded play within a play structure. This concealment doubles with the concealment that took place in Theresienstadt, drawing a connection between what was seen by outsiders to the camp, and what the audience, as outsiders to the experience of the Holocaust, can see in the play.

The doubling effect also occurs when characters appear as both cabaret actors and characters in the inner play. Each character is first introduced within the framework of the cabaret, but assumes more serious tones when stepping into the scriptwriting plot. The dual persona allows them to occupy both worlds of the outer and inner play, and creates a layered identity that corresponds to the layered identities of real prisoners who were forced to conceal themselves in the camp. The terms of the inner and outer play are very fluid, which enhances the onstage doubling in reflecting the tension between the reality of the camp's awful circumstances and the richness conveyed through its artistic programs. These subtle changes can be seen in the first act when the scene transitions from a cabaret number to the introduction of Nazi leader Haindl, who is played by one of the cabaret's Jewish artists. The Imp announces: "The show goes on. Backstage,"[153] but the conditions of a "backstage" are vague, as the characters change and remove their makeup. The visual of the characters changing their appearance reminds the audience of the staged production, but also resonates with the production of the cabaret narrative structure. In Theresienstadt there was no "break" from the camp, and in the play, even though the

characters retreat to “backstage,” they are still onstage in view of the audience. The audience is made aware of their constant roleplaying, whether as actors playing cabaret artists, or as actors playing cabaret artists playing camp prisoners.

Kift notes that while he originally chose fictional names for three cabaret actors he accidentally kept writing the names of their real life counterparts, as if their ghosts were creeping into the text.[154] In a compromise, he combined their real first names with fictional surnames, which creates yet another level to the identities of the prisoners who performed in the camp, and of the fictional cabaret artists who embody the prisoners. In the camp the prisoners had to assume layered identities in the Nazi propaganda theater and their performance during events like the Red Cross visit or for the documentary film became a mode of survival. Survival occurred spiritually in the artistic setting of the camp, where prisoners were able to create theater, but this only occurred in the larger context of the Nazi theater, which determined how prisoner art was to be presented to the public. In the play, the cabaret is the governing structure of presentation that determines how much the audience will see of the camp onstage.

If the Nazis were the manipulators of the real camp’s presentation to the outside world, the Imp is the manipulator of the presentation of the camp onstage. He specifically does this through calling characters to the stage and cuing them into conversations by speaking their lines for them. When Rahm tells Kurt he has been selected to direct the documentary, Kurt begins a response “I’m...” but when he cannot complete the thought the Imp fills in with “Speechless.”[155] Rahm continues the conversation as if Kurt has spoken the line himself, but the Imp remains in the background, ready to supply the characters with more dialogue. By doing this he demonstrates his control over the scene to show how the cabaret dictates the action of the inner

play. He also signals scene changes through whistling, which further extends his control over the revolving stage that reveals and conceals the cabaret artists at play in the performance.

In the first act the Imp acts as a free agent and is the only character who can move between the outer and inner play while still maintaining a constant stream of self-awareness in the inner play. However, in the second act when he assumes the role of Pavel Hanka, a production manager brought in by the Nazis from Prague, he loses his dual consciousness in the inner play. He still embodies qualities of the Imp when signaling scene changes, but has a limited means of control over the film script which he is hired to oversee. He instead must submit to Nazi Kommandant Rahm, who places himself in the position of control: "Let me get this clear, Herr Hanka. I'm running this show, not you. You understand? This film may be just another job to you. But to me it's a step in my career, and I can't afford any mistakes. If everything goes as I intend, I shall be out of this louse-ridden dump within three months and on my way to the top."[156] Rahm's aspirations to ascend the chain of command shows how the Nazis were constantly performing within the greater scope of Nazi operations, and how the illusion of power one day could be undermined by someone in a higher position the next. The entire Nazi operation was built as a cover up, not only to conceal the camps from the public, but to diminish transparency among its own ranks. Rahm breaks Hanka's illusion of power and this returns to the Imp's initial introduction of the play as a pure illusion. Nothing is as it seems in the camp and nothing portrayed on the stage is real. The historical representation is a complete fiction and the cabaret artists are just performers.

If the illusion of the cabaret is also not what it seems because it is part of the greater play and not a true cabaret theater, its mirroring of the theatrical nature of the camp implies the greater

loss of what cannot be shown onstage. The cabaret consistently works towards creating an image of the camp, but simultaneously pulls back from that depiction. It raises the question of what is being shown and what it is that the stage cannot articulate. In *Camp Comedy* the cabaret numbers offer a distraction from the dilemmas raised by writing the film script and the illusion of the camp. They critique the camp through satire, but if the stage does not show the camp, the reference point for the sketches must exist elsewhere and the loss of that reference point is what the cabaret hides from view. It continuously edges towards the loss, but cannot adequately define what the loss is. This is the crux of Holocaust performance as determined by its engagement with loss and the search for meaning behind its traumatic legacy. All Holocaust drama, and all theater for that matter, performs a doubling onstage, but with the additional layer of the cabaret, the doubling hints at what was hidden from view in the camps and what is hidden from the staging of the camp without actually determining the nature of the loss. The theme of loss is most prominent in considering the legacy of the Holocaust as we witness the loss of the last generation of survivors, and this infuses the layered camp-cabaret stage with even deeper meaning. It not only stands in for the historical experience, but for the fears, traumas and anxieties associated with the loss of the survivor generation, and the race to record their testimonies before the ability to witness the witness is no longer possible. The frenzied dash to account for their stories and access the root of that loss resonates in the constant motion of the camp cabaret's metaphorical carousel and the dizzying motion of prisoners in and through the camp as they perform for survival.

In *How We Danced While We Burned* the cabaret setting of a German beer hall, described as "Hell," is a metaphor for a concentration camp where characters literally give the performance

of a lifetime. Performances take the form of short cabaret acts which range from song and dance numbers to a striptease and puppet show. A Commandant acting as the master of ceremonies calls patrons to the stage and successful acts are permitted to remain in the hall, while unsuccessful acts are sent through an "EXIT" door at the back of the stage. A metaphor for the gas chambers, the EXIT is a point of no return and most performers must pass through it, whether voluntarily or by force. The play satirically emphasizes the systematic operations of the Holocaust and concentrates on the orderly movement of bodies through the performance space.

In the opening scene, the Commandant introduces himself as the host before giving a list of rules for patrons to follow: "We got to get the rules right first thing. We got a lot of rules, all kinds or rules, you wouldn't believe it till you heard it, and you got to obey the rules here."[157] The list is long and includes such odd prohibitions as "no picnic lunches" and "no squeezing pimples or blackheads," but the most important rules relate to the performance acts which establishes the conditions that will keep the hall in working order: "First and foremost, when your number's called, you gotta come up, no matter who you are. No shrinking tulips and daffodils allowed. And when you come up, you gotta do your own thing, three-four minutes, maybe you gotta chance even. But if you flop, you gotta go, no question. You ain't even got a prayer, understand?"[158] The Commandant then proceeds to call patrons by their numbers to perform for their lives.

The rules and numbers are symbolic of the strict Nazi policies that helped maintain order in the camps, where dehumanizing tactics such as assigning prisoners numbers in place of names aided in the operation of extermination. The Commandant sets the rules to ensure the performances will run smoothly and in the cabaret this means that patrons will filter through the

space as they transition from spectator to performer, and then exit the hall. The flow of bodies is crucial to the cabaret as a place of business, but as representative of the camp, it symbolizes the handling of prisoners as they labored in the camps and were sent to the gas chambers. The Commandant keeps the action moving as he calls for new performers and pushes them, sometimes quite literally, through the EXIT door. The play trades in the carousel in *Camp Comedy* for a space that moves performance acts along like a conveyor belt, always anticipating the next one. It infuses the mechanism of industrialism to communicate the systematic handling of bodies, with a particular focus on the elimination of performers from the performances space. After the first performer, number forty-seven, is forced through the EXIT, the Commandant returns to his schedule. "We gotta keep it moving. The railroads are coming in like rabbits on us. We are swamped right over our heads."[159] His mention of the railroads hints that the cabaret space is more than just the entertainment venue it appears to be, and that the pressure to move the performances along is part of a larger plan beyond the stage. "Look at them! How we gonna keep up with them? Huh? You got a solution, number eighty-nine?"[160] Number eighty-nine performs a striptease before the Commandant directs a group of waiters to throw her through the EXIT. The only solution the Commandant sees is the Final Solution, which is played out among the group of rowdy patrons.

The patrons heavily weigh in on the fate of the performers as their response to the acts determine whether the performers remain in the hall or will be sent through the EXIT. They act as witness to the performers, but identities are ambiguous as patrons become performers and assume various roles throughout the play, including waiters, actors in a "Christmas play," and even a parody of Hitler who expresses a deep affection for flowers. The fluid action from one

role to the next means that no one is safe from the position of performer and everyone has the potential to play the witness, victim, perpetrator and judge. Any notion of hierarchy crumbles as patrons become performers and step into the role of the victims, which they previously mocked and judged. The clear cut division between characters completely collapses in the final scene when a group of prisoners from "the other camp"[161] break through a wall and charge into the space. The other camp comprises prisoners who presumably come from another section of the concentration camp, but also collapses the space of the theater to show the convergence of two seemingly distant camps operating on the same stage of ignorance, oppression and victimization. Chaos ensues as a patron calls out for her son among the prisoners and the Commandant orders guards, waiters and waitresses to beat the unruly crowd. The intrusion comes as a surprise to the Commandant, who then speeds patrons towards the EXIT after directing them to strip naked: "Okay. So we got to hurry up. We wasn't expecting you so soon. You didn't know when you had it so good. Now we got to hurry it up."[162] He then orders the prisoners to put on the clothes of the former patrons as they fill into the hall, "Quick! Quick! We got a late show to do! We gotta keep the wheels of progress rolling."[163] The incoming prisoners open up the space of the hall to situate it within the larger context of camp operations, and the "Hell" of the beer hall reveals the expandability of bodies and locates the quick turnover of prisoners within the greater system of the concentration camp.

Throughout the entire play the Commandant has served as a figure of authority through his direction of patrons and performers, but after the startling entrance of the prisoners he delivers a monologue that reveals his own his part in the performance operations. In a break from his usual lewd and devious manner, he speaks to the audience in defense of his role in the

treatment of victims: “Listen, you don’t make no accusations, huh? What I do for you, you swine, it ain’t easy. Somebody, he’s got to live to tell about it. —Why me? Why not? I paid for my job. Listen, I *paid*.”[164] He describes his own sacrifices in the loss of his family, and it becomes clear that performing the role of Commandant was his chance at survival. The Commandant is initially introduced as speaking with a mix of Jewish accents, but here his identity as a Jew is solidified in the loss of his wife and son, Itzak, to the gas chambers: “He was a good boy. He went and he washed. And when he washed, when they spritzed him with...did he yell out—*Daddy, where are you?* I hear him! I hear him! God, I hear him! *Daddy!*—I paid! I paid! I paid!”[165] The Commandant’s job makes clear his role as a cog in the larger frame of genocide, and the hierarchy of prisoners the Nazis established to keep the camps running. Even though the Commandant runs the show in the beer hall, he is still a victim and is still expendable, though perhaps not to the obvious extent as prisoners below his rank. His position resembles that of the capo-s, who Viktor Frankl notes were often more cruel than the camp guards and “were chosen only from those prisoners whose characters promised to make them suitable for such procedures, and if they did not comply with what was expected of them, they were immediately demoted.”[166] Frankl does not excuse their behavior and suggests they “became much like the SS men and the camp wardens and may be judged on a similar psychological basis.”[167] The Commandant is ruthless in pushing patrons to the EXIT, but uses his victimhood to account for his own crimes. The exchange of new prisoners for patrons shows the repetitive motion of the killing system and that no one is safe from the fate of the EXIT.

By using the cabaret stage to represent the concentration camp, the play’s blatant references to the Holocaust conceals its horrors with humor and entertainment, allowing it to

present the Holocaust onstage without relying on realistic representations. The elusive quality of the Holocaust experience manifests in the cabaret space by hiding the fates of performers behind the EXIT door and concealing the camp environment with performance. Cabaret traditionally dismantles notions of illusion, but here the play turns it into the illusion it ultimately rejects, and it acts as a diversion from the truth behind the concentration camp. True to life representations are exchanged for performances that suggest the impossibility of staging the Holocaust because, as Gerald Rabkin writes in his introduction to the play: "If an attempt at representing the unrepresentable is made, Bernard implies, it cannot accept art's formal consolations; it has no choice but to risk its receptors' revulsion."[168] Indeed, the play creates a space to accommodate the bizarre antics of its characters and in doing so, incorporates crude and satirical humor to represent an event that has traditionally been treated with such a high degree of solemnity. In his essay on laughter in works about the Holocaust, Terrence Des Pres writes: "high seriousness is governed by a compulsion to reproduce, by the need to create a convincing likeness that never quite succeeds, never feels complete, just as earnestness feels inadequate to best intentions. Comic works, on the contrary, escape such liabilities; laughter is hostile to the world it depicts and subverts the respect on which representation depends."[169] *How We Danced While We Burned* resists attempts at mimicry and embraces an offbeat and potentially offensive humor, but even with its questionable taste, it instills a level of respect with its rejection of accuracy and its acknowledgment of the impossibility of accurately representing the loss embedded in Holocaust experience.

Courtroom Scenes in *Sammy's Follies* and *The Trials of John Demjanjuk*

Sammy's Follies: A Criminal Comedy uses comedy to a similar effect in staging the criminal trial of Auschwitz Commandant Franz Ferdinand Höss. Höss, the man who introduced the pesticide Zyklon B for use in the gas chambers, is being tried for the crime of "Willful, personal, prolonged *in*difference."[170] The trial is staged in a bar called "The Follies," where a troupe of ragtag misfits play various parts in the courtroom. They reenact crime scenes and give testimony in front of a jury made up of recruited audience members who are responsible for deciding the verdict at the end of the play. The troupe of players uses a script for dialogue when acting out the trial and use anything from mop heads to toilet paper for costumes. The bar supplies a setting similar to that of a cabaret and the performance subverts any notion of true to life representation. The players maintain a constant awareness of the trial's fictional portrayal, and use comedy in a rejection of the "convincing likeness" that Des Pres claims "never quite succeeds."[171] Their foolish behavior is presented through a cabaret like revue and gives meaning to the bar's title. A play within a play, the courtroom scenes are embedded into the space of the bar, which is closed for business because it is election day. The characters are an unruly bunch, both in the bar and during the trial scenes, and constantly test the limits of the stage with their mischievous antics.

Sammy, bar owner of The Follies, begins the play by alerting the audience to the stage's illusions: "Twelve low comics!... One burlesque blonde! And me! Sworn this show to diversions more real than natural. Madcap athletes! Gutter *artistes*! Hired to rid an audience of its illusions. Trust in nothing. The spectacle is bait, the jokes a stratagem. Our performances? Sugar on the arsenic!"[172] His introduction is similar to the welcoming words of *Cabaret*'s Emcee and *Camp*

Comedy's Imp, who establish the fictional makeup of the stage for the audience. He introduces his troupe before each member assumes a role in the performance of Höss's trial. Sammy plays Höss, and the others take on the roles of the prosecution, defense and witnesses. The prosecution begins with the charge of indifference and the wish to "see a crime *never fully examined* brought to justice."[173] Over the course of the trial witnesses are brought to the stage, but because some of them are dead or silent, the prosecution requests the court permit it to act out their testimonies.

The first dead witness, concentration camp prisoner A-one-thirty-four-Zero-fifteen, reenacts his hanging with a rope and a series of twitches. In response to the defense's claim that the "exhibition is morbid and in questionable taste,"[174] the prosecution states: "hangings are, by definition, morbid. And always, I might add, in questionable taste. My lord, we've researched this scene with care and can attest to its accuracy."[175] By not attempting a true likeness, the performance possesses greater control over how it can present the hanging in the courtroom. The hanging might not appear authentic, but the defense's claim of accuracy attests to the fact that the stage can only show so much, and the experience of death onstage is only relative to the audience watching it in the present moment. Similarly, witness testimony cannot reproduce an experience and the play addresses this through its interrogation of the courtroom as a space of performance. The play expands beyond the limits of what a real courtroom can portray and raises the question of what can be witnessed in the courtroom and how effective that performance is in accounting for the initial crime that cannot be shown.

This same idea is reflected in the play's examination of Holocaust performance and in claims that one cannot bear witness to the Holocaust. In *Remnants of Auschwitz*, Giorgio Agamben discusses gaps in survivor testimonies and describes the limits of the witness in

response to Primo Levi's discussion of survivor testimony: "The witness usually testifies in the name of justice and truth and as such his or her speech draws consistency and fullness. Yet here the value of testimony lies essentially in what it lacks; at its center it contains something that cannot be borne witness to and that discharges the survivors of authority. The 'true' witness, the 'complete witnesses,' are those who did not bear witness and could not bear witness."[176] The play's use of the dead to reenact testimony encompasses the lack that Agamben describes in testimony, which also resonates in the prosecutors desire to seek justice for "a crime *never fully examined*."[177] This refers to both a lack of trial for the crime and the inability to bear witness to the crime, because the true witness is no longer able to take the witness stand.

The embedded performance structure that places the courtroom scenes in the bar illustrates the loss of testimony through its layers of performance, but also allows the audience to actively participate in witnessing. The audience's incorporation into the jury does not allow them to sit passively, but forces them to actively pass judgment in the final verdict. The jury is another facet of the embedded performance that permits a viewing of the self as a witness, and suggests the importance of witnessing the witness in the chain of Holocaust testimony. Gaps in testimony may persist, but the duty to witness history and acknowledge its losses are critical in understanding how the losses of the past manifest themselves for current generations. The jury is used in a similar way to the mirror in *Cabaret*, as it reflects biases and judgments of the audience who watch themselves onstage, both the audience watching their fellow audience members in the jury and the audience jurors who are made aware of their performance in the play. It breaks any illusion that the players create and confronts the audience with the world beyond the stage. The end of the play offers three optional endings to accommodate the audience of any given

performance, but whether the verdict is "guilty," "innocent," or "no decision,"[178] the play reminds us "corruption and indifference continue,"[179] and "no one is indifferent!"[180]

In *The Trials of John Demjanjuk: A Holocaust Cabaret*, a cabaret performance seeks to uncover the truth of John Demjanjuk, a man originally charged with being Ivan the Terrible of Treblinka before his verdict was overturned a few years later. The cabaret is conducted by an accordion playing emcee called Fraülein who, along with her sidekick named Rosie, tells the story of John's trials and flashes back to his childhood, his adult life in Cleveland and his time during World War II. In the spirit of the emcee characters of the previously discussed plays, Fraülein presents the "Holocaust Cabaret,"[181] describing the performance as a "night of nightmares."[182] She does not declare the stage as a space of illusion, but through a series of Brechtian style songs and narrative commentary, she establishes a self-awareness in the storytelling device of the cabaret that frames the play's embedded scenes surrounding John's trials. John's trials take place in the courtroom, but also correspond to the trials of seeking truth in courtroom testimony and in John's memories of his past during the war.

The play explores the limits of testimony in the courtroom, and questions the authenticity of his memories. It also questions the motives of the play's audience in witnessing John's trials, alluded to in Fraülein's introductory remarks:

> So you came to laugh.
>
> Or not.
>
> To forget your problems.
>
> To watch the torments of another man.

Thank God its not me, you will say.

Thank God it is a monster.

This is not my story.

This is not me.[183]

She suggests the audience hopes to find escape in the cabaret, as similarly promised by the Emcee of the Kit Kat Club, but also acknowledges a voyeuristic side to witnessing and a self-righteousness in distancing themselves from the evil they see in John. However, because John denies being Ivan the Terrible and his identity is uncertain, the audience cannot justifiably claim their own innocence. John's trial reflects the audience members who witness and judge him before the court comes to a verdict. It constructs guilt around their readiness to place blame on him and the refusal to acknowledge any evil in themselves. In this sense the distance between the audience and courtroom, as suggested by the immediacy of the cabaret, is proven false, and the illusion of their own innocence is reflected in John's denial of guilt.

The play's cabaret does not take place in a specific venue, such as a beer hall or theater, but exists purely within the Brechtian performance style of song that breaks up scenes and brings awareness to the embedded cabaret structure. Brechtian performance influences the musical interludes that awaken the audience to the illusion of the courtroom and the vehicle of the stage that presents the search for John's true identity. The cabaret framework also lengthens the chain of witnessing as the audience views the courtroom through the cabaret, embedding layers into the memory of John's past and the memory of his witnesses. This is further emphasized through

the character of Ivan, who acts as a foil to John in a reincarnation of Ivan the Terrible. Ivan first appears as John sleeps and sings the song "The Myth of Ivan the Terrible." He sings:

I'm Ivan the Terrible
God, what a name
I put the devil
And his angels to shame
I am here to bring out the darkness in men

If your water's too pure
Your garden too green
If your body is soft
And your mind is too clean
I'll be sure to muck it and maim it again

Oh the moon has a nice look tonight
But it's only a reflection
It is not its own light
If your conscience seems a little too quiet
I have to come to inspire it
To remember things that you'd probably rather forget[184]

Ivan appears throughout the play as a figment of John's imagination, acknowledged only by John, Fraülein and Rosie, and fills John's head with talk of murderous behavior. In his song he praises his wicked character and shows his intent to remind John of the evil that lurks inside him. He disturbs John with stories about the concentration camps and suggests that John is more complicit in the crime of killing than he acknowledges. "How is it you haven't broken?" he asks John, "Do you put your memories in a compartment and just forget? I can't. Killing was so easy back then. The hard part was how to dispose of the bodies."[185] John consistently denies involvement in criminal activity, but Ivan suggests he and John are not much different.

John maintains that he is a "good man,"[186] but Ivan's persistent pestering begins to influence John into thinking he might also harbor a deep evil inside of him. The question of John's identity is subject to the verdict of the court and the memory of the witnesses who testify against him, but his memory is not enough to convince the court of his innocence, especially when he expresses difficulty in remembering the past. When John is questioned by the prosecutor, he labels himself a survivor, stating: "These are atrocities that I want to forget, but can't, just as anyone who survived the Holocaust."[187] He victimizes himself in remembering the suffering he endured during the famine in Ukraine, but when asked about his failure to mention his time in Chelm during his first indictment, he replies: "I can't help what I forget."[188] What John lacks in memory, Ivan makes up for in his own gruesome accounts of the camps. John tries to distance himself from Ivan by establishing his innocence, but in the courtroom John is only seen as Ivan the Terrible, and his conviction is the ultimate prize for those who seek justice.

John and Ivan's conflicting memories demonstrate the limits of the courtroom in revealing truth, and in the cabaret setting this takes on additional meaning through its

representation of the absence of truth onstage. The cabaret frame reinforces what is not said onstage and reflects the survivors who cannot articulate their experiences. This lack of testimony reinforces the trauma from the loss of the Holocaust experience, as seen through the loss of its victims, which is then, as Shoshana Felman suggests, repeated through the reenactment of the trial.[189] The play's theatrical reenactment of the trial therefore creates multiple layers of the absence of the traumatic experience which cannot adequately be articulated in the courtroom or onstage. The absence is indicated through the illusion of the cabaret, which is further embedded into the greater structure of theatrical concealment. This structure, as consistently seen in this chapter's plays, ultimately points to the difficulty of contending with Holocaust loss and the delicate relationship between the Holocaust and the portrayal of its traumatic history, whether onstage, in the cabaret or in the courtroom.

CHAPTER IV

Memorial Performance: The Site of Memory

> "Whatever the origins of theater, it has always struggled with the desire to be something other than what it is: duplicitous or equivocal—the intention being to return it to the real, some purer stage, as before, where desire was, and didn't fail."
>
> —Herbert Blau, *Take Up the Bodies*[190]

Making Room for Memory and Tradition

The holiday of Passover commemorates the freedom of the Hebrews from Egyptian slavery as told in Exodus, recalling their hard labor and departure from Egypt. Each year at Passover Jewish families participate in the holiday seder, a ceremonial meal that includes an ordered set of prayers and symbolic rituals.[191] Personalized seders often incorporate traditions unique to each participating family's cultural influences and it is common to include memorial prayers for the victims of the Holocaust. Many also include the symbolic action of leaving an extra chair at the Passover table to represent the Holocaust victims who could not be there. Some traditions determine the chair should remain empty to acknowledge the absence of Holocaust victims, while others insist it should be filled so that there is always one more Jew at the table.

The chair's meaning, however, is centered in its representation of loss and its call for the remembrance of past oppression, which is performed alongside the ritual of remembering enslavement in Egypt. It places the narrative of Holocaust loss within the long historic plight of the Jews, suggesting it has as much bearing on contemporary constructions of Jewish identity as the enslavement of Jews in Egypt has had on Jewish identity for centuries.

The chair is particularly noticeable in that its symbolic status is meant to embody all of Holocaust loss. It generally does not represent one lost body, but the collective understanding of all lost experiences and lives. Especially now, decades after the event, the symbol of the chair is less specific and more a suggestion of the pervading sense of loss that lingers with the call for Holocaust remembrance. The chair is therefore more representative of communal, as opposed to personal, remembrance that generalizes the call for memory as something pertinent to the Jewish community as a whole. Its physical presence supplements the absence of what it represents, exhibiting a theatricality that complements the ritual performance of the Passover seder. It performs an absence that cannot be ignored and concretizes Holocaust loss in its command of the physical space. The Passover chair will bruise a shin if not minded. One must walk around it and make room for its place at the table. Likewise, one must make room for the Holocaust as it continues to manifest in histories of trauma and the anxieties that emerge from recalling a loss that was never witnessed. It dually recalls the phantom hauntings experienced by post-Holocaust generations as it occupies the space of identity with its ghostly presence and absence of murdered Jews. It serves as a reminder that the ghosts of the past demand a place in the construction of contemporary Jewish identity, memory and practice.

In her book, *We Remember with Reverence and Love*, Hasia Diner chronicles the incorporation of the Holocaust into American Jewish life, including prayers in the Passover Haggadah, the ceremonial seder prayer book. She writes: "American Jews made the tragedy and the need to remember [the Holocaust] a profound part of their collective communal existence, inscribing it in books and performances, in liturgies, and in the programs of their institutions."[192] It is through these acts of remembrance, she argues, that Jewish communities were not silent in the years immediately following the Holocaust, but strove to address its losses. Diner's study focuses specifically on American Jewry and reaches only until 1962, but over fifty years later, the will to document and memorialize this loss still plays an important part in the culture of Holocaust remembrance in the United States and abroad. Memorial projects take many forms, from museums and architectural monuments to ritual performances, such as those at the Passover table. The use of the chair makes physical space for the Holocaust in Jewish tradition and imparts the importance of carrying out the memory of loss, which is made even more pressing with the transition into an era of the final loss of Holocaust survivors. For post-Holocaust generations, though, a solid foundation of memory has already been established, particularly in spaces of remembrance that seek to document, memorialize and teach about the Holocaust.

The act of remembrance for post-Holocaust generations has largely moved into the physical arena, creating links between memorial tradition and physical space. Spaces like archives, memorial museums and former concentration camp grounds aim to document, memorialize and teach, and like the Passover chair they act as a physical manifestation of remembrance, loss and communal endurance. In the following discussion I will look at various types of memorial spaces to show how they bridge the narrative and experiential aspects of

memory in a multilayered performance of remembrance and post-Holocaust trauma. Though I acknowledge the inherent presence of the archive in memorial spaces, I am less concerned with the archive as I am with designated memorial sites, and particularly Holocaust memorial museums, which is where I will base my discussion. In representing genocide and the Nazi tactics that made the Holocaust possible, memorial museums are quick to draw on similar tactics to move visitors through their spaces, thus reenacting the traumatic circumstances that led to the call for remembrance in the first place. While this often entails educational objectives that teach history and address the current state of world oppression and genocide, they also have the potential to mislead visitors and contribute to the culture of trauma that surrounds the Holocaust. In the following discussion I will consider how the curatorial mechanism of the museum recalls the mechanical framework of the Holocaust in a performance that dictates the physical and emotional movement of spectators to cultivate a distinct mind and body experience. This first requires an understanding of the killing mechanics of the Holocaust, and how both industrial machinery and organizational tactics contributed to the manipulation of minds and the movement of bodies across the European landscape.

Memorial Mechanics

In *Murder in Our Midst* Omer Bartov discusses the industrialized nature of the Holocaust as a result of the war mechanics that allowed for mass genocide.[193] He cites the Holocaust as the prime example of "industrialized killing," resulting from the modern industrialized state that characterized Germany after World War I. He writes: "The mechanized, rational, impersonal, and sustained mass destruction of human beings, organized and administered by states, legitimized

and set in motion by scientists and jurists, sanctioned and popularized by academics and intellectuals, has become a staple of our civilization, the last, perilous, and often repressed heritage of the millennium."[194] He intrinsically ties the industrial state to, what I call, an industrial mindset, which made necessary the cultivation of a communal understanding of the necessity for murder. He locates the industrialized nature of the Holocaust in its legitimization by the state, emanating from the industrial arena's promise for a better future: "Industrial killing, however, is a much newer phenomenon, not only in that its main precondition was the industrialization of human society, but also in the sense that this process of industrialization came to be associated with progress and improvement, hope and optimism, liberty and democracy, science and the rule of law."[195] The war was supported by those who believed that weeding out "inferior" races from society would lead to a higher standard of culture and living, and just as industrialization became a marker of progress, so too did the removal of these undesirable individuals from the community.

If industrialization held the promise of a better standard of living, and ethnic cleansing was the answer to Germany's discontent, than it seems fitting that industrial warfare served as a key element in making the Nazi dream a reality. After all, as Bartov insists, the war tactics of World War I had already set in place all of the necessary framework for a wide-scale persecution, which easily paved the way for mass murder: "For the Holocaust was far more directly the almost perfect reenactment of the Great War (and its own imagery of hell), with the important correction that all the perpetrators were on one side and all the victims on the other. Everything was there: the barbed wire, the machine guns, the charred bodies, the gas, the uniforms, the military discipline, the barracks."[196] The structural basis for the concentration camps and mass

transport of bodies was already set in motion, falling under the encompassing system of what Bartov classifies as total warfare, which reaches extremes in the assignment of good and evil and guarantees security to those carrying out the killing under the Nazi regime: "this reenactment had the great advantage that it was *totally* lethal for the inmates and *totally* safe for the guards. And the killing too, needless to say, was *total*."[197] From this we can see that the systematic destruction of the Jews, as the primary group intended for slaughter, was as much a result of an industrial mindset stemming from the industrial machinery that entered the battleground of World War I, as it was the actual machinery used to carry out the killing on the warfront and in the camps.

Bartov grounds his discussion of industrial killing in the tactical measures on the battlefield, and while tactical warfare is not the focus of this chapter, the underlying idea behind industrial killing as a synthesis of the intellectual and physical components of mass murder are important in understanding the representation of genocide in spatially defined Holocaust sites which, in their movement of bodies through the space and manipulation of historical and emotional material, inadvertently mimic the tactics of the killing systems they aim to represent.[198] This factor is difficult, if not impossible, to avoid, but it is important to consider the effects it might have on post-Holocaust trauma and the state of Holocaust memory for current and future generations. To further expand on how industrial killing worked in the Holocaust, and specifically the concentration camps, I deviate slightly here from Bartov's discussion in adapting its basic tenets to break down the tools of industry that mobilized bodies in the killing process, and the more intellectually concerned, organizational tactics that maintained order in the chaos of war and genocide. I refer to these tools of industry as those that relied on actual machinery to conduct the killings, including the gas vans, gas chambers and cremation ovens that killed and

disposed of bodies, as well as the railroad system that allowed for the mass movement of prisoners across Europe's landscape in the various stages of the ghettos and concentration camps.

Distinct from the weaponry used on the warfront, these tools were crucial in conducting genocide on such a massive level and, as Bartov notes that many elements of the concentration camps were already in existence from the labors of World War I, their potential only had to be re-imagined to go from killing on the battlefield to killing in the camps. Industrial progress secured a natural pathway towards genocide which, unconscious at first in it efforts to mobilize bodies and goods, easily adapted to moving those bodies towards erasure. It was only a matter of time before the masses of slaughtered bodies were not to be found on the warfront, but contained in the towns, ghettos and concentration camps that faced the corruption of industrial ingenuity. Gas was no longer reserved for infantrymen on the battlefield, but for victims of the mobile gas vans that entered Jewish towns, and the gas chambers which could accommodate larger numbers in the camps.

The railroad system is perhaps the most potent example of the move towards genocide, in that it literally moved bodies to their deaths, underlying the larger operation of the Nazi agenda to redraw the lines of Europe by extending power and accomplishing it through the removal of those undesired persons from its land. The intricate system only had to be minimally converted to serve the purpose of prisoner transports. In this case, the trains that were once meant to transport passengers, goods and soldiers now made it possible to move prisoners across the continent. Diverting tracks to reach the camps and making sure the railcars were hollow enough to hold an unprecedented number of bodies for more effective mobilization gave the system a new purpose and literally moved victims to the hellish grounds of the camps and towards their

deaths. The railroad that was originally meant to alleviate the burdens of daily life by making travel and the transport of goods easier now became a part of other greater system of mass murder. Technological advancement and expansion which were once built for the betterment of daily living were now in service to the Final Solution, which determined that German lives would be better with the removal of those lives they saw as inferior.

The industrial progress of Europe, even beyond the sphere of warfare, pushed towards mobilizing society and making it more efficient, which was then reapplied by the Nazis to make it more efficient through the erasure of the Jews as the primary cause of Germany's troubles. This trend is by no means unique to the Holocaust and World War II, as can be seen in the potential of nuclear and biological warfare arising from scientific advancement, but it is hard to ignore the blatant warning signs of the "total" killing systems of the twentieth century World Wars when an invention as seemingly good natured as a transportation device is now an iconic sign of death when referenced with the Holocaust. Though integral to the act of genocide, the actual machinery used for killing was only the final manifestation of the meticulous planning that cultivated the industrial mindset amongst the perpetrators and bystanders who enabled the destruction of Europe and led to its millions of murdered victims.

The physical components of the killing process could not operate alone and thrived on those organizational tactics that kept the killing and camps in operation. I refer here to the blueprints of the camps themselves with their overcrowded barracks, barbed wire, electric fences and armed guards, as well as camp hierarchies created among prisoners to maintain order through self-regulation. This resulted in the selection of capo-s, or prisoners positioned as the heads of barracks or work factions, who upheld the camp's state of discipline by giving the

illusion of power within prisoner ranks, while in reality capo-s were still prisoners who were subject to their Nazi captors. The capo-s, who were often brutal in their treatment of the prisoners they oversaw, were important in ensuring bodies were accounted for and organized, as were tedious procedures such as tiresome roll calls which could last for days, long soup lines and prison labor. These measures instilled a sense of routine in the camps, which were otherwise unpredictable. Subject to change at any moment with prisoner transports, the reassignment of labor and death sentences in the gas chambers, these seemingly smaller motions were essential cogs in the larger concentration camp system, which further helped to shape an industrial mindset in support of the natural progression towards the use of killing machines off of the battlefield.

Propaganda was of course integral in this process, as it created an intellectual and emotional pathway for European citizens towards the rationalization of killing. It was also crucial in propagating the lie of the camps through covering up the underlying truth of killing, as discussed in Chapter Two. To take the example of art production in Theresienstadt, the *Freizeitgestaltung* program, "beautification" of the grounds and authorized performances ultimately led to the Red Cross's approval of camp conditions during its 1944 tour, and was highly reliant on how the representatives were moved through the camp grounds. The tour affected both the prisoners who were subject to continued persecution and the Red Cross representatives who became pawns for the Nazis who dictated their every move in the camp, determining where they could go and what they could see. Theresienstadt's microcosmic view of its propaganda tactics is important in understanding how the mechanics of the killing system

worked on prisoners and bystanders alike, subjecting the former to the mechanized order of labor and death and the latter to the emotional propaganda that allowed for destruction to occur.

Theresienstadt's propaganda tactics make it clear that the mechanics of the Holocaust went far beyond the actual machinery that conducted the killing, and relied on numerous factors to oil the greater machine of genocide. It specifically demonstrates how bodies were affected within the space of Nazi influence and underscores the industrial quality of genocide in relation to the movement of bodies. In the case of the Red Cross tour, prisoners were carefully positioned to paint an ideal picture of camp life and the representatives took a predetermined course that revealed the camp's facade, but concealed its miseries. This is reflective of the movement of prisoners in their transition from their cities and towns to the ghettos, their movement across the continent on trains to the concentration camps, and ultimately through and between camps as they edged closer to death in the gas chamber, death marches and in the daily motions of camp life.

The mechanics of the genocide depended on the industrial machinery of murder and the industrial quality of the Nazi strategy that kept bodies in motion and moved them emotionally and physically towards destruction. As previously stated, these are the movements often captured in attempts to create physical memorials of the Holocaust, as seen in memorials and museums. These spaces create theatrical stage grounds of memory, not unlike the camp grounds that were staged in Theresienstadt. The museums are tasked with relaying information, while also accounting for the emotional content involved in its display via textual or video displays, artifacts and architectural statements. In the three museums I discuss below, the Holocaust is displayed through historical narratives and is highly reliant on moving visitors through history by

moving them through the imaginary spaces of the Holocaust. Whether these spaces contain scaled models, genuine artifacts or informational plaques and videos, the manipulation of bodies and emotions recalls the history it conveys in a collision of the past and present in a constructed space of memory.

In her study of slave castle-dungeons in Ghana, Sandra L. Richards explores the space of the Elmina slave castle, observing: "we tourists are required to re-enact in some small measure an aspect of the captives' experiences."[199] Similarly, in her work on legal trials, Shoshana Felman addresses the traumatic re-enactment that occurs in the courtroom.[200] Each setting attempts to address traumatic histories through connecting with history or seeking justice, and suggests that each person involved replay history in recalling or imagining events. It reinforces the trauma of the inciting event that is beyond the present experience, and informs the present moment through the experiencing of witnessing remnants of the past, whether they are artifacts, histories or the spatial grounds on which the original trauma occurred. The sites below are all located outside of Europe, therefore away from the site of Holocaust persecution. They must rely on means beyond historical grounds to communicate history and memory, and result to various means of emotional and bodily manipulation to enact Holocaust remembrance. Though constructed as sites of memory that also aim to raise awareness and promote justice and healing in the present day, they inadvertently continue the chain of trauma through traumatic re-enactment.

Scaled Holocaust Models

The Museum of Tolerance (MOT) in Los Angeles relies heavily on the use of technology to foster conversations about injustice, particularly within the context of the Holocaust. The

museum's website identifies a twofold mission that identifies the space as "a human rights laboratory and educational center dedicated to challenging visitors to understand the Holocaust in both historic and contemporary contexts and confront all forms of prejudice and discrimination in our world today."[201] The museum's interior architectural design reflects this duality in the main exhibits on the ground floor of the museum, offering a Tolerance Center and separate Holocaust exhibit. Descending down a spiral ramp, visitors are given two choices of where to begin their tour. To the left lies the entrance to the Tolerance Center, a hallway that beckons with its bright array of flat screen televisions that broadcast various news stations. The flickering pictures and overlapping voices sharply differ from the darkly lit entrance to the Holocaust exhibit, tucked behind a large mural depicting a young Adolf Hitler speaking to his loyal supporters. The diverging pathway at the base of the ramp requires the visitor to make the choice between the exhibits, setting up an opposition between the two from the start. The museum's noble mission makes the two exhibits compete for attention, suggesting the visitor must prioritize the value of one over the other.

Visually and spatially, the path most naturally leads first to the Tolerance Center. The television hall's noise and moving pictures are intriguing, if not unsettling, as they plug the visitor into the current state of world affairs and chaos, and usher them into the spectacle of news headlines and media reporting. Emerging from the hallway, another video display confronts the visitor with "ethnic and minority stereotypes as a means to challenge their current attitudes and perceptions,"[202] and is once again presented with a choice: to enter a door marked "Prejudiced" or another marked "Unprejudiced." The path, however, is fixed and only the "Prejudiced" door is a viable option. The other is locked, insinuating that we all have the capacity to "prejudge," with

or without malicious intent, and that while we must confront our own personal biases, we must also consider how heightened instances of bias can lead to greater measures of intolerance and injustice. Behind the "Prejudiced" door is a larger room filled with more video feeds, interactive media and activities proposing the wide scope of intolerance in the United States and around the world. Various computerized activities allow visitors to respond to scenarios of injustice, ranging from bullying and drunk driving, to women's rights and child slavery. A video on American Civil Rights plays on a loop across from a "history wall" chronicling injustice in the United States, which reveals more information with the touch of a button. A final film about world genocide ends the Tolerance Center tour before leading visitors to the entrance of the Holocaust exhibit.

The Holocaust exhibit continues the use of technology to impart information. Before entering the exhibit, visitors select ID cards with photographs of children persecuted in the Holocaust. Computers located throughout the exhibit give information about each child, corresponding to the historical progression of the tour. Passing through a set of automatic doors, visitors are left to follow lights and sounds as they make their way through a historical study of the Holocaust. The tour is conducted by a fictional trio of a researcher, historian and museum designer, shown as immobile plaster figures, who introduce the visitor to the early years of the Nazi rise to power in a series of dioramas. The dioramas act as tiny stages, dramatized with lighting, voiceovers and music. The "tour guides" lead visitors through the room as they pass various scenes depicting Germany in the 1930s, including a store window filled with copies of *Mein Kampf* and a cafe where more scaled mannequins discuss their hopes and fears in the changing political atmosphere. The tour guides move visitors through the space as if making them a part of history, though at all times the visitor remains at a distance from the diorama

stages. The visitor passes through the museum at a fixed pace, determined by the timed tour cycle, and led by the audio recorded guidance of the tour guide machines. The guides appear throughout the exhibit in their mannequin form, but when unseen they still enact power over the visitors through their recorded voices, light and sound effects.

Unlike the Tolerance Center, there is no time to stop and reflect on the information given for most of the exhibit, which continues in the adjoining rooms with a video narrative of the events of *Kristallnacht*,[203] a hologram diorama based enactment of the Wannsee Conference,[204] video narratives of Jewish resistance set amidst a scaled backdrop of demolished towns, and a large map depicting the expansive railway system that transported prisoners to camps across Europe. It is not until passing through a metal gate that visitors can take a moment to themselves as they peer at artifacts from the camps and a scaled model of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp. This moment of contemplation is short lived however, when the incoming tour group from the next timed tour cycle pushes visitors to walk through one of two hallways labeled "Able-Bodied" and "Children and Others," emulating the fate of prisoners who were either sent to the gas chambers or labor camps. Confronted with the first decision since entering the interior Holocaust exhibit, the visitor is once again falsely given the impression of choice. The hallways both lead to the same "Hall of Testimony," where voice actors narrate the stories of Holocaust victims in a room suggesting the concrete construction of a gas chamber. The exhibit purports to capture the experience of the gas chamber selections, but the scenario is undercut by both tunnels leading to the same space. Like the scaled cafe, towns and rubble, the hallways are "authentic" in their aesthetic. Their positioning among the camp artifacts, scaled camp model and barbed wire gates elicits an eeriness about the space, which speaks more to the theatrical

representation of choice than the lack of choice prisoners actually had in the camps. Exiting the Hall of Testimony concludes the tour of the interior exhibit, and visitors are met with stories of liberation. A final set of computers allow visitors to discover the fate of their ID card children, complete with a printout of the child's story.

The use of technology throughout the museum is captivating, though the dramatic portrayal of the Holocaust sometimes seems to confuse the use of artificial means of representation for the real. Bartov cites an article by Nicola Lisus and Richard Ericson that claims the museum's use of technology neglects intellect through its appeal to the emotions,[205] to which Bartov responds: "This is especially disturbing in view of the fact that emphasis on emotion rather than intellect was the central trope of fascism, both manipulating the masses in describing the 'other,' the 'Jew,' as being the exact opposite of this view, a person with a destructive intellect and a total inability to empathize."[206] By suggesting the presence of fascist tropes in a museum that seeks to dismantle the very core of intolerance, Bartov locates the long reaching influence of the Holocaust in the narrative of remembrance. The mechanics of the Holocaust suddenly find a place in the mechanics of the museum space, demonstrating the far reaching effects of the event as it continues to work on bodies as they pass through memorial spaces.

The visitor moves through Holocaust history in a technologically induced stupor, guided by a mechanical storytelling system that results in an emotionally driven tour, but little room for intellectual contemplation. This is also telling of how traumatic history is re-enacted upon the visitor. Very little action is needed on the part of spectators except for physically moving through the exhibit. They confront Holocaust persecution and genocide within the enclosed space that is

cut off from the rest of the museum and are cued to move through the exhibit as if on a conveyor belt that leads up to the grand finale of the hallway passages. The exhibit is like being stuck in a television set in which everything happens around the spectator, and where reflection can occur in a near comatose state. A voiceover at the end of the tour contemplates the common claim that Jews were led to their deaths "like sheep to the slaughter," which sums up the re-enactment of visitors through the museum as they make their way to the "gas chambers." They follow the path of a simulated Holocaust history to a supposed destruction, emerging to find more video screens boasting of American liberators and computer screens to inform them of their ID card child's fate. The near "death-like" experience is quickly subverted by stepping out of the Hall of Testimony, and the surroundings of a crumbling Europe, barbed wire and concentration camps all become a forgotten episode. Bodies are made to feel uncomfortable in the cold, darkly lit exhibit, rocked by the plaster rubble and barbed wire gate. The trauma of the past is used to fuel the experience, and though visitors are merely surrounded by a theatrical set, the simulated terrain of the Holocaust spurs a traumatic re-enactment that keeps the original event and its trauma alive.

Perhaps the most unsettling part of the exhibit is seeing the few real artifacts in the exhibit, which includes a Nazi uniform and flag displayed next to the Wannsee Conference diorama, and a display case with prisoner uniforms and camp artifacts placed next to the scaled Auschwitz-Birkenau model. Within the "realistically" designed interiors of the Holocaust exhibit, the inclusion of artifacts is limited. In comparison to the constant movement of video displays and the lights and sounds that guide visitors through the space, the stagnant artifacts are easy to pass by with little more than a glance. Their display cases seem out of place among the artificial "sets," almost making them seem the artificial intruders on the museum stage. Their

addition requires an awkward transition between witnessing the exhibit's artifice and witnessing the real. The Nazi uniform's presence is unsettling, not just because of the memory embedded in the crispness of its collar and Nazi insignia, but because of the realistic experience it conveys in comparison to the constructed experience of the artificial exhibit. Scholar Oren Baruch Stier writes: "In general, material artifacts of the Holocaust are among the most powerful signifiers of that era, because they carry and convey the material trace of authentic experience."[207] In the case of the artifacts in the exhibit, their iconic signification is overshadowed by the representation of icons in the video footage, voiceover narrative and recorded musical accompaniment.

In *Spectacular Suffering: Theatre, Fascism and the Holocaust*, Vivian Patraka creates a working model for Holocaust museums as performance sites, repurposing Michel de Certeau's concept of "place" and "space" within the context of performance. She writes: "For my purposes, place means a pre-scripted performance of interpretation, and space produces sites for multiple performances of interpretation that situate/produce the spectator as historical subject."[208] In the case of the MOT, the "pre-scripted" performance of the technology enhanced tour places the Holocaust in its own historical moment, disconnected from the "other" instances of genocide that are given two or three minutes of screen time in the Tolerance Center. The mode of presentation is restrictive and the fixed voiceover reduces the visitor's mobility, both spatially and intellectually. It confines the visitor to a narrow historical view of the Holocaust through the scenic details of artificial German streets, ruins and camp grounds. The museum openly states its aim that visitors understand the Holocaust in "historic and contemporary contexts," but the separation of the two exhibits and the shallow exploration into a broad collection of

contemporary issues gives primacy to the Holocaust as the model of genocide and injustice to which all history compares.

The Tolerance Center is a saturation of information, leading up to the "main event" of the Holocaust, as suggested by the condensed selection of world injustices in the Tolerance Center and the sole focus of the Holocaust in the adjoining exhibit. While the Holocaust exhibit leads the visitor back to the spiral ramp to exit the museum, the Tolerance Center leads right into the Holocaust exhibit, suggesting all contemporary issues of injustice must be seen in light of the Holocaust. This imbalance leads to cultural comparisons and the insistence on the uniqueness of hate in the Nazi powered genocide. The placement of the exhibit entrances and exits also invalidates the choice given to visitors at the beginning of the tour, as the natural flow of the museum path determines that visitors should leave with the Holocaust as the last thing on their minds. For those choosing to leave through the Tolerance Center, the final passage requires a winding search for the Holocaust exhibit's exit path, including a second brush with the Hitler mural, which once again suggests the Tolerance Center must be understood in the context of persecution and genocide of the Holocaust.

In response to comparative histories, Michael Rothberg proposes a productive approach to applying the Holocaust as a model for genocide with his theory of multidirectional memory. "I suggest that we consider memory as *multidirectional*," he writes, "as subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not private."[209] He uses an analysis of the Holocaust to address histories of colonialism, but does not treat the two histories as distinctly separate or detached events. Multidirectional memory instead looks at how each history leads to a deeper understanding of the other, by putting historical memories into

conversation with each other. It does not rely on claims of uniqueness, but on the ability to relate to surrounding events, demonstrating the interconnectivity of different communal experiences. Multidirectional memory is particularly relevant in its ideas of collective identification and remembrance, pushing the boundaries of how communities remember, and how they construct shared identities with other communities. The experience of walking through the MOT suggests its multidirectional approach to the Holocaust and the accompanying injustices presented in the Tolerance Center, but the emphasis on the emotionally charged Holocaust exhibit sets its history apart, resisting the interconnectivity of events and instead encapsulates the memory of the Holocaust in a self-contained narrative of oppression and genocide that demands special attention in its memorialization.

Were the two exhibits not placed side by side and promoted as equal parts of the main museum, the slight toward non-Holocaust features might seem less substantial. A nod towards today's world injustices through a featured exhibit would perhaps warrant it greater attention, knowing it did not have to compete with the Holocaust exhibit that lays concealed behind its automated doors. Given the Tolerance Center's not so subtle gestures to the possibility of unchecked prejudices resulting in the Holocaust, coupled with the emotional draw of the Holocaust exhibit, the two exhibits ultimately relay a message of impending doom if one does not stand up and speak about against intolerance. However, under the circumstances of leading visitors through the multimedia focused space that gives much of the thought process over to machines, the museum subverts the idea of actively turning thoughts into actions, and accommodates a silent observance of prejudice and oppression. The MOT is unique in its use of artifice to recreate a Holocaust experience for the visitor, but, as Bartov writes, "By trying to

make the audience 'feel' the event, the museum extracts it from its historical context, negating its past reality all together."[210] The visitor experiences the museum spectacle in an enclosed space and is encouraged to imagine walking through a German town, past the ruins of war torn streets and through a concentration camp. Like the Red Cross Representatives who left Theresienstadt believing the truth of the camp they witnessed, visitors risk leaving the MOT with a narrow view of Holocaust history, confined to the light and sound show that stands in for the real, and that fails to acknowledge its own artifice in its act of representation.

Artifact as Historical Narrative

Miles away from Los Angeles, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) in Washington D.C. prizes the display of artifacts and architecture to cultivate a national narrative for Holocaust remembrance. Built just off the National Mall, the museum's location situates the Holocaust within the narrative of American history, suggesting its occurrence in Europe has great meaning for Jews and the greater population in the United States. Like the MOT, the USHMM chronicles the events of the Holocaust from Hitler's rise to the liberation of the camps and new beginnings for Holocaust refugees, but instead of an automated tour, the USHMM self guided tour lets visitors pace themselves, allowing for freer movement in each exhibit section and the ability to stop and reflect throughout the space. This all culminates at the end of tour in the Hall of Remembrance, where visitors can light candles in memory of victims and reflect, suggesting the importance of making space for remembrance in the greater Holocaust narrative.

The museum's main exhibit unfolds over three floors, beginning with an elevator ride to the fourth floor where visitor's receive passports of real people who lived during the Holocaust. Unlike the MOT's plastic ID cards that reveal children's stories through a series of machines, the passports are printed on a sturdy card stock and provide each person's Holocaust story on the interior pages. It does not rely on machines to reveal information, freeing the visitor from dependence on technology for information. The exhibit does include some video screens, but information is mostly given through timeline panels placed throughout the exhibit and its abundance of artifacts. Artifacts are integral to the museum's display, as these pieces tells stories through their connection with the past, suggesting their memories are imbedded in their materials and that this brings authentication to their place in the museum and its historic narrative. Propaganda leaflets, photographs, uniforms, children's art, shoes, crematoria, a train car and countless objects fill display cases and ground space, accompanying the narrative of information panels that move the visitor through history.[211]

An often noted attraction of the museum is a roomful of shoes piled on the side of a pathway that visitors view as they walk past. On the day of my visit this room was under renovation and only a small pile of shoes covered the floor, yet the discolored and aging fabrics elicited a discomfort in response to the abandonment of mundane objects by bodies sent to the gas chambers. Patraka writes of the display: "shoes are malleable enough to retain the shape of their individual owners and, even, here and there, an impractical bow or a tassel. So each shoe provides a small, intimate remnant of survival in the loss; collected in piles, the shoes convey the magnitude of that loss without becoming abstracted or aestheticized."[212] The shoes are a confrontation with physical remnants of history, supplementing the display with a story in the

shoe's material history and silently conveying experience that a reenactment or textual narrative does not. Patraka continues: "despite constantly blowing fans, the shoes smell (from their own disintegration) and thus involve our bodies in making memory. The smell of the shoes is organic, like a live body, and in that way they become performers, standing in for the live bodies that are absent. Thus the shoes, as objects made to preform an absent subjectivity, are performative."[213] The shoes' disintegration is visible, not only enhancing their smell, but also reinforcing the growing passage of time between the Holocaust and the present. The noticeable rotting away of material presents a visible link between the shoes and their history, working on multiple sensory levels to create a performance in which the spectator witnesses the continuous distancing of time from the Holocaust.

History unfolds as the visitor advances through the museum, creating pathways through the exhibit's open space. Though the historical narrative flows in a general direction, multiple pathways can be made around and through artifact displays so visitors can choose how they move through the high volume of textual and artifactual information. An example of this is on the middle floor of the exhibit that features barracks from Auschwitz-Birkenau and a railway car set atop train tracks from Treblinka. At first glance the barracks section on display with its three tiered bunk appears quite large, though the reality of sleeping multiple prisoners to a bed puts into perspective the overcrowding that occurred in the space, particularly when more than 500 prisoners were divided among thirty-six bunk beds, as suggested by the museum's archive record.[214] This space is particularly revealing because of the central placement of the barrack in relation to the flow of visitors in and around its walls, where the ability to roam the floor produces a freedom of movement in contrast to the limited mobility prisoners must have had in

their confined quarters. The entry to the barracks display is adorned with a metal sign reading "Arbeit macht frei" ("work sets you free"), modeled after the famed metal gate at Auschwitz. The sign is visible after exiting the railway car, mirroring the sign prisoners must have seen upon their arrival to Auschwitz by train. The railway car is one of the first major features on the floor and is visible to visitors as they enter, though they must walk through a separate gallery before the car is actually accessible. The first view of the car is significant though, as traffic naturally flows towards its display, as if to remind visitors of the prisoners' impending transportations that took them away from their homes to unknown destinations. Upon reaching the car many visitors reach for their cameras to capture the image of the aged wooden planks and rusted metal. The ability to walk through the car offers an odd thrill. To stand inside it brings a morbid sense of excitement where, for a brief moment, one might feel the convergence of the past and present emerging in the car interior's dark corners.

The railway car is extremely iconic of Holocaust history, which Stier writes is "directly related to victim experiences of the time, in this case representing and indeed embodying the experience of deportation, and conveys something of the gravity of that experience, repeated countless times, through the absence of its human cargo."[215] My experience of walking through its interior was met with expectations about what to feel in this space of absence when I could freely enter and exit its doors. The prospect of entering its enclosed space elicited wonder in being surrounded by something so integral to the large scale transport and displacement of prisoners across Europe. Of course, the car alone is not responsible for anything without the minds and hands that controlled it, but its part in the mechanical operations of persecution imbue it with the terror and suffering that occurred within its walls. Despite the wear and tear of age,

the knowledge of its history as part of the transport held a significant degree of intimidation. Walking through the car generated a profound shift in my bodily energy, brought on by my anticipation, heightened emotional state in the museum, the car's dark interior and, most noticeably, its smell. The car had a very distinct smell of damp wood. It was sweet but rotten, old but still breathing. Like Patraka's description of the disintegrating shoes, the aging smell of the wood enacted a performance by incorporating bodies in the memory making process. Though faint, the power of the smell was overwhelming and transformative. My overactive imagination made me think I could smell the sweating, defecating and dying bodies that were once crowded in the car, and my pulse quickened. This made me want to touch it and, against the direction of signs not to touch the artifact, I reached out my hand to graze the wall as I exited through its second door.

I was acutely aware of my shifted emotional state once I emerged, but did the car truly embody the historical memory to perform this liminal power? Was its magic capable of lasting so many years after its use and through so many visitors who walked through its doors? My anticipation when I initially approached the car was heightened, as I trusted the USHMM would provide me with an authentic experience with its artifacts on display, one in which I could make contact with a train that actually transported Holocaust prisoners seventy years ago. After all, I had not traveled across the country to walk through a prop piece, like those scaled models in the MOT. Or so I originally thought. In his study of Holocaust icons, Stier discusses the museum's acquisition of its famed railway car and the likelihood that it was never used to transport Jews to Treblinka, or anywhere for that matter.[216] After finding the car in Warsaw where it had been used as a film prop, a museum team who had been searching for artifacts in Europe began

arrangements to transport the car to the United States.[217] However, after further inquiry into assurances made by Polish authorities that the car was authentic, it was found that their claims lacked proper evidence, and so the museum accepted that the car was merely the kind used in transports, allowing its iconic imagery to outweigh its unlikely use as an actual prisoner transport.[218]

That it is certainly the type of historical car used to transport prisoners is signifiant, but that it was never used for this purpose gives pause to the meaning behind visitors' contact with the car, especially when they are already in heightened emotional states from the museum's surroundings. Its unlikely history as a prisoner transport clashes with its storytelling capacity in the context of the death and suffering it represents. This does not diminish its image as the same "type" of railway car used for transports, but rather makes it more reliant on its iconic status to effect experiences for its spectators. Stier writes: "the fact that there were a variety of railway cars used for deportation during the Holocaust, along with the disparate details of each instance of deportation, renders each example of a railway car in its historical context unique."[219] Visitors must therefore depend on the authenticity of the iconic image, whether the car in question is authentic or not, to affect an emotional shift within its space. The absence of prisoner bodies in the car is therefore heightened by the fact that it never held any prisoners in the first place, requiring a continuous performance of walking through the space to instill the car with its iconic status.

The experience of walking through the railcar proved that I was easily susceptible to the power of suggestion, but made me question whether my feelings could be authentic if the car was not. How is authenticity valued in a Holocaust experience so far removed from the actual

event? Does the railcar's lack of authenticity devalue my experience as a spectator? Or is it enough that the car's type is the same as those used for transports? While I cannot deny the emotional and physical shift I experienced in the railway car, the authenticity of the experience must be read in a similar context to the experience created in the MOT's staged representation of Holocaust history, calling into question how each experience is meant to affect the visitor and how this alters the role of spectatorship in memorial settings. In the case of the railcar, its emotional ploy draws visitors who gravitate towards its representation of real suffering, even though this probably never occurred within its walls. Because they can walk through it, it invites visitors to become surrounded by its history and serves as a touchstone to the location of the Holocaust without actually being on European soil, forging a connection with the vast terrain the car covered.

The act of walking through the railcar makes it an interactive piece, and suggests it provides a similar experience of walking through a site specific memorial, though on a smaller scale. It is of course no match for an actual concentration camp, but coupled with the imported cobblestones from the Warsaw ghetto that line the entrance walkway to the third floor, they cultivate a sense of "being there" that makes interaction with the remnants more personal. However, when I walked through the car, I was disappointed to find its floor covered by a small bridge, meaning my feet never came into contact with its wooden floorboards. I could see and smell its interiors, but I was not allowed to get closer than the raised museum flooring. Artifacts elicit thrills through the possibly of the spectator's close proximity to them, and given the chance to walk through the car suggest this is the closest one might get to the history it represents. Walking over the entrance bricks from the ghetto, I could feel my sensory awareness heighten in

my feet as if I wanted to feel their history flowing through my body. The car however, providing a chance to be completely surrounded by the artifact, proposed an even greater sense of excitement which was then cut short by the few inches of distance between its wooden flooring and the raised pedestrian footpath. My shoes of course prevented direct bodily contact with the car, but the bridge is just another reminder of the railcar's place in an institutionalized exhibition of the Holocaust, dictating how spectators interact with its artifacts by shaping the narratives surrounding their displays. Stier notes the raised walk, along with railings to keep the visitor from further exploring the car, means that though "the railcar is internally visible, it is not quite fully accessible,"[220] and this ultimately reinforces the distance of historical experience through the vehicle of the staged artifact. Unless the visitor is brave enough to ignore the "Do Not Touch" sign, there is no chance for making direct physical contact with the car, and even so, the car only gives the illusion of making contact, just as all of the artifacts in the museum suggest the illusion of connecting with the past by witnessing its material remains.

While the USHMM uses artifacts to create scenic imagery, from the reconstructed barracks furnished with the three-tiered bunk bed, to the railway car's placement as a main attraction with suitcases strewn about its rails to dramatize the haste with which prisoners were forced through its doors, the artifacts are contained to their individual exhibits to complement the museum's historical narrative. Their inclusion is a major part of how the museum pieces together history and loss, speaking for the absent bodies that once crowded the railway car and barracks. Because the museum does not incorporate them into an immersive experience, the artifacts are more striking in their placement in the museum. Their given role in the historical timeline affords them a greater opportunity to communicate history thorough their embedded memories and

iconic imagery. Their commanding presence, however, is largely based on their individual history, which is located in their material memory. Allen Feldman claims: "Narrativity can be invested in material artifacts in relations that have a storytelling capacity of their own,"[221] and because Holocaust narratives often belong to voices of the dead that cannot speak, the ideal artifact in this case is the authentic one, which speaks through its involvement with those bodies in the past. Its influence in its present narrative depends on its past use, but this does not deny the power of suggestion when it comes to artifacts such as the railway car, displayed with the understanding that it is historically representative of the type of car used in transports. I have already suggested the emotional state cultivated by the museum leading up to the passage through the car, particularly when the car is one of the first things the visitor sees when entering the floor, despite its physical separation by another gallery. In relation to the museum's emotional conditioning, the influence of the emotional affect from the high volume flow of visitors walking through the railway car suggests a performance of memory that is built on the emotional experience of other visitors who have walked through the car. If, according to Feldman, artifacts have the capacity to transmit memory, the ability of visitors to transmit and circulate their emotional memory through the space surely contributes to the energetic shift that occurs within the car's walls.

On the subject of artifact authenticity, the distinction between "real" pieces of history and artificial representations is important in considering how memorial spaces perform Holocaust history, and particularly how they create memory in the process of recalling the past. To return to the MOT, its immersive Holocaust tour suggests the potential for an authentic experience through its theatrical representation. The tour is nothing short of a performance, staged in a very

traditional sense with its technological elements and choreographed movement of the spectator. Museum sites inherently possess a scripted narrative and choreography in how they move visitors through their spaces, but the MOT commands total control over the spectator's movements, not allowing for exploration beyond the spotlit diorama stages and cued television screens. While this limits spectator mobility within the space, its detailed construction enacts upon the spectator an experience based in the iconic Holocaust imagery embedded in the video footage, plaster sets and voiceovers. It recalls the monitored movement of prisoners through the camps, or in the case of Theresienstadt, the Red Cross camp tour.

Bartov warns that making the audience "feel" the Holocaust isolates the event and erases its history,[222] but history is deeply embedded in the structure of the museum's performance, drawing on the regulation of movement during the Holocaust and tracing it onto the body of the spectator. In the USHMM, the interaction with artifacts and walking through the spaces of the railcar barracks or over the bricks from the Warsaw ghetto enacts a similar emotional connection, though allows for a more contemplative and personal experience as visitors can interact with the pieces at their own speed and are not inundated with screens or guided lighting that forces them through the space at a quicker pace. In either case though, the spectator's controlled movement through the representational space recalls the historical performance of prisoner bodies. The memorial space therefore creates performative links in place of material memory, where the experience of walking through the museum results in the memory of the spectator's performance more so than the artifact itself. It is the re-enactment of moving through the space that bridges the stages of the museum with the event it depicts, and transforms the space of memorial into an active performance.

Locating National Identity Through Memorial

The locations of the MOT and USHMM are notable in their distance from the sites in Europe where the Holocaust took place, and particularly the USHMM in the nation's capital. It's prime spot near the National Mall's multitude of government buildings, national museums and landmarks suggests the history of the Holocaust holds greater meaning for all Americans in the greater conversation of oppression and injustice. While there is value in Holocaust education and remembrance, the attention to an event that never occurred on American soil risks overshadowing its own historical genocides and injustices, particularly when historically persecuted groups on American soil, such as Native Americans and African Americans, do not have the same kind of public memorial institutions dedicated to their destruction.[223] The USHMM began as a publicly funded project and is now privately funded, while the MOT is and always has been privately funded,[224] but their representation of injustice through the Holocaust indicates their initiative to weave the history of the Holocaust, and the impact it had on American Jews, into American identity. Another site that positions the Holocaust within the framework of national identity is Israel's Yad Vashem, the World Center for Holocaust Research, Documentation, Education and Commemoration. Built in Jerusalem, Yad Vashem directly reflects the large migration of refugees to Israel during and after the Holocaust, which played a significant role in establishing Israel as a national Jewish homeland. So much of Yad Vashem is connected with its immediate surroundings, from its vast grounds overlooking the Jerusalem Forest to its location on Mount Herzl, the namesake of the founder of Modern Zionism.

The path to Yad Vashem is long and winding. The heavily shaded road leads up to an elaborately carved metal entrance gate, behind which stand a number of white stone buildings on

sprawling scenic grounds. The atmosphere is tranquil and is just quiet enough to hear the wind blowing through the trees in the surrounding forest. Directly behind the entrance gate is a large stone archway with words from Ezekiel carved in Hebrew and English: "I will put my breath into you and you shall live again, and I will set you upon your own soil."[225] The allusion to Holocaust victims and refugees is clear in the depiction of resurrected bodies, which neatly establishes a link between Jewish displacement and homeland. The museum building is an elongated triangular structure, carved into the hillside, and visitors walk through the space, zigzagging into gallery rooms off of the central path. The display of information takes a similar approach to the USHMM's historical narrative, incorporating artifacts and information panels to communicate the history of Jewish persecution and genocide under the Nazis. During its busy hours large tour groups crowd the space, pushing visitors into the awkwardly angled side galleries as they navigate their way through the cramped quarters. The outside grounds, in contrast, are spacious and serene. Memorial structures and gardens, such as those dedicated to children of the Holocaust and the Righteous Among the Nations[226] dot the premises, and various buildings house the institution's archives, research centers and educational programs. Its isolation on the hilltop creates a palpable distance from the rest of busy Jerusalem, where its open spaces act as a sacred ground for Holocaust memory.

The authoritative nature of Yad Vashem on all things Holocaust greatly depends on Israel's national narrative of historical persecution, which contributes to a definition of Jewish identity and the formation of the Jewish State. Yet, in this context, Yad Vashem also constitutes a contested space of memory with concerns to Israel's own refugee crisis, dating back to the nation's establishment. With a mission to preserve the memory of those who perished in the

Holocaust, and particularly Jewish victims,[227] the national initiative for remembrance overlooks the memory of Palestinian refugees and their continuing struggle for nationhood. Jerusalem itself is a city fraught with tension and Yad Vashem embodies its bitter conflicts through remembering the tragedy of the Jews on the landscape of Palestinian displacement. Far from where the Holocaust took place, the call for Holocaust remembrance at Yad Vashem re-appropriates Holocaust memory to support its principles of Jewish identity and nationhood, implying that Holocaust memory is integral to Israel's national identity and landscape. Yet, by treading on issues of national identity in the face of historical erasure, the space of Yad Vashem becomes a battleground for memory, where memorializing one loss eclipses the forgetting of another.

Artists and director Yael Bartana addresses these issues of national identity, memory and homeland in her film series entitled *The Polish Trilogy*, which chronicles the fictional Jewish Renaissance Movement in Poland (JRMiP) that calls for the return of 3,300,000 Jews to Poland in response to the 3,300,000 Jews who were persecuted and murdered during the Holocaust. Location is a key element of the film, but unlike journeying to the Jewish homeland of Israel, it determines that Jews have a right to return to the homeland that once sought to destroy them. The JRMiP appears highly idealistic in its views even though a mass return to Poland seems very unrealistic, yet, the strength of the movement lies in its cultivation of conversations on themes such as nationhood, religion, identity and return, as well as political and social injustice. The movement is an entire "what if," glimpsing the possibility of what could be when individuals disassociate from preconceived notions of nationhood and national identity. The JRMiP proposes a return, though this concept is unstable due to the fact that many of the possible returnees were never a part of Poland in the first place, and weakens the establishment of Israel as the official

Jewish safe haven. To return 3,300,000 Jews to Poland would mean relocating mostly Jews who merely have an ancestral relation to the land, as scarcely enough Polish survivors remain alive to return. Therefore, these individuals would not be returning, but moving to a new land, as European refugees once moved to a new land in Israel after their liberation. However, the movement goes beyond its open welcome to Jews and states in its manifesto: "We accept into our ranks all those for whom there is no place in their homelands—the expelled and the persecuted."[228] Therefore, Poland becomes the grounds of remembrance for all oppressed people of the world, leaving Israel behind. At Yad Vashem, remembrance is based primarily on Jewish persecution, but the JRMiP proposes remembrance as an all inclusive appeal for new a beginning.

The so-called return is a venture into a new construction of a national community, united, not by origin, religion or ethnicity, but by an opposition to these identifying factors. In its ideology that promises no discrimination and a rallying cry of "We shall be strong in our weakness,"[229] the JRMiP emerges as a community of the downtrodden, those historically and presently denied a landed nation based on discrimination of factors such as religion, race and ethnicity. It proposes a community exempt from the dictates of religious and nationalist goals, yet this means that in the process of becoming part of the movement, a break with preconceived notions of national identity must occur. "Returnees" submit to a new national status that is inherently anti-national in an attempt to restructure citizenship in a non-discriminatory, amalgamated society. Likewise, the migration of Jews to Israel after the Holocaust united them on a national front, detaching from previous national statuses to embrace a new Jewish community and strength in Israel. As a result, Yad Vashem depends on a Jewish and Israeli

national memory of the Holocaust and life in Europe prior to settling a Jewish nation, as well as the nation's early political ideals that helped build the nation through an emphasis on communal work and experience.

Most concerned with the political influences of nationhood, Bartana denounces political structures, writing: "When I set up the movement, I wanted to examine whether we as a society —or rather, any society, especially Israeli society—can imagine our reality beyond the processes of indoctrination to which we have been subjected under the guise of socialization."[230] Her rejection of indoctrination, however, clashes with the demagogic appeal of the JRMiP's leader, a characterized version of real life Polish activist, Sławomir Sierakowski, who also co-wrote the film's script. In the first film entitled *Mary Koszmary* (Nightmares), Sierakowski gives a lofty speech on the grounds of the dilapidated Olympic Stadium in Warsaw, which could easily be mistaken for a forgotten cemetery, and calls for the return of the Jews. Young children adorned in scout uniforms walk behind him at the end of his speech, where their comparison to Hitler Youth scouts reinforces the influence of Fascist ideals which the JRMiP is seemingly trying to remedy from the years of Nazi rule in Europe.

The second film, *Mur i wieża* (Wall and Tower), depicts the move of a small group of, presumably Israeli, immigrants to Poland, as they establish a small walled compound that evokes imagery of the walled Jewish ghettos that once dotted Europe. The builders, clad in attire reminiscent of European refugees and military uniforms, maintain a hopeful spirit as they physically construct the walls of their community and hang the movement's flag from the compound's watchtower. Their presence however, invites the stares of people as they pass by, and while their return suggests they are trying to assimilate into Polish society, as demonstrated

by Polish language lessons and working the Polish soil, their compound keeps them at a distance from the outside and recalls the alienation of the Jews who were forcibly separated from the Polish public before they were removed from the city entirely. The final film, *Zamach* (Assassination), focuses on the funeral possession and memorial service for the now assassinated JRMiP leader. While one speaker at the service claims: "The Diaspora, ladies and gentlemen, ended in Auschwitz,"[231] and Israel is the only Jewish homeland in an age of continuing anti-semitism, another Holocaust survivor asks that her Polish citizenship, stripped from her at age twelve, be returned, though she too claims that Israel is the only place for her to live. She claims the return of citizenship would be an act of "historical justice, vital for me! And hopefully for you as well!"[232] suggesting that instead of her returning to Poland, her Polish identity be returned to her.

The references to the Israeli and Palestinian dispute for land are undeniable, and as Bartana specially mentions Israeli society in her description of the JRMiP, the return to Poland cannot be viewed without considering the meaning of returning to one's homeland while the previous establishment of a Jewish homeland in Israel has led to so much strife and violence. In relation to Yad Vashem's location as a contested site of memory, the film's thematic undertones of land ownership, citizenship, nationhood, religion, discrimination and the right of return highlight the importance location plays in memorializing a people's tragic history, especially when it pushes aside the suffering of another and ultimately calls for a return to the spacial root of ancestral trauma. While recalling the past of Jewish genocide through the Holocaust, the JRMiP also interrogates the underpinnings of a Zionist ideology that similarly support the space of memory constructed and curated at Yad Vashem. The JRMiP states that the movement is

"revivifying the early Zionist phantasmagoria,"[233] and, as such, aims to break from any political doctrines that privilege certain individual characteristics over others, yet in doing so it merely repeats the history it aims to subvert. Its Zionist vision presents a paradox with regards to settling Polish land in the face of the current struggle on Israeli soil, and upends the initiative of Israel to stand as the permanent location for carrying out the memory of the Holocaust and protecting world Jewry against further oppression.

Unlike former concentration camps and memorials in Europe, places like Yad Vashem and the USHMM cannot rely on the historical significance of their locations to represent Holocaust loss and oppression, and instead depend on making the Holocaust part of their national narratives, whether that includes tying the Jewish community to the land of Israel or using the memory of the Holocaust to call for justice on a larger scale, domestically and globally. Sites like the grounds of Auschwitz-Birkenau draw tourists wishing to see and walk the grounds of the former site of mass murder, imbuing the land with greater meaning because of the events that took place there, but the memorial museums located outside of Europe must instead focus on how they can evoke the memory of the Holocaust as part of a communal effort. The performance of memory rests not only in the artifacts, timelines and video footage they display, but in the connection visitors make to the memory of the Holocaust as they find ways to embody the act of remembrance.

Performing Memorial

While all memorial sites rely on memory, heritage sites are defined by the memory of what took place on their grounds, and history is constructed through the artifact of the land itself.

The artifact of the land is no longer an object in a museum, but constitutes the entire stage of the heritage site. The land performs for the spectator through its embedded memories, but also provides a performance ground where the spectator constructs her own conception of history as she moves through the space. In Anne Szumigalski's play, *Z: a meditation on oppression, desire & freedom*, the grounds of a concentration camp provide the backdrop for a critique of Holocaust memory and representation, juxtaposing the life of prisoners in the camp and the tourists who visit the camp decades later. The play is a reflection on the performance of memory, and how we tell stories of the past. It begins with a disembodied female voice reciting a story of desire and pleasure, loss and pain "And I'll tell you again and again the same story,"[234] and it is through storytelling that Itzak, a prisoner, manages to stay alive, having been promoted to the position of kapo[235] by a Kommandant. Described as an ex-comedian and storyteller, Itzak claims that he must "live to tell the tale,"[236] and while he claims he will tell the tale "of the oppressor," and "of the victims in his thousands, millions,"[237] he cannot speak for the dead. "What does a story matter?" he asks, "What does anything matter if its not a story?"[238] The play reflects these questions through telling its own story of the Holocaust, and by looking at how memory speaks, or fails to speak, at the site of loss.

The play takes place in the fictional Forest Grove concentration camp, where prisoners Sara and Mimi work in a sex hut, and Itzak recounts stories for the German guard, Horst, who in return orders Itzak to choose the next round of prisoners for the gas chambers. A male chorus laments the camp's suffering and loss, and a gypsy prisoner named Z roams the grounds, occupying the role of the outsider in the camp's prisoner hierarchy and in the greater narrative of Holocaust history. The second act jumps ahead in time to the 1960s, where the camp has been

transformed into the Forest Grove Memorial Gardens. A cast of characters walk about the grounds including Julie and Coralie, two tourists played by the same actors as Sara and Mimi, and are more concerned with trivial matters of fashion and cuisine then with the history of the camp. Also present is an unofficial tour guide named Benny and a tramp, played by the same actor who plays Z. As Julie takes pictures of the gardens, a backdrop reveals images of the concentration camp and prisoners. The images of suffering starkly contrast with Coralie's complaints about her high heels, "Nothing on earth worse than pinched feet,"[239] and Julie's dissatisfaction over the local cuisine, complaining she is "famished" while eating ice cream.[240] Their inflated language recalls the suffering of the camp for the audience, but their flair for the dramatic prevents them from seeing past their own insignificant troubles. As the second act continues, elements of the concentration camp merge with the gardens, mapping the past onto the present and fusing the two in a layering of memory.

As a place where bodies perished and prisoners endured unimaginable suffering, the memorial gardens are seemingly the ultimate space of memorialization, yet the gardens in the play become a battleground for memory, and memories fail to communicate the gravity of the camp's horrors to its visitors. The history of the concentration camp is instead communicated to the play's audience, who can see and hear what the characters in the "present" cannot. The history of the grounds speak through the disembodied voices and characters that straddle the camp's past and garden's present, and the ghosting of the past expresses a doubling at the site of loss for both the victims and their stories. For the audience, though, the grounds are nothing more than a stage, and the site of memory is reduced to a representation of a memorial. The play tests the notion of the memorial site as a stable remnant of the Holocaust and questions its ability

to recall the past, but as the memorial is only a staged construction, it further interrogates the representation of the Holocaust in all forms, and particularly in the theater that performs loss.

Peggy Phelan reminds us in *Unmarked* that performance cannot be repeated,[241] and the stage cannot repeat loss anymore than a memorial can access the past to recover experiences. Sandra L. Richards writes: "Like theater, memory is constructed through processes of selecting, repeating, forgetting—willfully as well as unconsciously—and reassembling narratives."[242] *Z* manifests this in its approach to creating narratives around the memorial site, and in examining how we create stories to memorialize the Holocaust years after its end. The theater as a self-reflective apparatus widens the scope of how we tell stories about loss and how we maintain or dispense with notions of authenticity. The example of the USHMM railway car shows how the experience of walking through the car is subject to the museum's historical narrative and the symbolic nature of the car's use in the greater chain of railway transports. For a memorial located at a historical site of loss, the space as artifact constructs a history of loss, which in turn characterizes the memorialized space as a site of performed memory. In the context of slave dungeons in Ghana, Richards writes: "tourists fill a violent absence with the materiality of their own bodies," and this is also applicable at the sites of former camp grounds, ghettos or places of massacre, where spectators fill the space of loss with the act of memory making through the process of witnessing.

In *Z*, the site of loss is artificial, but the performance of the site becomes its own fleeting memorial through the narrative of Holocaust loss and memory. The absence of an actual site of loss in the play emphasizes the absence represented by those actual sites of loss the play performs. The absence performed onstage, then, becomes its own artifact. It is imbued with

meaning from the loss represented by the memorial grounds and their layered history, as symbolic of the absence of Holocaust experience. Memorial sites and artifacts do not recreate a historical experience, but draw on the absence of that experience to elevate the historical remnant in place of memory and personal experience. Like the stage, the artifact operates on an absence by standing in for what cannot be remembered, and creates new memories in place of those lost with the original event. *Z* presents the memorial site as a space filled with traces of the past, but devoid of the present stories to recall the camp's true horrors, where the past fights to be heard among present constructions of history.

CONCLUSION

The decades following the Holocaust have seen the rise of an abundance of memorial spaces, traditions and acts that seek to build communal recognition and honor those lost in the genocide. They create a memory for those lost as well as honor those who survived and the brutality they experienced. Survivor memories have long stood as the ultimate link to the past and give credence to the command to never forget, but now, what is left to remember of the Holocaust? The memories cultivated by post-Holocaust generations can never reach the root of the trauma embodied by survivors, so as we witness their passing, we might ask how this loss reflects the struggle of post-Holocaust generations in coming to terms with a historic loss they never witnessed. There is no shortage of the continued attempts to reveal new testimony and explore loss by sifting through remnants of the past, which stands to create context for the Holocaust experience through various avenues of narrative and representation, as presented in this project. Yet, how do we reconcile with the loss of survivors as representative of the greater loss of the Holocaust in our own performance of Holocaust remembrance? Is there a conscious way to move about the space of Holocaust memory in a way that honors those who have passed, yet frees post-generations from the clutches of the traumatic victimhood, guilt and pain that emanates in the anxious search for meaning behind the Holocaust experience and the drive to preserve memory? Furthermore, what will this mean for the Jewish community that has dedicated so much time and effort to the preservation of Holocaust memory?

As a young girl I took refuge in the dark space of the closet to experience something I could not fully understand, but felt compelled to replicate through the performance of victimization. It was the stories about the Holocaust, however sugarcoated or gratuitous in imagery, that imbued me with a sense of victimhood, though this was one distinctly separate from the characters I read about or the ancestors and wider community of victims that captivated and captured my attention from such a young age. I became victim to the struggle to remember those victimized at the hands of the Nazi party, and I found myself an involuntary victim of the guilt of not having been there, and for having the privilege of safely walking out of my hiding space without risking capture or death. The danger of my space rested within the inherent attachment I felt to the past and the overwhelming sense of responsibility to find a way to remember what I had not and could never experience. My anxiety filled sense of wonder was uncontrollable, but it paved the way for my voluntary journey deeper into the memory of the Holocaust, where I developed a greater consciousness of the slippery terrain of memory and the legacy of the Holocaust and its traumas.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this project, I am acutely aware of my own performance of trauma in researching and writing around the exact absence I am trying to uncover. This was not the case in my forays into the make believe world of the Holocaust, yet the resulting sense of loss is evident in both instances, and as seen in previous chapters, that loss is revealed with each effort to get to the root of Holocaust trauma. It is a performance that circles around the meaning behind that loss and only returns to a wrestling with the revealed absence. Yet, in all the attempts to try and access that experience, we perform its resulting traumas in a bid for remembrance, that is really a dallying with the loss of memories, as embodied by the loss of

its victims and those survivors who held its memory for so long. That memory that we try to keep alive becomes enshrined in our imaginings of the Holocaust, which takes shape through the continued attempts at representation and efforts to memorialize its loss. This is where the performance of loss meets the lack of words to properly articulate what propels the search. It is almost as if the closer we get to feeling the experience, the farther we enter into our own construction of the past to soothe some desire that makes us want to feel connected to it. The search continues to operate in a cyclical pattern, driven by the anxiety to ask more questions, only to be disappointed by what they do not reveal. The search for loss can then be described as compulsion brought on by the fear of never knowing the truth behind the haunting legacy of the Holocaust, or maybe even the possible fear of actually finding out.

All of this leaves me with a profound sense of sadness over the present loss of survivor memories and the current transition into the post-survivor era. One may argue the Holocaust ended long ago, but for so many survivors who state they relive the events of the Holocaust on a daily basis, their memories and traumas give a palpable quality to their embodied experiences. In the expansive collection of Holocaust testimonies and artifacts, great importance is given to the physical remnants of the event, yet the reverence for these objects is built around those who were there. We archive their voices and their belongings, yet when they pass, we lose the most integral remnant of history that cannot be preserved in a museum or archive like the objects or stories they leave behind. The immediacy of their narrative is lost, and this is the great loss that remains untouchable, for even as they share their stories, they perform the loss of the event that sparked the trauma and displacement of the survivor and descendant generations who continue to act out memory in a reinforcement of the traumatic hold of the Holocaust.

I cannot be sure why some post-Holocaust descendants are so compelled to continually return to the Holocaust experience, but from my position as a third generation descendant, I am most affected by the weight I carry of being the last generation to come of age among living survivors, and to then see them completely disappear. Once again, I feel saddened, but also overwhelmed by the burden of carrying this sadness, and an immense sense of guilt for wanting to let it go. Can we emerge from this Holocaust legacy unscathed? The traumatic scars of the past that are deeply entrenched in survivors continue to reveal themselves in Holocaust descendants, but when will these scars, if ever, fade? In trying to reconcile with the evil that caused so much pain and suffering, I find myself returning to the concealed root of trauma time and time again. I witness it in the memorial spaces, testimonies and performances I discuss in this project, as well as in my own writing as I try to unravel the mysterious hold of the Holocaust over myself and those generational descendants who see it as their duty to remember and document the event.

The effects of trauma in Holocaust descendants, especially in the third generation, and particular myself, become apparent in the felt responsibility to actively receive the legacy of the Holocaust and play a role in preserving the remnants of the experience, as well as by documenting the attempts at remembrance as a way of carrying on the memory of an event descendants could not witness. I see my traumas manifesting in the dark spaces of the closet and the fascination with performing victimhood in trying to understand my ancestral history, which was really an attempt to feel what I could not, and therefore left me with guilt over not being able to share those feelings of pain, fear and loss of the victims I tried to emulate. The feelings of sadness, guilt and anger associated with my relationship to the Holocaust lead me to the question

of why I became the bearer of this legacy. It is a legacy that requires a delicate balance between the guilt of not knowing the pressure to know more, as well as the understanding of the far reaching personal and communal traumas that result from the event and the loss its descendants continue to mourn.

NOTES

[1] Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved* (New York: Vintage International, 1989), 199.

[2] See: Richard Plant, *The Pink Triangle: The Nazi War Against Homosexuals* (New York: Henry Holt Paperbacks, 1988), 13.

[3] See: Jonathan Safran Foer, *Everything Is Illuminated* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002).

[4] See: Liev Schreiber, *Everything Is Illuminated,* directed by Liev Schreiber, DVD (Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2006).

[5] See: Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis*, trans. and ed. Nicholas T. Rand, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

[6] See: Gabriele Schwab, *Haunting Legacies: Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2010).

[7] See: Elinor Fuchs, ed. *Plays of the Holocaust: An International Anthology* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1987); Robert Skloot, *The Theater of the Holocaust*, 2 vols. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982-1999); Robert Skloot, *The Darkness We Carry: The Drama of the Holocaust* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988).

[8] See: Irene Watts, *A Terrible Truth: Anthology of Holocaust Drama*, 2 vols. (Toronto: Playwrights Canada Press, 2004).

[9] See: Jonathan Garfinkel, *The Trials of John Demjanjuk: A Holocaust Cabaret* (Toronto: Playwrights Canada Press, 2005).

[10] See: Rebecca Rovit and Alvin Goldfarb, eds., *Theatrical Performance during the Holocaust: Texts, Documents, Memoirs* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999); Rebecca Rovit, *The Jewish Kulturbund Theatre Company in Nazi Berlin* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2012).

[11] See: Lisa Peschel, ed. *Performing Captivity, Performing Escape: Cabarets and Plays from the Terezín/ Theresienstadt Ghetto* (London: Seagull Books, 2012).

[12] See: Roy Kift, "Reality and illusion in the Theresienstadt cabaret," in *Staging the Holocaust: The Shoah in drama and performance*, ed. by Claude Schumacher (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 147-168; Roy Kift, introduction to *Camp Comedy*, in *The Theater of the Holocaust*, ed. Robert Skloot, vol. 2 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999).

[13] See: Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986).

[14] See: George Steiner, "The Long Life of Metaphor: An Approach to the 'Shoah,'" in *Writing and the Holocaust*, ed. Berel Lang (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1988), 154-171; Lawarence Langer "Interpreting Survivor Testimony," in *Writing and the Holocaust*, ed. Berel Lang (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1988), 26-40.

[15] Berel Lang, introduction to *Writing and the Holocaust*, ed. Berel Lang (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1988), 4.

[16] See: Saul Friedländer "Historical Writing and the Memory of the Holocaust" in *Writing and the Holocaust*, ed. Berel Lang (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1988), 66-77; Terence Des Pres, "Holocaust *Laughter*?" in *Writing and the Holocaust*, ed. Berel Lang (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1988), 216-233.

[17] See: Theodor Adorno, *Prisms*, trans. Samuel Weber and Sherry Weber (London: Neville Spearman, 1967).

[18] See: Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

[19] Jonathan Garfinkel, *Ambivalence* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008), 121.

[20] "Never forget" has become a popular symbol of Holocaust remembrance, though it has been applied to many other traumatic events in history. Its Hebrew equivalent לזכור (l'zcor) is the infinitive "to remember," and is commonly used in Holocaust literature and ceremonies.

[21] Hasia R. Diner, *We Remember with Reverence and Love: American Jews and the Myth of Silence After the Holocaust, 1945-1962* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).

[22] Some examples include the USC Shoah Foundation, the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies at Yale, and the Yad Vashem Archives in Jerusalem.

[23] Władysław Bartoszewski grew up Catholic and participated in the Polish underground to aid Jews during the Holocaust. He was imprisoned in Auschwitz and later served in the Polish government and wrote extensively on the Jewish community in Poland. He was awarded the honor of Member of the Righteous among the Nations.

[24] Władysław Bartoszewski, forward to *A Promise at Sobibór: A Jewish Boy's Story of Revolt and Survival in Nazi-Occupied Poland*, by Philip Bialowitz with Joseph Bialowitz, ix-xi (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2010), ix.

[25] Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Mariner Books, 2000), 10-11.

[26] Ibid., 11.

[27] In Jewish custom the B'nei Mitzvah, a coming of age ceremony, is celebrated when girls turn twelve (Bat Mitzvah) and boys turn thirteen (Bar Mitzvah). It is common for girls in the United States to celebrate a Bat Mitzvah at age thirteen, at the same time as their male peers.

[28] While I reference African American slavery and Native American genocide, I recognize these and other oppressive events that took place on American soil seldom receive adequate attention, especially in comparison to the Holocaust, which took place outside of the United States. I am thinking of school curricula, and particularly of national memorials. For example, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C. was built with the aid of public funds and focuses primarily on the genocide of the Jews. In comparison, the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian only designates a small portion to genocide, while the National Museum of African American History and Culture is only just set to open this fall. I am a proponent of Holocaust education because it teaches about the dangers of oppression and the importance of remembrance, but in bringing this to national attention, it is important to not forget those atrocities committed on American soil, especially when national memorialization is seemingly prioritized and risks an omission of this nation's own oppressive history.

[29] In contrast, Holocaust education in Israel begins in kindergarten, as part of a recent program launched in 2014 to familiarize young children with the event's history and meaning. The nationwide event of Yom Hashoah in Israel is observed in upper level school ceremonies and with sirens that sound across the nation, but until recently there were no guidelines to introduce young children to the meaning behind the day and its sirens. The Holocaust is arguably more palpable in Israel because of its large number of Holocaust refugees who contributed to its independence in 1948, resulting in the Holocaust's impact in Israeli education and culture, including the institution of Yad Vashem (the World Center for Holocaust Research, Documentation, Education and Commemoration) in Jerusalem, which contributed to the early Holocaust curriculum. The new curriculum equips teachers with knowledge on how to teach children about the Holocaust, but the question of how much to divulge is still a question, especially with regards to raising a new generation of children after the loss of the last survivors. See: Emily Harris, "In Israeli Kindergartens, An Early Lesson in the Holocaust," NPR, May 5, 2016, http://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2016/05/05/476912786/in-israeli-kindergartens-an- early-lesson-in-the-holocaust.

[30] A similar occurrence sparked outrage among parents in Israel whose children returned from school wearing gold stars from their Holocaust lessons. See: Emily Harris, "In Israeli Kindergartens, An Early Lesson in the Holocaust," NPR. This might be compared to Holocaust descendants who choose to mark themselves with tattoos in honor of their survivor grandparents, though the choice to mark oneself is quite different from young children who are given stars to wear in the name of education. While young descendants might see their tattoos as a re-appropriation of their grandparents' markings and a way to claim their identity against historical oppression, young students who are made to participate in role playing games or wear symbols of oppression are far less likely to understand the significance of these activities and risk integrating this victimhood into their understanding of Jewish identity. This not only has potentially harmful psychological effects in cultivating identity, but also continues the chain of victimization without accounting for steps taken to increase the protection of Jewish individuals and communities.

[31] For a more detailed example of emotionally driven Holocaust education, see my discussion on Holocaust museum exhibits in Chapter Four.

[32] Garfinkel, *Ambivalence*, 121.

[33] My family lived in a small town in Cuba dubbed "Polandia" for the high volume of Polish refugees who immigrated there. Years ago when my two uncles took a trip to Cuba, they went in search of Polandia and met an old man who had vague memories of a young boxer, who we believe was my grandfather. Old Polandia was long gone, but the single memory of my grandfather's prowess in the boxing ring was a welcome piece of information, like a trace that proved he was there.

[34] Sol Rotstein was born in 1923, but his gravestone reads 1925.

[35] See: Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, translated by Isle Lasch (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006), 6.

[36] Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia" in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Vol. XIV. (1914-1916): On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works*, trans. and ed. James Strachey, 237-258. (London: Hogarth, 1957), 245.

[37] Schwab, *Haunting Legacies*, 41.

[38] See: Anna Rosner Blay, *Sister, Sister* (Alexandria: Hale & Iremonger, 1998).

[39]See: Helena Rosner, Interview 17374, USC Shoah Foundation (Australia, 14 July 1996).

[40] See: Rosner, interview.

[41] Elie Wiesel, *Ethics and Memory* (Walter de Gruyter: Berlin, 1997), 13.

[42] See: Abraham and Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel*, 113-4.

[43] Abraham and Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel*, 171.

[44] Blay, *Sister, Sister*, 118.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Abraham and Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel*, 171-2.

[48] Ibid., 114.

[49] Blay, *Sister, Sister*, 211.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid., 25.

[52] Ibid., 24.

[53] See: Rosner, interview.

[54] Blay, *Sister, Sister*, 25.

[55] See: Art Spiegelman, *Maus I: A Survivor's Tale: My Father Bleeds History* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986); Art Spiegelman, *Maus II: A Survivor's Tale: And Here My Troubles Began* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1991).

[56] Gabriele Schwab, *Haunting Legacies*, 37.

[57] Leclerc, Michel. *The Names of Love*, DVD (Chicago: Music Box Films, 2010).

[58] Ibid.

[59] See: Art Spiegelman, *Metamaus* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2011), 150.

[60] Abraham and Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel*, 176.

[61] Kift, intro. to *Camp Comedy*, 49.

[62] Lisa Peschel notes that both the German "Theresienstadt" and Czech "Terezín" were in use for over 150 years before the Nazis took over the town, and refers to the town as "Terezín/Theresienstadt." See: Peschel, *Performing Captivity*, 1. My earliest research introduced me to the camp through its German name, so based purely on reasons of habit, I will use "Theresienstadt." On the subject of terminology, Theresienstadt is referred to as both a "ghetto" and "concentration camp" in various sources. This chapter discusses the space of the camp environment, and while this could encompass the space of the ghettos, such as those in Warsaw and Łódź that were known only by that term, for the sake of continuity I will use the term "concentration camp."

[63] Kift, *Camp Comedy*, 39.

[64] Kift, *Camp Comedy*, 49.

[65] Agamben, *Homo Sacer,* 170.

[66] See: Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, 6.

[67] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 170.

[68] Adorno, *Prisms*, 34.

[69] See: Leslie Epstein, "Writing about the Holocaust" in *Writing and the Holocaust*, 267.

[70] Gene A. Plunka, *Holocaust Drama: The Theater of Atrocity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 14-15.

[71] See: Roberto Benigni, *Life Is Beautiful,"* directed by Roberto Benigni, DVD (Burbank, CA: Miramar Home Entertainment, 2002).

[72] Adorno, *Prisms*, 34.

[73] Edward Isser, *Stages of Annihilation: Theatrical Representations of the Holocaust* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1997), 20.

[74] Kift, intro. to *Camp Comedy*, 42.

[75] Peschel, *Performing Captivity*, 26.

[76] Rovit and Goldfarb, *Theatrical Performance during the Holocaust,* 169.

[77] See: Prager, "Interpreting the Visible Traces of Theresienstadt," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*, 7, no. 2 (2008): 175-194, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14725880802124206, 177.

[78] Peschel, *Performing Captivity*, 38.

[79] Thelma Gruenbaum, *Nešarim: child survivors of Terezín* (London:Vallentine Mitchell, 2004), 43-4.

[80] Aron Kramer, "Creation in a Death Camp," in *Theatrical Performance during the Holocaust: texts, documents, memoirs*, ed. Rebecca Rovit and Alvin Goldfarb, 179-189 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 180.

[81] Gruenbaum, *Nešarim*, 43.

[82] Prager, "Interpreting the Visible Traces of Theresienstadt," 177.

[83] *Theresienstadt: Ein Dokumentarfilm aus dem jüdischen Siedlungsgebiet* (Theresienstadt: A Documentary from the Jewish Settlement Area) is the actual name of the documentary, though it is also commonly referred to as *Der Führer schenkt den Juden eine Stadt* (The Fürher Gives the Jews a City). See: Karel Margry, "The First Theresienstadt Film (1942)," 309.

[84] Kift, *Camp Comedy*, 45.

[85] Ibid., 48-9.

[86] Kift, "Reality and Illusion," 149.

[87] Tuma, "Memories of Theresienstadt," 267.

[88] See: Karas, "Operatic Performances in Terezín," 196.

[89] Ibid., 198.

[90] Zdenka Ehrlich-Fantlová, "The Czech Theater in Terezín," in *Theatrical Performance during the Holocaust: Texts, Documents, Memoirs*, edited by Rebecca Rovit and Alvin Goldfarb, 231-249 (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 235.

[91] Kift, *Camp Comedy*, 61.

[92] Ibid., 62.

[93] Ibid., 64.

[94] Kift borrowed from the name of the real head of the Judenrat in Theresienstadt, Paul Eppstein. See: Kift, intro. to *Camp Comedy*, 41.

[95] Kift, *Camp Comedy*, 64.

[96] See: Norbert Troller, *Theresienstadt: Hitler's Gift to the Jews*, Trans. Susan E. Cernyak-Spatz and edited by Joel Shatzky (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 48.

[97] Isser, *Stages of Annihilation*, 18.

[98] Kift, *Camp Comedy*, 55.

[99] Ibid., 55.

[100] See: Herbert Blau, *Take Up the Bodies: Theater at the Vanishing Point* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982), 145.

[101] Ibid.

[102] Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, 29. Frankl specifically refers to his experience in Auschwitz, though I propose these examples can be expanded to encompass the discussion of the concentration camp system as a whole.

[103] Ibid.

[104] Rovit, *Theatrical Performance*, 204. See also: Peschel Performing Captivity, 225-6.

[105] Kift, *Camp Comedy*, 91-2.

[106] Kift, "Reality and Illusion," 150.

[107] Kift, *Camp Comedy*, 51.

[108] Ibid., 51.

[109] Ibid., 51-2.

[110] Ibid., 52.

[111] See: Peschel, *Performing Captivity*, 43.

[112] "Karussell," written by Manfred Greiffenhagen was performed by Kurt Gerron, who ran the Karussell cabaret. Kift suggests it was probably the opening song at all *Karussell* performances. See: Kift, "Reality and Illusion," 165.

[113] Kift, *Camp Comedy*, 47.

[114] Ibid., 47.

[115] Ibid., 47-8.

[116] The real Kurt Gerron was killed in Auschwitz, along with many of Theresienstadt's artists. See: Kift, "Reality and Illusion," 164.

[117] Kift, *Camp Comedy*, 113.

[118] Juan Mayorga, *Way to Heaven*, trans. David Johnston (London: Oberon Books, 2005), 24.

[119] Ibid., 28.

[120] Ibid., 29.

[121] Ibid., 30.

[122] Ibid., 30.

[123] Ibid., 23.

[124] Ibid., 29.

[125] Ibid., 30.

[126] Ibid., 49.

[127] Ibid., 47-8.

[128] Ibid., 42.

[129] Blau, *Take Up the Bodies*, 149.

[130] Lisa Appignanesi, *The Cabaret* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 1.

[131] Peter Jelavich, *Berlin Cabaret* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 2.

[132] Ibid.

[133] Ibid..

[134] Ibid.

[135] Appignanesi, *The Cabaret*, 6.

[136] See: John Willett, *The Theatre of the Weimar Republic* (Teaneck: Holmes and Meier, 1988), 34-5.

[137] Jelavich, *Berlin Cabaret*, 6.

[138] Rovit, *The Jewish Kulturbund*., 2-3.

[139] Ibid., 25.

[140] Jelavich, *Berlin Cabaret*, 282.

[141] Blau, *Take Up the Bodies*, 149.

[142] Joe Masteroff, Fred Ebb and John Kander, *Cabaret* (New York: Random House, 1967), 3.

[143] *Cabaret* was adapted from John van Druten's play, *I Am a Camera*, which was based on *The Berlin Stories* by Christopher Isherwood. In *I Am a Camera*, all action is confined to the small living quarters of the flat. It shields the characters from the realities beyond its walls, but also confines them to the small space. Moving out of this space through the inclusion of the Kit Kat Club creates an alternate space of escape that parallels Cliff and Sally's troubles in the flat with the growing Nazi presence outside. See: John van Druten, *I Am a Camera* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1971).

[144] Masteroff, *Cabaret*, 55.

[145] Ibid., 106.

[146] Ibid., 112-3.

[147] Ibid., 113.

[148] Thomas P. Adler "The Mirror as Stage Prop in Modern Drama," *Comparative Drama* 14, no. 4 (Winter 1980-81): 355-373, http://www.jstor.org/stable/41152917, 369.

[149] Ibid.

[150] Kift, *Camp Comedy*, 96-7.

[151] Ibid., 90.

[152] Ibid., 63.

[153] Ibid., 52.

[154] Kift, intro. to *Camp Comedy*, 40.

[155] Kift, *Camp Comedy*, 60.

[156] Ibid., 95.

[157] Bernard, *How We Danced*, 24.

[158] Ibid.

[159] Ibid., 28.

[160] Ibid.

[161] Ibid., 53.

[162] Ibid.

[163] Ibid.

[164] Ibid., 54.

[165] Ibid.

[166] Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, 4.

[167] Ibid.

[168] Gerald Rabkin "The Unspeakable Theatre of Kenneth Bernard," intro. to *How We Danced While We Burned, followed by La Justice, or The Cock that Crew*, i-xi (Santa Monica: Asylum Arts. 1990), ix.

[169] Des Pres, "Holocaust *Laughter*?," 219.

[170] Lion, *Sammy's Follies*, 368.

[171] Des Pres, "Holocaust *Laughter*?," 219.

[172] Lion, *Sammy's Follies*, 359.

[173] Ibid., 375.

[174] Ibid., 382.

[175] Ibid., 383.

[176] Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*. Trans. Daniel Heller-Roan (New York: Zone Books, 2002), 34.

[177] Lion, *Sammy's Follies*, 375.

[178] Lion, *Sammy's Follies*, 464.

[179] Adrienne Kertzer, "On the Other Hand: The Paradox of Holocaust Theater," intro. to *A Terrible Truth: Anthology of Holocaust Drama* Vol. 1., edited by Irene N. Watts, iii-xiii (Toronto: Playwrights Canada Press, 2004), vii.

[180] Lion, *Sammy's Follies*, 466.

[181] Garfinkel, *Trials*, 6.

[182] Ibid., 5.

[183] Ibid., 6.

[184] Ibid., 19.

[185] Ibid., 47.

[186] Ibid., 46.

[187] Ibid., 45.

[188] Ibid.

[189] Shoshana Felman, *The Juridical Unconscious*: Trials and Traumas in the Twentieth Century (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 5.

[190] Blau, *Take Up the Bodies*, 148-9.

[191] The Hebrew word, *seder*, literally translates to "order."

[192] Diner, *We Remember*, 22.

[193] Omer Bartov, *Murder in Our Midst: The Holocaust, Industrial Killing, and Representation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

[194] Ibid., 3-4.

[195] Ibid., 4.

[196] Ibid., 48-9.

[197] Ibid., 49.

[198] Ibid., 185.

[199] Sandra L. Richards "What is to be Remembered?: Tourism to Ghana's Slave Castle-Dungeons" in *Critical Theory and Performance*, edited by Janelle G. Reinelt and Joseph R. Roach, 85-107 (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2010), 92.

[200] Felman, *The Juridical Unconscious*.

[201] Museum of Tolerance website, "Our Vision and History," http://www.museumoftolerance.com/site/c.tmL6KfNVLtH/b.4866027/k.88E8/Our_History_and_Vision.htm.

[202] Vivian M. Patraka, *Spectacular Suffering: Theatre, Fascism, and the Holocaust* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 118.

[203] *Kristallnacht* (literally "Crystal Night"), known in English as the "Night of Broken Glass," was a large pogrom carried out against the Jews in Germany on the night of November 9-10, 1938. Jewish buildings, storefronts and synagogues were targeted, leaving behind wide scale destruction, including shards of glass from broken windows, for which the pogrom was named. 30,000 Jewish men were arrested, marking a turning point in the elevated oppression of the Jews. The video display in the museum is housed in its own small theater, featuring an assortment of screens that display photographic and video images of the destruction. It separates the entrance of the exhibit that focuses on the rise of Nazism from the inner exhibit, which transitions into killing mechanisms of the camps and resistance to the Nazi regime.

[204] The museum's Wansee Conference diorama focuses on the discussion of Nazi officials in putting the Final Solution into full effect. The conversation revolves around the use of gas chambers and the pesticide Zyklon B.

[205] See: Nicola A. Lisus And Richard V. Erikson, "Misplacing Memory: The Effect of Television Format on Holocaust Remembrance," in *The British Journal of Sociology*, 46, no. 1 (March 1995): 1-19, http://www.jstor.org/stable/591620.

[206] Bartov, *Murder in Our Midst*, 185

[207] Oren Baruch Stier, *Holocaust Icons: Symbolizing the Shoah in History and Memory* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2015), 35.

[208] Patraka, *Spectacular Suffering*, 122-3.

[209] Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 3.

[210] Bartov, *Murder in Our Midst*, 186.

[211] The USHMM houses a children's exhibit called "Daniel's Story," which, like the MOT exhibit, provides an immersive experience. The children's narrative, however, differs from the MOT's Holocaust history geared towards a multilevel audience. While I acknowledge that the question of how to best teach children about the Holocaust is an important one, it is beyond the scope of this chapter and will not be discussed here.

[212] Patraka, *Spectacular Suffering*, 127.

[213] Ibid., 128.

[214] See United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Collections website item listing: http://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn75911.

[215] Stier, *Holocaust Icons*, 35.

[216] Stier, *Holocaust Icons*, 52.

[217] Ibid., 47.

[218] Ibid., 52

[219] Ibid.,, 35.

[220] Ibid., 50.

[221] Allen Feldman, *Formations of Violence: The Narrative of the Body and Political Terror in Northern Ireland* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 14.

[222] Bartov, *Murder in Our Midst*, 186.

[223] The Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian and the National Museum of African American History and Culture (to open in September 2016) are located on the National Mall, though neither are dedicated solely to the study of persecution or genocide.

[224] President Jimmy Carter established the President's Commission on the Holocaust in 1978, and land for the USHMM was donated by the federal government. All other funds for planning and building were made by private donors. (USHMM Website: Resources for Academics and Research FAQ, https://www.ushmm.org/research/ask-a-research-question/frequently-asked-questions#13.) The MOT was built by the Simon Wiesenthal Center and is privately funded.

[225] *Ezekiel* 37:14 "I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the Lord have spoken, and I have done it, declares the Lord."

[226] "Righteous Among the Nations" is an honor bestowed upon non-Jews who risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust.

[227] Yad Vashem acknowledges non-Jewish victims of the Holocaust, but emphasizes the Holocaust from a "Jewish Perspective." (Yad Vashem website: Mission Statement, http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/about/mission_statement.asp).

[228] Sebastian Cichocki and Galit Eilat, eds. *A Cookbook for Political Imagination* (Warsaw Azcheta National Gallery of Art: Sternberg Press, 2011), 121.

[229] Ibid.

[230] Yael Bartana and Otto Weininger, "Dear Madam, Dear Sir," in *9 Artists*, ed. Ryan Bartholomew 84-99 (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 2013), 92.

[231] See: Yael Bartana, *And Europe Will Be Stunned* (London: Artangel, 2012), 124.

[232] Ibid.

[233] Cichocki and Eilat, *A Cookbook for Political Imagination,* 120.

[234] Anne Szumigalski, *Z: A Meditation on oppression, desire & freedom*, in A Terrible Truth: Anthology of Holocaust Drama Vol. 1., compiled by Irene N. Watts, 291-353 (Toronto: Playwrights Canada Press, 2004), 295.

[235] Here I use this alternate spelling "kapo" in accordance with the play's text, though the previous use of "capo," as described in Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning*, denotes the same position.

[236] Szumigalski, *Z*, 319.

[237] Ibid., 321.

[238] Ibid., 319.

[239] Ibid., 332.

[240] Ibid., 349.

[241] Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 146.

[242] Richards, "What is to be Remembered?," 85.

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