Notes on Contributors

Donald Bloxham is Richard Pares Professor of European History at the University of Edinburgh. He is author of *The Final Solution: A Genocide* (Oxford University Press, 2009); *The Great Game of Genocide* (Oxford University Press, 2005); *The Holocaust: Critical Historical Approaches* (Manchester University Press, 2005), with Tony Kushner; *Genocide on Trial* (Oxford University Press, 2001); and co-editor of *The Oxford Handbook of Genocide Studies* (Oxford University Press, 2010), with A. Dirk Moses, and of *Political Violence in Twentieth Century Europe* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), with Robert Gerwarth.

Ana Carden-Coyne is Co-Director of the Centre for the Cultural History of War, University of Manchester, and co-founder of Disability History Group, UK/Europe. *Reconstructing the Body: Classicism, Modernism and the First World War* (Oxford University Press, 2009), will be soon followed by *The Politics of Wounds: Military Patients and Medical Power* (Oxford University Press, 2012). Edited volumes and special journal issues include *Gender and Conflict since 1914: Historical and Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (Palgrave, forthcoming); 'Enabling the Past: New Perspectives in the History of Disability' (*European Review of History*, 2007) and *Cultures of the Abdomen: A History of Diet, Digestion and Fat in the Modern World* (Palgrave, 2005). She has published in the *Journal of War and Culture Studies*, *European Review of History*, *Humanities Review* and *Journal of Australian Studies* on topics of war, memory, disabled soldiers, medicine, gender/sexuality, and recent work on war museums and disability (Sandell *et al.*, *Re-Presenting Disability: Activism and Agency in the Museum*, Routledge, 2010). The *Guardian* newspaper published her booklet on *Wounded Visionaries* (November, 2008).

Boaz Cohen, PhD, an historian, is the head of the Holocaust Studies programme of the Western Galilee College in Akko Israel. His work focuses on the development of Holocaust memory and historiography in their social and cultural context and on Jewish post-Holocaust society. He also lectures on Jewish Studies in the Shaanan College in Haifa. His current research is on early children's Holocaust testimonies and the adult interest in them. His book *The Future Generations – How will they Know? Israeli Holocaust Historiography: Emergence and Evolvement* has just

been published in Hebrew by Yad Vashem and is due to be published in English by Routledge.

Jean-Marc Dreyfus is lecturer in Holocaust Studies at the University of Manchester. He holds a PhD from Université Paris 1- Panthéon-Sorbonne, and was a postdoctoral fellow at the Center for European Studies (Harvard University) and at the Centre Marc-Bloch in Berlin. He works on economic aspects of the Holocaust and the looting process. He is also active in publishing memoirs and diaries of Holocaust survivors. His book, written with Jean Samuel, *Il m'appelait Pikolo – Un compagnon de Primo Levi raconte* (Robert Laffont, 2007) was translated in several languages. His current research deals with diplomatic and financial negotiations in the aftermath of the Holocaust.

Christopher E. Forth is the Howard Professor of Humanities & Western Civilization and Professor of History at the University of Kansas. His recent books include *The Dreyfus Affair and the Crisis of French Manhood* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), *Masculinity in the Modern West: Gender, Civilization and the Body* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008) and the co-edited volume *French Masculinities: History, Culture and Politics* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

Cathy S. Gelbin (PhD, MA in German Studies, Cornell University) is Senior Lecturer in German Studies at the University of Manchester. She specializes in German-Jewish culture, Holocaust Studies, gender and film. Before serving as Director of Research and Educational Programmes at the Centre for German-Jewish Studies (Sussex University, 1998–2000), she was coordinator of the Holocaust video testimony project *Archiv der Erinnerung*, carried out at the Moses Mendelssohn Zentrum für europäisch-jüdische Studien (Universität Potsdam) under the aegis of Yale's Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies. Her publications include *An Indelible Seal: Race, Hybridity and Identity in Elisabeth Langgässer's Writings* (Die Blaue Eule, 2001), *Archiv der Erinnerung: Interviews mit Überlebenden der Shoah* (co-edited, Verlag für Berlin-Brandenburg, 1998) and *AufBrüche: Kulturelle Produktionen von Migrantinnen, Schwarzen und jüdischen Frauen in Deutschland* (co-edited, Ulrike Helmer Verlag, 1999). Her monograph *The Golem Returns: From German Romantic Literature to Global Jewish Culture* has recently been published (University of Michigan Press, 2010).

Daniel Langton is Professor of the History of Jewish-Christian Relations at the University of Manchester. He is co-director of the Centre for Jewish Studies, co-editor of *Melilah*, a journal of Jewish Studies, and Secretary of the European Association for Jewish Studies. He was trained at the Parkes Institute for Jewish/Non-Jewish Relations at the University of Southampton. His publications include

Claude Montefiore: His Life and Thought (Vallentine Mitchell, 2002), *Children of Zion: Jewish and Christian Perspectives on the Holy Land* (Woolf Institute of Abrahamic Faiths, 2008), and *The Apostle Paul in the Jewish Imagination* (Cambridge University Press, 2010).

Dalia Ofer is Max and Rita Haber Professor of Holocaust and East European studies, Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry, the Melton Center for Jewish Education, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (emerita). She served as the head of Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry (2003–2007) and the head of the Vidal Sassoon International Research Center for the Study of Antisemitism (1995–2002). She was the Mandelbaum Visiting Professor, Sydney University in spring 2009; the Ida King Visiting Professor, Holocaust and Genocide Studies, Richard Stockton College, New Jersey, in spring semester, 2008; and the Charles H. Revson Foundation Fellow for Archival Research, CHAS-USHMM (March–August 2007). She also served as the head of the History Committee of the Ministry of Education of Israel (2004–2007). She has published and edited six books in Hebrew and English and numerous articles on the history of the Holocaust, immigration to Palestine and Israel, gender, the memory of the Holocaust in Israel and the teaching of the Holocaust. Professor Ofer received the Ben Zvi Award for *Derech Bayam: Aliyah Bet Bitkufat Hashoah* (Yad Ben Zvi, 1988) in 1991, and the Jewish Book Award for *Escaping the Holocaust: Illegal Immigration to the Land of Israel* (Oxford University Press, 1990) in 1992. In 1999, the book *Women in the Holocaust* (Yale University Press, 1998), co-edited with Lenore J. Weitzman, was the finalist in the Jewish Book Awards in both Holocaust and Women categories. She was the academic editor (with Paula Hyman) of *Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia* (Shalvi, 2007).

Marcel Stoetzler is a lecturer in Sociology at Bangor University, Wales. He was educated at Hamburg, Greenwich and Middlesex Universities and has held postdoctoral fellowships at Goldsmiths College (University of London) and the University of Manchester. He works on social and political theory, intellectual history and historical sociology, and has lately concentrated on various aspects of modern antisemitism, especially its interconnections with liberalism and nationalism and the emergence of the discipline of sociology. He is also interested in, and has previously published on, problems of feminism, critical theory ('Frankfurt School'), Hannah Arendt and Marx. His first book, *The State, the Nation and the Jews – Liberalism and the Antisemitism Dispute in Bismarck's Germany* was published in 2008 by the University of Nebraska Press. He serves on the editorial board of *Patterns of Prejudice* of which he has edited a special issue (May 2010) on *Modern Antisemitism and the Emergence of Sociology*. He is also Honorary Research Fellow at the Centre for Jewish Studies, the University of Manchester.

Nathalie Zajde, PhD, Clinical Psychologist, Associate Professor at Université Paris 8, Saint-Denis. She is a clinical psychologist and researcher at the Ethnopsychiatric Academic Centre Georges Devereux, and a specialist of psycho trauma. She founded of the first clinical and research settings for Shoah survivors and their offspring in France. She is the author of many articles and of *Enfants de survivants* (Odile Jacob, 1993) and *Guérir de la Shoah* (Odile Jacob, 2005). Zajde lived for two years in eastern Africa where she has founded a university clinic for psycho-trauma research at the University of Burundi in Bujumbura. For five years (2005–2009) she was researcher at the French Research Center in Jerusalem, and created the first ethnopsychiatric consultation for Ethiopian patients and other cultural minorities in Israel at the psychiatric hospital Beer Yaacov.

General Editors' Preface

Why do people study the past? How are they making sense of the remnants of the past they encounter in archives, libraries and interviews? And how do people then write the past? At a time when most professional historians accept that any such writing depends on authorial perspective, narrative strategy and cultural context, a thorough understanding of the history of historiography is the precondition of reading history. Undergraduate and postgraduate courses increasingly include the compulsory study of the philosophy of history and historical theory. *Writing History* presents a book series that focuses on the practical application of theory in historical writing. It publishes accessibly written overviews of particular fields of history. Rather than focus upon abstract theory, the books explain key concepts and demonstrate the ways – acknowledged and unacknowledged – in which they have informed practical work. Each book relates historical texts and their producers to the social conditions of their existence. As such, *Writing History* goes beyond historical works in themselves. In a variety of ways, each volume analyses texts within their institutional arrangement and as part of a wider social discourse.

Arguably no event in history has received as much attention from historians and scholars from a whole range of other disciplines, including literary studies, sociology, ethnology and political science, as the Holocaust. Historians see the attempted systematic murder of European Jewry by National Socialist Germany as a paradigmatic event, which demonstrates what human beings can do to other human beings. It has become the symbol of ultimate evil. Whilst some scholars have viewed the Holocaust as a black box that escapes human understanding or explanations, others have attempted to shed light on the genocide by making use of a host of different theories, ranging from psychoanalysis to Marxism. Any student of the Holocaust is confronted with a literature that has been deeply influenced by a range of different and often mutually exclusive theoretical perspectives; hence it makes sense for a series that is dedicated to showing the impact of theory on specific forms of scholarly writing to dedicate one volume exclusively to literature on the Holocaust.

Jean-Marc Dreyfus's and Daniel Langton's *Writing the Holocaust* explores the full range of disciplinary perspectives in Holocaust writing, from sociology to

psychiatry to theology. It pays close attention to different genres and their ways of representing and talking about the Holocaust. Cinematic representation stands next to the rendering of a narrative of the Holocaust in museums and in the wider context of Jewish history. We encounter distinct bodies of theories that have influenced many disciplines and genres, and have led to a wide variety of writing about the Holocaust: they include psychoanalysis and Marxism. The latter does not have a separate chapter dedicated to it, but it features strongly in several of the disciplinary and genre chapters. Finally, we have seen over the last decade or so, much research has been applied to 'the body' in history, and it is not surprising that Holocaust studies have paid much attention to iconic bodies – emaciated, starved, piled-up, distorted, tortured and discarded bodies whose images are now associated the world over with the Holocaust. The body is always a gendered body, and therefore it is only logical that the editors have also included a chapter on the impact of gender theories on Holocaust research.

It has often been argued that the Holocaust is a unique event in human history. In fact, the German historical profession fought a protracted 'historians' controversy' (*Historikerstreit*) in 1985–6, in which the notion of the singularity of the Holocaust was defended by left-liberal historians against attempts by conservatives to compare the Holocaust with the class war in the Soviet Union. As the chapter on comparative genocide research illustrates, we have come a long way since then. To compare is not to equate – and few scholars who have put the Holocaust in a comparative context have done so with the ambition to relativize the crimes committed and the horrors associated with the event. Instead, comparison has allowed us to gain new insights into the history of the Holocaust and a variety of theories have been fruitfully employed in comparative genocide research.

Overall, the reader of this book is presented with a wealth of examples on how diverse bodies of theory have reconfigured the field of Holocaust studies over the last decades.

Stefan Berger, Heiko Feldner and Kevin Passmore
Manchester and Cardiff, April 2011

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Jean-Marc Dreyfus and Daniel Langton

Introduction

Jean-Marc Dreyfus and Daniel Langton

In 1992, Saul Friedländer published a landmark edited volume called *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the Final Solution*.[1] It contained the proceedings of a conference which had aimed to confront the historical writing of the Holocaust with the new currents of thought in the humanities then rising to prominence in North American universities.

Friedländer opens the volume by asking, 'Can the extermination of the Jews of Europe be the object of theoretical discussions? Is it not unacceptable to debate formal and abstract issues in relation to this catastrophe?'[2]

The most influential articles in this still strikingly relevant volume, the chapters which have been most widely read and commented upon, are those which deal with postmodernism and the Holocaust. The tendency – at that time most fully developed in departments of literary or cultural studies, and far less prevalent in history departments – to highlight the epistemological importance of historians' use of language, as opposed to their establishment of the facts, posed fundamental questions of the then rapidly expanding field of Holocaust studies. The resulting debate, which famously pitted Hayden White on one side against Saul Friedländer and Carlo Ginsburg on the other,[3] remains unresolved to this day, even as postmodern studies have continued to move forward (and have begun to be brought into question on occasions), and Friedländer has continued to write important historical works whose profile has reached beyond the academic sphere, culminating in the award of the Pulitzer prize for his massive two-volume treatment of the Holocaust.[4]

This controversy was all the more significant for bringing a number of facts to light. Firstly, it emphasized just how long it had taken for the institutionalization of research on and teaching of the Holocaust to take root in universities around the world. Outside Israel, it was only really in the 1980s that the study of the destruction of Europe's Jews attained true academic legitimacy.[5] For many years, the Holocaust was not considered a legitimate field of study for a variety of reasons, which had as much to do with the status of Jewish studies in universities as with that of Jewish communities themselves in a Western world divided by the Cold War. The memoirs of Raul Hilberg – who describes in detail the difficulties he encountered in publishing his thesis, which is now considered a founding text of Holocaust studies[6] – attest to this, as do those of Léon Poliakov.[7]

Then there were difficulties connected with the highly specific nature of the object of study – a problem which, we would suggest is related to the almost sacred position assigned to Jews in Western culture – and with the establishment of the facts when faced with a vast mass of often inaccessible archives, all of which led to a relative paucity of studies theorizing the historical narrative of the genocide.

While the historical academy in the West had been getting to grips with anthropology and structuralism, the Braudelian long term and the return, in the 1980s, of political history, studies on the Holocaust remained isolated. The Marxist orientation of many social historians in Britain, for example, long prevented them from engaging with the short duration of the event, the Nazi regime lasting only twelve years and the period of mass murder barely four. Aside from these explanations, the whole fraught process of the institutionalization of Holocaust studies, which is still ongoing in many countries, also needs to be considered. The genocide of the Jews was long seen as the history of a minority of an already minority group, to be considered, strictly speaking, as a subset within the larger field of research on totalitarianism. It took several decades for European national narratives of the Second World War to overcome their reticence regarding the various forms of collaboration in the persecution of the Jews. The writing of the genocide long remained the preserve of certain Jewish circles, which were themselves very restricted. The state of Israel is a notable exception, although even there, some limits applied to research, for reasons arising from the new state's uncertainty regarding the construction of its national narrative.

Even as the Second World War raged, pioneering groups of Jews had begun establishing archives of material and even writing accounts of their suffering. The most famous of these was the *Oneg Shabbath*, in the Warsaw Ghetto,[8] but the phenomenon existed throughout Europe, from the Wiener Library in London to the chronicles of the Lodz Ghetto,[9] or the clandestine creation, in Grenoble, of the *Centre de documentation juive contemporaine*.[10] Immediately after the war, these Jewish documentation centres, run by volunteers, took on the task of calculating the losses and writing the history of the tragedy that had just unfolded. There were thirteen of them, coming together on several occasions for European congresses.[11] Some pioneering historians brought a preliminary intellectual framework to this embryonic history, and in particular gave it a first taste of academic legitimacy. Léon Poliakov, for instance, who had been a member of the French delegation at Nuremberg, published the first full-length account of the Holocaust in 1951,[12] defining many of the themes which would be developed much later by a younger generation of historians, from Jewish reactions to the role of the Churches to the structure of the persecution apparatus. The book was translated into English in 1956.[13] The postwar years also saw attempts at a more theoretical analysis and explanation of the genocide, often written from a Marxist perspective

by German Jewish émigrés. Ernst Fraenkel, Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno and, of course, Hannah Arendt are the most famous of these.

By contrast, these works highlight the relative lack from the outset of a theoretical approach specific to the study of the Holocaust.[14] It is also true that German historians confronted the Holocaust relatively early on, often considering it as a small chapter in the larger sweep of their analysis of the nature of National Socialism. When the first works on the Holocaust were published, they displayed a strange contempt for all non-German historiographical production on the subject, as if only 'German science' could account for the Nazi phenomenon and the genocide of the Jews.[15] By contrast, the output of Israeli historians, which although ahead of its time was heavily influenced by a Zionist vision of Jewish history, concentrated not only on the heroism of Jewish combatants, in particular the Jews in the Polish ghettoes, but also on the importance of the narratives of victims and survivors. The publication in 1961 in the United States of Raul Hilberg's masterful study *The Destruction of the European Jews*[16] inevitably marked a turning point on account of its sheer breadth, its willingness to cover the entirety of the catastrophe on a European scale and its numerous breakthroughs in the description of the structures of persecution. Let us not forget that this work came out of a thesis in political science, not history.

Towards the end of the 1970s, the number of subjects being researched in this area began growing rapidly, although the central themes defined in the postwar period remained unchanged. The social history of victims before and after the Holocaust was one of these new lines of enquiry, as was the study of representations of the Holocaust in literature, cinema, popular culture and even graphic novels. The period following the catastrophe began to be studied, through a series of themes grouped together under the heading 'Aftermath', dealing with the history of Jewish Displaced Persons and their reception in host countries, whether in Israel or elsewhere. Historians became increasingly interested in the postwar trials, the memory of the Holocaust, its political uses and its role in identity formation, as well as the question of Holocaust memorials. The return of studies devoted to the perpetrators of the genocide (in German '*Täterforschung*') coexisted uneasily with an ever-growing number of survivor testimonies, systematically recorded by various foundations, by far the most important of which being the Shoah Visual History Foundation created by the film-maker Steven Spielberg. In 1995, the debate surrounding the property of Jewish victims (Holocaust Looted Assets) led to the creation of a true subfield of study, covering all the economic aspects of the Holocaust, from the systematic looting of personal property to the involvement of German and other European companies in the process of genocide.[17] The writing of the Holocaust has also been structured around 'great' debates extending well beyond academic circles, as the Holocaust has, since the 1980s, attracted the attention of a very

wide public. These range from the tensions – which, despite vigorous denials, remain powerful – between intentionalists and functionalists, to the uses of the Holocaust in Israeli and American public life, to arguments about the possibility of a comparison with Stalin's terror and, of course, the German Historians' quarrel of 1986 onwards.[18]

The aim of this book is not to settle these debates, nor to provide a definitive explanation for these developments. Its scope is at once wider and more modest. Wider in the sense that it seeks to ask questions of certain major discipline areas in the humanities regarding the ways in which they have addressed – or not addressed – the writing of the Holocaust. More modest in the sense that these analyses, covering a historical period of the more than sixty years that have elapsed since the events in question, do not claim to provide definitive responses to the issue of the theoretical engagement of the humanities with the history of the Jewish catastrophe. The authors brought together here provide far more than a simple description of 'trends' within their respective disciplines' approaches to the writing of the history of the Jewish genocide; for they have succeeded in making clear the full range of theorizations at work in this process – or, in many cases, their relative absence. The scope of this book is also modest in the sense that it does not aim to be exhaustive, whether in its analysis of different disciplines or in the range of disciplines it covers. Due to constraints of space, for instance, it has not been possible to cover fully such important areas as anthropology, political science, philosophy, economic history, literature or postmodernism.

In the first chapter, Dalia Ofer shows how the emergence of women's studies and gender studies within Holocaust Studies has given rise to controversy, yet also opened up new avenues of research. In Chapter 2, Cathy Gelbin uses film studies methodology to show how film-makers from across the globe, first from Eastern Bloc countries, then the United States, attempted to invent a cinematographic language able to express the scale of the catastrophe. Marcel Stoetzler examines early attempts by sociological texts to account for Nazi antisemitism. Written by exiled sociologists from broadly Marxist perspectives, these sought to explain the causes of prejudice against and hatred of Jews, without ever actually addressing the question of mass-murder. The sociologist Zygmunt Bauman represents a later exception to this tendency, with his book *Modernity and the Holocaust*. Nathalie Zajde considers the important – and isolated – contribution of psychiatry with respect to the description of survivor trauma, and the resulting definition of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Daniel Langton's contribution surveys the main Jewish and Christian thinkers who, between 1965 and 2003, attempted to interpret the Holocaust by resituating it within a theological vision of history. Boaz Cohen examines the tensions between the 'scientific' writing of Jewish history, as it was constructed in the nineteenth century and later adapted in a Zionist context,

and the writing of the Holocaust – tensions which persist to this day. Donald Bloxham's contribution places the Holocaust in the wider field of genocide studies and in doing so offers a new interpretation of the destruction of Europe's Jews. Christopher Forth, meanwhile, focuses on studies of the body, showing how this extensive field of research has nonetheless had only a very limited impact on the writing of the Holocaust. Finally, Ana Carden-Coyne's chapter demonstrates how the debates surrounding representation, the unrepresentable and the difficulty of using images for fear of establishing a potential 'pornography' of horror have informed the presentation of the Jewish genocide in a museum context.

Notes

1 Saul Friedländer (ed.), *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the Final Solution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).

2 Friedländer, *Probing the Limits of Representation*, p. 1.

3 Hayden White, 'Historical emplotment and the problem of truth', in Friedländer, *Probing the Limits of Representation*, pp. 37–53; Carlo Ginsburg, 'Just one witness', in Friedländer, *Probing the Limits of Representation*, pp. 82–96.

4 Now combined in Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews 1933–45* (London: Harper Perennial, 2009). For an interesting discussion of this book in the light of the debate with Hayden White, see: Wulf Kansteiner, 'Success, truth and modernism in Holocaust historiography: reading Saul Friedländer thirty-five years after the publication of *Metahistory*', in *History and Theory*, Theme Issue no. 47 (May 2009), pp. 25–53.

5 On research into and the teaching of the Holocaust in the first years of the state of Israel, see: Arielle Rein, 'L'historien, la mémoire et l'Etat. L'œuvre de Ben Zion Dinur pour la commémoration et la recherche sur la Shoah en Israël', in *Devant l'abîme. Le Yishouv et l'Etat d'Israël face à la Shoah 1933–1961*, *Revue d'Histoire de la Shoah*, no. 182 (January–June 2005), pp. 257–78.

6 Raul Hilberg, *The Politics of Memory: The Journey of a Holocaust Historian* (Chicago, IL: Ivan R. Dee, 1996).

7 Léon Poliakov, *L'auberge des musiciens. Mémoires* (Paris: Mazarine, 1981).

8 Joseph Kermish (ed.), *To live with honor and die with honor!: selected documents from the Warsaw Ghetto Underground Archives 'O.S.'* ('Oneg Shabbath') (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1986).

9 Sascha Feuchert, Erwin Leibfried, Jörg Riecke, Julian Baranowski, Krystyna Radziszewska (eds), *Letzte Tage: die Łódzer Getto-Chronik Juni/Juli 1944* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2004).

10 Annette Wieviorka, 'Du Centre de documentation juive contemporaine au Mémorial de la Shoah', in *Le Monde juif, Revue d'histoire de la Shoah* (July–December 2004), pp. 11–37.

11 Laura Jokusch, '"Khurban Forshung": Jewish Historical Commissions in Europe 1945–1949', in *Simon Dubnow Institute Year book* , vol. 6 (2007), pp. 441–73.

12 Léon Poliakov, *Le bréviaire de la haine* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1951).

13 Léon Poliakov, *Harvest of hate*, introduction by Lord Russell of Liverpool; forewords by François Mauriac and Reinhold Niebuhr (London: Elek Books, 1956).

14 Enzo Traverso, *L'histoire déchirée: essai sur Auschwitz et les intellectuels* (Paris: Le Cerf, 1997).

15 Nicolas Berg, *Der Holocaust und die Westdeutschen Historiker. Erforschung und Erinerrung* (Göttigen: Wallstein, 2003).

16 Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (Chicago, IL: Quadrangle Books, 1961).

17 'L'aryanisation économique et la spoliation pendant la Shoah. Une vision européenne' (Economic Aryanisation and looting in the Holocaust. A European overview), introduction of the guest edited issue *Revue d'histoire de la Shoah*, 'Spoliations en Europe', no. 186 (January–June 2007), pp. 15–41.

18 On the controversy, see, among other books: Charles Maier, *The Unmasterable Past: History, Holocaust and German National Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988).

1

Gender: Writing Women, Writing the Holocaust

Dalia Ofer

About a quarter of a century ago one of the first studies on women and the Holocaust was published. This was *Women Surviving the Holocaust: Proceedings of the Conference*, edited by Esther Katz and Joan Miriam Ringelheim and published in New York by the Institute for Research in History. The proceedings brought to light the interest that the topic aroused and its complex nature. In the opening remarks Marjorie Lightman, Executive Director of the Institute for Research in History, which hosted the conference, said: 'I commend the scholars who, by virtue of their feminism, are asking the questions that break the veil of historical silence.'[1]

Joan Miriam Ringelheim, the academic chair of the conference and since then a leading scholar on gender and the Holocaust, commented in a later article on her correspondence with Cynthia Ozick. In 1980, Ozick had challenged Ringelheim's employment of feminist methodology in studying the fate of women during the Holocaust:

> I think you are asking the wrong question. Not simply the wrong question in the sense of not having found the right one; I think you are asking morally wrong questions, a question that leads us still further down the road of eradicating Jews from history … Your project is, in my view, an ambitious falsehood … *The Holocaust happened to victims who were not seen as men, women, or children, but as Jews*.[2]

This was reinforced by Dr Helen Fagin, herself a Holocaust survivor and a professor of English and director of Judaic Studies at the University of Miami: 'I don't want the Holocaust to be made secondary to feminism.'[3] Both Ozick and Fagin were concerned with the motivations of scholars who were not interested in the Holocaust *per se* but were using it to further other agendas.

Since 1983, the literature concerning women in the Holocaust has developed to cover a large scope of subjects concerning the historical protagonists, perpetrators

and collaborators, victims, rescuers and indifferent groups in relation to their mode of operation, motivations and behaviour.

Research trends may be divided into a few categories. One was motivated by the cultural feminism approach and demonstrated the perspective of women's studies, as reflected in the works of Gisela Bock, Sybil Milton and to some extent also Claudia Koonz. Another tendency approached the issue from the wider perspective of social history and sociology, as in the studies of Marion Kaplan, Lenore J. Weitzman, Judy Tydor Baumel, Dalia Ofer and others. The effort to integrate the gender perspective into overall discussions on Holocaust issues is manifested in the works of Nechama Tec (*Resilience and Courage: Women Men and the Holocaust*, concerning the Jewish victims), of Elizabeth Harvey (*Women and the Nazi East: Agents and Witness of Germanization*) and in Lenore J. Weitzman's research on the women couriers in the Jewish resistance.[4]

These publications have broadened the historical narrative and legitimized introduction of the perspective of the individual and their subjectivity into the core of the historical analysis of the Holocaust. They also aroused a greater awareness of a methodological issue: how to integrate and disseminate personal documentation such as letters, diaries, post-Holocaust memoirs and oral history into the historical narrative. These efforts led to the democratization of the field of research: not only heroes and heroines were the subject of research but normal people who were described through their activities in their daily life. The nuances added new information on women to the conventional knowledge of Holocaust events, while the personal points of view enriched the historical narratives, proving that the absence of women from the narratives had resulted in a partial, incomplete, reconstruction of events and prevented a comprehensive interpretation of the Holocaust.

These were evident in literature and sociology, and thus Holocaust research was enriched through a number of fields of study. The efforts to understand and incorporate women's narratives stressed even further the multifaceted and complex reality.

In what follows I will relate some of the major themes that were studied and debated in Holocaust studies, concentrating on perpetrators and Jewish victims, and focusing on Germany and Eastern Europe. I will demonstrate my arguments through the fields of history and literature.

Main Themes and Fields Presented in Gender Analysis

Literature

Scholars of literature were among the first to concentrate on women's writing and to use gender as a category of analysis. This was displayed in empirical as well as theoretical approaches that examined the themes of the genre and style of

women's writing during the Holocaust and its aftermath. They emphasized that women paid more attention to details in their narratives, expressed their emotions more openly and were more aware of themselves, the surrounding environment and of relations with the inmates.[5] Through the literary output they studied the inner world of the author and the outer setting of these writings. Though all literary expressions are personal and exhibit first and foremost the writer's own personality and understanding of reality, general conclusions can be drawn by reading a wide range of Holocaust literature. They applied theoretical concepts to both feminist texts and the studies on post trauma to gain an understanding of women's writing on the Holocaust.[6]

One example from Holocaust poetry will demonstrate the transition from the subjective and intimate to the objective and public through gender analysis. The collection edited by Ruth Schwertfeger, *Women of Theresienstadt: Voices from a Concentration Camp*, published as early as 1989, demonstrates the distinctiveness of poetry and memoirs written by women in the camp. Schwertfeger reconstructs daily life in Theresienstadt by using the poems as her main source of information. Their day-to-day existence was the main concern of the camp's inmates and the poetesses reflected it in their writings. Some of the poems were published after the war, as their authors survived, while others were found in the archives. The table of contents includes: 'Day to Day Life in the Camp', 'Cultural Activities' and 'Transportation and Liberation'.[7] Schwertfeger explains that the inmate authors' needed to write as creative self-expression made their life and suffering more bearable. 'Writing helped me,' wrote Grete Salus.

But writing also served as testimony, sometimes with a moral lesson or just as an account of the events.[8] Writing with the intention of producing a literary text demonstrated that, 'To write a poem means to compromise, to elevate it from the intermediary stage for being and consciousness, to purposely give it form.'[9] Gerty Spies, an inmate in Theresienstadt, described her relationship to her own poems after lying awake at night memorizing her verses: 'I held them tight, they held me tight – we held each other.'[10] Throughout the book poems provide a detailed description of the hardships of Theresienstadt, including hunger, forced labour, loneliness and the difficulty of getting up in the morning. These details, Schwertfeger claimed, are typical of women's writing and display the manner in which they examine their surroundings.[11]

The emphasis in Schwertfeger's volume is on women, but Sara Horowitz, a central figure in literature for research of the Holocaust, commented: 'Our task is to examine women not only as objects of particular abuses, as developers of particular survival strategies, or even as thinkers about their own experiences. We must examine the place of gender in accounts of men as well as those of women.'[12] She warns against reading women's writing as a separate corpus without connecting it to and comparing it with the literary works produced by men, and this scholarship

would ignore experiences that were common to men and women, and which were present in women's testimonies and literary writings.

I opened my discussion with literary study of the Holocaust since the literary corpus includes not only fiction and poetry, but also diaries and other contemporaneous writings and memoirs written after the war. Since such writings are central to historical research as well, a dialogue has developed between the two disciplines.[13] Sidra Ezrahi, among the first to take part in that dialogue, has maintained that comprehension of Holocaust literature is dependent upon broad knowledge of the historical context.[14]

Historiography

I will focus on Jews and will only comment briefly on non-Jewish German women. The historical controversy over the role of German women in the genocide perpetrated by the Nazis and their support of the regime and its criminality precedes discussions about the victims.

The American historian Claudia Koonz maintains that non-Jewish German women, in general, helped their husbands separate the public from the private sphere and in this way supported the silence about the crimes committed by Nazism, including the Final Solution. Moreover, she claims that by such behaviour they became direct accomplices in the crimes. The policy of the regime stressed the role of women as homemakers who were to produce healthy babies and be faithful to their men. The Nazi women's organization, headed by Gertrud Scholtz-Klink, directed women to avoid questioning their husbands about work when at home; wives were supposed to provide the tired and troubled men with a peaceful home setting.[15]

In contrast, Gisela Bock, who studied the history of women in Germany and Europe from a cultural feminist approach, maintains that non-Jewish German women were also victims of the regime.[16] The regime penetrated vulgarly into the private sphere, imposing its racial policy through the use of denunciations, and thus the declared separation of the private from the public spheres became invalid: 'All Germans were responsible for the Holocaust, but not in their specific identities as women or men, and not because of their marital state, motherhood, or fatherhood.'[17]

The main point of Bock's analysis is that non-Jewish German women were part of the Nazi regime in all capacities, as perpetrators, bystanders and victims. Women were part of the concentration and death-camp echelons, though never in the highest positions of command.

In view of the above, the study of everyday life and the reaction of grass-root Germans to the regime's racial vision became an important field into which gender was integrated.[18] This research combined social and cultural history. The role of gender and sexuality in shaping social order and in social transition,

and the meaning of gender stereotypes in the national imagination, became central themes.[19]

The Nazis transformed and used these images to establish gender conventions and viewed any deviation as a danger to social order. The patriarchal character of the German family was reinforced and the role of each member of the family was undeniably gendered. The importance of delivering healthy Aryan babies became the dominant factor in ratifying marriages, in which racial considerations were central. All these factors have a gender perspective and demonstrate the connection between gender and race in Nazi ideology.[20]

Further research on German women as perpetrators combined social and cultural history and related the enrolment of women in different activities in the occupied Eastern territories. In explaining the behaviour and self-understanding of these women, scholars drew upon both the sense of mission and the cultural baggage that enabled women to participate enthusiastically in transforming the East into a German East. This included actions that called for the use of aggression and violence. Women took part in the deportation of Poles and Jews, ordered the deported women to clean their own homes for new German dwellers and expressed no empathy or compassion with the deportees. They viewed with indifference the evicted families, including children and elderly people, who were searching desperately for a place to live. Simultaneously, they engaged in social work, teaching and integrating model house-care into the new ethnic German communities in the annexed Polish territories.

For Elizabeth Harvey, these women were agents of the regime and witnesses to criminal actions against Poles and Jews. However, she maintains that the participation of women in bureaucratic tasks connected to the Einsatzgruppen (the mobile killing units) mass killings, the police and the army made them either co-perpetrators or direct perpetrators. They transmitted orders, typed the reports of the killings and listened to the jokes and remarks of the killers about their operations. In carrying out their duties they were exposed to cruelty and suffering, and most of them did not display any reservations. The vision of the future Germanization of these areas, together with the degraded images of the Slavs, Poles, Ukrainians and Russians on the one hand, and antisemitism on the other, produced energetic perpetrators.[21]

For Gudrun Schwartz, the women were perpetrators. Both Schwartz and Elissa Mailänder Koslov, who studied men and women in Majdanek, stressed that this group included mostly young unmarried women, often students who were happy to be free from the constraints of the patriarchal family and other conventions that limited their activities at home.[22]

Following the definition of agents, witnesses and perpetrators, the issue of gender as a factor of explanation becomes rather complex. The number of German women who were directly involved in activities in the East is estimated

at about half a million. Others, as maintained by Bock and Meyer, participated in sterilization and forced abortion efforts and in clerical work connected with the persecutions, killings and deportations. Still others were employed in different professions in public institutions or with private enterprises that in one way or another served the criminal activities of the regime. And a significant number, as mentioned above, served in the SS in the forced labour and death camps. Many of the women chose to ignore what was being perpetrated, similar to the choice made by male Germans. Most of the women assigned to the East did not express any reservations; on the contrary, they were willingly and enthusiastically involved in these acts.

The Jewish Victims: A Gendered Perspective

Women in the Holocaust, published in 1998, was one of the first anthologies devoted to Jewish women during the Holocaust with an effort to provide some historical perspective. The research presented in the volume described a diversified Jewish reality in various parts of Europe, and different modes of inclusion and exclusion of Jews in European societies. These had an important impact on internal Jewish life, on class structure and on the self-understanding of Jews. It applied to gender as well as to other factors in the life of the Jews. The bourgeois outlook of the Jews in Germany and other Western countries was not representative of the working and lower middle classes that accounted for the majority of Eastern European Jews. The Jews in Eastern Europe lived in different environments, in big and small cities, in *shtetlach* (small cities with a majority of Jews), and in more or less integrated settings with non-Jews. Class differences and ideological affiliations among Jews had an impact on gender perceptions and affected the involvement of women in the working force, their social activities and the private family sphere.

In addition to the great degree of diversity, the editors of *Women in the Holocaust* sought a theoretical conceptualization that would enable viewing different experiences of Jews under Nazi occupation through categories that would explain the responses of women in the different environments. They had recourse to cultural feminism and social history as the disciplines that might provide this conceptual framework. Analysis of the data indicated that everyday life and efforts to create a semblance of 'normality', despite the chaotic and brutal reality, were a central stage for the manifestation of gender differences. As routines of men and women were different in normal times, the question arose as to what concepts would illuminate the narrative and the analysis of the continuity and rupture that each of the sexes experienced. The following categories were suggested by Ofer and Weitzman:[23]

1. Pre-war roles and responsibilities of men and women.
2. Anticipatory reactions of men and women to the Nazi regime and occupation.
3. German policy and treatment of men and women.
4. Responses of Jewish men and women to Nazi persecution.

These categories called for employment of a comparative methodology in respect to the geography of the Holocaust. This obligated viewing carefully the several stages of the war and the different arenas where Jews strove to survive the persecution and the killings. It also required scrutiny of the historical background of the Jews in different European communities and within one country, as well as an examination of public and private patterns of behaviour. The use of these categories involved distinguishing on the basis of social class, education and age, and it demonstrated that gender was a necessary factor in any comprehensive interpretation of human behaviour, alongside other social categories. All together, this framework suggested an innovative and creative reading of the available sources and a search for new ones.

Research on Jewish women during the Holocaust drew on works that related to women in wartime and showed the similarities of the impact of war on gender conventions and gender roles. Despite many hardships that women experienced when they left their spouses, they were empowered. However, such study also demonstrated the unique fate of Jews, as Raquel Hodara proved in her article, 'The Polish Jewish Woman from the Beginning of the Occupation to the Deportation to the Ghettos'. Hodara pointed to the changes that occurred in the life of Polish Jewish women in the pre-ghetto period that are often veiled in the historical accounts. She showed that major changes in gender roles took place before the move to the ghetto; this included a wide range of activities within the family, in the economy and in employment. She demonstrated the growing involvement of women in the public sphere. However, she also maintained that the differences between Jewish and non-Jewish Polish women were substantial despite the great persecutions, deportations and killings that non-Jewish Poles experienced.[24]

As an example of the analysis I will now discuss the family in the context of daily life during the Holocaust and how the gender analysis contributed to a sophisticated and nuanced description.

The Family between Fracture and Solidarity

The history of the Jewish family relates to routines typical of the ordinary regular life of the individual and the society. It entails the detailed handling of day-to-day situations and the use of common sense in ordinary activities that do not demand any exceptional attention of the individual, such as going to work, providing food for the family, leisure time and so on. Everyday lifestyle differed from one society to another and according to class and gender. Daily activities were gendered

and thus reflected the hierarchy between men and women (both in the public and private spheres), defined responsibilities and contributed to the order of the routine. Returning to the categories mentioned above, daily life reflected 'the culturally defined gender roles of Jewish men and women, which endowed the two sexes with different skills, knowledge, and expertise'.[25] Here I will concentrate on Eastern Europe.

In the course of the destruction of European Jewry between 1939 and 1945, the family as a social unit and as a personal sanctuary faced unprecedented pressures and duress. Although Jews lived mostly as a seed family, the extended family was an important factor in the Jewish milieu both before the war and during the Nazi regime.

West and East European Jews alike placed noteworthy emphasis on the importance of family life. As Paula Hyman has remarked, 'Jews entered the modern era with a powerful myth about the strength and stability of the traditional Jewish family throughout the ages.'[26] In her analysis, the 'traditional Jewish family' shared two important values generally assigned to the modern family: affection between parents and children and an emphasis on the importance of emotional ties between couples.[27]

Typically, Eastern European Jewish men were not professionals. As shopkeepers, middlemen, carpenters, shoemakers or tailors, their clientele was largely Jewish and their families tended to live in buildings or neighbourhoods that had a distinctly Jewish character.

Most East European Jews were from the lower classes and economic necessity forced many women into the labour market, either working at home on piecemeal jobs or else in family shops or other commercial establishments. About one-third of the Jewish women in Poland, for example, were employed, comprising about 20 per cent of the Jewish labour force. Women were responsible for running their households, and household help was mostly provided by their daughters. Husbands were not involved in household work or in the education of their daughters, although they often took charge of schooling and supplemental Jewish education for their sons.[28]

The research of Raquel Hodara, Anita Tarsi, Sharon Kangisser Cohen and Dalia Ofer on the families in Eastern Europe during the Holocaust demonstrated that they underwent a number of structural changes.[29] Large numbers of families were uprooted from their homes and incarcerated in ghettos where they lived in extremely crowded dwellings; often a few families shared one room, and all families in the apartment shared one kitchen and bathroom facilities. Intimacy within couples, and between parents and children, was a dream. Many families did not have a male provider since some men served in the Polish army, others left following the call of the Polish government to establish a second front-line in eastern Poland, while still others were sent to forced labour camps or fled to

the new Soviet territories. Since all believed that a greater danger confronted men, mothers encouraged their young sons to escape and wives encouraged their husband to leave, at least for a while.

Women very often were more daring in testing the boundaries between what was legal and illegal, believing their situation to be less vulnerable than that of the men. They were often quite inventive in creating situations in which they could disguise themselves as non-Jews, a task that was easier for women than for men. They pretended to be Polish domestic help in Jewish homes (when this was still allowed) and were willing to change external characteristics, such as dyeing their hair, wearing women farmer's dresses and so on. Young girls were smuggled across into the Aryan side and did not hesitate to use their femininity in order to pass through the gate.

Women expressed a sense of satisfaction that they were able to manoeuvre and support the family, defend their husbands, get out to the Aryan side to engage in smuggling and approach the Jewish authorities – and even the Nazi rulers – to get information about what had happened to their men and release them.[30] The hostile public sphere became a major arena for women's activities.

On the other hand the sources describe families sitting around a dinner table to create a semblance of a regular meal despite the meagre food, and of an attempt to bake a birthday cake for a family member. These demonstrate the effort to maintain family cohesion and negate the forces of rupture – to not forget what normalcy was.[31]

Professional women were also active in public institutions and discovered that they were able to contribute to the welfare of the community beyond their regular activities in ordinary times. They participated in a number of volunteer enterprises; for example, an increasing number of women replaced men on the housing committees in the Warsaw Ghetto.[32]

Families that stayed together endeavoured to devise survival strategies as a unit, while having to accommodate themselves to considerable changes in the roles of different members of the family, in particular between married couples, but no less between children and parents. Mother, father and children had to assist in creating an integrated effort for survival of the family unit. Many records testify to the fact that women had a much stronger voice in the new situation.

A great burden on Jewish mothers lay in the traditional order of Jewish family roles. The direct responsibility of caring for the home and the children was the mother's realm, but the ability to perform motherly obligations was now enormously limited. Contemporaneous sources disclose the frustration of mothers in view of their inability to provide basic cleanliness, as they observed the deteriorating health of children and adults and were confronted with obstacles to sustain a fair distribution of food for all family members. Success was always limited, and one should bear in mind that the economic condition of the family was the

paramount factor. Thus, the memoirs and diaries of mothers and women who were not on the brink of starvation differed considerably from the testimonies of the impoverished.

In contrast to women's socialization and values, the sources tell of a growing number of mothers who deserted their children. They left them on an orphanage doorstep or near a self-help institution. Some mothers were absolutely desperate and unable to endure any longer their own and their child's suffering, while others hoped that they would improve the child's chances of survival. However, children were also deserted when mothers tried to escape during the deportations. Some families made the difficult decision to entrust a child to a non-Jewish family, regarding separation to be a lesser evil. We have only a few testimonies on such deliberations between couples; often such decision had to be made by mothers who had already been left alone.[33]

Any reading of family relationships is gendered and offers, in the words of Kangisser Cohen, 'a window into the lives of ordinary people which level the historical description and introduced the human struggle in complete bluntness'.[34] Sources whose provenance is families in the ghetto instruct the reader that in a time of such extremes family cohesion becomes very delicate. The quest for even a semblance of normalcy was what Jews and Jewish families desperately tried to achieve, knowing full well that everything under the occupation and in the ghettos defied normalcy. And yet, the structural changes in the family shattered conventions and undermined relationships between couples, between parents and children, and within the extended family. The imbalance between the parents, coupled with extreme economic want, uncertainty, terror and fear, in addition to the crowded conditions in the apartments, hindered intimate relations and the sense of solidarity. Contemporary documentation tells of quarrels within families, of men having love affairs with younger women, as reported by Rachel Auerbach in her Warsaw diary, of complaints by children that their parents deprived them of the food to which they were entitled, as the chronicle of the Lodz ghetto sadly reveals, and of friction between brothers and sisters.[35]

A question that may arise from the above is how a gendered description of the family would contribute to the study of the major issues of Holocaust research, namely Jewish responses to Nazi persecution and to the Final Solution: resistance, accommodation, compliance, defiance, choice, collaboration and cooperation.

Ofer and Weitzman suggested viewing the family strategy of survival as one manifestation of resistance. They challenged the conventional analysis of resistance as either membership in an underground movement or participation in armed activities such as partisan warfare or revolt. They presented resistance from the perspective of the ordinary man and woman who were unable, or unprepared, to join in armed resistance. They also disagreed with the view that resistance should be defined only as an intentional act of a group. They claimed that in view

of the Nazi declarations about the fate of the Jews under their rule, even before the launching of the Final Solution, the interpretation by many ordinary Jews – as the personal documentation reveals – was that the objective of the Germans was to decimate the Jewish communities in the occupied East. This was how Jews interpreted the ominous food shortage that caused starvation and the horrendous conditions in the forced labour camps. Thus, ordinary Jews intentionally devised their own strategy of survival. The various steps that were devised by women and men according to their personality, social class, education, social network and gender should be viewed beyond an instinct of the individual to go on living regardless of hardship. The challenge of gender analysis provided a missing element of what we must now see as an incomplete picture of Jewish resistance during the Holocaust.[36]

To lend support to the above, I shall refer to the report by Cecilia Slepak on women in the Warsaw Ghetto. Her report was based on interviews she conducted with women in the ghetto between December 1941 and the spring of 1942.[37] Following an introduction, Slepak presented sixteen brief biographies of women from different social classes. Her work was part of a wider initiative to document life in the Warsaw Ghetto a year after its establishment and to evaluate its impact on both individuals and the public.[38]

Writing in the midst of the extraordinary situation in the Warsaw Ghetto, Slepak juxtaposed women with formerly unacceptable occupations such as thieving, prostitution and begging, alongside traditional 'women's work' and new occupations for women. She described the lives of her sixteen informants, among them housewives, a cleaning woman and employees in food storage centres, public kitchens and orphanages, as wells as a woman who served on the housing committees. She also wrote about women in the performing arts – a dancer, an actress and a musician – as well as small-scale vendors, smugglers and professional women, such as an agronomist, a translator and a librarian.[39]

Slepak did not hesitate to describe the darker sides of women's life, and the reality that emerges from their life stories may be interpreted in different ways. However, her conclusion was that women were 'victorious in the struggle for life'. In reading her narrative, a clear subtext emerges: activism was important. The abnormal conditions of the war and occupation demanded that women became active in promoting the survival of their families in non-conventional ways.[40] Under wartime conditions, particularly in the ghettos, choices were very limited. However, the women Slepak described did make choices; they were constantly thinking of alternatives. Some choices that she noted were the decision to work and not beg in the streets, to engage in smuggling, to cross over to the Aryan side despite the danger involved and to establish romantic relations with non-Jews in order to gain some advantages. Choices emerged as an outcome of both general and specific conditions, a woman's particular personality and her standards.

Making choices reflected a sense of autonomy and activism together with resentment towards the situation forced upon them. In addition, women made deliberate decisions such as to cross the border to Vilna, to establish a library or to look for a particular job.[41]

As an interim conclusion I argue that not only was the understanding of both accommodation and resistance nuanced by introducing the concept of choice through gender analysis, but this also established accommodation and resistance across the spectrum of Jewish responses rather than at its two opposite ends.

Underground and Armed Resistance[42]

Women were part of the underground and armed resistance from its outset. In Eastern Europe, the youth movements were the cradle of underground activities. Following the shock of the Polish defeat, youth movement activities resumed bit by bit. Many of the adult leaders of the various youth movements fled Poland, as they were afraid to be targeted by the Nazis or because they left to join the front in eastern Poland. In a number of communities young women assumed leadership of the movement, since the danger for females, as mentioned earlier, was less considerable. Only in the winter of 1940 did the men begin returning and a kind of 'dual leadership' (discussed below) of young men and women emerged.

Under the regulations of the Nazi occupation regime, many of the routine procedures of the youth movements were illegal, such as more than a few individuals congregating together, moving after curfew or travelling from one community to another. As all the youth movements had branches throughout Poland, communication between communities was vital to their educational work.

The participation of girls in the youth movements' activities was not a novelty. The belief in equality between the sexes was shared by all non-religious Zionist and non-Zionist youth movements such as Hashomer Hatzyir, Dror Hehalutz, Noar Zioni and the Bund. Even among religious youth movements such as Bnei Akiva and Hashomer Hadathi great importance was placed upon the activities and services of girls. However, in reality during the prewar period the ideology of equality was not often practised, so girls and female adolescents had to struggle for their fair share. Nevertheless, the new situation offered some specific opportunities for young females: on the one hand, adapting to male roles, including physical work and later participation in fighting (to which I shall return), and on the other hand, the advancement of feminine traits, such as nurturing and taking special care of refugee youngsters who were strangers in the community and helping those whose families had become very poor or depleted.

Many of the youths who were in the movements before the war did not rejoin; those who did, however, found the gatherings a haven. Barred from their schools, dismissed from places of work and often unable to comprehend the difficulties

that their families confronted, the meetings provided them with an opportunity to put aside gloom for a few hours. They gave a sense of belonging and even hope. Youth movement gatherings produced an intimate mood of comradeship, an important factor in the relations between the members. It is therefore interesting to learn that from a gender perspective their discourse used family terms such as sisters, brothers, mothers and fathers.

Following the incarceration in the ghettos, as life became increasingly difficult more young people lost members of their families while in many homes the day-to-day worries of parents about getting provisions and preparing a meal occupied all their faculties and little energy was left for emotional support. Some families stopped functioning altogether. Children and young adolescents had to shoulder the responsibility of providing for the family, and the search for a source of income became desperate. As a result, a youth movement centre, called a *ken* – 'nest' – in Hebrew, turned into a real nest, a place to find reassurance. The leaders, among them many young women, turned the movements' soup kitchens into not only a supplementary source of food but also a cultural and educational centre, which provided the members with motherly warmth. Thus in the underground papers and memoirs we read of the maternal character of central leaders such as Zivia Lubetkin, of the Dror Hehalutz movement, who eventually became the leader of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising together with Mordechai Anielewicz, Tema Schneiderman from Bialystok, Gusta Davidson Drenger (Yustina) and many others.

Due to the isolation in the ghettos, once mobility of Jews was completely forbidden, young women and members of youth movements, disguised as non-Jews, turned out to be the vital lifeline of the movement. They were sent as couriers or emissaries (*shlihim* in Hebrew) from one community to another, passing on information, underground papers and educational materials. The emissaries remained at their destination for several days or weeks to discuss ideological and educational matters with the local leadership, oversee educational activity, and plan and lead theoretical seminars for the older members of the branch. In short, they had to personally represent the central leadership, its ideas, programmes and operations. They also became deeply involved in problems connected with the daily life of the members of the movements.

These meetings that occurred when the emissaries visited groups in the ghettos were described as a beacon of light. They provided a sense of belonging to a larger body, strengthened local initiatives and supplied spiritual encouragement. The following passage from the testimony of Rozka Korczak, a leader of the Jewish underground in Vilna, describes the emotional response of her besieged colleagues in the Vilna Ghetto when Tosia Altman, one of the most famous couriers (*kashariyot* in Hebrew) from Warsaw, arrived in December 1941: 'Tosia came. It was like a blessing of freedom. Just the information that she came.

It spread among the people … As if there were no ghetto … As if there was no death around. As if we were not in this terrible war. A beam of love. A beam of light.'[43]

When the mass killing began in the East the couriers passed on the information. When the idea of armed resistance was initially formulated they were the first to contact the non-Jewish underground to get armaments and carry parts of weapons that would be assembled in the ghetto. Leaders of the movement and of the armed resistance valued the contribution of the couriers, as well as of the other young women who participated in the actual fighting in Warsaw and in the smaller direct clashes in Bialystok and other ghettos. This was also true among the groups of Jewish partisans that were formed from among members of the youth movements and the underground in the ghettos.

Women played a central role in the legacy of the youth movement and of the Jewish resistance; however, they were usually called couriers rather than fighters. A number of female scholars have raised the issue of the manner in which these women have been remembered, feeling that they have not been given the heroic image to which they are entitled. Avihu Ronen, a male historian, believes:

> When it came to fighting, it appears that the new leadership of women was somewhat reduced: they left the combat to the men and were relegated to auxiliary duties such as communication, logistics, first aid, documentation, etc. However, although there was some change in gender status during the days of the armed underground and the fighting (1942–1944), women's role and status remained significant.[44]

Lenore J. Weitzman takes issue with this conclusion, claiming that analysis of the efforts of the *kashariyot*:

> should lead us to conclude that the *kashariyot*, if judged by the same standards as those who fought in the ghettos, are equally deserving of the title of hero. It is, however, still possible that this type of reasoned analysis may nevertheless be at odds with the popular judgment that accords more honor to those we call fighters, or to those who had guns, even if they never fired them.[45]

Avihu Ronen discerns a particular form of leadership that developed within the youth movements during this time, which he relates to the young age of those leaders, who were in their early twenties. He calls it a 'dual leadership':

> A 'dual leadership', composed of one man and one woman, emerged in many of the Jewish undergrounds in the ghettos. The main reason for this development lay in the family structure of the intimate group in which the

> male and female youth leaders were viewed by the youngsters as the group's 'father' and 'mother'. During the war, there was an additional reason: romance.[46]

Ronen points out how the romantic relationship impacted both the camaraderie of men and women during the events themselves and the first written works about the Jewish underground and resistance. A number of women among this group survived the Holocaust and were the first to set down in writing the history of the resistance. They played down their role in the historic events in order to adorn the heroic memory of loved ones. The second generation of authors were men who did not pay sufficient attention to the women and their unique role.

Therefore, I suggest that a fresh look at the history of the underground and resistance should be written from a gendered perspective to represent both the continuity of the traditional self-understanding of men and women during these years while at the same time to demonstrate how the boundaries between the sexes were crossed.

Conclusion

In this article I have discussed only some of the issues in which gender analysis has contributed to a new and nuanced reconstruction of the historical narrative, a contribution that has enriched the description and assisted in understanding the historical protagonists as human beings. I have not talked about major issues that concern women in forced labour camps, such as Skarżysko-Kamienna in the Radom district, and their particular experiences, or women in the death camps such as Auschwitz-Birkenau where many women arrived with their children and were sent directly to their death. This demonstrates that the scope of leading actors of the historical narrative is broader than is conventionally conceived and suggests the application of new dimensions to the historical account.

Gender analysis is indispensable in social history, especially in the history of everyday life which must employ the culture and mentality of the society under study. The fear that gendered analysis would create a hierarchy of suffering or a ladder of heroism and courage has proved incorrect. It offers a look at the routine of daily events at extremes and attests that the criticism which maintained that the introduction of gender into the Holocaust narrative would make the historical description banal was mistaken. In an effort to understand the life of both the victims of Nazism and the perpetrators of the Holocaust, a gendered representation helps us to remember that all historical protagonists were human beings and part of their own society and culture.

Yet, the narratives of the perpetrators and victims are substantially different. In the case of German women who served in the East, the females who were supposed to present a display of care and nurture according to gender theories were blind towards the victims. The women who served in the East were immersed in evil and criminality that was enhanced by ambition, racial perspective and deep dedication towards the cause of the Reich. Ideology, racism and colonialism overcame what were considered the feminine characteristics of gentleness and compassion.

The victims also crossed gender boundaries, and often acted inconsistently with the traditional norms and values of their society. This was manifested in the rupture of family life and the rifts in the enforced ghetto milieu.

Thus, multifaceted reflections of human nature were unveiled: parental love and loyalty, fear, betrayal of family members and friends, abuse of authority and friendship, and the ability to sacrifice and forgive. All emerged out of the unique human condition during the Holocaust.

In all Holocaust narratives the basic axiom should not be missed: Nazi criminality was addressed to Jewish men and women because they were identified as Jews by an arbitrary decision of the Nazi regime. However, this identification did not alter the fundamental differences between male and female, rich and poor, professional and non-professional. Women and men followed their path of persecution, each bearing in their personality their cultural baggage.

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36 Lenore J. Weitzman and Dalia Ofer, 'Women in the Holocaust: Theoretical Foundations for a Gendered Analysis of the Holocaust', in Marcia Sachs Littell, *Women in the Holocaust: Responses, Insights and Perspectives* (Merion Station, PA: Merion Westfield Press International, 2001), pp. 1–34.

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2

Cinematic Representations of the Holocaust

Cathy S. Gelbin

When the gates of the concentration camps opened, visual documents – photographic images and documentary film that the Allied film crews took from Auschwitz, Dachau and Belsen after liberation – played a decisive role in telling the world what had happened. From the immediate postwar period onwards, Eastern Bloc countries began to produce a series of feature films thematizing the Holocaust, with film from the Western side of the Iron Curtain later following suit. Yet although visual culture played a vital role in disseminating cultural knowledge about the Nazi atrocities, it has today attained the status of a particularly problematic medium of Holocaust representation.

Although a number of recent studies have approached the issue of visual Holocaust representation in more nuanced ways, there exists today no in-depth study of the key formal markers of Holocaust film beyond existing explorations of national cinemas. This article, then, will begin to map the formal innovations and key aesthetic strategies in Holocaust film since the late 1940s. I will show that, from its very beginnings, Holocaust film has drawn on particular modes of representation – the metaphor, metonymy and synecdoche – to account for the problems of understanding and representing the Holocaust.

I will then argue that a filmic language for Holocaust representation has developed throughout four major periods linked to discernible thematic and aesthetic trends in Holocaust film. These are, firstly, Eastern Bloc film between the late 1940s and early 1960s, with East German and Polish film in particular, followed by, Italian art cinema from the late 1960s to the mid-1970s. Thirdly, from the mid-1970s into the 1980s, the United States saw the emergence of major Holocaust films drawing on the classical Hollywood aesthetic. Lastly, a post-classical aesthetic, a term I borrow from Elefteria Thanouli,[1] has been dominating both United States and European films since the mid-1990s.

In tracing this trajectory, I will show how filmic techniques have moved from circumventing the direct representation of the gas-chamber atrocities through metonymic or synecdochic fragmentation towards ever more concerted attempts to capture the atrocities through the means of subjective realism, an aesthetic mode throwing up the complexity of visual representation itself. While I will show that this strategy is not without its own problems, I will highlight its productive feature in its heightened ability to reinstate the Jewish victims' stories and agency, and to mediate the now remote Holocaust experience for the third and fourth generations.

Of course, this brief investigation cannot deliver an exhaustive discussion of a breadth of films, but instead relies on highlighting the significant features of Holocaust film through a set of key films produced in the seven decades since the passing of the historical event. While the Holocaust encompasses a multiplicity of experiences of persecution, annihilation and sometimes survival that have been treated in a wide range of films internationally, this short exploration will focus on the particular body of concentration camp films, since these works bring the problem of aesthetic Holocaust representation to the fore.

The Discourse on Holocaust Representation

As fictional Holocaust representations in literature and film proliferated, they drew scholarly attention. From the early 1950s onwards, the German philosopher and cultural critic Theodor Adorno had turned his attention to the problem of Holocaust representation in poetry and music. In the most famous of his statements, issued in response to the popular acclaim of Paul Celan's poem 'Death Fugue' in particular, Adorno contended in his 1949 chapter on 'Cultural Criticism and Society' that 'to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric. And this corrodes even the knowledge of why it has become impossible to write poetry today'.[2] Adorno included cultural criticism in the problem of culture after Auschwitz for, as he argued, cultural criticism grew from the same society as the object to which it responded. The separation of culture from barbarism was thus a construct owed to ideology, whereas in reality culture and barbarism remain linked.

Yet nowhere did Adorno call for a prohibition of Holocaust poetry or even art more broadly, as later critics claimed. Rather, he challenged the claims for post-Holocaust art of a stance somehow untainted by the atrocities of its age, so that it would not have to account for the great rupture in the discourse of civilization that the Holocaust presented. In his 1962 chapter 'Commitment', Adorno further elaborated the problem of artistic representation of the Holocaust itself. Discussing, among other works, the Viennese Jewish composer Arnold Schönberg's twelve-tone piece *Survivors of Warsaw*, Adorno argued that the human suffering during the Holocaust indeed called for its treatment in art,

'no art that avoided the victims could stand up to the demands of justice'. Even though aesthetic stylization lent the 'unthinkable' some transcendent meaning and lessened its horrors, he further contended, the necessity of art after and about Auschwitz arose not least from the ongoing repression of the past in Germany in particular.[3]

Often misunderstood to have issued a prohibition of art about Auschwitz, Adorno's observations on the problem of deriving aesthetic pleasure from the Holocaust formed the point of departure for a new generation of critics since the late 1960s. These scholars, foremost George Steiner and Alvin Rosenfeld,[4] now stressed the inherent unrepresentability of the Nazis' camp atrocities that pushed the limits of understanding even of the survivors themselves. Atrocities of a hitherto unprecedented and unimaginable scale, they argued, the Nazi crimes did not lend themselves to mimetic reconstruction. Holocaust art was to account for this historical event through narrative gaps, ruptures and silences conveying the very inability to adequately account for this event.

Perhaps because literary scholars dominated most early scholarship on Holocaust representation, the field tended to reproduce the older cultural bias against film as a low-culture medium unable to produce the self-reflexivity associated with high modernism. On the surface level, of course, film indeed emerges as a particularly problematic means of Holocaust representation, given its potential to close mimetic gaps particularly to the untrained eye. Heightening the problem of documentary fiction, the denotative filmic image may resemble physical reality so closely that it exacerbates the possibility of mistaking filmic representation for reality. To reduce feature film to this problem, however, does not account for its highly self-referential aesthetic means, which in contrast shall be examined in this piece.

By the 1980s, 'realistic' and 'authentic' sources, foremost the survivors' personal narratives, had become the privileged medium of Holocaust representation because they seemed to counteract the problems of fictionalized and aestheticized portrayals. It was James E. Young's seminal book *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust* (1988) that broke down this dichotomy, arguing that Holocaust narratives across autobiographical and fictionalized genres represent each in their own way constructions in need of critical interpretation.[5] And yet, the most adamant condemnation of feature film at large came from Claude Lanzmann, the French director of the documentary *Shoah* (1985), who asserted in response to Spielberg's *Schindler's List* (USA, 1994) that: 'The Holocaust is unique particularly in that it surrounds itself with a circle of flames, which must not be violated, because a certain, absolute extent of horror cannot be mediated: It is my conviction that whoever does, is guilty of the worst transgression. Fiction is a transgression, and it is my deepest conviction that any image is forbidden.'[6]

There can be no doubt that the heated debate around *Schindler's List* spawned concerted efforts of film scholars to explore in a more complex manner the

possibilities and problems attached to feature film. Pointing to the obvious parallels between Lanzmann's interdiction and the biblical prohibition to make images of the divine, Hansen, for example, critiques the implicit sacralization of the Holocaust arising from such prohibitions. These, Bratu Hansen argues, reduce the problem of Holocaust representation to a simplifying dichotomy of 'showing or not showing – rather than casting it, as one might, an as issue of competing representations and competing modes of representation'.[7]

Although this issue demands further scholarly attention, there exist to date only two major studies of Holocaust film. Whereas Annette Insdorf's pioneering *Indelible Shadows* (1990) gives a broad overview of the body of international Holocaust film, Doneson (2002) focuses on Hollywood film. At the same time, the studies by Koch (1992), Zelizer (2001) and Bathrick *et al.* (2009) have begun to theorize Holocaust film beyond Hollywood and in relation to other visual media.[8] And yet, the major aesthetic strategies through which Holocaust film has been addressing the problem of mimesis have remained largely under-examined.

Narrative Ruptures: Metaphor, Metonymy and Synecdoche

In a 2003 article on Holocaust film, the German film scholar Hanno Loewy outlined Holocaust film's use of metonymies and synecdoches to circumvent the direct representation of the gas-chamber atrocities and thus account for the problem of Holocaust representation.[9] While this is undoubtedly true, the recent emergence of films pushing against these limits of representation calls for a historicization of this filmic strategy. Although these fragmentary codes of communicating meaning, which were pioneered in early postwar socialist cinema, continue to circulate through most Holocaust films, it is foreseeable that they will become increasingly obsolete.

Until the 1980s, the annihilation of European Jewry played at best a marginal role in the discourse on the Nazi past on both sides of the Iron Curtain. This, however, took on a particular twist in the East. Here, the political discourse favoured political resisters over the Jews, who were conceived as a passive mass that had failed to resist its destruction.[10] At the same time, the Eastern Bloc, in keeping with its governing antifascist ethos, not only produced an unparalleled number of highly vivid concentration camp films into the early 1960s, but also pioneered the use of fragmentary Holocaust images reflecting the ruptures and silences that Rosenfeld later observed in Holocaust literature.

In these films, metonymies and synecdoches, such as the smoking crematoria chimneys, the victims' leftover possessions and the deportation trains, thus commonly signified the Nazis' mass destruction of human lives. Because the partial

aspects of metonymy and synecdoche resist closure of knowledge, and with it any total knowledge of the experience of destruction, they produce a fragmentation visually expressing the narratives gaps that Rosenfeld demanded for appropriate Holocaust portrayals. While portraying the daily torture of the Auschwitz inmate's existence, Wanda Jakubowska's Polish film *The Last Stage* (1948) abstains from any direct portrayals of the mass dying. Instead, the camera indicates the mass destruction process in panning the victims' spoils – spectacles, prostheses and suitcases – which refer metonymically to the vast loss of human lives, and through the synecdochic image of the crematorium at the end of the main camp road.

Andrzej Munk's Auschwitz-set *Passenger* (Poland, 1961), which like *The Last Stage* was shot on location, similarly conveys the annihilation processes through the metonymic images of the victims' remains, for example the empty baby carriages rolling into the leftover goods depot. Synecdoches are displayed in the crematorium's smoking chimney and shots of SS men feeding cans of poison gas through a chute while children, women and men, mostly shown sideways through medium long shots, passively descend into the building. However, Munk's refusal to show full-face shots of Jewish victims in contrast to his political victims potentially undercuts spectatorial sympathy and identification with the former. Powerful as these images may be, this cinematic strategy visually reiterates socialist countries' privileging of anti-Nazi resisters over the racially persecuted, who are also sidelined in Munk's plot.

Treating the internment of Greek Jews in a Bulgarian transit camp, Konrad Wolf's East German film *Stars* (1959) gave the first more detailed filmic account of the Jews' persecution. Again, the Auschwitz atrocities are referred to through a series of metonymies, with the transit camp itself acting as a metonymy for, in Jakubowska's term, the 'last stage'. When the Jews are finally deported on to their deaths, the train disappears into a tunnel, covered by a cloud of smoke metonymically invoking the smoke of the Auschwitz crematoria.

From the Classical to Post-Classical Aesthetic

Inspired by the French New Wave's self-reflexive cinematic style, *Stars*, also made important cinematographic innovations within Holocaust film. Wolf gives a first impression of the transit camp through a series of dramatic camera angles and pans moving from the objective to the subjective. Zooming out from the close-up of a church, the camera pans and tilts downwards to offer an extreme long-shot from a extreme high angle – a take with connotations of omniscience – of the Jews amassed in an adjacent courtyard. Casting its shadow into the smoke-filled yard below, the church tower itself seems to metaphorically point to the absent crematoria of Auschwitz, a take that seems to point to the Christian origins of modern

Jew-hatred. Halting for a moment, the camera then zooms into the crowd and fades into the full-face close-up of a man drinking from a battered tin bowl.

Views of the church, exploring its aspects from varying camera angles, also reflect the film's star-crossed German-Jewish couple's futile search for a future. In so doing, *Stars* anticipated the more recent turn in Holocaust film to a subjective or 'energy' realism,[11] whereby camera movements visualize the protagonists' emotional states. It is precisely this cinematographic style that lends the film its emotionally strong portrayals, even though these are severely marred by Wolf's sentimentalized invocation of the stereotypical 'beautiful Jewess',[12] which both sexualizes the film's subject and furthers its narrative of Jewish passivity in the face of destruction.

A similar cinematographic style marks Frank Beyer's Buchenwald film, *Naked among Wolves* (GDR, 1963), although this film, too, sidelines the Jewish victims in relation to the resisters. Here, the extreme long-shot of the smoking crematoria, shown off-centre in fishbowl effect from a high-angled camera position renders the inmates below ant-like and inconsequential. This distorted image suggests that the camp atrocities essentially defy representation through the seamless aesthetic, which maintains the cinematic reality effect.

At the same time, Western European art cinema was producing a radical break with the thematic and aesthetic features connoting linearity, stability and knowability in the classical Hollywood aesthetic. During the late 1960s and mid-1970s, Italian directors produced as part of this trend a string of highly controversial films treating Nazism and Italian fascism. Particularly Liliana Cavani's *Night Porter* (Italy, 1974) and Lina Wertmüller's *Seven Beauties* (Italy, 1976) drew intense criticism for their highly sexualized depictions of the Nazism, which they cast as a metaphor for the destructive patriarchal conditioning of the heterosexual relationship. By and large, these films, too, universalized the Nazi victims and obscured the annihilation of European Jewry.

At the same time, these films furthered the self-reflexive cinematic style that is now the hallmark of Holocaust film. For example, Cavani's warped and tilting images of SS men filming and observing their victims' sexualized dance and song performances do not simply replicate, but rather critically expose, the pornographic exploitation of the Holocaust in postwar culture. Such accusation had come to the fore in the critical response to Gillo Pontecorvo's 1960 film *Kapo*. This film, Jacques Rivette in particular charged, espoused voyeurism in using a tracking shot to show the suicidal leap of a female camp inmate into the electrical barbed wire. Another problematic sequence shows the unfolding of heterosexual romance in the camp latrines.

In contrast, Cavani's and Wertmüller's visual devices of disturbance parody and undo feature film's melodramatic conventions, which continue to play a prime role in the filmic sexualization of the Holocaust. Through these strategies that invite critical reflection on the act of cultural production as well as consumption,

Cavani mounts an attack on bourgeois culture itself, which her film implies with the genesis of both fascism and patriarchal gender power.[13]

Yet US-American Holocaust film in the 1980s remained dominated by the classical Hollywood aesthetic's seamless visuality, narrative continuity, and spatial and temporal contiguity. Among the handful of early Hollywood films treating the Holocaust, such as George Stevens' *The Diary of Anne Frank* (USA, 1959) and Sidney Lumet's *Pawnbroker* (USA, 1964), only Fred Zinnemann's *Seventh Cross* (USA, 1944), based on Anna Seghers' novel of the same title, was set in a concentration camp. Made, however, before information about the Auschwitz gas chambers had reached the wider public, the film lacked the ubiquitous signifiers of mass annihilation. Before the 1970s the only US film featuring scenes of the mass atrocities was Stanley Kramer's *Judgment at Nuremberg* (USA, 1961). Instead of resorting to metonymy and synecdoche, Kramer implicitly acknowledges feature film's inability to produce images from these scenes. The film does thus not attempt to restage the mass dying, but rather refers to the atrocities on the level of dialogue and by inserting into its narrative original footage taken during the liberation of the camps.

With Marvin J. Chomsky's TV mini-series *Holocaust* (USA, 1978), American Holocaust film not only came into its own, but dominated the production of Holocaust films internationally. The first US production to fictionalize the Holocaust in its extensive facets of deportation, ghettoization and gas-chamber annihilation, *Holocaust* traced the story of one assimilated German-Jewish family from the beginning of ostracism in 1933 to life and death in the Nazi ghettos and Auschwitz. The programme was broadcast to millions of viewers worldwide, including in Germany, where it set off the first large-scale public debates on the destruction of European Jewry. However, the series' limitations due to its TV format and adherence to the Hollywood aesthetic, which dominated US productions such as Daniel Mann's *Playing for Time* (USA, 1980) and Alan J. Pakula's *Sophie's Choice* (USA, 1982) into the next decade,[14] led most critics to chastise *Holocaust* for trivializing the historical events upon which it was based.

Although the film's aesthetic was indeed largely conventional, *Holocaust* nonetheless displayed a self-reflexive element in its use of hypermediated imagery to refer to the gas chambers. Hypermediation occurs when film draws our attention to the constructed nature of screen images and the spectatorial gaze itself. In one of *Holocaust*'s gassing sequences, we see a German observing the scenes of dying inside through a peephole on the door. Through the peephole's invocation of the cinematic gaze, Chomsky suggested that the Holocaust defied the immediacy and transparency promised by the classical aesthetic. While directly borrowing the image of the peephole from Hitchcock's *Psycho*, a film with its own Holocaust connotations,[15] *Holocaust* does not then cut to a point-of-view shot depicting the actual scene behind the artificial eye. Such a tactic would have invoked the

contention by early film critic Siegfried Kracauer that realist film offered a protective shield through which the camp atrocities, too terrible to be witnessed in reality, could be approached.[16]

Instead, we see the German shrinking back in shock from what he has beheld, suggesting that these scenes precisely cannot be imagined through the cinematic gaze. This logic is repeated even when the camera later follows naked female inmates inside the gas chamber. As a hissing sound emerges, connoting the release of gas, the camera quickly cuts from the close-up of the lead protagonist closing her eyes to an empty black frame. The camera then cuts to a close-up shot of flames, zooms out from an asphalt cooker and pans to the road construction site where the woman's husband is conscripted to forced labour. This shot not only metonymically invokes the final destruction of the woman's body in the flames of the crematoria, but also anticipates her husband's death which will soon follow her own.

For his Auschwitz sequence in *Schindler's List* (USA, 1994), Steven Spielberg reshot Holocaust films' earlier metonymies and synecdoches – the trains, the smoking chimneys, the peephole and the victims' silent march into the underground destruction facilities – while also restaging Chomsky's scene of the women inside the gas chamber. Here, however, Spielberg set a new trend in abandoning the classical aesthetic. To describe *Schindler's List*'s play with a self-reflexive aesthetic, Miriam Bratu Hansen employs the term popular modernism, a concept she coined elsewhere for the utilization of avant-garde film techniques in Hollywood films since Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane* (USA, 1940).[17] My discussion, instead, draws on Thanouli's concept of a 'post-classical' style that emerged in the 1960s and has come to fruition since the 1990s.

Post-classical cinema, Thanouli argues, cites and rewrites the classical aesthetic through its heightened character-centred causality and subjective or 'energy' realism.[18] Through rapid camera movements, extreme lens lengths and editing, post-classical film translates the protagonists' emotions into the visual to create a 'you are there' feeling. Post-classical hypermediacy, the layering of different media within one shot, does not destroy the classical unity and closure altogether, but rather creates windowed representations exposing the constructed and multidimensional nature of the image. Key elements of this cinema are a high degree of self-reflexivity disrupting the 'seamless' cinematic illusion, the multiplicity of narrative voices and a heightened emphasis on knowability, while – in contrast to the avant-garde – also maintaining a concerted investment in spectatorial pleasure.

In particular the shower sequence in *Schindler's List*, which again borrows heavily from the shower in Hitchcock's *Psycho*, evinces these post-classical traits. The fearful facial expressions are translated technically into the fast cutting rate and the jerky flow of camera movements, which follow and echo the women's

panic-stricken reactions. The 'you are there' feeling of the shot is further emphasized by the camera's seeming position inside the moving crowd, which places the spectator directly among the women. The use of wide-angle lenses distorting the perspectives conveys the horror of the moment, while also undercutting the naturalizing cinematic effect. The constructed nature of the cinematic gaze is exposed through the hypermediated image of the peephole, through which the camera presents a fish-eye's view of the women inside before it cuts abruptly to a new position directly inside the room.

Critics were enraged by this sequence, which, by showing explicit details of female nudity, sexualized and trivialized the Holocaust. By moving inside what seems to be a gas chamber, Spielberg's camera on the one hand suggested that the Holocaust was representable, while it on the other hand powerfully played into the hands of Holocaust deniers when the showerheads really do turn out to release water. And yet, we can see the latter narrative choice as another metonymic reference to what Spielberg, too, obviously deems to be unrepresentable.

Taking its aesthetic cues from Spielberg's shower scene and its title from Primo Levi's final book, Tim Blake Nelson's *The Grey Zone* (USA, 2001) went a decisive step further. Determined to show it all, this film is set entirely inside one of the Jewish Special Commando units that processed the dead bodies at the Auschwitz-Birkenau crematoria. Through tilted camera levels and by constantly switching between wide-angle, telephoto and normal lenses, Nelson achieves a sense of constantly changing perspectives ranging from visual estrangement to connoting the horrible normality that the Special Commando unit's "work" took on. Like other films of this type, *The Grey Zone* is further built on a multitude of narrative levels adding to classical camera and character focalization,[19] such as the host of protagonists between whom the story constantly switches, as well as the invocation of Primo Levi's and Miklós Nyiszli's memoirs,[20] non-diegetic titles and the voice-over of a young Jewish girl murdered in the course of the film.

Through these means the film edges from fragmented and synecdochic images of the processing of dead bodies inside the crematorium to a close anatomy of the destruction process. An initial shot of the furnace room yields only partial images of the action inside, which is largely obscured by the back of an inmate carrying a dead body through a door bearing a no-entry sign. In combination with the fragmented view of the room inside, the sign functions as a symbolic reminder of the interdiction against Holocaust imagery. In its course, however, the film increasingly pushes beyond the now familiar Holocaust metonymies and synecdoches that form the received boundaries of Holocaust representation in feature films. Instead, *The Grey Zone* piles up ever more explicit images of human bodies in all stages of the destruction process. These culminate in a young girl's hypermediated memory of her gassing, which the film presents through a filtered

normal-lens close-up,[21] and the grotesquely wide-angled shot of three naked female corpses with sagging breasts and bellies, propped up against a bench so that the Special Commando men can extract the teeth and hair of the gassed. These misogynistic 'house of horror' connotations, which are reinforced by the men's conversation among bushels of hair hanging from a drying line above, are among the most problematic moments in the film.

Foremost, such graphic detail begs the question of its necessity. In other words, do such details tell us anything about the essence of the Holocaust that is worth knowing? Or is such understanding more readily furthered by the metonymic images of absence and loss, such as when a Christian child in Imre Gyöngyössy and Barna Kabay's film *Job's Revolt* (Hungary, 1983) views the Jewish deportees' lost track marks in the empty Hungarian landscape? It seems to me that the merits of post-classical Holocaust film lie not so much in what it shows, but in the way in which it exposes its own workings. This strategy seems to come closest to Adorno's insistence that, rather than being silenced altogether, Holocaust art must reflect on itself to account for the problem of representation.

This strategy also informs Lajos Koltai's international co-production *Fateless* (Hungary/Germany/UK/Israel, 2005), which makes explicit its aesthetic sensibility in relation to the Holocaust. *Fateless* presents one of the most sensitive and complex filmic treatments of the Holocaust to date. The film, based on the Nobel Prize winner Imre Kertész's autobiographically inspired novel of the same title, follows the deportation of a fourteen-year-old Jewish boy, Gyuri, from his native Budapest and his survival of the Auschwitz and Buchenwald camps. *Fateless* is composed in the vein of post-classical subjective realism throughout, as well as this aesthetic's multiple narrative voices and pulsating cinematography and editing. In one key sequence of telephoto lens close-ups, for example, we see the non-religious Gyuri observing other men swaying in prayer during roll call, with the focus changing abruptly from one praying inmate's face to that of Gyuri. Breaking the 180-degree continuity rule, according to which the camera must remain on the same side of the action, we then see Gyuri starkly focused from the other side, imitating the prayer sound against the silent atheists who are left blurry behind him. These shifting camera perspectives and positions transmit not only Gyuri's fading powers of consciousness during the torturous hours of roll-call, but also bring into focus and validate the uniqueness of each inmate's experience beyond fixed notions of authenticity.

This dreamlike sequence has a strange beauty reiterated later in the moment of Gyuri's near death, as he lies on the ground among a litter of bodies. In a point-of-view shot, we then see Gyuri's vision of the sky suddenly opening up to reveal a bright light streaming through the clouds. This image seems to announce Gyuri's imminent death or perhaps some divine revelation which, however, does not occur. We may read this image as a symbol of God's silence during the Holocaust

and the empty search for its meaning. This beauty, then, has no divine or rational meanings except to stand on its own, as an integral part of the human experience. Gyuri's voiceover epilogue thus quotes from Kertész's novel in asserting that 'there's nothing too unimaginable to endure' and that 'even beside the chimneys in the pause between torments there was something similar to happiness'. Because of the camera's subjective realism throughout the film, this assertion is validated as one individual's experience of the Holocaust that cannot be generalized or claimed by the spectator. What makes Gyuri's statement all the more poignant in its possible limitation is that it comes from a boy just on the threshold to adolescence, who we assume has not yet possessed his full cognitive capabilities in the camp.

Subjective realism in *Fateless* comes to the fore when the deadly ill Gyuri is lifted from a litter of bodies on to a cart taking him towards the crematorium, and when what seems to be his final journey is again portrayed through a series of shifting camera perspectives and positions. In a high-angled, wide-lens crane shot the camera first sweeps along with the cart's movement between two barbed-wire fences. In the background, we see camp life carrying on as some inmates sit before a barracks, while a gate opens in the opposite direction to let an empty cart back into the camp. Against classical continuity, a tracking shot then zooms into a telephoto close-up of Gyuri on the other side of the cart, which is now moving towards the opposite side of the frame. As Gyuri gazes directly into the camera – a shot suggesting that we are looking directly into his mind – the flattening telephoto effect seems nearly to superimpose the cart's spinning wheel on Gyuri's face behind. We may read this image as a symbol of Gyuri's waning life. The passing wheel, however, partially bars Gyuri's eyes from our vision, suggesting that this experience cannot be fully mediated through the camera.

Albeit not seen through the wheel, the next image seems to present us with a point-of-view shot of inmates behind the fence carrying a large cauldron of soup, for when the camera cuts back to Gyuri's face behind the turning spokes, we hear him murmuring 'carrot soup'. The multifaceted disruption of classical continuity in this sequence in terms of breaking the 180-degree rule and the reversal of direction within the frame, as well as through discontinuous frame composition, connote the intermediate space between life and death that Gyuri inhabits in that moment. Buchenwald did not have a gas chamber, but for Gyuri, who had been sent here from Auschwitz, the showerhead under which he is then placed connotes his imminent gassing. In a point-of-view shot, the camera traces his fearful gaze by zooming into a spiralling extreme close-up of the showerhead above.

This image is disrupted by the startling roar of the showers, which begins while Gyuri still contemplates the ceiling. The lag that occurs before we are shown the powerful splash of the showers connotes Gyuri's delayed understanding that within his frame of experience, where death forms normality, something abnormal has occurred. When the boy is taken away from the shower room, the film

again reiterates the aberrational nature of this survival. As Gyuri is carried hanging over the shoulder of another inmate, the camera shifts into an upside-down perspective to present a tracking point-of view shot. As the camera pans from the smoking crematorium chimney to an upturned pile of dead bodies, the transposed face of a dead young man briefly emerges in sharp focus. In so doing, *Fateless* seems to invoke Primo Levi's assertion in *The Drowned and the Saved* that 'we, the survivors, are not the true witnesses' because 'unlike the drowned', the survivors 'did not touch bottom. Those who did so, have not returned to tell about it'.[22]

Conclusion

By utilizing Thanouli's concept of a recent post-classical aesthetic in cinema more broadly, this piece has proposed that post-1990s Holocaust film is increasingly moving beyond metonymy and synecdoche, which earlier film-makers used to account for their sense of the filmic unrepresentability of the Holocaust. In the vein of post-classical film more generally, film-makers' edging toward unmitigated representation of the gas-chamber atrocities has instead stressed the inherent knowability of the Holocaust, albeit through a self-reflexive style exposing the cinematic gaze and the constructedness of its images. In so doing recent films deliberately disrupt the mystification and sacralization of the Holocaust that arose from critics' prohibition against making fictional images from this event.

The overall trajectory of a filmic language for the Holocaust suggests that there is no inherently appropriate mode to represent the atrocities. Rather, the emergence of these styles signifies the particular political-cultural conditions, discursive junctures and generational changes framing the creation of these films. The changing styles of Holocaust film suggest that, no matter how nuanced and sensitive, there is no one aesthetic sensibility that will remain set in stone, but rather that the needs and modes to account for this past will remain in constant flux.

Of course, these ever more detailed images of the mass destruction process have very little to tell to the Holocaust scholar who has studied the close historical details of the Nazi genocide. To impart accurate historical knowledge, however, cannot be the sole function of art, even where we hold it accountable to a certain factuality. Rather, these films fulfil a set of broader functions for the third and now fourth generation after the Holocaust. The only recourse that the generations born after the Holocaust have to this event is to resort to mediated images, and this condition is essentially reflected in the self-reflexive cinematic style that draws to attention the very act of mediation.

The cinematic gaze resulting from this is aesthetic is, however, by no means distant. By throwing into question classical cinema's totalizing narrative authority and its suggestion of the spectator's voyeuristic control over the image, the post-classical

aesthetic has enabled film-makers to closely approach the Nazi victims' subjective experience and with it also their often-denied agency. What this gaze, with its effects of visual dislocation, at the same appropriately registers is that the victims' experiences are not the spectator's own, but that they are indeed emotionally and cognitively traceable. The powerful empathy that these films invoke for the victims' stories must not be underestimated in the seventh decade after the Holocaust. After the fall of the Iron Curtain and the events following 9/11, the Holocaust as a defining moment in Western history is increasingly receding into the background.

The post-classical emphasis on knowability through the means of subjective realism has aided Holocaust film in effectively countering the diminishing temporal and personal proximity of the historical event. At the same time, the new sense of the Holocaust's knowability arises from our now ingrained knowledge of the modernity's genocidal potential. Despite the partial postwar restoration of Western self-consciousness and its narratives of progress, the Holocaust can thus no longer rupture the Western consciousness to the extent that it did in 1945. In the case of Holocaust film, post-classical cinema's emphasis on the continuity of styles thus reflects the sense of historical continuity three generations after the event. For better or for worse, the Holocaust no longer forms an aberration in the Western awareness, but an integral part of the West's understanding of its history, which our means of representation can gradually approach.

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14 This was so even where, as in Chomsky and Mann's case, films did not come out of the Hollywood studio system itself. See also Insdorf, *Indelible Shadows*, p. 3.

15 See Cathy S. Gelbin, 'Metaphors of Genocide: The Staging of Jewish History and Identity in the Art of Tanya Ury', in Carolin Duttlinger, Lucia Ruprecht and Andrew Webber (eds), *Performance and Performativity in German Cultural Studies* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2003), pp. 230–36.

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19 For an outline of the eight possible levels of film narration, see Branigan (1992), cited in Thanouli, *Post-Classical Cinema*.

20 The film's opening titles explicitly credit Nyiszli, an accomplished Hungarian-Jewish pathologist whom Auschwitz SS doctor Josef Mengele selected to assist human experiments. See Miklós Nyiszli, *Auschwitz. A Doctor's Eyewitness Account*, trans. Tibère Kremer and Richard Seaver (New York, NY: Arcade, 1993).

21 This episode loosely follows Nyiszli, *Auschwitz*, pp. 114–120, who relates the case of a young girl who survived the gassing and was later shot by the SS.

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3

Sociology

Marcel Stoetzler

[W]e can hold our industrial and technological civilization responsible for the camps, not because any spectacular industrial measures were required to carry out the mass murders and bring about suffering of boundless proportions (in Germany, these measures amounted to little more than gunpowder, poison and fire …) but because a technological mentality invaded the human world as well … In his time, Rousseau already noticed this development, which is why his vision of humanity is so filled with despair: 'Iron and wheat civilized men,' he writes, 'and ruined the human race'.[1]

Sociology and Holocaust Writing – Discuss[2]

Where to start? The subject at hand seems to give us at least two different tasks: the more obvious would be to explore what sociologists have written about the Holocaust. Some sociologists, or social scientists, have been concentration camp inmates and have written about it; this could be an obvious starting point. The most famous of these is probably Bruno Bettelheim (a psychologist, rather than a sociologist, although by training he was a philosopher, as were many sociologists in his generation; the disciplinary divisions were then still enviably porous; see Chapter 7 for a discussion of Bettelheim).[3] Then there have been sociologists, social scientists and social theorists who were Jewish, or whom at least the Nazis would have categorized as such, who lived when it happened and who wrote about the Holocaust. The most prominent group of these are a group of Marxists that is usually dubbed the 'Frankfurt School' (they could be called 'independent' or 'non-orthodox' Marxists as most of them were not members of any communist or other workers' party), who were also deeply influenced by psychoanalysis (that other 'Jewish science', in the opinion of antisemites).[4] Their 'critical theory'[5] is the only sociological tradition that made antisemitism

and the Holocaust a centrepiece of its analysis, and had tremendous influence in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, when the foundations of today's Holocaust discourses were laid. Thirdly, there were a string of other sociologists contributing to this theme, working within the more established or mainstream theoretical paradigms of sociology. By far the most significant figure here is Zygmunt Bauman, whose book *Modernity and the Holocaust* – first published in 1989 – is probably today for most people the defining statement on sociology and the Holocaust (see below).[6]

So much for our first, more obvious, task. As for the second task, we need to halt a moment and wonder what 'sociology' means. Up to this point, we have taken for granted that sociology is an academic discipline and that sociologists are people who are employed as sociologists in sociology departments (or sometimes in 'neighbouring' disciplines, including history). However, one of the most famous texts of that discipline states as its main point that all members of modern societies are sociologists because we all are constantly, every single moment of our lives, required to make use of what the author, C. Wright Mills, called *The Sociological Imagination*: basically, we have to put ourselves in other peoples' shoes in order to anticipate whether, let's say, they will hit us or kiss us during the next moment, a complicated task that requires us all to have command of a complex, namely 'sociological', knowledge of the society we inhabit.[7] Given this definition of sociology, our assigned question could also be answered by examining what kind of *implicit* sociology shapes the Holocaust writings of just anyone, not just those of sociologists. Historians, too, for example, whether they know it or not, 'are' sociologists, certainly in that wider sense just described, and often indeed quite specifically as they draw on, and map out, their own thinking and writing with the help of (explicit) social theory. The principal example is that of Raul Hilberg, one of the most significant historians of the Holocaust (although he is actually a political scientist, a student of Franz Neumann, a member of the above-mentioned 'Frankfurt School').[8]

The Holocaust: How, What and Why

All writings about the Holocaust address one or several of the three questions, 'what?, 'how?' and 'why?' To be precise, though, 'why' in turn refers to either 'what' or 'how' (*why* did happen *what* happened, and *why* did it happen *how* it happened), which leaves us with this set of questions: what happened, including who did what to whom, *and why*; and how did it happen, how was it possible, *and why*. Put simply, these strands of enquiry (when formulated in the mode of asking 'why') boil down to, on the one hand, 'why the Jews, why exterminate them, why the – ordinary or not so ordinary – Germans as perpetrators, etc.?', and

on the other hand, 'why concentration camps, gas chambers, trains, ramps, why Einsatzkommandos (the mobile killing squads), why bystanders, etc.?' Those who have worked on more recent discussions based on the 'what' questions seem mostly to be found amongst those who are dubbed 'intentionalists' (those who hold that the Nazis and their companions in crime *intended* to kill all Jews, everywhere, at any price, and deliberately chose to commit the Holocaust), whereas those who ask 'how' tend to be amongst the 'structuralists' (those who believe the Holocaust was not exactly, literally, intended but gradually *emerged* out of the structures and dynamics of the National Socialist regime as a whole). This is strange because those who ask 'what' are inevitably centrally concerned with antisemitism, which is an ideology, a worldview or a set of beliefs, perhaps even something akin to a religion, and from a sociological perspective, ideologies, worldviews, religions and so on are at least as much part of the *structures* of any given society as they are aspects of an individual's, or a group of individuals', *intentions*. The more one thinks about these issues seriously, i.e. conceptually, one will inevitably come to the conclusion that this conceptual dichotomy is not terribly useful, and indeed most historians of the Holocaust nowadays will claim that the intentionalist/structuralist dichotomy has been overcome.

The whole distinction between 'structure' and 'intention', so commonplace in historians' debates, is itself already the reflection of a piece of sociological theory: sociologists would typically address this particular conceptual distinction as the problem of 'structure and agency', and it is at the very heart of their discipline.[9] If we define sociology as the 'science', in the sense of *Wissenschaft* – sustained methodical enquiry – of *society*, then we are saying nothing more than that this new science committed itself to the exploration of the breathtaking, revolutionary discovery in the nineteenth century of a new constellation in which the agency of individual human beings was constrained, framed and directed, not by other individual human beings – their masters or groups of masters – but by *structures* and patterns that are intangible, invisible, but *there*: some 'thing' out there that exists of nothing more than the combined actions – the agency – of all members of society, but still is more than simply the sum of those actions.[10] It is a mysterious, abstract, but real 'thing', this society, of which sociology is the science. Patterns of thought, including prejudices, ideologies, religions and so on, as they have a part in directing people's actions, are very much part of that mysterious structure that goes by the name of 'society'. Any sociology that is worth its salt tries to rationalize this mysterious ambiguity as the 'dialectic' between structure and agency: society is constituted by the actions of individuals, but the individuals – what they do, think, love, eat, play, adore – are in turn constituted by society. This is the modern situation. (Beware of sociologies – explicit ones in sociology books or implicit ones elsewhere – that pretend to offer a resolution to this dialectic: there cannot be one, at least not this side of the end of history.) As the Holocaust is an

event of the modern era (for some, *the* modern event), the acting, thinking and so on of its perpetrators, as also its victims and those all-important 'bystanders', must be looked at with the structure/intention dialectic always at the back of one's mind. (Although almost inevitably any one author or scholar will deal with the one more or better than with the other ….)[11]

The Extreme Point of an Irrational Reality

After this brief attempt to outline the first of the two terms in the title of our assignment – sociology – let us move on to the Holocaust. I would like to begin with a rather unexpected example of sociological accounts of, or references to, the Holocaust. Henri Lefebvre (1901–91), an unorthodox French Marxist (he was expelled from the Communist Party in 1958), published in 1947 the first volume of his hugely influential *Critique of Everyday Life*. A book of that title would not necessarily be anyone's first port of call in search for an analysis of that decidedly non-everyday event, the Holocaust, and yet Lefebvre turns to Auschwitz in a crucial passage in the last section of this book.[12] Lefebvre quotes survivor reports, in particular those by David Rousset[13] and Pelagia Lewinska,[14] and contemporary commentary, looking for an answer to the question, 'What is Auschwitz?' He asserts that the camps were not just extermination camps because 'it would have been easier to shoot the detainees *en masse*',[15] but neither were they work camps because the 'amount of work produced is insignificant'. One statement he picks up maintains that the camps are '*Ubuesque*', 'a nightmarish *Kafka-esque* world where everything seems organized according to some implacable, rigid, rational mind; but which one? Since everything here is unnatural, dehumanised, mad, manic'.[16] Another one states: 'What had given the impression of disorder was premeditated, what appeared to be ignorance was subtlety.'[17] And he quotes Rousset: 'But the fact that this universe of concentration camps exists is not unimportant for the meaning of the universe of ordinary people'.[18]

Lefebvre goes beyond these contemporary accounts by asserting that there are no separate universes: 'the absurd and the rational coexist' in '*scientific barbarity*'. The 'feeling of absurdity' is merely pushed to an extreme in the camps, but it is 'the most constant of feelings underlying everyday life' for 'us men of Paris or Toulouse, New York or Tbilisi'. 'In factories, government offices, courts of law, barracks, or simply in cities, an implacable mechanism is at work', the manifestation of an 'irrational reality' and 'dehumanized Rationality'.[19]

He says that it is significant that contemporary commentators used references from literature (such as Alfred Jarry's proto-absurdist play *Ubu King*; Franz Kafka's works) to describe the extreme terror of the camps, but by doing so they miss

the important point that Kafka's 'universe' is not 'intended to be extraordinary': according to Kafka, modern man *as such* is '*tragically* controlled' by the unity of absurdity and reason. To understand this world one must 'abandon the illusions created by moral doctrines' and that of 'beneficial Reason and a fully realized individuality'.[20] (Lefebvre has on his mind, of course, Marx's argument in *Das Kapital* that the modern ensemble of fetishized social relations, epitomized in commodity fetishism, creates a topsy-turvy world, but different versions of the same basic idea, which Lefebvre himself designated as 'tragic', permeate most strands of classical sociological theory: Ferdinand Tönnies, Georg Simmel, Max Weber.) In the modern world, individuality is not realized, reason is not beneficial and morality does not rule. All this is normal, everyday experience, as witnessed by a range of writers from Marx to Kafka and Jarry. Auschwitz is 'just' an extreme case, in the same sense that the 'universe' created by Kafka's writings is 'just' an extrapolation of everyday life. In the words of the survivor, Lewinska: 'I can only admire the skill with which the Germans had introduced the modern science of man into the way they organized life in the camp … They consciously created a jungle where brutal egoism, trickery, the lack of all deference towards anyone physically weaker, stifled any sense of human solidarity'.[21] Lefebvre concludes: This jungle 'represented a condensed social image of the Third Reich', which in turn merely constituted a condensed image of everyday life in the modern world.[22]

Many will – quite rightly – feel the danger here that the specificity, the uniqueness of the Holocaust, disappears as just another instance of a truly grand narrative and indeed, as sociologists are specialists of the generic, they do run this risk. They do not *necessarily* have to succumb to it, though: the sociological perspective ought to construe the uniqueness of the Holocaust as the uniqueness of the uniquely exemplary, which means it is exemplary by virtue of being unique, extreme, a vanishing point that indicates its perspectivity: exemplary but not normal; and it is by virtue of being exemplary in this specific sense that its uniqueness gains its monumental relevancy in the first place. (This is also the sense of Yehuda Bauer's critique of Elie Wiesel's insistence on the incomprehensibility of the Holocaust.)[23] Just as we read Jarry and Kafka because we 'feel' that they communicate to us something of relevance for how we understand ourselves and the society that we form and inhabit, so we study the Holocaust: it gets at us because it is uniquely exemplary. In other words: it matters. Teachers and other authorities of education, the culture industry and the state are likely to do more damage than good when they demand we study the Holocaust as if this was a duty, or to make us feel good about the fact that we are not as bad as the Nazis. It is the sociological dimension, pivoted on reflection on the problem of structure and agency in modern society, that lends our studying a moral value, namely insofar as the Kantian imperative of 'dare to make use of your critical capacities'

is nowadays, after Auschwitz, connected to the moral imperative that one must act in such ways that no further Auschwitz may happen.[24]

The *Never Again Auschwitz* Moment

The history of (Western) sociology in the twentieth century (like the history of most other things, too, in that period) was shaped by the shift from the Second World War (against Hitler and National Socialism) to the Cold War (against Stalin and 'socialism in one country', and then in a few more countries). The fact that antisemitism was central to National Socialism (but, by comparison, rather peripheral to Stalinism) was, to the extent that Western social sciences enrolled in the war effort of the Anti-Hitler-coalition, duly reflected in social scientific attention to antisemitism and the Holocaust in the 1940s and still the 1950s. Accordingly, this attention was eclipsed when the focus shifted: it was only for a short historical moment that Western democracy and liberal values were defined in terms of *Never Again Auschwitz*. Even survivors found an audience, briefly. For the duration of the Cold War, though, the topic was very much at the bottom of the agenda (except amongst some groups, mostly of the non-Stalinist left) and re-emerged in the 1980s, and especially since 1989. In the context of sociology as an academic discipline, it is probably fair to say that a curriculum that is primarily about modernization theory and the search for the most effective path to world-wide industrial-capitalist 'development' (as in the 1950s and 1960s) is hardly able to accommodate a matter that cannot but destroy any naive optimism about the benign character of ('Western') progress and civilization.

What was produced in that short historical moment before the Cold War made itself felt, though, is most exciting and full of scholarly innovation. A not insignificant part of this story is the interaction between the 'Frankfurt School' (a group of émigré, mostly Jewish, Marxists) and progressive, liberal sociology in the United States. (Presumably, there have not been too many periods when the Office of Strategic Studies or its successor organisation, the CIA, employed Marxist philosophers like Herbert Marcuse to advise them on how they should deal with their enemies.)[25]

During the Second World War and the immediate postwar period research on the Holocaust and on antisemitism did not constitute separate discourses; it was generally taken for granted that the Holocaust was an extreme expression of antisemitism, and likewise that antisemitism was a phenomenon that could result in events like the Holocaust. The 'what' and 'why' (as opposed to the 'how') of the Holocaust was studied through the study of antisemitism.[26] The 'structural' approach that would study the Holocaust with little or no attention to antisemitism emerged later as a (temporary) reaction against this initial consensus.

At the same time, antisemitism was generally seen as a particular form of ideology, worldview, mentality or mental pattern, often 'prejudice', which in turn was usually seen as somehow related to society. It is in explaining *how* 'prejudice', ideology or mentality would have been linked to society that theoretical and disciplinary approaches differed. Social psychologists and psychoanalysts, for example, would often take account of society in highly sophisticated ways. For this the contributions in Ernst Simmel's edited volume *Anti-Semitism, A Social Disease* of 1946 are exemplary.[27]

Critical Theory in American Exile

The most significant and innovative work in the area of theoretically informed empirical social-scientific research on antisemitism and the Holocaust resulted from the cooperation between the émigré scholars of the ('Frankfurt School') Institute of Social Research (AJC founded in Frankfurt am Main, Germany, in 1924 as an independent Marxist research institute) and two Jewish institutions in the United States, the American Jewish Committee (AJC founded 1906) and the Jewish Labor Committee (JLC, founded 1934).[28] Apart from large quantities of unpublished but nevertheless influential material (especially the study 'Antisemitism among American Labour') and Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno's more philosophical work *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (including the key text 'Elements of Antisemitism'), this cooperation resulted in the five-volume *Studies in Prejudice*, which remained for decades the most comprehensive and influential interdisciplinary body of work on antisemitism and the Holocaust. Two other publications that were foundational texts in their respective disciplines were published by key members of the Institute just after they ceased being members: Erich Fromm's *Escape from Freedom* (1941) and Franz Neumann's *Behemoth* (1942). Paul Massing and Karl August Wittfogel also published novels about their imprisonment in concentration camps, which contain key insights that would reappear in their scholarly work.[29] Also one of the most influential interdisciplinary edited volumes on antisemitism belongs into this context: *Jews in a Gentile World, The Problem of Anti-Semitism*, (1942) edited by Isacque Graeber (a research associate at the Institute) and Steuart Henderson Britt, which contained, for example, Talcott Parsons' (strongly Durkheimian) text, 'Sociology of Modern Anti-Semitism'.[30]

While Parsons found fascism in the United States unlikely, trade unions and many on the American left were, at the end of the war, seriously concerned about this possibility. 'Antisemitism among American Labour' was a large-scale qualitative content analysis (involving 270 volunteer interviewers, who were workers)[31] that was to establish whether American workers would 'prove a stronger bulwark against totalitarianism' than European workers had been.[32] It was also the first study that looked

at the effects of the Holocaust on antisemitism in the United States.[33] The study confirmed that reports about the Holocaust had led to an increase in the intensity of antisemitism.[34] The most interesting finding is perhaps that a verbal commitment to democracy tended to restrain antisemitic sentiments, but could not be relied upon as a defence against fascism. Massing distinguishes 'the democratic stereotype' and philosemitism from 'critical ability to reflect': 'Transition from old-fashioned prejudice to streamlined pogrom is facilitated by thinking in stereotypes. In modern, technologically disciplined society, ideas, notions, slogans again and again impressed upon the human mind by constant repetition leave a permanent imprint, grow rigid and inflexible … The individual no longer makes his mind work on actual experience.'[35]

In this, the labour study is related to a central point made by Horkheimer and Adorno in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (see below).

The Bestseller: The Authoritarian Personality

The most widely known volume of *Studies in Prejudice* was *The Authoritarian Personality*, co-authored by Adorno, Else Frenkel-Brunswik, Daniel J. Levinson and R. Nevitt Sanford and three further collaborators (1950).[36] In his preface, Max Horkheimer states that the aim of the study was to 'contribute directly to an amelioration of the cultural atmosphere in which hatred breeds'; the mere 'propaganda of tolerance' or the 'apologetic refutation of errors and lies' cannot tackle the problem of 'the position of minorities in modern society'.[37] The great relevance of Freudian psychoanalysis is that it pointed to 'the suppression of children' and 'brought about a revolution in the relation between parents and children', that is a key contribution to the change of the 'cultural atmosphere'.[38]

> The central theme of the work is a relatively new concept – the rise of an "anthropological" species we call the authoritarian type of man. In contrast to the bigot of the older style he seems to combine the ideas and skills which are typical of a highly industrialized society with irrational or anti-rational beliefs. He is at the same time enlightened and superstitious, proud to be an individualist and in constant fear of not being like all the others, jealous of his independence and inclined to submit blindly to power and authority.[39]

The 'authoritarian personality' is that of 'the potential fascist'.[40] The study is based on the principal discovery by Massing in the labour study that an individual's political, economic and societal convictions form an encompassing and coherent mental pattern, a 'mentality' that 'is expressive of hidden traits of the individual's character structure'.[41] Adorno writes that economic motivation and interests of the individual cannot explain his or her antisemitism, but societal totality (that is understood to be primarily determined by a mode of production) 'affects all

human relationships and even the innermost composition of the individual'. The autonomy of the individual (that had been growing in a free-market economy, where individuals all the time make their own decisions) is replaced by submissive and conformist behaviour, 'in line with the economic tendency towards gradual disappearance of the free market and the adaptation of man to the slowly emerging new condition'.[42] In these terms, 'critical theory' theorized the modern 'species' of men who would be the perpetrators and bystanders of the Holocaust.

'Elements of Antisemitism'

The now most famous statement of the Frankfurt School's analysis of antisemitism and the Holocaust is 'Elements of Antisemitism. Limits of Enlightenment', contained in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. In this text Horkheimer and Adorno (and Leo Löwenthal, co-author of parts of it) draw their conclusions from the empirical work that the Institute had done and was still doing at the time, and mediate these with an impressive interdisciplinary literature pertinent to various aspects of the subject.[43] 'Elements of Antisemitism' is thus a highly condensed summary of a whole set of arguments.[44] The student unfamiliar with the authors' particular brand of Freudo-Marxism is recommended to study some of the surrounding literature first, such as the contributions in the edited volumes by Simmel (1946) and Graeber (1942),[45] perhaps also Sartre (1946) who makes a not dissimilar argument,[46] and then to face the music.

One of the main lines of argument goes roughly as follows.[47] It sets out from the observation how stupid antisemitism is: 'The Jewish middleman totally becomes the image of the devil only since economically he has practically ceased to exist', the central paradox that makes it practically impossible to *argue* against antisemitism. Horkheimer and Adorno silently presuppose that still in the nineteenth century it might have been just about plausible to believe that 'the Jews' as a collective had certain characteristics or did certain things, but in the twentieth century (both in the German Nazi and the American democratic context) antisemitism is only conceivable as a symptom of the destruction of the capability to think. Amongst the actual terms they use to describe the latter are 'loss of experience', 'ticket thinking' (a metaphor that refers to ballot papers on which a person ticks one box but votes for a whole 'ticket', i.e. a set of items or a list of candidates) and thinking in stereotypes: 'The loss of experience that manifests itself in ticket thinking has rendered inoperative those "elements of antisemitism" that once derived from experience, but the same ticket thinking now mobilises them anew.' This mechanism can explain 'the empty, impenetrable character' of the most modern form of antisemitism: it is the antisemitism of individuals whose psychology 'lets itself and its contents be constructed exclusively by synthetic schemes' as provided

wholesale and prêt-à-porter by society, under exclusion of genuine experience.[48] This accounts for the lack of antisemitic enthusiasm: the antisemite gives 'a helping hand only when his role as employee of party or *Zyklon* gas factory call on him to do so'.

This argument implies that before the question 'where does antisemitism come from?', another question needs to be answered, namely, 'where does this specifically modern form of stupidity come from?'; the answer is, basically, that capitalism makes stupid: 'the basis of the development which leads to ticket thinking, is the universal reduction of all specific energy to the one, identical, abstract form of labour from the battlefield to the [film] studio'. The text ends on a moderately optimistic tone: 'Enlightenment itself, having come into its own and thereby turning into a force, could break through the limits of Enlightenment.'[49]

The principal 'limit' of the Enlightenment is here understood to be the fact that it comes in the form of liberalism, based on the capitalist mode of production and the national state; really existing liberalism has to ensure that capitalism and its associated political forms (nation, state) remain unchallenged, and can therefore not be interested in the unlimited development of everyone's mental and intellectual capacities: liberalism will not remedy capitalism-induced stupidity, and thereby helps along antisemitism, amongst other similarly absurd things. It is in this specific sense that civilization destroys itself.

The question, why are *the Jews* the victims, is being answered on two levels. For one, this is because they came to symbolize the progress of civilization without ever actually having enjoyed any of the power and security that come with being part of the class that is in charge and the beneficiary of civilization. Secondly, it is because Jews developed the concept of God that has been central to the progress of civilization, and whose displacement by its Christianized version has been equally central to the corruption of the concept of civilization: the Hebrew God signifies emancipation of *Geist*, spirit, from nature but also its distance from it, while the Christian God corrupts the *Geist*'s emancipation by giving it a human mediator. The conflict between these two antagonistic concepts of the divine remains central to the process of civilization.

Zygmunt Bauman: Reinventing Holocaust Sociology

The extremely fruitful period of the 1940s and early 1950s failed to usher in a continuous tradition of progressive, interdisciplinary, theoretically driven empirical social research on the Holocaust, although the theme and its main problem, the modernity of the Holocaust, never totally disappeared.[50] The book that brought this question into focus in a popular form, the now most widely referenced book on the subject, is Zygmunt Bauman's *Modernity and the Holocaust*.[51]

It stated forcefully that the Holocaust cannot be treated as a mere relapse into barbarity.[52] The most beautifully written part of the book is the short eighth chapter – 'Afterthought: Rationality and Shame' – that would probably be the best place to start reading. At stake here is the admission, 'I am not sure how I would react to a stranger knocking on my door and asking me to sacrifice myself and my family to save his life'.[53] The National Socialist state constituted a system in which 'the rationality of survival' rendered 'all other motives of human action irrational' so that 'reason was the enemy of morality'.[54] The sub-discipline that Bauman operates in here is the sociology of morality.

A concise summary of the argument can be gathered from a speech Bauman delivered on acceptance of a major prize for *Modernity and the Holocaust*, added as an appendix to the paperback edition of 1992.[55] The second chapter provides a useful account of the literature on antisemitism (notably absent from Bauman's discourse, though, are critical theory, as discussed above, and psychoanalysis). The third chapter is pivoted on the concept of racism. Bauman proposes an extremely narrow definition of the term, stating that 'racism comes into its own only in the context of a design of the perfect society and intention to implement the design through planned and consistent effort',[56] whereby Nazi antisemitism becomes the principal paradigm of racism. Although Nazi racism (i.e. antisemitism) mobilized anti-modernity sentiments (romanticizing community protected from alleged corrosion by modern society), it was in this sense absolutely modern: 'The *Führer* expressed his romantic vision of the world cleansed of the terminally diseased race. The rest was the matter of a not at all romantic, coolly rational bureaucratic process.'[57]

Bauman makes the important point that also in Western-style societies racist antisemitism could in a crisis-ridden future be on the agenda again: 'One can assume that situations calling for a direct take-over of social management by the state may well happen in some not too distant future – and then the well-entrenched and well-tested racist perspective may again come handy'[58] and concludes: 'The *possibility* of the Holocaust was rooted in certain universal features of modern civilization: its *implementation* on the other hand, was connected with a specific and not at all universal relationship between state and society.'[59] In the 'Introduction', he points more specifically to 'the emancipation of the political state, with its monopoly of means of violence and its audacious engineering ambitions, from social control – following the step-by-step dismantling of all non-political power resources and institutions of social self-management'.[60]

The remaining chapters elaborate on aspects of the argument, and do so in often rather problematic ways. Chapter four rehearses various arguments around the relationship between the Holocaust and 'modernity', which is discussed mainly in terms of civilization, science and bureaucracy. Chapter five explores the thesis that 'the rationality of the ruled is always the weapon of the rulers'[61]

using the case of the *Judenräte*, the Jewish Councils. Bauman is unclear whether or not he believes the cooperation of (some of) the *Judenräte* was essential to the implementation of the Holocaust, but rather uses this thorny issue to examine 'the ability of modern, rational, bureaucratically organized power to induce actions functionally indispensable to its purposes while jarringly at odds with the vital interests of the actors'.[62] Bauman seems quite close here to Foucault, who is not mentioned, however. Bauman's point here is a version of that most fundamental concern of modern social theory, namely that modern individuals create through their subjective acting objective structures – society, capital, God, power, the state – that enslave and possibly destroy them.

Chapter six is the least impressive part of the book: here Bauman starts from a surprisingly uninformed dismissal of the propositions of *The Authoritarian Personality* (which is the only work from the context of the 'Frankfurt School' that he mentions) as a deplorable example of 'old habits of thought' and contrasts to it favourably the 'recklessly' innovative experimental psychology of Stanley Milgram, which centred on tests to show the extreme possibilities of obedience to authority.[63] Bauman also cavalierly dismisses the substantial critical literature on Milgram's experiment, insinuating that 'the academic world' simply refused to listen to Milgram's point that any ordinary Joe will, under certain institutional arrangements, 'obey authority' and electrocute anyone without good reason. Bauman draws the rather unspectacular conclusion 'that *pluralism is the best preventive medicine against morally normal people engaging in morally abnormal actions*'.[64] His enthusiasm for Milgram prevents Bauman from asking the obvious sociological question: why the participants in a particular series of experiments, as well as its countless replications in academic and, more recently, 'reality TV' contexts, should be seen as representatives of (modern) 'man' in general?

The theoretical substratum of this enthusiasm becomes apparent in the seventh chapter: Milgram's experiment illustrates a theoretical-philosophical point that is central to Bauman's overall conception (arguably because the experiment itself already presupposed just this philosophical assumption). This point is that 'the universality of human revulsion to murder, inhibition against inflicting suffering on another human being, and the urge to help those who suffer' are part of 'the elementary human condition'.[65] Therefore, 'the Holocaust could be accomplished only on the condition of neutralizing the impact of primeval moral drives.'[66] The blame lies with the civilizing process that neutralized 'the moral forces spontaneously generated by human proximity' and then replaced them with its own 'controlling pressures', thereby eroding morality.[67] This argument, that sounds quite a bit like Jean-Jacques Rousseau (but also a bit like Edmund Burke and Tönnies; Bauman invokes Sartre, Emmanuel Levinas and Max Scheler), culminates in the statement that 'under modern order the ancient Sophoclean conflict between moral law and the law of society shows no signs of abating'.[68]

Bauman rallies his perspective on the pre-societal origin of morality in the 'existential reality' of 'proximity' specifically against Émile Durkheim, whom he makes stand in for the discipline of sociology in its entirety: for (Durkheimian) sociology, 'Man is a moral being only because he lives in society';[69] 'actions are evil because they are socially prohibited, rather than socially prohibited because they are evil'.[70] There is, indeed, a critical edge to Bauman's argument against Durkheim and (positivist) sociology: the society that claims to be the origin of morality and moral behaviour posits itself as superior to its constituting members, and even more so to those outside of it (the 'savages' and other non-citizens), and this claim legitimizes its dominance over them.

This is ultimately the lesson Bauman wants us to learn from the Holocaust: society (*cum* national, bureaucratic state, science, technology, etc.) should not be allowed to dominate and erode pre-societal morality. Still, Bauman's critique of the implicit authoritarianism (and methodological nationalism) of this perspective, though valuable, differs sharply from that of critical theory such as that of Horkheimer and Adorno, as the latter see morality emerging in the contradictions intrinsic to an antagonistic society, while Bauman sees a conflict between society on the one hand and something outside or before society (the existential) on the other hand.[71]

Bringing History Back into Holocaust Sociology

If one were to read (or buy) only one book in order to sample relevant analytical perspectives on the Holocaust, this book should be the volume edited by Moishe Postone and Eric Santner, *Catastrophe and Meaning, The Holocaust and the Twentieth Century* (2003).[72] This volume is exemplary in demonstrating that 'interdisciplinarity' can mean more than the bundling together of a set of disciplinary specialists in one volume: all contributions here are driven by social-theoretical concerns as well as historical sensitivity. The problem of structure/agency, or intentionality, is discussed (Saul Friedländer; Shulamit Volkov); the dialectic of modernity, destructivity and history (Anson Rabinbach, Dan Diner, Moishe Postone); violence and warfare (Omer Bartov); destruction (Frank Trommler); gender and presuppositions of history writing (Debórah Dwork); memory, Holocaust literature, testimony and art (Aaron Zeitlin, Dominick LaCapra, Geoffrey Hartman, Paul Mendes-Flohr).

The two contributions most pertinent to the issues discussed in this chapter are those by Anson Rabinbach and Moishe Postone. Rabinbach points out that a number of the most prominent German-Jewish émigré intellectuals, including Hannah Arendt, Horkheimer and Adorno, developed the discourse that connected the Holocaust to modernity in opposition to the then predominant

perspective of a negative German *Sonderweg*, of which the writer Thomas Mann was a major proponent: the idea of a 'special path' of German history, producing a political culture and mentality at variance with other ('Western') countries (or cultures, or nations), putting Germany on the pathway to Nazism.[73] They

> implicitly understood that Nazism was a cultural synthesis fusing elements from a hypermodern industrial society with a fundamentally irrationalist and unstable admixture of romantic anti-capitalist, nationalist, radical *völkisch*, and bioracial elements … National Socialism was not a 'reactionary' ideology but a project of national regeneration predicated on racial hierarchy. If there is no common core or authentic cultural form of modernity, if a high level of technological and economic development is compatible with a wide range of cultural forms, then Nazism appears as an alternative form of modernity, just as militant Islamic fundamentalism is an alternative form of modernity today. From this perspective, the genocide is not a 'normal' event inherent in a generically understood 'modern society' but one whose 'possibility' demonstrates the pathological potential of specific constellations of modernity in crisis and the attempt to overcome that crisis by extreme violence.[74]

What Rabinbach describes in terms of intellectual history, is spelt out in more theoretical terms by Postone. Going beyond the intentionalist/structuralist dichotomy, Postone suggests that it is obvious enough that the Nazis *wanted* the Judeocide (whether or not that wish became manifest at a slightly sooner or later stage), and also that they were able to attempt it only due to specific conditions and circumstances (including the existence of a modern state, bureaucratic authority, division of labour, etc.), but neither explains the most important question, which is *why* they wanted and did it. All the usual suspects including 'instrumental rationality', 'bureaucratic-technocratic domination', 'the exclusions inherent in Enlightenment universalism', late nineteenth century 'racist and biologistic thinking' and fanatic 'anti-Bolshevism', and even any combination of all of the above are too unspecific to explain what the Nazis did to the Jews of Europe.[75] One needs to look at and explain the specific Nazi brand of antisemitism: 'the idea of the Jews as a world historical threat to life' itself.[76] Postone argues that there is a 'deep structural' analogy between the pattern of *which* aspects of modernity Nazism rejected (as opposed to which aspects it embraced) on the one hand, and its image of 'the Jews' on the other. In both cases what is rejected is 'mysteriously intangible, abstract, and universal', un-rooted, difficult to check and conspirational:[77] 'Within the modern antisemitic worldview, the Jews constitute an immensely powerful, shadowy, international conspiracy, responsible for those

"apparent" opposites, plutocratic capitalism and socialism, as well as for the rise of vulgar market culture and the decline of traditional values and institutions.'[78]

Neither industrial capital, though, nor modern technology were objects of antisemitic attacks.[79] Indeed, plutocratic (i.e. greedy, money-grabbing) capitalism, market culture and socialism stand on one side of the divide (the 'Jewish' side; things to be rejected and destroyed), industrial capital, industrial labour and technology stand on the other side (things to be affirmed). Although industrial capital and (capitalist) technology (i.e. technology whose development is shaped and driven by the requirements of the capitalist mode of production) are for most observers obviously aspects and elements of 'capitalism', Nazis (and others sharing similar forms of antisemitism) might indeed think of themselves as 'anti-capitalist' – hence the name 'National Socialism'. Labour would appear to them as the innocent, natural substratum on which parasitical, exploitative capitalist superstructures are feeding. It is not completely devoid of sense that a (national) 'socialist' regime, that is engaged in large-scale, expansive, modernizing capitalist production, would particularly violently round up and attack a category of people who seem to it to personify the evil (i.e. abstract, intangible, supra- and anti-national) aspects of 'capitalism'. Postone adds that in the context of developed capitalist production, individual labours 'increasingly become cellular components of a large, complex, dynamic system' of a 'blind, processual, quasi-organic character'.[80] In other words, capitalist society approaches a point where it actually mimics nature (a point developed by Horkheimer and Adorno in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*). This 'allows for social and historical processes to become increasingly understood in biological terms in the course of the nineteenth century'.[81]

To the extent that the notion of society as a blind, extrinsic, violent and uncontrollable force of nature represents genuine experience of life in developed capitalist society, it is hardly surprising that discourses about society are increasingly prone to adopting the language of nature and biology. Naive criticism of capitalism – Postone introduces here the term 'fetishized anticapitalism' – is in this context likely to oppose a naturalized notion of what it celebrates (the concrete, material, creative) to an equally naturalized notion of what it sees as evil (the abstract, immaterial, parasitical). A naturalized notion of abstraction, however, needs a particular group of people as its carriers, and in the last third of the nineteenth and the first third of the twentieth centuries no group of population in Europe was – for a variety of reasons – as conveniently to be cast in this role as 'the Jews'.[82]

This is the story, so far, in rough outlines. It is an open field. One of the few certainties is surely, as Yehuda Bauer suggests with a nice hint of sarcasm, that 'when people murder Jews, this may indeed have something to do with their not particularly liking them'.[83]

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Notes

1 Tzvetan Todorov, *Facing the Extreme, Moral Life in the Concentration Camps*, trans. Arthur Denner and Abigail Pollack (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1999), p. 290.

2 I would like to thank Christine Achinger for her, as always, invaluable comments, and Bob Cannon for letting me read his draft of a critique of Bauman.

3 Bruno Bettelheim, a former member of the German Social Democratic Party and a former inmate of Dachau and Buchenwald, is famous for his seminal (and fascinating) article 'Individual and Mass Behaviour in Extreme Situations', *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, no. 38 (1943), pp. 417–52, which was based on his experiences in the camps.

4 On the 'Frankfurt School' see Rolf Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School: Its History, Theories, and Political Significance*, trans. Michael Robertson (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994), and Martin Jay, *Dialectical Imagination, A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research 1923–1950* (Boston, MA/Toronto: Little, Brown, 1973); on psychoanalysis as a 'Jewish science' see Stephen Frosh, *Hate and the Jewish Science, Anti-Semitism, Nazism and Psychoanalysis* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

5 I use 'critical theory' in the original and specific sense of the word – coined in opposition to 'traditional theory' – not in the more generic use that has become more common now, typically referring to theories that combine literary or cultural criticism with some sort of sociologically motivated enquiry.

6 Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992). See also Zygmunt Bauman, 'The Camps: Eastern, Western, Modern', in Jonathan Frankel (ed.), *The Fate of the European Jews, 1939–1945: Continuity or Contingency? Studies in Contemporary Jewry, An Annual, XIII* (New York, NY/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) and Zygmunt Bauman, 'Allosemitism: Premodern, Modern, Postmodern', in Bryan Cheyette and Laura Marcus (eds), *Modernity, Culture and 'the Jew'* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998).

7 C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (London/New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1959).

8 Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews, Revised and Definitive Edition* (New York, NY/London: Holmes and Meier, 1985). Hilberg began his work starting out from the basic premises of Neumann's *Behemoth*, that National Socialist society was organized as the agglomerated anarchy of civil service, army, industry and party. See Franz Neumann, *Behemoth, The Structure and Practice of National Socialism* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1942). All four basic groupings were involved in the Holocaust, operating independently from one another – see Raul Hilberg, *The Politics of Memory, The Journey of a Holocaust Historian* (Chicago, IL: Ivan R. Dee, 1996), p. 63 – which makes all the more remarkable the fact that it was uniformly patterned. Hilberg writes that he objected to the title of Léon Poliakov's 1956 book, *Harvest of Hate (La bréviaire de la haine)*: 'The bureaucrats, I already knew, were not "haters"' (Hilberg, *The Politics of Memory*, p. 70).

9 Compare to Moishe Postone and Eric Santner (eds), *Catastrophe and Meaning, The Holocaust and the Twentieth Century* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 85.

10 Émile Durkheim (1858–1917, one of the 'founding fathers' of the discipline of sociology) is usually credited with having insisted on society being a 'thing', while the concept of 'reification', the *becoming-a-thing* of social relations, characteristic of the German tradition starting from G.W.F. Hegel, makes a similar, though more critical, point on the same reality.

11 Some relevant titles of the huge literature on these questions are the following: C. Fred Alford, 'Hitler's Willing Executioners: What does "willing" mean?', *Theory and Society*, vol. 26, no. 5 (1997), pp. 719–38; Omer Bartov, 'Defining Enemies, Making Victims: Germans, Jews, and the Holocaust', *The American Historical Review*, vol. 103, no. 3 (1998), pp. 771–816; Yehuda Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust* (New Haven, CT/London: Yale University Press, 2001); Ronald J. Berger, 'The "Banality of Evil" Reframed: The Social Construction of the "Final Solution" to the "Jewish Problem"', *Sociological Quarterly*, vol. 34, no. 4 (1993), pp. 597–618; Michael Freeman, 'Genocide, Civilization and Modernity', *British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 46, no. 2 (1995), pp. 207–23; Saul Friedländer, 'Ideology and Extermination: The Immediate Origins of the "Final Solution"', in Postone and Santner, *Catastrophe and Meaning*, pp. 17–33; Berel Lang, 'Intentions and the "Final Solution"', in Simone Gigliotti and Berel Lang (eds), *The Holocaust, A Reader* (Malden/Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 252–63; A.D. Moses, 'Structure and Agency in the Holocaust: Daniel Goldhagen and His Critics', *History and Theory*, vol. 37, no. 2 (1998), pp. 194–219; Ivar Oxaal, 'Sociology, History and the Holocaust', *Theory, Culture and Society*, no. 8 (1991), pp. 153–66; Moishe Postone, 'The Holocaust and the Trajectory of the Twentieth Century', in Postone and Santner, *Catastrophe and Meaning*, pp. 81–114.

12 Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, vol. 1, trans. John Moore, with a preface by Michel Trebisch (London/New York, NY: Verso, 1991), pp. 240–6.

13 Lefebvre quotes from a publication by David Rousset from the *Revue International*. David Rousset, *L'univers concentrationnaire* (Paris: Editions du Pavois, 1946) was published in an English translation five years later: David Rousset, *A World Apart*, trans. Yvonne Moyse and Roger Senhouse (London: Seeker and Warburg, 1951). Although the passages quoted here are not verbatim in the book, references to Ubu and Kafka can be found in the first and the last pages of the book, as well as throughout the first chapter. A passage worth quoting for its pertinence to the theme is the following: 'it would be easy to prove that the most characteristic traits of SS mentality and of the social substructure may both be found in many other sectors of world society, although they may not be pronounced, and certainly not to the same degree as the later developments in the great *Reich*' (Rousset, *A World Apart*, p. 112).

14 Pelagia Lewinska, *Vingt mois à Auschwitz* (Paris: Nagel, 1966).
15 Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, p. 240.
16 Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, p. 242; Lefebvre quotes from David Rousset (referring to Buchenwald).
17 Lewinska, *Vingt mois à Auschwitz*, p. 70.
18 Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, p. 243.
19 Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, pp. 243–4.
20 Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, p. 244.
21 Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, pp. 244–5; Lewinska, *Vingt mois à Auschwitz*, pp. 126, 129.
22 Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, p. 245; Lewinska, *Vingt mois à Auschwitz*, p. 130.
23 Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust*.
24 Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 361 ('Meditations on Metaphysics', second section).
25 Tim B. Müller, 'Bearing Witness to the Liquidation of Western *Dasein*: Herbert Marcuse and the Holocaust', *New German Critique*, no. 85 (2002), pp. 133–64.
26 On the other hand, there have also been several theoretically informed studies of the concentration camps, a topic I have omitted here. See: Bettelheim, 'Individual and Mass Behaviour in Extreme Situations'; Theodore Abel, 'The Sociology of Concentration Camps', *Social Forces*, vol. 30, no. 2 (1951), pp. 150–55; Herbert A. Bloch, 'The Personality of Inmates of Concentration Camps', *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 52, no. 4 (1947), pp. 335–41; Paul Martin Neurath, *The Society of Terror, Inside the Dachau and Buchenwald Concentration Camps*, ed. Christian Fleck and Nico Stehr with an afterword by Christian Fleck, Albert Müller and Nico Stehr (Boulder, CO/London: Paradigm Publishers, 2005); Wolfgang Sofsky, *The Order of Terror: The Concentration Camp*, trans. William Templer (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).
27 Ernst Simmel (ed.), *Anti-Semitism, A Social Disease*, Preface by Gordon W. Allport (New York, NY: International Universities Press, 1946).
28 Eva-Maria Ziege, *Antisemitismus und Gesellschaftstheorie*, *Die Frankfurter Schule im amerikanischen Exil* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp 2009), p. 91. The cooperation between the Institute of Social Research and the JLC was mediated through the 'Committee on Racial Tensions', an initiative by the JLC that later became part of the AFL-CIO civil rights departments (Ziege, *Antisemitismus und Gesellschaftstheorie*, p. 80).
29 Paul Massing, *Fatherland* (London: Gollancz, 1935); Karl August Wittfogel, *Staatliches Konzentrationslager VII* (London: Malik, 1936).
30 Isacque Graeber and Steuart Henderson Britt (eds), *Jews in a Gentile World, The Problem of Anti-Semitism* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1942). Talcott Parsons (1902–79) was in the 1950s and (although less so) in the 1960s the dominant liberal sociologist in the United States and probably worldwide. His work is based on an amalgamation of his interpretations of Durkheim and Weber, shifting in the 1940s from 'action-theory' to 'system-theory'.
31 Ziege, *Antisemitismus und Gesellschaftstheorie*, p. 190.
32 Quoted in Ziege, *Antisemitismus und Gesellschaftstheorie*, p. 188.
33 Ziege, *Antisemitismus und Gesellschaftstheorie*, p. 171.
34 Ziege, *Antisemitismus und Gesellschaftstheorie*, p. 211.
35 Ziege, *Antisemitismus und Gesellschaftstheorie*, p. 222.
36 Theodor Adorno, Else Frenkel-Brunswik, Daniel J. Levinson and R. Nevitt Sanford, *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1950). On this see also Richard Christie, Marie Jahoda (eds), *Studies in the Scope and Method of 'The Authoritarian Personality'. Continuities in Social Research* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1954); William F. Stone, Gerda Lederer and Richard Christie (eds), *Strength and Weakness, The Authoritarian Personality Today* (New York, NY: Springer, 1993); Jos Meloen, 'The Fortieth Anniversary of "The Authoritarian Personality"', *Politics and the Individual*, no. 1 (1991), pp. 119–27.
37 Max Horkheimer in Adorno *et al.*, *The Authoritarian Personality*, p. ix.

38 Horkheimer in Adorno *et al.*, *The Authoritarian Personality*, p. x.
39 Horkheimer in Adorno *et al.*, *The Authoritarian Personality*, p. ix.
40 Ziege, *Antisemitismus und Gesellschaftstheorie*, p. 271.
41 Ziege, *Antisemitismus und Gesellschaftstheorie*, p. 272.
42 From an unpublished memorandum by Adorno, quoted in Ziege, *Antisemitismus und Gesellschaftstheorie*, p. 273.
43 Max Horkheimer (1895–1973) was the director of the Institute from 1930. Theodor Adorno (1903–69) joined the Institute (then in New York) in 1938 and was its director (back in Frankfurt, West Germany) in the 1960s.
44 There is (in English) practically no secondary literature that engages with the text in any detail. The most important comments are in 'The Cunning of Unreason', in Anson Rabinbach, *In the Shadow of Catastrophe: German Intellectuals between Apocalypse and Enlightenment* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 166–98; and: '"Why were the Jews Sacrificed?", The place of antisemitism in Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*', in Nigel Gibson and Andrew Rubin (eds), *Adorno: A Critical Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), pp. 132–49. See also Marcel Stoetzler, 'Liberal Society, Emancipation, and Antisemitism, Why current debates on Antisemitism need more Dialectic of Enlightenment', in Stefano Giacchetti (ed.), *Nostalgia for a Redeemed Future* (Newark, NJ: John Cabot University Press/University of Delaware Press, 2009), pp. 145–60.
45 Simmel, *Anti-Semitism*; Graeber and Britt, *Jews in a Gentile World*.
46 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew*, trans. George J. Becker (New York, NY: Schocken, 1965). Sartre (1905–80) was a leading French philosopher (bridging phenomenology, existentialism and Marxism) and writer.
47 I have worked from the German text in Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung, Philosophische Fragmente* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1969) and made use of both English translations: Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment, Philosophical Fragments*, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), pp. 137–72, and Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (London: Verso, 1997), pp. 168–208.
48 Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, pp. 215–16; Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment, Philosophical Fragments*, pp. 170–71; Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, pp. 206–7.
49 Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, pp. 216–17; Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment, Philosophical Fragments*, pp. 171–2; Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, pp. 207–8.
50 Some relevant texts that are not discussed here are: Theodore Abel, *Why Hitler Came into Power* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986); Helen Fein, *Accounting for Genocide, National Responses and Jewish Victimization during the Holocaust* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1979); Henry Friedlander and Sybil Milton (eds), *The Holocaust: Ideology, Bureaucracy, and Genocide* (New York, NY: Kraus International, 1981); Norman L. Friedman, 'Teaching about the Holocaust', *Teaching Sociology*, vol. 12, no. 4 (1985), pp. 449–61; Alex Grobman and Daniel Landes (eds), *Genocide: Critical Issues of the Holocaust* (Los Angeles, CA: Simon Wiesenthal Center, 1983); Everett C. Hughes, 'Good People and Dirty Work', *Social Problems*, vol. 10, no. 1 (1962), pp. 3–11; Fred E. Katz, 'A Sociological Perspective to the Holocaust', *Modern Judaism*, no. 2 (1982), pp. 273–96; Fred E. Katz, 'Implementation of the Holocaust: The Behavior of Nazi Officials', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 24, no. 3 (1982), pp. 510–29; George M. Kren and Leon Rappoport, *The Holocaust and the Crisis of Human Behaviour*, Revised Edition (New York, NY: Holmes and Meier, 1980); Lyman H. Legters (ed.), *Western Society after the Holocaust* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1983); E. Reichmann, *Hostages of Civilisation. The Social Sources of National Socialist Anti-Semitism* (London: Gollancz, 1950); Arnold M. Rose, 'Comment on "Good People and Dirty Work"', *Social Problems*, no. 10, vol. 3 (1963), pp. 285–6.

51 Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*. Zygmunt Bauman (born 1925) was a lecturer in sociology at Warsaw when he left Poland in the context of the antisemitic purges of 1968. Until that year he had been a member of the ruling Polish United Workers' Party. Subsequently he held a professorship at Leeds University from 1972–90. His decision to write a book on the Holocaust seems to have been triggered by his wife, Janina Bauman (1926–2009), writing two volumes of memories, *Winter in the Morning* (1986) and *A Dream of Belonging* (1988). Janina Bauman was a survivor of the Warsaw Ghetto.

52 I have used mainly the following literature to come to grips with Bauman's book and the questions it throws up, including the question of how to assess the fascinating, but equally repulsive, Milgram experiments: Omer Bartov, *Disputed Histories, Germany's War and the Holocaust* (Ithaca, NY/London: Cornell University Press, 2003); Thomas Blass, 'The Roots of Stanley Milgram's Obedience Experiments and Their Relevance to the Holocaust', *Analyse & Kritik*, no. 20 (1998), pp. 46–53; Thomas Blass (ed.), *Obedience to Authority, Current Perspectives on the Milgram Paradigm* (Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 2000); Paul Du Gay, *In Praise of Bureaucracy, Weber, Organization, Ethics* (London: Sage, 2000); David Feldman, 'Was Modernity Good for the Jews?', in Cheyette and Marcus, *Modernity, Culture and 'the Jew'*, pp. 171–87; Peter Lunt, *Stanley Milgram, Understanding Obedience and its Implications* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); George R. Mastroianni, 'Milgram and the Holocaust: A Reexamination', *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology*, vol. 22, no. 2 (2002), pp. 158–73; Stanley Milgram, *Obedience to Authority, An Experimental View* (London: Pinter and Martin, 1997); Arthur G. Miller, *The Obedience Experiments, A Case Study of Controversy in Social Science* (New York, NY: Praeger, 1986); Don Mixon, *Obedience and Civilization, Authorized Crime and the Normality of Evil* (London: Pluto Press, 1989); Arne Johan Vetlesen, *Evil and Human Agency, Understanding Collective Evildoing* (Cambridge/New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Shulamit Volkov, 'Anti-Semitism as Explanation: For and Against', in Postone and Santner, *Catastrophe and Meaning*, pp. 34–48; Zoë Waxman, 'Thinking against Evil? Hannah Arendt, Zygmunt Bauman, and the writing of the Holocaust', *History of European Ideas*, no. 35 (2009), pp. 93–104; Mona Sue Weissmark, *Justice Matters, Legacies of the Holocaust and World War II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

53 Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, p. 205.

54 Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, p. 203.

55 Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, pp. 208–21.

56 Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, p. 66.

57 Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, p. 77.

58 Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, p. 81.

59 Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, p. 82.

60 Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, p. xiii.

61 Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, p. 142.

62 Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, p. 122.

63 Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, p. 152.

64 Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, p. 165; italics in the original.

65 Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, p. 185.

66 Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, p. 188.

67 Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, p. 199.

68 Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, p. 199.

69 Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, p. 172.

70 Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, p. 173.

71 See also the slightly different perspective taken in Todorov, *Facing the Extreme*, pp. 291–2.

72 Postone and Santner, *Catastrophe and Meaning*.

73 Postone and Santner, *Catastrophe and Meaning*, p. 55.

74 Postone and Santner, *Catastrophe and Meaning*, p. 61.

75 Postone and Santner, *Catastrophe and Meaning*, p. 87.

76 Postone and Santner, *Catastrophe and Meaning*, p. 87.
77 Postone and Santner, *Catastrophe and Meaning*, p. 89.
78 Postone and Santner, *Catastrophe and Meaning*, p. 89.
79 Postone and Santner, *Catastrophe and Meaning*, p. 90.
80 Postone and Santner, *Catastrophe and Meaning*, p. 92.
81 Postone and Santner, *Catastrophe and Meaning*, p. 92.
82 Additionally to the references listed in 'Further Reading', the following text is also of interest but cannot be discussed here: Jeffrey C. Alexander, 'On the Social Construction of Moral Universals: The "Holocaust" from War Crime to Trauma Drama', in Jeffrey C. Alexander, Ron Eyerman, Bernhard Giesen, Neil J. Smelser and Piotr Sztompka, *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004), pp. 196–263. A good survey on the history of antisemitism is: Geoff Eley, 'What are the Contexts for German Antisemitism?', in Frankel (ed.), *The Fate of the European Jews* (see above footnote 6).
83 Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust*, p. 71. Admittedly, he does go a bit further than that: 'It appears that when an intellectual or pseudo-intellectual elite with a genocidal program, whether explicit or implicit, achieves power in a crisis-ridden society for economic, social, and political reasons that have nothing to do with the genocidal program, then, if that elite can draw the intellectual strata to its side, genocide will become possible … A social consensus will be created … [which] will provide a justification for ordinary folks to participate in the genocidal program' (Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust*, pp. 104–5).

4

The Psychiatric Treatment of Holocaust Survivors, or, the Tribulations of a Syndrome

Nathalie Zajde

The Birth of Concentration Camp Survivor Syndrome

Several years before the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps and the discovery of their survivors – walking skeletons whose terrified eyes so perturbed their liberators – former deportees with psychological training, the most famous being Bruno Bettelheim, had already described the psychic transformations undergone by the victims of internment (see Chapter 7 for more information on Bettelheim). In France, a list of symptoms was established with the assistance of doctors (both Jewish and non-Jewish) brought together through support groups for former camp inmates, allowing a specific pathology to be identified. This medical advance contributed to the implementation of a system of payments to former deportees by the French state.[1] However, it was not until the beginning of the 1960s that a systematic consensus-based and internationally recognized scientific methodology was applied to the psychiatric and psychological effects on survivors of their deportation and torture.[2] It was in this period that the 'survivor', as an internationally recognized psychiatric category, was born. The concept first appeared in the specialized literature as part of the term 'Concentration Camp Survivor Syndrome'. CCSS is defined by a clinical table setting out the list of the different symptoms suffered by survivors of the Nazi concentration and extermination camps. The syndrome's symptoms include:

- intense feelings of fear, terror and abandonment;
- reliving of the traumatic event;
- avoidance of stimuli linked to the event;
- reduced interest in current activities;

- neurovegetative hyperactivity;
- traumatic dreams;
- recurring memories;
- periods of stress around anniversary dates;
- dissociative states;
- acute irritability;
- loss of ability to concentrate;
- mood changes;
- reduced ability to modulate affect;
- irrational and excessive fears and anxieties.[3]

This syndrome has various *raisons d'être*. On the one hand it was hoped that, in formulating this new nosographic entity, the psychopathological problems encountered by survivors of an entirely novel and terrifying experience could be analysed and treated. Gaining international recognition for this new medical condition was also necessary if former internees were to be diagnosed by psychiatric experts[4] and have their status as victims confirmed, giving them the right to free medical treatment and financial compensation, wherever they had settled after the Second World War.[5]

The Problems Raised by CCSS

Concentration Camp Survivor Syndrome was meant to describe a particular form of suffering – that of the survivors of Nazi barbarity – and lead to appropriate and effective therapies, yet it would appear that this remit has not been fulfilled. Various questions arise from this. How can we account for the fact that this much-trumpeted syndrome did not in fact describe any truly new pathology? Why has no psychodynamic or drug therapy specific to the syndrome, or even effective in treating it, ever been developed? And how is it that the exact symptoms of CCSS, unchanged but for the name of the condition, have become widely known as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder – a condition describing the pain of any individual who has faced lethal danger from any sort of violence, from a young woman who has been raped in the New York metro to a Tutsi survivor of the Rwandan genocide to a Sri-Lankan survivor of the 2006 tsunami or the Welsh victim of a car-crash?

The trauma of concentration camp survivors has thus become the paradigm case of all psychic trauma.

How did this specialized area of psychiatric and psychological knowledge, intended to describe and treat specific populations who were determined to a great extent by their ethnic, religious or political identity and made to suffer because of the aggression of a historically situated totalitarian regime – the Nazis – come to

be supplanted by such a general and anonymous approach? How did the 'Jew', the 'communist', the 'Roma', who had survived the murderous and ideologically highly specific plans of the Nazis, come to be erased and replaced by 'anybody', any person who has survived the threat of death in any situation? How did the 'Holocaust survivor' come, psychiatrically and psychologically speaking, to *disappear* in favour of a 'universal victim'? To put it another way, how has the trauma of the Holocaust become the paradigm case of the ahistorical and universal phenomenon of contemporary trauma?

To answer these questions, it will be necessary to retrace the history and evolution of Concentration Camp Survivor Syndrome, from its origins to the present day, and isolate and identify, as far as it is possible to do so, the theoretical foundations and psycho-social consequences of each stage of its evolution.

Survivor Syndrome, the Intrusion of Modernity

The central premise of Survivor Syndrome was that those who had come back from the camps were ill *because of* what they had experienced there, as a result of what the Nazis had inflicted upon them. Although this might seem obvious today, it should be recalled that when psychiatric evaluations of camp survivors were made in the context of compensation claims,[6] there was disagreement between the advocates of Survivor Syndrome (essentially Northern European and American psychiatrists) and some German psychiatrists, who no doubt wanted to shift blame away from the Nazi regime to which they had belonged. The latter put forward the argument – which is acceptable provided that one is utterly cynical and a proponent of radical scientism – that it was impossible to prove that these survivors were suffering because of the camps and suggested that former internees who presented psychopathological symptoms upon leaving the camps had in fact already been ill before their imprisonment.[7] This position discounted the idea of a syndrome caused directly and uniquely by a real, recently lived experience.

This was in contrast to the new psychiatric category of Concentration Camp Survivor Syndrome, which maintained that the psychological problems experienced by survivors were not due to an unresolved Oedipus complex or a poor neurophysiological constitution, but were truly the result of objective mistreatment by aggressors who were conscious of their actions and destructive in their intent. In other words, human beings, even adults, could, in the event of certain specific and identifiable circumstances, experience a radical and long-lasting transformation of their psyche and even their whole identity, regardless of their individual constitution, their previous psychiatric record or their prior history more generally. This approach held that camp survivors' pathologies were a direct reflection of what their torturers had sought to achieve: the psychological and physical degradation of their victims.

With the formulation and development of CCSS, then, psychopathology escaped from the realm of the private and intimate to make its entry into the public sphere. Understanding and treating survivors meant looking very closely into what had damaged them, namely a modern totalitarian political regime, the deployment of technological innovations in the destruction of whole groups of human beings, modern social theories and new ways of thinking about and finding 'solutions' to conflicts. With Survivor Syndrome, modernity made its entry into psychiatry. Psychiatrists and psychologists would from now on have to look for the causes of their patients' illnesses in the specific configurations of the modern world. The corollary to this revolutionary shift was the active involvement of psychiatry in the public space. Henceforth, psychiatric concepts would play a determining role in every conceivable area: in social policy, legal decisions, geopolitical strategy and, later on, in the areas of international aid policy and even the development of technology.[8] Today, combating psychological trauma and its psychopathological consequences is one of the goals of governmental and non-governmental organizations in supporting humanitarian projects, intervening in conflicts abroad, constructing educational infrastructure, issuing legal judgements in ad hoc courts and formulating laws with international jurisdiction.

Eager to preserve this new status in the social and political sphere, a status acquired thanks to Survivor Syndrome, psychiatry and psychology have looked more and more closely at people's lives and activities in today's societies. The degree to which psychology has usurped more tangible social and political considerations is remarkable. Events concerning the internal functioning of society or even conflicts between different states are increasingly presented to us through the prism of the psychological consequences that they generate. When a factory closes, reporters place as much emphasis on the psychological trauma for the workers as on the economic, social and political consequences of the closure. This new interest in emotional suffering linked to objective causes – in other words, to actions for which authors and intentions can be identified – is clear. We seem to be witnessing a hyper-psychologization of political and social questions.

The 'Victim-reflex'

This excessive psychologization, this incessant recourse to the notion of psychological trauma and various connected notions – such as 'grief work' (the psychological process of coping with a significant loss) or the famous 'survivor guilt'[9] – are the expression of a society's desire to highlight human suffering, victimhood and feelings of empathy and pity. Survivor Syndrome contributes to a definition of humanity based on its weaknesses and pain, on negative reactions to external aggression. This choice of psychological thinking is based on a reinforced notion

of the individuality of the human subject – its individualism – as well as its malleability. Survivor Syndrome is thus a confirmation and consolidation of the universalizing, uniformity-driven direction of contemporary Western societies insofar as, in the way that it is formulated, this syndrome can apply to absolutely anyone,[10] regardless of their gender, background, affiliations or the events they have been through. Survivor Syndrome extracts patients from their original group affiliations and lumps them together in a single, undifferentiated group defined by psychology.

The Contradiction at the Heart of CCSS

Whereas the novelty of CCSS's original argument stemmed above all from the idea that the condition was brought on in individuals as a result of the specificity of their experiences, their own identity and that of their aggressors – the Nazi persecution of the Jews for *being* Jews, stubbornly holding on to their respect for their God and His laws, proclaiming the uniqueness of their age-old philosophical, religious, ritual, social and ethnic heritage; or of the Roma for *being* Roma, a nomadic people respecting their own rules and social mores, their own rules of purity and impurity, and 'resisting' acculturation from one generation to the next – CCSS ends up, bizarrely, taking a generalizing approach, with no attention paid to the identity of either sufferers or their persecutors. *Almost no text-book or article dealing with the pathology of Holocaust survivors takes the Jewish identity of these patients into account in any meaningful, scientific fashion.* Jewish identity, whether under attack from its aggressors or proclaimed by victims, is not deemed worthy of serious consideration. Admittedly, this Jewish identity is implicitly present and even mentioned on occasions, yet this Jewishness has no theoretical weight and remains strictly anecdotal in nature. In a psychiatric and psychotherapeutic context it is thus treated as a construct possessing no conceptual relevance. Yet one might have expected the fact that the great majority of these patients are Jews – survivors of the Nazi genocide – to have featured as an essential element in the theoretical elaboration of this psychopathology and the technical aspects of the resulting therapy.

From Survivor Syndrome to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

It was in the 1980s, during legal proceedings brought by veterans of the Vietnam War against the US military establishment that CCSS came once again to the fore. Lawyers representing veterans who were suffering from debilitating psychiatric problems – insomnia, sexual impotence, uncontrollable aggression, inability to relate to others, etc. – based their arguments on CCSS, with its list of symptoms

and its concept of external causality, as they attempted to prove the responsibility of the US army for their clients' problems in order to obtain compensation and invalidity benefits (Young 1995).[11] By basing their claims on Survivor Syndrome, these veterans could be examined and officially declared ill, leading to treatment, compensation payouts and a pension paid for by the state. Thanks to CCSS, both a victim (the ill soldier) and a perpetrator (the US army), which was responsible for their traumatic experiences, could be identified. It thus fell to the latter to pay out compensation and ensure that the victim enjoyed a special medico-social status. It goes without saying that, in order to serve as the cornerstone of the legal arguments underpinning this entirely new situation, Survivor Syndrome would need a change of name. The veterans were anything but former deportees and internees, rather former soldiers who had played the role of aggressors. In this way, Survivor Syndrome, taken virtually unchanged as far as its content and conceptual approach were concerned, became the now famous Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and took its place in the prestigious statistical manual of American psychiatry, the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, in 1980.[12]

The list of symptoms for PTSD is more or less identical to that for CCSS, although supplemented by a new, more detailed and broadened definition of its causes. What sets PTSD apart from other conditions is the fact that it is principally defined by its causes, which are always life events. These are dramatic events which are all linked to the threat of the imminent death of the subject or of their loved ones – kidnapping, rape, natural disasters, accidents, etc. Hence, the condition known previously as Survivor Syndrome, now transformed into PTSD, can apply to any situation judged to be a traumatic event for which a guilty party is potentially identifiable, allowing the sufferer to launch legal proceedings and claim damages and medical costs. In the case of Vietnam War veterans, who was this guilty party? It was first of all war itself, insofar as it carries, by definition, the risk of death. However, war is not a 'legally responsible entity', and so it was up to the US army, the soldiers' employer, to take responsibility for these traumatized individuals.

The Vietnam War – and the return of young American soldiers to an often hostile reception – marked a radical shift in the way armed conflicts and combatants were perceived. Henceforth, in Western societies, to have been involved in war became a mark of weakness, and soldiers, previously thought of as heroes, became potential victims, risking psychological trauma.

PTSD: One Syndrome Fits All …

Whereas, traditionally, the construction of subjects as clinical cases – in other words, the act of defining an individual according to a psychiatric model – always

had the effect of de-socializing individuals,[13] shutting them into a psychiatric space and even removing their legal responsibility, psychiatric patients have, thanks to Survivor Syndrome and its progeny, PTSD, been given new hope of avoiding psychiatric incarceration and debilitating medication, and can even hope to lead an existence tolerated by wider society. A subject recognized as being psychologically traumatized can refuse psychiatric treatment with psychotropic medication and request psychotherapy without drugs, and can also play an active role in social exchanges by demanding compensation from their aggressor for the acts the latter has committed. The patient can launch legal proceedings and seek damages through the legal system and insurers. PTSD has thus become a real force within society, drawing in thousands of individuals from sufferers and their families to professionals (clinicians, lawyers, insurers). The 'false memories' affair (Hacking 1995) was one of the most remarkable illustrations of this phenomenon.[14]

In the 1980s, psychiatrists in the United States convinced insurance companies that certain policy-holders – their patients – needed to follow a course of psychotherapy because they were suffering from PTSD due to violence suffered during their childhood, the trauma from which they had repressed. This violence (usually sexual) had been perpetrated by adult aggressors, often the parents of these patients. The therapy would consist in bringing out the repressed memories of these assaults at the conscious level so that, following the logic of catharsis, the lifting of this repression would cure the neurosis. The insurers, quite logically, then pursued the aggressors and their insurers, in order to demand damages and, in particular, claim back the cost of their clients' psychotherapy. The patients undergoing psychoanalysis or psychotherapy were thus forced by their insurers, and encouraged by their psychotherapists – or, to be precise, by the *theory* of psychotherapy – to take their parents to court for these supposed acts dating from their early childhood. In these trials, the psychiatrists took on the role of 'witnesses' to the theory of repressed childhood memories and so, by extension, to the violence covered up by these parents. Pitting members of the same family, namely a patient in psychotherapy suffering from PTSD and their parents, against one another, these trials ground on remorselessly, based entirely on the theoretical concepts of trauma and PTSD. After many trials and a number of scandals, these patients and their parents rebelled against their psychotherapists and got together to prosecute the latter on the basis that the theory of repressed memories was false, that these memories had been entirely constructed by the psychotherapists in question, and that the patients had been manipulated when in a position, as patients, of vulnerability and susceptibility to influence.

In this way, PTSD, rather than being an explanation for an illness and a source of ideas for therapists treating its sufferers, became a truly malevolent force, sowing rumour, doubt, mistrust and conflict. In addition to this, its encouragement of intimate revelations led to the rehabilitation of a psychological procedure

dating from the nineteenth century which had long been discredited due to an absence of any proof of its effectiveness: catharsis. In the wake of this affair, there seems to have been a marked upsurge in interest in bearing witness, gathering traumatic memories and creating life-narratives of dramatic events. The 'duty of memory' and the 'duty to bear witness' are ceaselessly invoked in spite of the tragic consequences of the false memory syndrome scandal and growing evidence from new research that encouraging subjects to recall painful life-events which they had forgotten can sometimes have negative effects.[15] In any case, recounting and bearing witness to one's traumatic experiences has, following the vast wave of Holocaust testimony,[16] become a common practice, which is even encouraged among populations who have survived or participated in massacres – the Algerian War, the Khmer Rouge massacres in Cambodia, the Rwandan genocide, etc. It is to be noted that the psychological consequences of the collection of this testimony from witnesses have yet to be studied systematically.

The Treatment of Survivor Syndrome

What treatment was given to concentration camp survivors presenting the symptoms of CCSS? Paradoxically, it would seem that no specific form of psychotherapy or psychotropic treatment was ever developed. In other words, a syndrome was isolated, but no tailored treatment for it was ever perfected. Furthermore, and this fact merits closer scrutiny, there seems to have been no known case of a survivor diagnosed with CCSS who was ever recognized by experts as having been cured, whether by psychotherapy or psychotropic drugs. So, from the point of view of psychiatric diagnosis at least, these survivors remained ill for the rest of their lives.

Although we know of no specialized therapy being developed for survivors of the Nazi camps, we do possess a rare account written by a survivor of Auschwitz of Jewish-Polish origin, who agreed to follow a course of narcoanalysis administered by a psychiatrist specializing in the treatment of traumatized patients. This account was published in 1987 by the Israeli survivor and writer Yehiel De-Nur under his nom de plume 'KaTzetnik 135633',[17] and is a transcription of his treatment using LSD which had been recorded in its entirety by Dr Baastians, a specialist in psychic trauma working in Holland. The technique of narcoanalysis was invented during the First World War in order to treat traumatized soldiers and allow them to return quickly to the front. It consisted in administering a narcotic to the patient in order to make them relive the traumatic scene in a hallucinatory state and then induce a different version of the events in question, this time with a 'happy ending'. The traumatized soldier therefore wakes up relieved and ready to return to combat.

During his five sessions of analysis under the effects of LSD in Dr Baastians' clinic in Holland in 1976, KaTzetnik 135633 speaks continually of scenes

relating to the Torah, the religious universe of Hassidic Jews in prewar Poland (where he had spent his childhood) and Auschwitz. His hallucinations bring together in a single, often terrifying scene, images of pious Jews, characters from the Bible, devils and Christ. The Dutch doctor recognizes his own inability to comprehend and, more importantly, interpret the visions of the survivor. He invites a Christian theologian to attend the sessions, but he is equally mystified. Baastians therefore concludes that only De Nur himself can make sense of his psychic production and admits as much to the patient. KaTzetnik 135633 interrupts the treatment because his symptoms are steadily worsening, as if the therapy was actually deepening the trauma. He states in the commentary accompanying the transcription of his therapy in the published edition that, some years after the end of the treatment, his nights had become calmer, his nightmares less terrifying, but that it was now in the daytime that horrible visions would come to him in the most unpredictable and uncontrollable manner.[18]

KaTzetnik 135633's treatment is a sad illustration of the contradiction at the heart of CCSS: it is a psychological and psychiatric definition which is nonetheless incapable of providing a conceptual framework for dealing with specific traumatic experiences. KaTzetnik 135633 was suffering from having been persecuted for being Jewish and his hallucinations featured the Nazis and antisemitic crimes and thoughts, as well as the destruction of the traditional Jewish life to which KaTzetnik 135633 and all his family had belonged. The question posed to the discipline of psychiatry by KaTzetnik 135633's psychic pain is that of how one can live following such a massacre. Attempting to answer this question using generalized psychological concepts and references to Protestant theology would seem to constitute at least an error of judgement, if not a grave and even dangerous misinterpretation.

Survivor Syndrome and Humanitarian Action

What approaches can specialists in clinical and pathological psychology possibly use to treat populations as diverse as Hutu and Tutsi survivors of massacres in Burundi, Christian Croat survivors of the war in the former Yugoslavia, Sri-Lankan victims of the 2006 tsunami, Palestinian survivors of Israeli bombardments of Gaza or Israelis affected by Qassam rocket fire? Spending only a few weeks or months on the ground and possessing little knowledge of the language, customs and essential concepts and laws of these populations, how do they manage to provide assistance and treatment? Faced with the depth and complexity of each culture, of each psychiatric matrix,[19] of each specific system of representations of suffering, illness and ways of caring, faced with the cultural richness and diversity of psychopathologies,[20] aid workers always respond with the same, supposedly effective mode of thinking. In reality, this seems far too often to result in a mismatch of priorities,

and sometimes in a total breakdown of understanding between, on the one hand, Western aid workers deploying discourse derived directly from CCSS and, on the other, people in great distress, whose world lies in ruins and who are threatened by hunger and death.

A study of the psycho-social aid provided between 2003 and 2004 to victims of the crisis in Burundi[21] has shown that the notion of PTSD was brought in by foreign psychiatrists and trainers (mostly North Americans working for non-governmental organizations) and, although translated into Kirundi – the local language – it proved hard to understand both for the populations in question and for Burundian clinicians, and even more difficult to incorporate within the psychotherapeutic services offered by Burundian psychotherapists. Research has shown that the latter tend to employ therapeutic techniques practised in the churches to which they are affiliated – prayer, laying-on of hands, the interpretation of 'speaking in tongues', etc. This underlines the fact that CCSS, like any psychiatric or psychological construct, has its logical foundations in the cultural universe of the West, and is based on an ontology which defines human beings as 'alone in the world', existing without gods, ancestors or other invisible beings and all subject to the same laws of existence and psychic mechanisms.[22] For these practitioners, accepting CCSS would mean abandoning the values and logic of their own culture. Although not unthinkable in this situation, such a step would raise important practical difficulties.

In the absence of reliable evaluations of the psychological aid provided by humanitarian organizations,[23] it would seem that the strength of PTSD, which can be applied to any situation of violence, lies in its simplicity. Its blindness to cultural diversity and the varying nature of events makes it appear – but only appear – both accessible and applicable to all. The study of this mass application of PTSD on an international scale and the practical aspects, real effects and ideological foundations of this application, needs to be pursued further.[24] Studies may indeed show that PTSD, as an 'empty shell', might at last spur therapists to consider their patients from the point of view of the social and cultural specificity of the event which gave rise to their dysfunction, and likewise to select therapeutic methods in tune with their cultural background.[25]

Conclusion

Psychiatry has had its part to play in attempts to comprehend the Holocaust. By describing and classifying survivors' psychological symptoms, it has sought to isolate the specific psychopathological consequences of this terrifying and hitherto unknown experience. To this end, however, it created Concentration Camp Survivor Syndrome, a condition which, far from being specific, has since

been used to describe traumatized psychiatric populations with no connection whatsoever to the Holocaust. While CCSS was pivotal in establishing Holocaust survivors' status as victims, it did not give rise to any novel or effective therapies with which to treat survivors of the Nazi camps. This lack of specificity is without doubt the greatest shortcoming of CCSS. Yet it was also thanks to this relative vagueness that CCSS was so eagerly accepted and developed, eventually becoming the most widely accepted psychiatric syndrome in the Western world, PTSD. A generation after the initial formulation of CCSS, as interest in the descendants of survivors has increased, psychiatric research has put forward the theory that psychopathology caused by the Holocaust may be transferred to subjects born long after the horrific events in question. However, this hypothesis has not yet allowed any psychopathological constants to be identified, or led to the creation of any generalized therapies which can be applied to this population as a whole. Psychiatrists have also, finally, attempted to unravel the mystery of what lay in the minds of the Nazi executioners, albeit with no conclusive results.[26] So, whatever errors and omissions the discipline may be guilty of, it is surely the case that a thorough understanding of the Holocaust cannot be gained without the participation of psychiatry and psychology from the very outset, and the insights into the functioning of the human mind which they bring.

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2 L. Eitinger, 'Pathology of the Concentration Camp Syndrome', *Archives of General Psychiatry*, no. 5 (1961), pp. 370–79; W.G. Niederland, 'Psychiatric disorders among persecution victims. A contribution to the understanding of concentration camp pathology and its after effects', *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, no. 139 (1964), pp. 458–74; H. Krystal and W.G. Niederland, 'Clinical observation on the survivor syndrome', in H. Krystal (ed.), *Massive Psychic Trauma* (New York, NY: International Universities Press, 1968); B. Shephard, *A War of Nerves. Soldiers and Psychiatrists, 1914–1994* (London: Cape, 2000).

3 For a clinical discussion of this syndrome, see N. Zajde, *Guérir de la Shoah* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2005).

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5 It is well known that the vast majority of Holocaust survivors have not returned to live in their countries of origin, but have instead emigrated, mainly to Israel, North and South America and Australia.

6 M. Kestenberg, 'Discriminatory Aspect of the German Indemnification Policy: A Continuation of Persecution', in Martin S. Bergman and Milton E. Jucovy (eds), *Generations of the Holocaust* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1982), pp. 62–82.

7 Regarding the methodological problems linked to research on the psychological and psychiatric consequences of Holocaust trauma, see J. Lomranz, 'The Skewed Image of the Holocaust Survivor and the Vicissitudes of Psychological Research', *Echos of the Holocaust*, no. 6 (April 2000). Regarding those affecting research on the 'second generation', see N. Solkoff, 'Children of Survivors of the Nazi Holocaust, a Critical review of the Literature', *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, vol. 51, no. 1 (1981), pp. 29–42.

8 For example in building regulations and the car industry (crash tests, etc.).

9 For further discussion of these two notions, see Chapter 7 in the present volume.

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14 I. Hacking, *Rewriting the Soul* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998).

15 R. McNally, *Remembering Trauma* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

16 The large-scale recording of survivor testimony on film began at the end of the 1980s at Yale University. The systematic collection of similar archives is now ongoing at various institutions throughout the world, including the Yad Vashem museum in Israel and, in France, the Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Shoah, in association with the Institut National de l'Audiovisuel. In 1994, the director and producer Steven Spielberg created a foundation for the audiovisual memory of the Holocaust which had, by 1999, made 50 000 recordings. In this way, survivors come to repeat their existential testimony for various different organizations.

17 De-Nur created this name by taking the expression used in the Nazi camps to refer to internees, based on the German initials 'KZ' (from *Konzentrationslager*) and his prisoner number from Auschwitz.

18 It should be noted that this type of reaction to narcoanalysis, along with the risk of psychotic decompensation, were the reasons for which many health authorities throughout the world have forbidden therapies using LSD and other hallucinogens. For a more detailed account of KaTzetnik 135633's treatment, see N. Zajde, 'Traumatismes', in T. Nathan, A. Blanchet, S. Ionescu and N. Zajde, *Psychothérapies* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 1998).

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22 Nathan, *Nous ne sommes pas seuls au monde*.

23 If the evaluation of psychotherapy in the Western world – where patients and care facilities are easily monitored – remains a difficult and still unresolved problem (Nathan, *Nous ne sommes pas seuls au monde*), trying to monitor psychotherapy in the developing world, often in crisis situations, is even harder!

24 C. Henrich, V. Berlinlioni, R. Marino, L. Papale and F. Sironi, *European Psychiatry*, vol. 12, supplement 2 (1997), p. 160s. Also see *Transcultural Psychiatry*, *Rethinking Trauma* special issue, vol. 37, no. 3, September 2000.

25 See T. Nathan and C. Grandsard, 'PTSD and fright disorders: rethinking trauma from an ethnopsychiatric perspective', http://www.ethnopsychiatrie.net/TobieNathan.html [accessed 20 April 2011]. For an application of this theory to Jewish Holocaust survivors, see C. Grandsard, 'Singularität vs. Universalität der Schoah – Implikationen für die Psychotherapie', in Jose Brunner and Nathalie Zajde (eds), *Holocaust-Trauma. Kritische Perspektiven zur Entstehung und Wirkung eines Paradigmas*, Conferences vol. 3 (forthcoming).

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5

Theology

Daniel Langton

Theological or religious responses to the Holocaust are often described by the shorthand 'Holocaust Theology'. Although there exist a few examples from the actual time in question[1] – from out of the whirlwind, so to speak – the vast majority of Jewish and Christian responses that make up the body of the relevant literature are retrospective, so it might be more accurate to talk of 'Post-Holocaust Theology'. Here we will consider religious responses dating from 1965 until 2003, mostly from the United States and northern Europe.[2]

Since some of these have contributed to the development of both popular and scholarly conceptions of the Holocaust, it is worth noting that within this particular discourse 'the Holocaust' has a particular meaning. The scholars we shall discuss are well aware that other ethnic groups such as the Roma, political prisoners such as communists, religious communities such as Jehovah's Witnesses and so-called social deviants such as homosexuals were swept up in the event. But the primary focus for Jewish and Christian thinkers alike has been the systematic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of six million Jews by Germans and their collaborators led by the Nazis. Thus, Jewish thinkers remains firmly focused on the implications of the catastrophe for Judaism and Jewish identity in terms of the threat to the covenant between God and the People of Israel, the challenge for their scriptural resources, and the link between the Holocaust and the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. And while it is certainly the case that Christian thinkers are concerned with the apparent moral collapse of the church leadership and the widespread acquiescence and even popular support of the Third Reich among Christians more generally, nevertheless their key interests are also largely focused on the Nazi war against the Jews. These include debates about the extent to which Christian anti-Judaic tradition and teachings are implicated in the genocide and how, if at all, they should be modified; the question of whether or not the 'crucifixion of the Jews' should be regarded as revelatory for

Christians, especially when considered alongside the rebirth of the Jewish state; the urgent need to repair and develop Jewish-Christian relations in general; and deliberations concerning the inappropriateness of the Christian mission to the Jews in particular.

One might have imagined that, as far as religious thinkers are concerned, the Holocaust could be readily subsumed under the more general category of responses to the problem of evil. Both Judaism and Christianity can boast of a venerable tradition of religious engagement with suffering and evil, much of which can be regarded as foundational for their faith systems: Jews look back to slavery in Egypt, the Assyrian, Babylonian and Roman exiles, and to the destructions of the First and Second Temples, while the execution of Jesus Christ is arguably the key event around which Christian theology develops. Persecution and martyrdom are common and prominent features of both Jewish and Christian histories. More generally, both religions have had to wrestle with the problem that a good, loving and wise God allows suffering and evil to occur in His creation, and have offered a wide-range of explanations. Most of these can be categorized as theodicies, that is, attempts to defend the justice of God in an apparently unjust world. Examples might include the portrayal of suffering as punishment for disobedience, or as educative or character-building, or as an unavoidable consequence of the divine gift of free-will. Not infrequently, suffering is treated as a mystery. Holocaust Theology is somewhat ambivalent about the entire theodic tradition. As Zachary Braiterman has observed, while anti-theodic responses such as passionate protestation and the blatant refusal to defend God can be found within the religious tradition, they are a defining characteristic of several classic Holocaust theologies.[3]

For a number of thinkers, both Jewish and Christian, the problem of evil is irrelevant for discussing the Holocaust precisely because it is regarded as unique and unparalleled in history. As such it cannot be considered as just one more example of evil or suffering, even a particularly horrific one, and therefore cannot be treated by reference to the familiar theodicies; rather, the Holocaust is seen to represent an entirely new theological problem that demands an entirely new type of engagement. Here, as elsewhere in other disciplines, the debate concerning the uniqueness of the Holocaust rages fiercely and opinion is sharply divided. What makes this debate different is that it takes place in the context of a wider discourse concerning the nature of God's actions in history. For some, the Holocaust points to a kind of divine immanence that is directly comparable to the awesome, miraculous events of the Bible, while for others it hints at the nature of God's transcendence – or even His absence or death – in relation to human history.

In most cases, the ideological background of the thinker plays a significant role in determining the extent to which his or her religious traditions and sacred writings are brought to bear on the question. Conservatives will tend explore the issues within a more restricted framework, although often with innovative and

imaginative interpretations of the mainstream texts, while progressives and radicals will, in addition, tend to look further afield, not infrequently drawing upon the scriptures of other faiths or upon the conceptual tools of social sciences and philosophy.

Jewish Responses

The received canon of Holocaust Theology begins with a work that remains as profoundly unnerving a read today as when it was published in 1965. Ignaz Maybaum's *The Face of God after Auschwitz*, a collection of short chapters and sermons first delivered in 1963, was the Austrian-born British Reform rabbi's attempt to answer the single question that had obsessed him since 1933: What had happened?[4] Behind this apparently naive question was the issue of whether belief in God's providential power and the idea of divine redemption were any longer meaningful. Ultimately, Maybaum argued in the affirmative, for he explained the Nazi genocide as an act of God that had brought about a greater good. Jewish suffering, he argued, should be understood as a historical manifestation of the mission of Israel, to bring about spiritual progress for Judaism and for the wider world.

He pointed to a pattern of Jewish disasters, specifically, the destruction of the two Temples, as historical proofs of this claim. The first had led to the recognition that the Jewish people constituted a nation independent of a land, and their consequent exile had resulted in carrying the knowledge of the true God and His Torah to the Gentile world. The second had ended the Jewish Temple cult, replacing it with prayer and study, and had demonstrated to the nations that the universal God was not located in any one place and did not require blood sacrifice. The Holocaust fitted into this pattern as the third *churban* or destruction. Hitler had, like Nebuchadnezzar before him, been an instrument of the divine will,[5] but he had also symbolized what was wrong with mankind. After Hitler's war against the Jews, the world, which had been led into the idolatrous worship of technology and a false messiah that made possible such barbarism, would never again trust in the empty promises of authoritarianism, whether theocractic or scientific, nor would it any longer tolerate religious persecution.[6] The destruction of European Jewry could also be regarded positively as ridding Judaism of the pernicious influence of medieval Jewish attitudes towards the Law and tradition.[7]

Few since have dared to offer such a redemptive theological assessment of the Shoah, especially after the publication of the collection of chapters entitled *After Auschwitz* (1966) by the North American free-thinker and Conservative-trained rabbi Richard Rubenstein. Rubenstein set the agenda by challenging any attempt to reconcile the God of the Exodus story, who saved His People from

slavery, with the facts of the Holocaust. Traditional explanations for the problem of evil that attempted to justify God's ways in the context of 'the most demonic anti-human explosion of all history'[8] were morally repugnant and theologically bankrupt. This realization, he said, had profound consequences for Judaism itself, and he famously proclaimed the death of the God of (Jewish) tradition, maintaining that a radical reformulation of Jewish religion was called for.[9]

Rubenstein's Jewish contribution to the Death of God movement[10] has become the classic work of anti-theodicy and revisionism with which all later Holocaust Theologies have had to grapple. In it he argued that while the omnipotent, redemptive God of Judaism was dead and the Jewish people stood in 'a cold, silent, unfeeling cosmos, unaided by any purposeful power',[11] the need for a viable Jewish community was more vital than ever. What alternative to Jewish religious tradition could he propose? His initial suggestion of a concoction of Freudian-influenced nature-paganism and Zionism, which drew criticism as a kind of Jewish atheism, later gave way to a mystical vision of Judaism with an impersonal, transcendent conception of the divine that had little or no bearing on the sufferings of the real world.[12]

While in the early years Rubenstein's provocative ideas did not impress North American Jewry, and he soon found himself socially and institutionally ostracized, the seriousness with which he took the religious challenges of the Holocaust has come to be vindicated within both communal and scholarly circles.

The philosopher Hans Jonas shared certain assumptions with Rubenstein, not least a conception of God as transcendent and incapable of acting directly upon the world. His chapter, 'The Concept of God after Auschwitz' (1968), which was revised several times, approaches the Holocaust somewhat tangentially, in that Jonas' first concern was to consider the nature of God's interaction with His creation. He envisions a God who, in the beginning and for unknowable reasons, had committed Himself to a cosmic experiment in 'chance and risk and [the] endless variety of becoming'.[13] This He had done by establishing the physical and biological laws that unfolded over time and space without any divine direction or correction and without foreknowledge of how it would develop.[14] The universe was left to itself to play out according to natural law and chance, with God having withdrawn Himself completely from the process. Following the surprising emergence of life, blind evolutionary forces had eventually generated the human mind which was capable of moral choice and of changing the world. With man, God now had a partner in creation.[15]

From this new myth there followed some interesting theological implications for any understanding of the divine. This included the idea of a 'becoming God' who is profoundly affected by His creation,[16] and of a suffering God, who is disappointed and hurt by His creation.[17] Such a God confounds the traditional claim of omnipotence, for the authentic act of creation must entail the self-renunciation

of the creator's power; if God was to intervene, He would be tampering with the process of free development such that creation would not be truly free of and distinct from the creator. Thus, while He remains in close relation with and cares for His creation, God has devolved responsibility for the creative process to humankind.[18]

By the time Jonas arrives at a consideration of the Holocaust, he is able to explain God's silence at Auschwitz as the necessary consequence of the relation of the creator to His creation: 'I entertain the idea of a God who for a time – the time of the ongoing world process – has divested Himself of any power to interfere with the physical course of things'.[19] This means that the responsibility for the victimization of 'the gassed and burnt children of Auschwitz' cannot lie with God but rather with humankind. Jonas appears to recognize that his theological speculation on such suffering and on 'a hidden God' strays somewhat from Jewish tradition.[20] In an attempt to rectify this perception, he suggests that it is not as foreign to Judaism as it first appears, observing the similarity of his theology with 'the old Jewish idea' within the mystical tradition of *tzimtzum* or 'contraction of the divine being as the condition for the being of a world'.[21]

This interest in *kabbalah* is given a more significant place in the thought of another philosopher, Emil Fackenheim, a German-born Canadian Reform rabbi who survived incarceration at Sachsenhausen, and who offers perhaps the most sustained and rigorous response to the theological challenges of the Shoah. Central to his writings is the idea that the Holocaust, as an event, cannot be adequately explained. In *God's Presence in History* (1970) he suggested that, uniquely, it could be categorized as both an 'epoch-making event' of Jewish history, comparable to the end of prophecy and the destruction of the temples, which challenged the core beliefs of Judaism, *and* as a 'root experience' of Jewish tradition, corresponding to foundational, revelational events such as the Exodus and the giving of the Law at Sinai, which established those core beliefs.[22] Increasingly, he came to view the Holocaust as profoundly mysterious. In *The Jewish Return to History* (1978) he described it as 'the rock on which throughout all eternity all rational explanations will crash and break apart'.[23] Consequently, he refused to engage with explorations of its religious meaning and focused instead on the authentic response of the Jew in its aftermath.

For Fackenheim, the starting point was the surprise of Jewish continuity. In highly charged language, he claimed that the wider Jewish community's astonishing determination to continue to self-identify as Jews could be understood as obedience, whether conscious or otherwise, to a new divine commandment: 'Thou shalt not give Hitler a posthumous victory'. This 614th commandment involved acts of social justice and resistance, as he argued in *To Mend the World* (1982). The title itself indicates his indebtedness to the Jewish mystical conception of *tikkun* or mending, that is, the idea that the Godhead was in broken and

needed to be restored to itself, which could be achieved by observance of the *mitzvot* or commandments among other things. The idea could also be expressed in terms of God being in exile from Himself, and Fackenheim linked it to a fierce affirmation of Jewish political autonomy and self-preservation, best achieved through Zionism and the support of the state of Israel. Via a Jewish mystical motif, then, the moral authority of Jewish philosopher-survivor was married to the religious politics of the nation-state.

This kind of theologically informed commitment to Israel is prominent in the work of the Transylvanian-born Orthodox rabbi Eliezer Berkovits, too. Also fascinated with the question of how the Holocaust might reveal the ways in which God acts in history, he was particularly interested in its relation to the establishment of the world's only Jewish state after two millennia. The miracle of 1948 demonstrated that the God of Jewish tradition continued to intervene in human affairs; in the words of the deuteronomic blessing, 'His face had shone upon us'.

The modern Orthodox thinker was less comfortable attributing the Nazi genocide to God, however, and he found an alternative explanation in a creative and elegant version of the freewill argument. The Holocaust was portrayed as a tragic consequence of the divine gift to humankind of moral choice. Insofar as evil and suffering were inevitable, then so too was the hiding of the face of God (*hester panim*) for, as Berkovits acknowledged in *Faith after the Holocaust* (1973), 'While He shows forbearance with the wicked, he must turn a deaf ear to the anguished cries of the violated.'[24] History, then, is a balancing act between God's self-restraint in allowing human freewill, which can lead to an eclipse of the divine in a catastrophic event such as the Holocaust, and His mercy in occasional intervention, which is neatly exemplified by the rise of the Jewish state of Israel.[25]

In this, Berkovits followed previous thinkers in attributing religious meaning to apparently arbitrary selection of historical events without providing a coherent rationale for so doing. Regardless, he believed that such an interpretation of recent history[26] allowed one to retain a semblance of faith in divine providence and even, if one were prepared to acknowledge the possibility of life after death, in the possibility of divine justice.[27] At the same time, Berkovits acknowledged that the enormity of the catastrophe demanded sensitivity towards those who had lost their faith ('holy disbelief') and condemnation of any kind of religious self-satisfaction.[28]

The paradoxes of articulating any kind of reasonable faith after the Holocaust lie at the heart of a long chapter entitled 'Cloud of Smoke, Pillar of Fire' (1977) by the North American modern Orthodox rabbi, Irving Greenberg. In his engagement with the intellectual challenges that the Nazi onslaught represented to core Jewish beliefs (such as God, the covenant, redemption and the value of human life), Greenberg was led to renounce the divine moral authority that underlay traditional commitment to the covenant and its commandments.

One had to reject any sense of assurance or certainty in one's religious life,[29] and to view Judaism as essentially a voluntary endeavour. In a post-Holocaust world, an easy faith was untenable, and what remained was a dialectic of faith and uncertainty, or 'troubled theism'. One could, one should, live a life of faith that was always in crisis, always haunted by doubt. Anything else was unacceptable; as he saw it: 'Living in the dialectic becomes one of the verification principles for alternative theories after the Holocaust.'[30]

Interestingly, well before he had broached the topic of the Holocaust, Greenberg had come to the conclusion that only voluntary adherence to the covenant would elicit true loyalty and commitment to the commandments (*mitzvot*). This he had argued with reference to the pragmatics of Western liberal democracy, in the contrast to experience of totalitarian regimes.[31] The Holocaust, however, gave him alternative rhetorical justification for his reformulation of the foundations of traditional Judaism. This illustrates a more general point that many of the positions advocated by Holocaust theologians need not be the direct result of wrestling with the Shoah, despite appearances to the contrary.

The question of uniqueness is responsible for much of the rhetorical power of Holocaust Theology, and we have already seen how Fackenheim's religio-philosophical analysis depended on the claim that it was an event unlike any other. One of the fiercest advocates for the uniqueness of the Holocaust was the eclectic theologian, novelist and publisher, Arthur Cohen, who asserted: 'Thought and the death camps are incommensurable … the death camps are unthinkable … [They are] beyond the discourse of morality and rational condemnation … [The death camps represent] a new event, one severed from the connection with the traditional presuppositions of history, psychology, politics, morality'.[32]

The term he alighted upon to capture his sense of the Holocaust and the title of his book published in 1981 was *The Tremendum*, an allusion to Rudolph Otto's Mysterium Tremendum.[33] For Cohen, Otto's idea of the Holy as the awful presence of God, near and present but unfathomable, mysterious and terrifying, was useful for beginning to appreciate the human tremendum, the Holocaust, which was an 'unparalleled and unfathomable … celebration of murder'.[34] It is clear that for Cohen the Holocaust surpassed all other events in its extremity and it uniqueness. Like Fackenheim, he was obsessed with the theological challenge facing Jews, that is, the problem of how to bridge the chasm that separates them from their pre-Holocaust traditions and worldview, which are, in the face of the tremendum, completely inadequate.[35] But he also questioned the usefulness of analysing the event with the familiar conceptual tools of history or of the political and social sciences, since the Holocaust was so much more than any particular example of war, or religious or social conflict, or genocide.[36] Its mysterious and alien nature was expressed, in part, by linking it to Otto's phenomenological idea of the Holy.

It is striking that, regardless of whether they viewed the Shoah as unique or not, none of the thinkers considered to date suggested the oldest explanation of all for suffering, namely, divine punishment for sin. Several, most notably Rubenstein, explicitly ruled out this option as morally indefensible when applied to the innocent suffering that characterized the Holocaust. But in 1986, the Orthodox thinker Bernard Maza offered an account entitled *With Fury Poured Out* that viewed the catastrophe as a divine action calculated to correct the erring ways of the chosen people. The issue was the allegedly widespread failure of prewar world Jewry to observe the Torah, that is, to live life in accordance with the divinely revealed Jewish Law. King Solomon's prophecy that 'the sun rises and the sun sets' (Ecclesiastes 1:5), which was interpreted by the Talmud as a reassurance that a sun of Torah always rises somewhere before the sun of Torah sets, did not match the Jewish youth's search for new, alternative value-systems such as socialism and secular Zionism in Eastern Europe and Palestine, and materialism in North America.[37] The Torah's light was about to be extinguished and so, with a magnitude never before witnessed, God re-established His sovereignty over his children. This He accomplished 'with fury poured out', in accordance with the words of Ezekiel.[38] According to Maza, then, the disobedience of the Jews of Europe provoked a divinely orchestrated genocide that in turn brought about widespread return to Torah-observant Judaism elsewhere, especially in Israel and the United States.[39] While for Maza such action was fully reconcilable with a heavenly father who chastises those whom he loves, others might well reject it as callous in the extreme.

Someone who had little or no difficulty seeing God as callous was David Blumenthal. Sooner or later, someone was bound to question the assumption that God had to be all-loving and in *Facing the Abusing God: A Theology of Protest* (1993) the modern Orthodox scholar argued that the faithful had too often been in denial about the character of the living God. The biblical tradition could throw much light on the apparent paradox of why the omnibenevolent and omnipotent God allowed so much suffering in His creation. It was not difficult to find passages that revealed His 'dark side', such as Job's suffering for a divine wager (Job 1:6–12), or the likening of God to a man who humiliates his lover (Jeremiah 13:25–6), or the anger and violence of His actions that caused the Talmudic sages to exclaim 'Were it not written, it would be impossible to speak thus' (Sanhedrin 95b). Arguably, the Bible showed the creator to be, on occasion at least, abusive towards his creation.

In considering the collective trauma of the Holocaust, Blumenthal went further still and provocatively suggested a systematic comparison with the trauma of sexual abuse. From this perspective he took the lessons that abuse was never the fault of the abused and that healing was possible, although never complete, if the abuser was confronted. Observing that no previous theodicy or defence of God's justice

had been entirely satisfactory, he believed that it made sense to acknowledge the reality of the abusive relationship between God and His people.[40] To accept that God was not omnibenevolent did not make faith impossible. As Blumenthal put it, 'To have faith in a post-holocaust, abuse-sensitive world is, first, to know – to recognize and to admit – that God is an abusing God, but not always.'[41]

The application of the problem of evil in theological engagement with the Holocaust, which lies behind the approaches of most of the religious thinkers considered so far, was entirely absent from the controversial contribution of the progressive Jewish liberation theologian Marc Ellis. With *Ending Auschwitz* (1994), Ellis attacked Holocaust Theology as a dangerous form of political theology. Too often, he argued, Jewish suffering during the Shoah was used to whitewash present-day abuses of Palestinians in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Auschwitz had made the Jew the paradigmatic victim, a highly privileged status that was extended to the Jewish nation-state.[42] According to Ellis, the theologians shared a widespread attitude of the Jewish community that had blinded them to the kind of social inequality and misuse of power in modern Israel which the Jewish people had suffered in Nazi Europe. As he put it:

> I wondered whether in a paradoxical way Auschwitz had perhaps become for Jews a place of safe haven. For if we dwell in Auschwitz, if we freeze our history at Auschwitz, we silence the questions others have of us and in fact we have of ourselves. In this way Auschwitz becomes for us a place where we can hide our accountability in the present, even as we demand it insistently of others for their past actions.[43]

Denying that Zionism was an authentic expression of Jewish values, he challenged the assumption that the survival of Israel as an end in itself to be fought for at all costs, especially if what was sacrificed was the prophetic tradition of social justice which lay at the heart of true Judaism.[44] For Ellis, an authentic Holocaust Theology would intertwine the prophetic tradition with lessons from the Shoah: it would be self-critical and sensitive to real world suffering, condemnatory of any kind of ideological idolatry, including nationalism, and critical of abuses of political power, especially any attempts to marginalize others.

In 2003 another powerful critique of the dominant trends within Holocaust Theology was published that was also concerned with representing a marginalized perspective. The British Orthodox theologian Melissa Raphael's *The Female Face of God in Auschwitz* was the first comprehensive Jewish feminist treatment of the subject, its criticism being focused on patriarchal conceptions of the divine. The God of normative Judaism who was central to the theologians' writings was, she said, too often conflated with the notions of omnipotence and totalitarian power. According to Raphael, Maybaum had erroneously assumed the necessity

of God's dominance of history by violence, Berkovits had mistakenly assumed that human dignity depended on freedom or the power of autonomy and Rubenstein had effectively abandoned the God of patriarchal tradition because He had not been patriarchal enough.[45] Such underlying assumptions were painfully ironic considering how similar they were to the ideological conditions that produced the Holocaust, that is, the Nazi idolization of masculine power.

For Raphael, trained in Christian theology, the alternative was a God who suffered alongside Her children. In developing her very distinctive theology she drew heavily upon the medieval Jewish mystical belief that catastrophes that befall the Jews were catastrophic for God, tearing God apart from God-self, and that *tikkun* or restoration in God and the world could be brought about when Jews consecrated the world with their goodness. At the centre of Raphael's book was a close-reading of women's Holocaust testimony, which was used to suggest that their experiences in the camps were often more co-operative than was generally the case among men, and which emphasized the importance in survivor testimony of the acts of loving-kindness upon which camp-sisters so depended for their dignity and self-worth.[46] Lurianic kabbalistic Judaism, with its conception of a broken God whose divine sparks need to be restored to the godhead, came to serve as a 'narrative theological framework' for exploring the meaning and significance of such behaviour.[47]

In this redemptive Holocaust Theology, God – or the *Shekinah*, the divine presence in feminine form which was defined as 'the love of the Mother-God'[48] – was made manifest in such acts of loving-kindness, even in the shadow of the camps.[49] Thus the confrontation with Auschwitz demanded for Raphael, as it had for Rubenstein, the abandonment of the God of tradition, although in her case the resolution was to be found in a reformulation of Jewish tradition that replaced patriarchal with matriarchal understandings of the nature of God.

Christian Responses

When it comes to Christian responses to the Holocaust, the theme of a suffering God looms large and nowhere more so than in Jürgen Moltmann's *The Crucified God* (1972). The German Protestant theologian's work is not, in fact, directly concerned with Auschwitz, but rather with the idea of redemption from, and faith after, suffering. In this theodical project, the Holocaust effectively represents human suffering in the modern world. Elsewhere Moltmann recalled how, at first, he had not viewed the Holocaust as raising questions about suffering but rather questions about how to live with the guilt of being a German.[50] But in time he became interested in Auschwitz as part of a justification for a new theology which would ring less hollow in the face of the horrific suffering that had characterized the twentieth century.

His primary interest was to relate the meaning of Christ's cross to an understanding of the nature of God, which resulted in his discoveries that God himself is capable of suffering,[51] and that in Jesus' dying cry of despair ('My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'), the Son of God not only shared the godforsakenness that is at the heart of suffering, but also joins in protest against it.[52] In support of these ideas, Moltmann interprets the survivor and novelist Elie Wiesel's famous image of a child hanged on the gallows as symbolic of God's presence and suffering alongside His creatures in Auschwitz.[53] Likewise, he explores rabbinic teachings about God entering exile alongside and suffering with His people.[54] Controversially, then, Moltmann offers a redemptive perspective on the Holocaust in that the suffering love of God is recognized to be the driving force for human love to continue to persevere in hope, even in the face of the final negation, death. As he puts it, 'God in Auschwitz and Auschwitz in the crucified God – that is the basis for a real hope which both embraces and overcomes the world, and the ground for a love which is stronger than death and can sustain death.'[55]

Whereas Moltmann had come at Auschwitz somewhat tangentially, Franklin Littell's *The Crucifixion of the Jews* (1975) placed the destruction of the Jews at the centre of his study, or, rather, he placed the failure of the Church to prevent the destruction of the Jews and its failure to oppose Nazism at its centre. A North American Methodist minister who was part of the American occupation of post-war Germany and an early proponent of the academic study of the Holocaust, Littell was uninterested in questions relating to theodicy. He was instead obsessed with questions about the Church Struggle or *Kirchenkampf*, that is, the complicated relations between the Protestant Church bodies and the Third Reich and the consequent intra-Church conflict between the pro-Nazi German Christians and their opponents known collectively as the Confessing Church.

The behaviour of Christians during the Holocaust, and especially the idea that they had betrayed their own religio-ethical teachings, has been fundamental to the debates among Christian Holocaust theologies, and Littell's book is a classic condemnation of Christian antisemitism. Littell argued that the prime problem was the 'superseding myth' which had proved to have 'murderous implications'.[56] Here we see an early statement of what has become known as the 'rhetoric of continuity', an assertion of a direct line of causation from the first to the mid-twentieth centuries.[57] From early on in its history, he explained, the Church had preached that God had finished with the Jews and that it had become the New Israel, with the consequence that it had discarded the Jewish roots of its faith. Such mistakes had come about by *misreading* the New Testament. In this, Littell adopted a conservative position in relation to the question of whether or not the Christian scriptures were intrinsically anti-Judaic.[58]

Nevertheless, he offered a radical programme of restoration and repentance in response to Christian guilt, raising issues that would come to dominate the

ongoing Christian discourse concerning Auschwitz. Among other things, he challenged Gentile Christians to accept that they had been in rebellion against God and that the Holocaust needed to be woven into Christian liturgies to remind them of this painful truth.[59] He categorized the establishment of the state of Israel as revelatory of God's ongoing love of the Jewish people, calling on Christians to support Zionism as an expression of their faith in the God of Israel.[60] And he argued that the Jew should be rescued from Christian theology, to be accepted on his own terms, and that therefore (logically) all missionary activities should cease.[61]

The Canadian Roman Catholic theologian Gregory Baum was perhaps the most systematic and authoritative proponent of the idea that the Christian mission aimed at the Jews should cease after the Holocaust. As a theological advisor to the committee responsible for several influential documents produced during the Second Vatican Council, including 'On the Church's relation to Non-Christian Religions' in *Nostra Aetate* (1965), Baum was well placed to consider the question. His article 'Rethinking the Church's Mission after Auschwitz' (1977) began with the statement: 'After Auschwitz the Christian churches no longer wish to convert the Jews. While they may not be sure of the theological grounds that dispense them from this mission, the churches have become aware that asking the Jews to become Christians is a spiritual way of blotting them out of existence and thus only reinforces the effects of the Holocaust.'[62]

Partly, he suggested, the Church had become increasingly embarrassed by the political meaning implicit in missionary activity; it had become sensitive to its close association with Western imperialism and the way in which theological universalism had manifested itself in the suppression of all other religions and their associated cultures.[63] But it was after hearing 'the voice of the Holocaust', which had generated 'a new openness to Jewish faith',[64] that the Church had begun actively to reinterpret its mission in terms of dialogue and service.[65] He recognized, however, that the new policies had little impact on a great number of Christians because, he argued, the negation of Christianity was built into the central symbols of Christianity, such as the portrayal of Judaism as spiritual bondage and of Christ alone as offering salvation. These symbols were powerful and no individual could mitigate their negative influence in wider culture, even if, as an individual, he was capable of resisting their power in his own life.[66] While such symbols had for centuries acted as a legitimization of ecclesiastical structure and social power, they could and should be reinterpreted in a post-Holocaust world. Judaism's bondage might be better expressed as loyalty to God and rejection of all forms of idolatry, and the Church's claim to be the unique source of saving truth was better understood as a judgment on the systems of worldly power rather than of the great world religions.[67]

From the beginning, many Christians have been confused by the idea that Christianity, a religion of love, should need to make deep-rooted theological

changes as a result of the genocide of the Jews by the Nazi regime. The North American Stephen T. Davis illustrated the position of many Evangelicals in his carefully worded rebuttal, 'Evangelical Christians and Holocaust Theology' (1981). Here he took exception with the attempt to liken the crucifixion of the Jews to the crucifixion of Christ, or with the demand that 'Christians must give up Christian themes that are offensive to Jews, e.g. the notion that Jesus is the messiah or the notion that Christians ought to engage in evangelism.'[68] He asserted that there was no necessary connection between the belief that Christianity succeeded Judaism and antisemitism, let alone genocide. In the first place, Davis could cite Paul in Romans 9-11 to show that 'Israel has a continued role to play in God's redemptive plan'; it was not the case, then, that there was no longer any justification for the existence of Judaism.[69] And in the second place, 'Antisemitism and genocide are both about as clearly contrary to the Christian ethics as anything is.'[70]

The strategy he adopted was primarily based on the distinction between 'cultural Christians' and 'committed Christians'. The historic attitudes of the Church, he admitted, had 'distort[ed] true Christian teachings' about the Jews, and all kinds of Christians at the time of the Holocaust had been attracted to 'idolatrous nationalism' at that time, and furthermore many committed Christians had remained silent in the face of genocide. And yet it would be wrong, he maintained, to say that Christians had been responsible for the horrors of the Holocaust, for in the end it had been cultural Christians who had committed the acts of murder and genocide. Authentic, evangelical Christianity, as defined by Davis, was left essentially untouched by the Holocaust, according to such an analysis.

Davis' defence was precisely the kind of foil against which the emerging Holocaust Theology movement defined itself; according to this perspective, those who sought to preserve the integrity of Christian teaching after Auschwitz had simply failed to grasp the enormity of the catastrophe and the central and structural role Christian theology had played.[71] For example, Roy and Alice Eckardt argued in *Long Night's Journey into Day* (1982) that the Shoah was nothing less than revelational. It was God's will that Christians reorientate themselves with regard to Jews and Judaism, and this meant, as it had for Littell, demythologizing the Jew so that he no longer played out a bit role on the stage of Christian salvation history and supporting of the state of Israel, which represented the normalization of the Jew.[72] In addition, it meant replacing certain central symbols of Christian belief – after Auschwitz, for instance, how could one maintain any longer the cross as the ultimate symbol of godforsakenness? The Eckardts' answer is clear in their suggestion that the calendar should be divided into 'Before the Final Solution (BFS)' and 'in the year of the Final Solution (FS)'.[73]

At the heart of their provocative work was a belief that the proper focus of enquiry was the antisemitism that had brought about the Holocaust.

Antisemitism was, in their view, a frighteningly inexplicable phenomenon which entirely frustrated rational enquiry.[74] What could explain the longevity and power of such hatred? Their response was a breathless appeal to the realm of the supernatural and rejection of core sacred texts.

> Our simple persuasion is that it is extremely difficult to speak meaningfully of the hatred of Jews without speaking of a demonic force or a concatenation of such forces … The devil is a totally unique power that concentrates upon totally unique evil … Is there an evil in this world that is uniquely evil? Yes, we have already spoken of it. That evil is antisemitism. The devil and antisemitism are correlate symbols: antisemitism is born of the devil and the devil receives his sustenance from anti-Semitism … [T]here is nothing like antisemitism. Accordingly, it is appropriate to speak of the devil … He is the god of anti-Semitism … Thus while the Fourth Gospel was written down by a man who may have carried the name John, the hidden source of John 8:42–47 may be understood as the devil himself … We suggest that so mysterious a phenomenon as antisemitism may well require consideration of a demonic force or forces if it is ever going to be reasonably comprehended.[75]

The shocking claims of the Eckardts – even equating God and the devil at one point[76] – put them at the extreme end of the spectrum of Christian theologians who not only took seriously the challenges of the Shoah but who sought to be seen to do so.

Without doubt, the most systematic and comprehensive Christian response to the Holocaust is the three-volume work entitled *A Theology of the Jewish-Christian Encounter* (1980–88)[77] by the North American Episcopalian Paul van Buren. Van Buren was closely associated with the Death of God movement, like Rubenstein, and had lost patience with moderates like Littell who had tried to reform Christian teaching so as to temper the effect of its anti-Judaic theology. What was required was a radical transformation and reorientation of the fundamentals of Christianity.

Van Buren began with the nature of revelation, which he believed was always occasioned by events that challenged received tradition and which, after re-orientating the community and its direction in history, became part of tradition in their turn.[78] In his own day, said van Buren, the dominant tradition that God had rejected the Jews had been challenged by portentous events, namely, the threat of the annihilation of the people of Israel during the Holocaust and the re-establishment of a Jewish state after two millennia. This had generated a revelatory vision of the reality of both the effect of Christian antisemitism and of God's continued interest in the Jews. The Church now appeared to be

reorienting itself, as evidenced by its postwar interest in the Jewish roots of Christianity and in Christian Zionism.[79]

Another fundamental element of Christian theology ripe for revision was the idea of the Covenant between God and Israel. The Church had badly misunderstood Paul's image of the grafting of the wild olive branch (Romans 11)[80] if it believed that God's covenant with the Jews was over.[81] Drawing on the Jewish philosopher Franz Rosenzweig, he argued that Jesus' words in John 14:6 ('No-one comes to the Father except through me') did not apply to the Jews, since they were already with the Father.[82] The ultimate solution, then, was to reject centuries of supersessionist teaching that saw the Church as the New Israel, and to understand that the divine Covenant with Israel was an eternal one,[83] into which the Gentiles had been incorporated by grace. The mission of the Jewish People remained the same as ever, to remind the world of the need to partner the one true God in perfecting creation.[84] The mission of the Gentile Church was simply to facilitate this.[85]

From this remarkable perspective, conversion of the Jews was nonsensical,[86] and while the Torah-obedient Jesus had been the human means by which the Gentiles had been grafted on to the vine, his significance to the Jews was only as one who had renewed the covenant in fulfilment of Jeremiah's prophecy of 'a new covenant' (Jeremiah 31:31).[87] The sacred obligation of the Church according to van Buren's 'new Theology of Israel' was clear. The Holocaust recalled a catastrophic failure of this obligation, and Christian attention and energy should now be focused on the state of Israel. As he explained, modern Zionism is, 'surely a step in the direction of the fulfillment of the promise of Israel's election … Anti-Zionism is in fact an anti-Jewish position. To be against Zion is to be against Israel. It was so in biblical times and it is so now … The Church is called to fight the defamation of the Jewish state'.[88]

No one went further than van Buren in the post-Holocaust programme to reconstruct Christianity from the ground up, and certainly no one was more concerned to put Christian Zionism at its centre.

Perhaps the most interesting figure in the Christian debate, and someone who set herself in complete opposition to those who would justify theologically the relationship between the Holocaust and the Jewish state, was that of the Catholic feminist theologian, Rosemary Radford Ruether. Already in 1974, she had made an significant impact with her study, *Faith and Fratricide; the Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism*, and related publications, which had developed the scholarship of James Parkes and Jules Isaac and explored the emergence of the Christian 'teaching of contempt' and, in particular, the *Adversos Judeos* ('Against the Jews') tradition of the Church Fathers.[89]

Her particular contribution had been to focus on High Christology, that is, the conception of Christ as divine rather than human, as the root cause of this hostile

tradition and, ultimately, of the Holocaust. The Jewish rejection of Jesus as God had, in a pagan environment where religions jostled in competition, forced a Christian response that demonized the Jews as incapable of recognizing the truth by their very nature. As she had put it, 'Anti-Judaism developed theologically in Christianity as the left-hand of Christology. That is to say, anti-Judaism was the negative side of the Christian claim that Jesus was the Christ.'[90]

With her credentials and commitment to improving Jewish-Christian relations firmly established, it was most disturbing, then, when in 1989 Radford Ruether and her husband Herman published *The Wrath of Jonah: The Crisis of Religious Nationalism in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*. This was an unrelenting critique of Zionism that included an extended and savage attack on the uncritical support offered by Holocaust theologians. Like Marc Ellis, her counter-history sought to demonstrate that political Zionism had been a minority concern among Jews prior to the Second World War and was not so much an authentic expression of the prophet roots of Judaism as 'a movement deeply flawed by ethnocentric nationalism and Western colonialist views of the Arab world'.[91] Also like Ellis, she believed that the real lesson of Auschwitz was the ethical imperative to side with the oppressed and persecuted:

> No-one's antisemitism is justified because some Jews, too, may be oppressors. The proper response to any revelation of injustice is compassion for the victims but also sorrow for the victimizers, for theirs is the moral tragedy. The point of authentic criticism of evil is not to justify more hatred and violence but to end the cycle of hatred and violence. This is what Jewish and Christian Holocaust theologians have failed to do, precisely by accepting the Zionist view that the response to the Holocaust means uncritical support for the state of Israel.[92]

For Radford Ruether, the pro-Israeli political theology of Christian liberals in particular was the flip-side of racial antisemitism and was driven by a misguided sense of guilt or repentance for Christian culpability for the Shoah. Rather than making reparations, she warned, it was adding to the list of injustices perpetrated in the name of Christianity.[93]

Conclusion

'Holocaust Theology' does not constitute a strictly coherent discourse, to the extent that some have even questioned the usefulness of the term.[94] The various contributions are highly idiosyncratic and often too personal and too much the product of an individual thinker to justify sweeping claims about the strengths

or weaknesses of theology as a specific approach to the Shoah. There is also a great deal of overlap with other disciplinary approaches, especially philosophy and history. And one must not forget that we are including here both Jewish and Christian perspectives, which, while they share much in common, also diverge significantly in terms of their interests and assumptions. Nonetheless, a few observations can be made, further to those established in the introduction.

The kinds of religious explorations encompassed by Holocaust Theology raise a whole host of theoretical and methodological issues for philosophers, theologians and historians. Katz has identified, among other things, debates about how to categorize historical events in relation to moral categories such as good or evil, whether historical events can confirm or deny theological affirmations, whether Jewish history is distinct from history per se, the uniqueness of the Holocaust and the implications (or not) for religion, the nature of the evidence for divine providence and of revelation, the Problem of Evil, the relevance of traditional, scriptural resources, and the connection (if any) between the Holocaust and the Land of Israel.[95]

Despite the fact that some of the works we have considered are theodic in nature and concerned to justify God's ways, Braiterman's perceptive observation that key works of Jewish Holocaust Theology are best described as 'antitheodic' (or that they emphasize such an attitude, at least) hints at the way in which Holocaust Theology can be distinguished from other theologies of suffering. Recently, Garner has added the category of 'atheodic' to include those approaches 'which seek to neither justify nor protest God's relation to suffering; rather they seek to focus on consolatory themes of divine co-suffering, restoration/healing, or the dissolution of the problem into divine mystery/inscrutability'.[96] In particular, Garner has noted the coincidence that a remarkable number of Jewish theologies have drawn upon Jewish mysticism and attributes this, at least in part, to a tendency to refuse to address the traditional challenge of evil and suffering.

The categories of antitheodicy and atheodicy seem to work as well for some of the Christian theologies as they do for the Jewish, and some might argue that such characteristic features of the discourse indicates the profound influence of the Holocaust. Others, such as Solomon, would be quick to counter that it is modernity and the loss of trust in traditional authority and scripture, rather than the Holocaust itself, that has brought about the refusal to attempt to justify God in the face of catastrophic human suffering.[97] In this context, Morgan's study of the interplay between contemporary culture and the Jewish religious responses reinforces the importance of historicity, that is, the historical-situatedness of the thinkers, for understanding the development of their ideas, and in particular the way in which Jewish thinkers have grappled with the question of whether an historical event (in this case, the Shoah) can influence or modify a religious tradition.[98] The same attention to cultural influences and academic trends is

found in one of the few dedicated surveys of Christian Holocaust theologies by Haynes, who also demonstrates the extent to which a number of people had incorporated Jewish thought into their own post-Holocaust theologies.[99]

Arguably, the cross-fertilization and intellectual indebtedness among Jewish and Christian respondents makes Holocaust Theology one of the most creative areas of postwar Jewish-Christian interaction, today. It is worth re-emphasizing one important concern here, namely, the role of God in the arena of history. The rationalist, naturalist assumptions that have characterized the study of history in the West for two centuries had convinced liberal-minded Jewish and Christian theologians to be very cautious about using the past as evidence for God's active engagement in the world, and even to refrain from so doing.[100] As we have seen, the Holocaust has enticed a good number of thinkers to reconsider this position and to seek to demonstrate the divine presence in history from a post-Holocaust perspective. Arguably, this represents the key intellectual contribution of 'Holocaust Theology' to the academic discipline of modern theology more generally.

Finally, a word about how Jewish and Christian Holocaust theologies have fared in their constituent communities. The importance given to the Holocaust by Jewish theologians is generally shared within the wider Jewry, and many of the academic debates can be found reflected in popular discourse, too. The challenge to the religious and communal establishment has been successful in that the Holocaust is centre-stage in popular Jewish religious and non-religious culture, even if there is certainly a fierce debate between those who view the centrality of the Holocaust as an obsession with victimhood, and those who believe it to be vital for ensuring Jewish continuity.

In contrast, the Christian theologians we have considered have not found the wider Christian community interested in the implications of the Shoah to anything like the same degree. Here, the challenge to the religious and communal establishment has been only partially successful. The official statements issued on the subject by Church authorities have been much more conservative and much less ambitious than many of the theologians would have wanted,[101] and even the idea that the Holocaust and its implications are important to Christian theology has had almost no impact at a communal level.

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Notes

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6

Jews, Jewish Studies and Holocaust Historiography

Boaz Cohen

Can the story of the Holocaust be told without taking into account its victims the Jews? While it may sound incongruous, it is clear that this question and the different answers to it inform Holocaust research and writing from the early postwar years until today, the early twenty-first century. What story do we glean from the Holocaust? Is it a story of the perpetrators – 'perpetrator history' – that tells how the Germans and their collaborators murdered the Jews, or is it a Jewish story – one telling how Jews *lived* and acted under the Nazi regime and subsequent murder operations? And where do we posit this story? Will it be a chapter in German history or in Jewish history? If we decide it belongs in German or European history then what is the place of attitudes towards the Jews, specifically antisemitism, in this story? If it belongs in Jewish history will it be integrated into that history or will it become a field apart?

The discussion on the Holocaust and the Jews can be broken down into three main issues: the centrality of antisemitism in the Final Solution; the importance of the Jewish voice and sources for our understanding of the Final Solution; and the experience of the Jews not only as murder victims but also as a people 'living before they were killed', continuing the process of Jewish history. This chapter will address the unfolding of the above discussion through sixty-five years of writing and research on the Holocaust. But at first there is a need to investigate the early concerns of those who wanted to devote themselves to writing the Holocaust.

Early Concerns: 'Judeo-centric' or 'Nazi-centric' History?

From the early days after the Holocaust, survivor intellectuals and historians were wary of the marginalization of the Holocaust. This anxiety was one of the main

reasons for the establishment of historical commissions and documentation centres. These organizations gathered testimonies, collected Jewish and German documents, monitored and participated in the trials of war criminals and published various materials.[1] It was obvious to their activists that it was their responsibility and mission to ensure that the Holocaust (although that word was not yet used) would be remembered and researched. However, while they had an impressive record of collecting and publishing, their work was not integrated into the mainstream of historical research. By 1955, Philip Friedman – one of the first survivor historians and a major figure in Holocaust research until his death in 1960 – could sum up the situation pertaining to the field of Holocaust research: he maintained that most of published works on the Holocaust,[2] 'are solely concerned with the subject of anti-Jewish hostility and its effects, and no more'. He claimed that, 'we cannot rest content with a study of the persecutions and the reactions they provoked, such as uprisings and other acts of resistance'. In opposition to this approach, which he referred to as 'Nazi-centric', he proposed a 'Judeo-centric' one: 'What we need is a history of the Jewish people during the period of Nazi rule, in which the central role is to be played by *the Jewish People*' [italics in original]. This inquiry into the history of the Jews during the Holocaust, he emphasized, must stem from seeing the Jewish people 'not only as the victim of a tragedy, but also as the bearer of a communal existence with all the manifold and numerous aspects involved'.[3]

Friedman felt that there might be resistance to this idea of focusing on internal Jewish history, because that approach could be viewed as particularistic and ostensibly of no interest to world history. But he maintained that even if that were true, Jewish historians must 'facilitate an understanding of Jewish ways of life and Jewish internal developments'; they have a duty to their own people. Beyond that, Friedman believed that the study of the Jewish people had a universal value as well, because the Jews, too, are part of universal history – 'every individual and every community is a part of universal history', including the Jews. The study of Jewish life, therefore, is significant also 'from a universal point of view'. The ghettos and camps served as the 'test tube of a vast psycho-sociological laboratory', because this was 'the first time in the history of human civilization a group of people of a comprehensive social structure and with a highly developed cultural and social standard found themselves compelled to live under the shadow of death, yet managed to leave for posterity survivors to tell the story and a significant amount of information on what had taken place'.[4]

The Importance of Holocaust Research for the Jewish People

For the early survivor-historians, the Holocaust was a personal and conceptual crisis that undercut the basic axioms of the collective Jewish national and individual

identity, both inwardly and outwardly. It raised existential problems that posed questions about the basic values of Jewish collective existence, relations between Israel and the nations, and the essence of Jewish national existence and Jewish solidarity. Their writings show that even though they extolled the moral conduct of individuals and groups, the Holocaust undermined their faith in social systems and in human beings' ability to lead moral lives in an insane and cynical world. They saw the research of the Holocaust as an essential tool in the quest for an appropriate remedy.

For Yosef Kermish, a member of Poland's Jewish historical commission and the first director of the Yad Vashem archive, research had a 'burning current relevance' and he believed that there was 'a sacred obligation' to conduct it. It had contemporary consequences because it had to do with the survival of the Jewish people as a collective that could function as a nation. The Holocaust and its lesson must 'serve as a stern warning to Jews' in the post-Holocaust world:

> We do not want the events of the recent past to be left as no more than a memory and monument. They should instead serve as a silent admonition and warning that we must draw national conclusions for the generations. We have a sacred obligation to learn the lessons of the trials of this generation … a generation that stood face to face with annihilation, a generation that lived all of Jewish history and the trials of all the generations.[5]

For him, the 'annihilation' – i.e. the Holocaust – was the essence of 'all Jewish history' and, in fact, the essence of its failure. Consequently, 'the sacred obligation to learn [its] lessons', of which he spoke, casts a new light on the call to employ the appropriate methods and approaches when researching the Holocaust. History was seen as a discipline with an application: its study was worthwhile only if a lesson could be drawn from it.[6]

Jewish Issues of Holocaust Research

From the early post-Holocaust days onwards, several Jewish issues of the Holocaust had been defined: the coping of Jewish community, community structures and individual Jews under Nazi rule; Jewish leadership under the Nazis; and the behaviour of Jews in the free world, especially of the leadership of the Yishuv – the Jewish community in Eretz-Israel (Palestine) – vis-à-vis the Jews under Nazi rule.

'How did we endure this trial?' asked Nathan Eck, Warsaw Ghetto survivor who went on to work in Yad Vashem. 'How did all of us withstand this test – both the millions who were tortured and exterminated and the millions who were not touched by the hands of the torturer and murderer?'[7] The events of the Holocaust raised questions and problems 'that trouble our generation and

sometimes penetrate to the depths of the soul',[8] as the Holocaust undermined the self-image of the Jews of Eastern Europe and defied many of their fundamental beliefs. In particular, it challenged the notion of the Jews as one people, a national and ethnic group bound together by a sense of mutual responsibility. Moral lapses in the ghettos and camps, and the problem of Jewish leadership under Nazi rule, undermined the conventional view of Jewish society. All the fury, disappointment and guilt were directed first of all inward, at the Jews themselves. Their overwhelming sense was one of failure. Eck doubted the possibility of arriving at valid conclusions in these matters; he was afraid of 'a lack of bravery, pangs of conscience, doubts about the possibility of finding the correct answer and the fear of the answer should it be found'.[9] Nevertheless, investigating these issues was an essential step on the road to the rehabilitation of the Jewish people, as these researchers understood it: the fruits of scholarship had to be of practical use.

High on the early historians' scale of research priorities was the question of the behaviour of the Jews of the Free World and their leaders during the Holocaust. 'Were the Jewish people one and united?' they asked. 'Was there a single international Jewry during the Holocaust? One people in body and soul?'[10] While certainly aware of the judgmental attitude, expressed by those who had not been there, concerning the Jews' behaviour during the Holocaust, they argued that the issue of what the Jews of the Free World had or had not done then was no less a matter of concern than the question about the conduct of the Jews who had endured the horrors. Faced with the question of whether 'they resisted or did not resist', they posed the countervailing issue of the attitude of 'the Jews who had not been in the ghetto and the concentration camps to the Jews who had been there'. Eck asked, 'What kind of action and conduct were shown by that sector of the Jewish people in the presence of the catastrophe that struck the other part of our people, those who were caught in Hitler's trap?' He went on, 'Were they traumatized by the reports about the extermination? How did this trauma affect their mood, their actions, their way of life, and so on?'[11]

But not only moods were to be investigated, the actions taken or not taken were also to be examined: 'Could they have saved something? Did they at least do everything that was possible aimed at rescue?' asked Meir (Marek) Dworzecki, who went on to establish the world's first chair of Holocaust Studies in Bar Ilan University in 1959.[12]

Who Should Write the History of the Jews during the Holocaust?

In the first decade after the Holocaust it became obvious to perceptive observers that historians of the Jews did not undertake writing the history of the Holocaust.

Major historians of the Jews, such as Salo Baron in the United States and Ben Zion Dinur and Yitzhak Ber in Jerusalem, did not drop their work and research projects in order to start researching the Jewish catastrophe. Some reasons have been given for this inaction. Historically, the event was very close and it was very hard if not impossible to attain the perspective needed for research. No less than that was the emotional problem – it was very hard to block the shock and pain and embark on academic 'objective' research. There was also the question of sources. Aside from millions of German documents that had yet to be sifted and analysed, there seemed to be hardly any sources to write Jewish history of the Holocaust. Even erstwhile Jewish or Zionist Israeli historian Ben Zion Dinur, who was the first chair of Yad Vashem and the Minister of Education, was only willing to integrate the Holocaust as distant chapters in a general research project of a history of destroyed European Jewish communities from their establishment hundreds of years ago.[13]

It looked as if the only people working on writing a history of the Jews during the Holocaust would be the survivor historians – those East European Jewish scholars who went through the Holocaust, established the historical commissions and published the early monographs on the period (including the one active in the West: the French Centre de documentation juive contemporaine, which published work by its researchers Joseph Billig, Georges Wellers and Léon Poliakov). But their work was mostly in Yiddish and Hebrew and did not provoke similar work in the wider academic world.[14]

This led to a divide between Jewish Studies and Holocaust Studies. This divide was exacerbated by the fact that the magnitude of the event and its special character put it in a different sector from 'standard' Jewish history. Speaking in 1968, Lenny Yahil was one of the first researchers to address this problem:

> The Holocaust was not seen as one of the many tragedies that overtook the Jewish people but instead as 'The Catastrophe' … It was looked upon as being isolated from everything previously known and accepted. Special memorial institutions were established, others were set up to collect documentation, memoirs and evidence were assembled. [Bringing about] the intentional isolation of the research from the mainstream of Jewish historiography, as if it were an entirely separate field. It is as if all the instruments and conceptions of Jewish historiography that had hitherto existed did not enable us to study this period; as if it must be circumvented in contemplating the history of the people.[15]

While Yahil, an Israeli who was in the beginning of her career, hoped to see this divide closing, it has been widening ever since. Historian David Engel has made the 'sequestering' of the Holocaust by historians of the Jews the focus of his research in the early 2000s. In *Historians of the Jews and the Holocaust* he claims that the

reluctance of historians of the Jews to research the Holocaust and to integrate it into Jewish history has only become more apparent as we get further away from the event.

'The Holocaust should not lead to a major reshaping of Jewish history,' claimed Paula Hyman. 'The fact that I know and mourn the destruction of European Jewry does not mean that I should interpret what happened in 1750, 1800 or 1900 differently that I would interpret it had the destruction of European Jewry had not taken place.'[16] It seems that many of these historians felt that the Holocaust threatened their ability to research modern Jewish history and specifically the (triumphalist) march of the Jews into modernity and modern European culture. It also challenged present-day assumptions guiding their research, values and identity based on this modernizing process. Therefore they saw the Holocaust as constituting 'an interruption of Jewish history; its occurrence should be preserved and the suffering of the victims noted but after doing so observers should return to the main highway leaving the momentary disturbance behind'.[17] Unlike their colleagues in the fields of Jewish philosophy and theology who have recognized the Holocaust as a seminal event challenging and demanding new modes of thinking and writing, historians of the Jews 'have raised the demand to insulate themselves from the Holocaust's influence to a vital principal from which deviation is to be condemned'.[18]

Holocaust without Jews: Writing Perpetrator History

Writing on the Third Reich had already started during the Second World War. Intellectuals in general and historians in particular were fascinated by the Nazi regime, Nazism, Hitler and so on. As Lucy Dawidowicz has shown in *The Holocaust and the Historians*, the Final Solution and the extermination of the Jews were glaringly absent or marginalized in this literature.[19] Thus in books on Nazi Germany by noted historians A.J.P. Taylor, H.R. Trevor-Roper and Alan Bullock antisemitism and the murder of the Jews warranted only a cursory treatment and a few sentences. In the USSR and the Eastern Bloc, the situation was even worse with a refusal to acknowledge the Final Solution and Jewish casualties. The Jewish victims of the Holocaust lost their identity and distinct fate, and became dead Soviet (or other) citizens in that literature.

Even when focusing on the murder of the Jews, the research was clearly inclined in the direction of 'perpetrator history' (*Täterforschung*); the little that was written about the Jewish aspect did not fit into the general trend. A major reason for this was the availability of hundreds of thousands of German documents, which had fallen into the Allies' hands and had been employed in the war crimes' trials. Scholars were inundated with this material, and its critical mass funnelled and dictated their research orientations and priorities.[20]

Viewing the Holocaust through the eyes of the perpetrators is most obvious in the seminal work of Raul Hilberg: *The Destruction of European Jews*.[21] Hilberg was able, through painstaking work on German documents collected by the Americans, to trace Nazi policies and actions towards the Jews and the path leading to the Final Solution. According to Hilberg, the research of the Holocaust was basically a research of the Germans and their allies:

> I had already decided to write about the German perpetrators. The destruction of the Jews was a German deed. It was implemented in German offices, in German culture. I was convinced from the very beginning of my work that without an insight into the actions of the perpetrators, one could not grasp history in its full dimensions. The perpetrator had the overview, he alone was the key. It was through his eyes that I had to view the happening from its genesis to its culmination.[22]

Hilberg's approach, determined by his training as a political scientist, was to research the Final Solution through an in-depth analysis of the German administration. His research showed the Holocaust through the eyes of German officials, dignitaries and leaders. It gave us unprecedented insight to the mechanism of destruction but had its downsides as well. In such an analysis there was not much room for the theme of antisemitism, even in the context of Hitler's ideology and policy decisions. Moreover, in such a research framework, there was not much room for the Jews – their actions, views and interaction with the Germans who ruled over them, and, of course, there was no place for their community life and survival strategies. Through the prism of the German bureaucracy the Jews were slated for murder, and murdered they were. They were passive as well as docile and, apart from a few outbursts, they fulfilled their accorded role.

Hilberg tried to explain the (German ascribed) passivity of the Jews during the Holocaust. The key, he claimed, lay in the course of Jewish History. In a widely quoted and contested chapter he claimed that looking:

> at the whole Jewish reaction pattern, we notice that in its two salient features it is an attempt to avert action and, failing that, automatic compliance with orders. Why is this so? Why did the Jews act in this way? … They hoped that somehow the German drive would spend itself. This hope was founded on a two-thousand-year-old experience. In exile, the Jews had always been in a minority; they had always been in danger; but they had learned that they could avert danger and survive destruction by placating and appeasing their enemies … This experience was so ingrained in the Jewish consciousness as to achieve the force of law … A two-thousand-year-old lesson could not be unlearned; the Jews could not make the switch [to resistance]. They were helpless.[23]

However, Hilberg got his Jewish history wrong on two counts: first of all, if he had consulted Jewish and bystander sources he would have found that Jews during the Holocaust were far from passive, even if not partaking in armed resistance. Secondly, a cursory look at modern European Jewish history would have shown that since the onset of emancipation and modernity it is almost impossible to talk of one 'Jewish reaction pattern'. The choices made by Jews during the Holocaust reflected the varying levels of political and personal identification of Jews with the national states of modern Europe, their ascribing to political ideologies and their political experience either as a fighting minority or an assimilating one.[24]

Further Away from the Holocaust of the Jews

Research and writing from the 1970s onwards focused on the Third Reich rather than on its victims. The functionalist-intentionalist debate was one example of this trend. Here, there were major German historians debating the Final Solution: was it Hitler's original intention to murder the Jews of Europe and did he start the Second World War with this intention in mind and unfolded a masterplan for its implementation? This is the 'intentionalist' view. Or was the murder of the Jews an unplanned and haphazard result of 'cumulative radicalization' of the German power structure?[25] According to the latter theory, the 'functionalist' approach, the mass murder of the Jews came to be through a twisted road characterized by inner-Nazi wrangling, ad hoc decisions and personal initiatives. Therefore Hitler, Nazi ideology and antisemitism played a minor part in the machinations of the Final Solution. It is sufficient to say that for the functionalists, the Holocaust serves more as an instructive demonstration of what Nazi Germany was about than a story of the German extermination of the Jews.[26]

Another example of the expunging of the Jews and the attitudes towards them from the discourse of the Holocaust can be seen in the work of sociologist Zygmunt Bauman. In a series of works,[27] Bauman claimed that to see the Holocaust 'as something which happened to the Jews; as an event in the Jewish history' serves only 'to belittle, misjudge, or shrug off the significance of the Holocaust for the theory of civilization, of modernity, of modern civilization'. For him, it was a mistake that made the Holocaust 'unique, comfortably uncharacteristic, and sociologically inconsequential'.[28] He claimed that the Holocaust should serve to underscore the inherent dangers of the advent of modernity and its civilizing process. It could succeed only because of 'the skilful utilization of "moral sleeping pills" made available by modern bureaucracy and modern technology.[29] Therefore, 'the Holocaust-style phenomena must be recognized as legitimate outcomes of the civilizing tendency, and its constant potential' and that this is the major lesson of the Holocaust.[30]

Bauman went on to claim that most atrocities of the twentieth century could be traced to the Enlightenment and its modernizing ethos. Thus the murder of six million Jews was for Bauman just another case of modern society's propensity towards violence aimed at 'purity', at those who didn't belong. The Jews just 'happened to be certain people who did not fit the model of a perfect universe'.[31] The theory had no place for antisemitism or a specificity of Jewish existence.

A more focused exploration of rank-and-file perpetrators and their motives is Christian Browning's *Ordinary Men*.[32] He analyses testimonials by members of Battalion 101 of the Order Police (*Ordnunszpolizei*) that was responsible for the murder by shooting of about 38,000 Jewish men, women and children and the deportation of about 45,200 others to the death camps. How did the men of this battalion, many of them middle-aged reserve policeman of a non-Nazi background, undergo the metamorphosis into cold-blooded murderers of whole Jewish communities? Browning's explanation is that the roots of this metamorphosis are not in Nazi ideology or in antisemitism but in social processes that can happen in every human society. For Browning it was not about Germans exterminating Jews but about the propensity of 'ordinary people' to become mass killers in specific group situations.

Bringing the Jews Back into the Holocaust: Writing Holocaust History Anew

The last years of the twentieth century were characterized by a return of the Jews and their history in writings about the Holocaust. This is apparent in the reintegration of Holocaust and Jewish history, a re-evaluation of the place of antisemitism in the Final Solution and the place given to the voice of the survivors. The voices calling for an integration of Jewish history into Holocaust research grew clearer in the 1990s. Yehuda Bauer posited the Holocaust as an encounter between two societies, the Jewish and the German, with each reaching this encounter with its own history. The convergence of the two influenced the final (varied) outcome in different areas.[33] Likewise, Dan Michman called for researching the 'Jewish dimension of the Holocaust'.[34] While research on Nazi Germany looked into German history, this was yet to be achieved for the research of the Jews. Yet, it is obvious that the Jews arrived at the Holocaust with the 'full baggage' of Jewish history, political culture, beliefs and sensibilities as they developed in their specific communities. Certainly, this baggage informed their actions and choices under Nazi rule.

It is not surprising that the call for the integration of Jewish history into the study of the Holocaust came from Israeli scholars. Israeli Holocaust research took an entirely different path than that in Germany or the United States. It focused

mainly on the fate of the Jewish people under Nazi rule. There is hardly any contribution to the research of the decisions leading to the Final Solution and to the functionalist-intentionalist debate. Most Israeli scholars focused their work on the Holocaust's Jewish dimensions: starting with extensive research on Jewish resistance during the late 1960s. In the 1970s, researchers went on to work on issues of rescue either by Jews under Nazi rule or by those outside of it. Another turbulent issue was the research of Jewish leadership and decision-making under the Nazis.[35] Some of this work was fuelled by internal Israeli developments and some was undertaken as response to the writings of Raul Hilberg, Hanna Arendt and Bruno Bettelheim (see Chapter 7 on Bettelheim). All these topics have been and continue to be contentious issues in Israeli Holocaust memory. Into the twenty-first century, we find Israeli researchers focusing on communities and their experience under the Nazi rule,[36] Jewish religious life and religious leadership.[37]

Refocusing on Antisemitism

What fuelled the cruelty of the German perpetrators and the willingness of rank-and-file Germans to enthusiastically and willingly partake in the murder of the Jews? In his thought-provoking and widely contested book, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, Daniel Goldhagen offered an answer directly challenging the view of German perpetrators as 'ordinary men'.[38] The answer lay in 'Eliminationist antisemitism', a particular German version of the Christian anti-Judaism that developed in Germany into a political culture shared by many across the political and ideological divide. It was characterized by a discourse calling for the elimination of the 'Jewish problem'. Goldhagen wrote that the:

> Germans' antisemitic beliefs about Jews were the central causal agent of the Holocaust … The conclusion of this book is that antisemitism moved many thousands of 'ordinary' Germans – and would have moved millions more, had they been appropriately positioned – to slaughter Jews. Not economic hardship, not the coercive means of a totalitarian state, not the social psychological pressure, not invariable psychological propensities, but ideas about Jews that were pervasive in Germany, and had been for decades, induced ordinary Germans to kill unarmed, defenseless Jewish men, women, and children by the thousands, systematically and without pity.[39]

Goldhagen's book, a bestseller, evinced positive response from the public in the United States and Germany but was criticized widely and fiercely in the academic community. It was branded as, 'simplistic', 'reductionistic', 'mechanistic' and

even 'racist'.[40] His methodology was challenged as was his depiction of German 'elimitionist antisemitism' as the ultimate key to the understanding of the Final Solution. But criticized as it was, Goldhagen's work prepared the stage for the return of the Jews into Holocaust discourse.

Antisemitism also returned to the discourse in the much lauded *Nazi Germany and the Jews* by Saul Friedländer.[41] The key, he wrote, was Hitler and his ideology of 'redemptive antisemitism' – the idea that Germany and Europe would be a better place if they could be cleansed of the Jews. This ideology was radicalized during the war into a belief that 'the Jew was a lethal and active threat to all nations, to the Aryan race and to the German Volk'.[42] Unlike Goldhagen, Friedländer did not see this as uniquely German and a prevailing attitude of the German people. It was Hitler's attitude and that of 'a segment of the party and its leaders'.[43] As the war raged on, wider circles of the population were introduced to it. Hitler advanced this ideology relentlessly and fanatically and was the moving force behind the Final Solution. The explanations offered by Hilberg, Browning, Bauman and many others to the Holocaust are all 'related issues' or 'factors' but cannot explain the move from the persecution of the Jews to their extermination. For Friedländer, the prime mover was antisemitism.

Likewise, in his research, Jeffrey Herf has shown that the lethal threat posed by the Jews was at the core of Nazi propaganda towards the German citizenry. Moreover, the alleged power of international Jewry, posited Jews as a number one political enemy of the German nation, threatening its existence. Therefore, once this political antisemitism was adopted, the Jews had to be exterminated in self defence.[44]

The Voice of the Victims

Concurrent with the reintroduction of antisemitism into the Holocaust discourse was another paradigmatic change in Holocaust historiography, namely the (re) integration of the voice of the Jews.

This can be seen poignantly in Friedländer's book mentioned above. Friedländer chose to tell the history of the extermination of the Jews in an integrated way that is 'both analytical and evocative' combing meticulous research of perpetrators and bystanders with first-person, mainly contemporary, accounts, diaries and testimonies by the victims. His aim, as he wrote in the second volume, was to 'tear through seamless interpretation and pierce the (mostly involuntary) smugness of scholarly detachment and "objectivity"', preserving the 'initial sense of disbelief' that was at the heart of the Holocaust as it was experienced at the time.[45] Thus, apart from the discussion of German decision-making and the technicalities of the Final Solution, the reader of Friedländer's book is given excerpts from, among others,

more than forty diarists, most of them writing during the event itself. He twice uses these sources to explore Jewish sensibilities at certain points: December 1941 and September 1943. Thus, he gives the reader a sense of the varied ways Jews perceived their situation at these harrowing moments. While sources by Jewish teenagers in hiding, such as Anne Frank or Moshe Flinker, cannot add to our understanding of the perpetrators policies, they are indispensable for our understanding how it was like for the Jews.

A major shift from perpetrator history to articulating the voice of the victims can be found in Christopher Browning's work of the 2000s. Browning moved from work on German documents, decision-making and rank-and-file perpetrators to utilizing survivor testimonies in order to reconstruct the history of the forced labour camp of Starachowice in central Poland through the eyes of its Jewish inmates.[46] This shift should not be underestimated. Browning made his name researching the German decision-making process leading to the Final Solution[47] and devoted many years perusing German documents. Yet, his sources for the Starachowice camp are 292 written, transcribed or taped testimonies of Jewish survivors. Most of those were from the Jewish community of the village of Wierzbnik, and shared their experiences during the war and the Holocaust. Browning also shifted to work on personal stories of Jews under the Nazis, co-editing a book of the correspondence of the Hollander family of Kracow, describing their increasing plight under Nazi rule.[48]

The paradigmatic shift described here entailed a shift in historians' attitude to survivor testimonies. Browning himself decided to focus on the Starachowice camp testimonies after he saw that they were ignored in a German court case as being 'most unreliable evidence'. On this basis, the court acquitted the officer responsible for the deportation of Wierzbnik's Jews. The voices of the victims could only come from testimonies but how should the historian work with them? How can they be verified and what is to be done with discrepancies in them and between them? Browning addressed this issue in a book devoted to *Holocaust History and Postwar Testimony*.[49]

The issue of testimonies and their importance for Holocaust research can be seen also in the work of historian Omer Bartov. Bartov's research focused on the German army during the Second World War debunking the view of the German army as an apolitical force standing aloof from the Final Solution, wanton violence and war crimes.[50] He too underwent a shift to reclaiming the Jewish voice in the Holocaust and this has brought him to rethink the importance of survivor testimonies. The need to utilize survivor testimonies in research is not an issue of respect for the survivors, claims Bartov, but it is significant 'in order to set the historical record straight'. This is not an issue of partisan politics giving the Jewish voice a place in history but one of historical research. 'Testimonies can at times save events from oblivion,' events that have been obliterated wantonly or

through lack of knowledge from perpetrator documentation. Speaking of their accuracy vis-à-vis German documentation he claims that, 'There is no reason to believe that official contemporary documents written by Gestapo, SS, Wehrmacht or German administrative officials are any more accurate or objective, or any less subjective and biased, than accounts by those they were trying to kill.'[51]

Postscript

What does the future hold for the place of the Jews in Holocaust writing?

Holocaust history writing has gone a long way since the early work of those that had no place for the Jews and their voice in the history of the Holocaust. As we have seen, more and more leading researchers are reintegrating the Jews into Holocaust history, looking again at antisemitism and its significance for the extermination of the Jews and listening to the voices of survivors through their testimonies.

It is obvious that the issue of testimonies will be a dominant feature of Holocaust research and writing in the coming years. The immense academic interest in testimonies manifests itself in academic ventures such as the 'Future of Testimonies' forum in the UK, the 'Future of Holocaust Testimonies' international conferences in the Western Galilee College, Israel. the 'Voices of Child Survivors: Children's Holocaust Testimonies' project of Bar-Ilan University, the Yad Vashem Conference book on *Holocaust Historiography in Context* and the *Jewish Responses to Persecution* series of the USHMM.[52]

What will be the next paradigmatic shift in the story of the Holocaust and the Jews? One cannot say as yet. We can only surmise that there are yet further chapters to be written.

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Notes

1 On the commissions see: Boaz Cohen, 'Holocaust Survivors and the Genesis of Holocaust Research', in Johannes-Dieter Steinert and Inge Weber-Newth (eds), *Beyond Camps and Forced Labour. Current International Research on Survivors of Nazi Persecution* (Osnabrück: Secolo Verlag, 2004); Laura Jokush, '"Khurban Forshung": Jewish Historical Commissions in Europe 1945–1949', *Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook*, vol. 6 (2007), pp. 441–73. Also see: David Bankier and Dan Michman (eds), *Holocaust Historiography in Context: Emergence, Challenges, Polemics & Achievements* (Jerusalem/New York, NY: Yad Vashem & Berghahn Books, 2008).

2 He is particularly referring to the following works: Léon Poliakov, *La bréviaire de la haine* (Paris: Calmann-Levy,1951); Gerald Reitlinger, *The Final Solution: The Attempt to Exterminate the Jews of Europe, 1939–1945* (London: Beechurst Press, 1953); and Joseph Tenenbaum, *Race and Reich* (New York, NY: Twayne Publishers, 1956).

3 Philip Friedman, 'Problems of Research on the European Jewish Catastrophe', *Yad Vashem Studies*, no. 3 (1959), pp. 25–40. Friedman, 'Problems of Research on the European Jewish Catastrophe', pp. 34–5.

4 Friedman, 'Problems of Research on the European Jewish Catastrophe', pp. 34–5.

5 Joseph Kermish, 'The Current State of Holocaust Studies' (in Hebrew), *Yedi'ot Yad Vashem* (Yad Vashem Bulletin), no. 1 (1954), p. 10.

6 At the first international conference for the research of the Holocaust, in July 1947 in Jerusalem, Nachman Blumental described the Historical Commission in Poland as underlining the role of applied history, which, he said, was a weapon in the contemporary struggle against fascism: 'In addition to the scholarly work we are doing what we call applied history. There is no room here for pure history. Everything we do is a weapon in the war against fascism and anti-Semitism.' Yad Vashem Archives [YVA] AM1/237.

7 Nathan Eck, 'Bring Relief to the Soul of the Generation' (in Hebrew), *Dappim le-heqer ha-Shoah ve-ha-mered* (Pages of Research on the Holocaust and the Revolt), no. 1 (1951), pp. 203–4.

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7

The Holocaust and the Limits of Psychoanalysis: The Case of Bruno Bettelheim

Nathalie Zajde

Psychoanalysis occupies a prominent position among the various psychological approaches to the Nazi camps, the Holocaust and mass psychic trauma. This is due in part to Freudian theory's status as the most innovative, the best constructed and the most comprehensive of the psychological theories, but also to its remarkably wide dissemination and its ascent to institutional status, following the Second World War, in those societies where the concentrationary experience is a subject of academic reflection and discourse.

The first researcher to apply psychoanalysis to this field was Bruno Bettelheim in his famous article, 'Individual and mass behavior in extreme situations' (originally published in 1943 and reappearing in revised form in several later publications).[1] Bettelheim's article was not only the first published study of this subject, but to this day remains the most complete, insofar as the author deploys the entire range of the major notions of Freudian psychoanalysis in his attempt to rationalise what he personally observed in the Nazi camps. For this reason, Bettelheim remains an authority and a major source of inspiration for many authors today.[2] Although Bettelheim deals with the concentration camps of Dachau and Buchenwald – camps which were not expressly set up as part of the project of the extermination of the Jews – his approach and his writings have been the main inspiration behind the majority of psychological studies of Holocaust survivors and of their deportation to Auschwitz and other death camps. It is significant that, from the 1970s onwards, psychologists and psychoanalysts working on the 'transmission of trauma to the second generation' have been greatly influenced by Bettelheim's arguments.[3]

Bettelheim is thus the most widely commented upon – and probably also the most widely criticized – author on this subject, for a number of reasons: he is among the most famous psychoanalytic critics and the most famous survivors of the Nazi camps of his generation; his article is one of the most informative and

thorough texts on the subject; and he suggests some highly original new lines of research into the psychological processes at work in the Nazi camps. His text nonetheless contains various theoretical inconsistencies and distorted or erroneous interpretations, for which he has been criticized in the writings of numerous psychoanalysts, psychologists and psychiatrists, including – if we count only former internees, some of them imprisoned alongside Bettelheim – Federn (1946, 1948, 1990), Kogon (1950), Neurath (1951), Cohen (1988) and Frankl (1959).[4] Finally, he reaches some particularly shocking conclusions regarding the psychology of victims and tormentors alike, to which we will return (see below).

'Individual and mass behavior in extreme situations' not only deals with the psychological functioning of the individual, but also examines social behaviours and the functioning of various groups within the Nazi camps.[5] Based on his observations, Bettelheim makes some general, and highly critical, statements about how humans function in a mass society. Although Bettelheim also analyses his data using approaches drawn from social psychology, psychoanalytical concepts remain at the core of his conceptualization, and these have been taken up – albeit not always uncritically – by numerous researchers and authors over the last sixty years.[6]

Bettelheim himself, although critical of the notion that psychoanalytical theory could serve as a tool of survival in the camps,[7] has no qualms about basing his reflections on the key concepts of psychoanalysis – the famous unconscious 'defence mechanisms' elaborated by Sigmund Freud ('projection', 'regression', 'identification with the assailant'), stages of development ('anal stage'), psychic structures ('psychosis', 'perversion', 'neurosis'), notions of 'psychic representation' and 'identification', as well as intra-psychic content ('sexual fantasies', 'fantasies of omnipotence', etc.). These concepts have subsequently become associated with two other fundamental psychological notions stemming from the depths of the concentrationary experience – 'survivor guilt' and the 'work of grief'. Today, these notions have indeed become essential for many authors, researchers and clinicians dealing with victims of trauma, whether this trauma is individual or a mass phenomenon, the result of natural events or intentional acts.[8]

For several decades, the success of Bettelheim's writings on psychology, psychoanalysis and, in particular, the treatment of autistic children[9] was truly worldwide, and it was only much later that the parents of autistic patients, support groups for users of psychotherapy, historians and biographers started to bring his arguments into grave doubt.[10]

The Basis of Criticism of Bettelheim's Work

If a new critical evaluation of Bettelheim's text on the psychology of the Nazi camps is called for, this is not so much in order to bring his ideas into

question as to allow reflection upon the use made of psychological/analytic concepts in the clinical treatment of survivors of the Holocaust, the families of these survivors and survivors of other 'extreme situations'. It would also aim to establish why, unlike the world of academia and the media, most survivors of the Nazi camps with no professional connection to psychology/analysis – the 'natural' audience for his text, insofar as they are both survivors and potential users of psychotherapy – have vehemently rejected Bettelheim's analyses and indeed all psychoanalytical arguments, whereas one might have expected these to have been of particular concern to them. In general, survivors have not been willing to undergo psychoanalytical treatment. It is necessary to reflect upon the reasons why these psychoanalytical notions have not *interested* survivors – in the sense in which Isabelle Stengers understands the term 'interest'[11] – meaning how these psychological/analytic concepts might have been expected to influence the individual subjects whom they claim to describe. On the contrary, they seem to have been massively disowned by these subjects, and to have resulted in no modification either of their psychological state or their thinking. The survivors of the Nazi camps, then, have not taken up the very notions which claim to speak about them.

Bruno Bettelheim: A Trainee Psychoanalyst Interned in the Nazi Camps

Born in Vienna to a prosperous, assimilated Jewish family with modern attitudes, Bruno Bettelheim was interned at the age of thirty-five in Dachau and then Buchenwald from 1938 to 1939. He was freed before the outbreak of the Second World War, in spring 1939. Although he never explicitly referred to the fact, it is assumed that he was arrested because he was Jewish.[12] At the time of his arrest he was a company director, having inherited his late father's factory, although he had always had an interest in contemporary thought and the arts, and held a doctorate in philosophy. However, Bettelheim was not a medical doctor, a virtually essential qualification if one wanted to train as a psychoanalyst at this time.

In 1943, several years after his release and emigration to the United States, he managed to publish, with some difficulty, his famous article, 'Individual and mass behavior in extreme situations'. Thanks to this publication he was able to enter American scholarly, psychological and psychoanalytic circles, despite being neither an academic, doctor, clinician nor psychologist.

In this article, Bettelheim tells how he survived after being violently beaten about the head during his arrest and then suffering the horror of deportation to Dachau. When, on his arrival at the camp, his strength was failing and he

could literally feel himself beginning to die, an internee who had been imprisoned in the camp for more than four years told him that, if he wanted to survive, he would have to make sure he kept eating and defecating and that, essentially, it was up to him to decide whether he wanted to live or die.[13] He also states that he owed his survival to the fact that, by joining forces with other psychologists and psychoanalysts interned alongside him, he began to observe and analyse the events pertaining to the situation in which he found himself. Using his knowledge of psychoanalysis, he 'studied' and recorded everything that he observed around him. He took note of the effects of the concentrationary situation both on the detainees and on their captors. In this way, he states, he had the strength and the means to resist by preserving his 'thought and individuality'.

Bettelheim was immediately struck by the ability of the concentrationary environment to transform individuals. He began focusing his attention on the functioning of the camp, on the intentions of the SS, on the torturers and the reactions of their victims.

Torture – A Calculated Measure

Bettelheim states that the terror and torture inflicted by the SS on the deportees was a measure calculated to break down the structure of the groups to which they belonged: Jews, communists, Jehovah's Witnesses, etc. – opposition groups which constituted a threat to the Nazi state. He thus demonstrates that deportation and torture were the result of strategic decisions as part of a war between different groups and were a means to influence wider society. Prisoners were tortured for what they were, as members of groups opposed to the Nazis, as enemies of power:

> an institution was needed to threaten the opponents of the system because too many Germans were dissatisfied with it. To imprison all of them would have interrupted the functioning of industrial production, the upholding of which was a paramount Nazi goal. *So if a group of the population got fed up with the Nazi regime, selected members of this group would be brought into the concentration camp. If lawyers became restless, a few hundred lawyers were sent to the camp; the same thing happened to physicians when the medical profession seemed rebellious, etc.*[14]

The basic strategy, then, was to weaken a group through terror, by striking at a significant number of the individuals who composed it. It also consisted in

destroying the links between people, links which formed the basis of the group and bound it together:

> These tortures alternated with efforts on the part of the guards to force the prisoners to hit one another, and to defile what the guards considered the prisoners' most cherished values. For instance, the prisoners were forced to curse their God,[15] to accuse themselves of vile actions, accuse their wives of adultery and prostitution. This continued for hours and was repeated at various times. According to reliable reports, this kind of *initiation* never took less than twelve hours and frequently lasted twenty-four hours.[16]

Bettelheim speaks of 'initiation'. The torture inflicted right from the time of their arrest and transportation caused these men to change as individuals. He notes a real transformation of personalities caused by the behavioural changes necessary in order to survive in the camp. He gives a detailed description of everyday life in a concentration camp and shows what constituted these torture techniques: roll-calls, physical torture, sleep deprivation, lack of food, exhaustion, absurd and inconsistent rules, total control of prisoners' physiological needs by the SS, absence of any contact with the outside world, repeated death threats and the unpredictability of the SS. He observes that these acts were calculated: 'The purpose of the tortures was to break the resistance of the prisoners … the timing of these tortures was planned'.[17] He shows how these tortures were the result of a strategy of political annihilation, rather than the perversions of the torturers:

> He [the author, Bettelheim] noted that the guards were lacking in fantasy when selecting the means to torture the prisoners; that their sadism was without imagination. He was rather amused by the repeated statement that guards do not shoot prisoners but kill them by beating them to death because a bullet costs six pfennigs, and the prisoners are not worth even so much.[18]

The Transformation of Prisoners

Bettelheim describes in minute detail the reactions of the internees and the evolution of their personalities. He very clearly distinguishes the 'old' prisoners from the 'new': the new prisoners remain attached to their former lives, refer to the outside world, to their families, upon whom they place all their hopes of freedom, and they have not yet adapted to the demands of the camp; whereas the old prisoners are fully integrated, initiated, know the ins and outs of survival in the camp, and no longer count in any way upon people outside, with whom they

consider they no longer have anything in common. The old prisoners realize they have been completely changed and the only prospect of freedom they can imagine is some extraordinary event, a revolution or a world war (it must be borne in mind that the text describes the year 1938–9). They are convinced that if they ever manage to get out of the camp, their future achievements will be remarkable.

Bettelheim identifies certain categories of internees. He terms '*Musselmänner*' ('Moslems') those who allow themselves to die; 'kapos' are those who, in order to obtain certain privileges, serve the SS; there are also those who adapt from day to day; and there is the 'elite', who prove able to resist, such as certain political prisoners:

> Similar behaviour characterized another group which, according to psychoanalytic theory, would have had to be viewed as extremely neurotic or plainly delusional and therefore apt to fall apart, as persons, under stress. I refer to the Jehovah's Witnesses,[19] who not only showed unusual heights of human dignity and moral behaviour, but seemed protected against the same camp experience that soon destroyed persons considered very well integrated by my psychoanalytic friends and myself.[20]

According to Bettelheim's study, the Nazi camps:

1 were part of a calculated, highly technical, operation seeking to weaken groups opposed to Hitler's regime through the capture and torture of their members;
2 aimed to break down the individual's solidarity with his group in order to weaken, then destroy the group in question and reduce the internee to the status of a slave of the SS state;
3 had the almost immediate effect of causing very real changes in individuals' personalities;
4 revealed an essential survival mechanism, namely solidarity. This solidarity was expressed through the reinforcement of structures specific to existing groups (whether political, religious, cultural or professional) or through the constitution of new alliances engendered by the situation in the camps.[21]

Bettelheim's Questioning of the Usefulness of Psychoanalysis

Faced with what he saw, Bettelheim states:

> This realization of the tremendous impact of the environment did not come as easy as it came soon. I was imprisoned in the camps at about the time

> when *my convictions derived from psychoanalysis were at their height* … My experience in the camps taught me, almost within days, that I had gone much too far in believing that only changes in man could create changes in society. *I had to accept that the environment could, as it were, turn personality upside down, and not just in the small child, but in the mature adult too*.[22] If I wanted to keep it from happening to me, I had to accept this potentiality of the environment, to decide where and where not to adjust, and how far. Psychoanalysis, as I understood it, was of no help in this all important decision.[23]

He also remarks that: 'Prisoners seemed to deal with camp experiences which remained within the normal frame of reference of their life experience by means of normal psychological mechanisms. Once an experience transcended this frame of reference, however, the normal mechanisms seemed no longer able to deal adequately with it and *new* psychological mechanisms were needed.'[24]

Bettelheim quickly realizes that, in order to study and understand the inhabitants of the camps, he will have to reverse the psychoanalytical approach, first examining the situation in order to understand the human response, rather than starting with the human response in order to then understand the situation. He considers it necessary to effect a complete shift of perspective. He postulates that, by taking an interest in the environment, in the organization and the constraints present in the camps, it should be possible for the psychologist to account for the type of person 'manufactured' inside them. Yet, when Bettelheim attempts a deeper analysis of the psychological mechanisms behind the behaviours induced by the concentration camp, he cannot help but return to a psychoanalytical orientation. He ends up explaining what he observed through reference to a Freudian 'human nature'. Contrary to his initial intuitions, he discovers, in the psychology of prisoners and their captors alike, the unconscious defence mechanisms of the psychoanalytic canon.

Bettleheim's Recourse to Psychoanalytical Interpretations – The Internees

Bettelheim states that the concentrationary experience forces internees to 'regress to an infantile state', and compares the prisoners of the camps to children. According to Bettelheim, the prisoners identify the SS with their own parents, seeing in them their all-powerful father. In the camp, they are taken back to the age when their parents, on whom they were entirely dependent, were toilet-training them. The internees become 'masochistic, passive-dependent, and childlike'.[25] They 'regress' to the 'anal stage'. The SS were like 'a cruel and

domineering father'. The internees harbour ambivalent feelings of love and hatred towards the SS, upon whom they 'project' internal conflicts dating from their own childhood. The prisoners are like small children who lack any notion of time because they are solely preoccupied with the immediate present (how to survive from one day to the next). Prisoners who have been in the camp for several years 'fantasise' and engage in 'megalomaniac' daydreams, imagining that they will only leave the camp in the event of a cataclysm or a world war[26], or proclaiming that they will become exceptional individuals and great leaders;[27] they 'deny reality' by stating that, once they are freed, they are unsure of being able to go back to their family life and their role as father or husband.[28] According to Bettelheim, the internees of the Nazi concentration camps 'deny reality', 'project their unconscious desires and conflicts on to the SS', and 'regress' to the infantile state. They become illustrations for a psychoanalytic textbook.

Reactions to Bettelheim's Text

The thoughts expressed by the internees on the political situation, their conditions of existence and the changes in their own psychology are sharp, relevant and revealing, yet Bettelheim, because of his attachment to psychoanalytical theory, refuses to accept what they say, and instead places distorted interpretations on their words.

This is what Charlotte Beradt takes exception to in her study of dreams under the Third Reich, in which she catalogues and analyses the dreams of German people between 1933 and 1939.[29] She demonstrates that the dreams of her compatriots were the expression of anxieties stemming directly from the threatening new political situation, and not of repressed unconscious desires. Although Bettelheim was a contributor to the afterword of the American edition of Beradt's book in 1968, he never renounced his psychoanalytical approach.

One picks up Bettelheim's text in order to discover what human beings become in an extreme situation, to understand the deadly stakes of these situations; yet the psychoanalysis presents 'toilet-training' and 'infantile feelings' as the keys to the phenomenon. In this context, psychoanalytical interpretation seems at best tragic, and some have even called it scandalous.

'Regression' versus 'Metamorphosis'

The use of the notion of 'regression' in relation to concentration camp internees has been widely questioned and criticized, in particular by Dés Prés, who quite rightly points out that the conditions to which the internees were subjected, such as not being able to defecate when they felt the need but only when their

tormentors decided they could, were totally unlike those experienced by an infant.[30] In essence, what Bettelheim interprets as a situation of regression is in reality an entirely new experience, which the internees had never undergone before. Bettelheim's conclusions are not just obviously wrong, but actually describe the exact opposite of the reality of the situation: the internees not only did not regress, but were forced to be different, new, to become psychological subjects that they had, up until then, never been before. The experience of their appalling, agonizing and utterly restrictive existence in the Nazi camps forced internees to undergo the opposite of regression – I would rather say that they instead had to go through a metamorphosis, a metamorphosis of their psychological as well as their physiological being. This posed great problems for those who returned from the camps. They had been transformed to the point that could no longer recognize themselves, that they were no longer the same people they had been before their deportation and that they would no longer be able to live normally among their families, within the society in which they had been born and raised. This is exactly what some of them had foreseen while they were still imprisoned: they knew that they had changed and suspected that they would never again be able to be part of the world which they had left behind. Saying that they had 'regressed' was an insensitive error which helped to drive these survivors away from psychologists, psychotherapists and psychoanalysts.

The SS

While Bettelheim provides a brilliant account of how the actions of the SS were driven by political aims and material necessities, and of how their job was essentially to implement a system which would be able to suppress all enemies of Nazism, he ends his analysis by imputing an unconscious function to the SS. According to Bettelheim, the SS seek to take the internees back to the psychological stage of the infant prior to toilet training, and in so doing 'project their fantasies' on to the internees, and so on to Jews.[31] They take pleasure in mocking the prisoners and dominating them.[32] Their attitude is no longer part of a deliberate strategy of torture with a political objective, but rather the involuntary expression of internal psychic conflicts at the level of the unconscious.

The Inappropriate Application of the Psychoanalytical Model to the Nazi Camps

What seems strange about this recourse to psychoanalytical concepts to describe the processes that occurred in the concentration camps is the fundamental

conceptual contradiction which it entails – for the unconscious psychic mechanisms identified by Freud describe processes which occur within the unconscious of the subject. The psychic apparatus constitutes an autonomous, atemporal, transhistorical, transcultural universe, independent of any external influence and strictly subjective. What mobilizes these mechanisms and underpins this psychic life is the very nature of what constitutes the psyche – namely the 'drives', the 'ego', the 'id', the 'super-ego' and the 'death drive'. These psychological mechanisms, most of which are unconscious, use the reality of the world as a pretext for their own expression: they are neither the consequence nor the cause of real-world phenomena. For this reason, referring to a tangible reality – here the Nazi concentration camps – and conceiving of it as the specific source of intra-psychic processes is, in psychoanalytical terms, absurd. This fundamental contradiction (the confrontation between the 'psychic apparatus' and a knowable reality – the concentration camps) unfortunately forces Bettelheim to make some truly incomprehensible statements:

> Aggression towards minorities was not an outlet open to all prisoners, since some belonged to minorities themselves, while others could not accept it either in the SS or themselves. For them an alternative outlet was to extrapolate it and project it into the SS man. This relieved them of some of their hostility and at the same time protected them from aggression toward the enemy, whose overpowering strength they had to stress. It was a most ineffective system of defense, and may be compared with delusional efforts to master inner pressures by externalizing them … The imaginary system was built up out of infantile fears and the prisoner's rage reactions at being forced into infantile patterns; these he projected on to the fictitious SS man. The reality interacting with it was the actually overpowering might of the SS.[33]

Where is the fantasy here? Were the SS not indeed all-powerful and bent on killing their prisoners? When, as Bettelheim does, one pushes this encounter between psychoanalytical concepts and historical reality too far, psychoanalytical theory comes out looking frankly ridiculous.

Bettelheim's Conclusion: The Camps Attack 'the Individual'

In spite of his own experiences, in spite of the things he himself witnessed and which his terrible experience in the camp spurred him to write about, Bettelheim concludes with the idea that totalitarian regimes seek to destroy people as 'individuals': 'one eventually hated the SS as such, but not so much the individual

inflicting the punishment. Obviously this differentiation was unreasonable, but it seemed to be inescapable.'[34]

Bettelheim himself puts forward this dichotomy between the individual and the SS guard. However, a question inevitably arises from this: how can one perceive individuals separately from their social existence? How, especially inside a repressive, concentrationary, military institution, can one distinguish between the 'individual' and the SS guard when they are one and the same person, insofar as the social role and function and the individual performing them are inextricably bound together?[35]

Questions of Methodology

Having demonstrated that what interested the SS was not the individual but the *collective group* to which the individual was attached, Bettelheim, as if forgetting what he has previously said, then draws a diametrically opposed conclusion. For the SS do not intern 'individuals', they intern opponents of the regime, Jews and homosexuals. It is the fact of belonging to a group, whether political, cultural, ethnic or religious, that they attack. The internees' presence in the camp was thus inextricably linked to the issue of the existence of their group in this new society of Aryans. The Jews were targeted because they occupied the 'environmental niche' coveted by the Nazis – a status based essentially on religious, metaphysical and economic considerations. The communists were political rivals. The Roma were culturally irrepressible. The Nazis forced homosexuals to undergo violent re-education because at the time they were thought to be deviant and perverted.

Bettelheim also very convincingly showed that the Nazi policy of deportation to the camps had at least two clear objectives: to eradicate all traces of group membership from individuals wherever this posed a threat to the Nazi state; and to wear down the prisoner until they had no strength left to resist within the camp. The latter objective was resisted not just by individuals, but by entire groups such as Jehovah's Witnesses and communists. The same conclusion was reached by Frankl, who centred his psychological study on the importance for survival of belonging to a group.[36] For Frankl, Bettelheim's decision to focus on unconscious sexual thoughts in order to understand the psychological processes at work in the concentration camps was incorrect. Frankl was obviously right on this point. In fact, the effect of Nazi torture was to metamorphose members of collectives into unaffiliated individuals – individuals in the true sense – in order to reduce them to slaves. The concentration camps therefore did not attack individuals, but on the contrary manufactured them. The Nazi camps transformed, in truly diabolical fashion, members of groups into isolated and defenceless individuals, naked subjects, hungry and terrorized, who were easily captured prey

for their persecutors. It is thus important, and Bettelheim glimpsed this without acting on his intuition, to study the mechanisms used to defend one's identity in such a context.

Theorizing Belonging

It is not so much a question here of passing judgement on the truth of psychoanalytical concepts than on their relevance: they simply do not help us to grasp how human beings operated in the camps. It does appear crucial to us, however, to study the techniques employed to *disaffiliate* individuals from the groups to which they belonged. How did the SS manage to eliminate the German communist party from the political scene? What techniques enabled them to 'hollow out' a member of the communist party to such a degree that the person no longer behaved as one after a few weeks of internment in Dachau? The corollary to this is the question of the reaction of these groups. How did the group of communist internees react in order to keep hold of its members, to make sure that they carried on behaving as communists, despite the apparatus of torture and metamorphosis put in place by the SS, to the extent that some of them carried out acts of resistance and even attempted insurrections? What were the resources that the communist party possessed as a human collective?

These sorts of questions apply to other groups: how did the Jehovah's Witnesses resist? How did assimilated Jews resist compared to religious Jews? How were new affiliations constituted within the camps? The patterns of affiliation and disaffiliation in operation in a camp run by the SS should be the first focus of our enquiry. Mapping them would be our first step towards understanding the changes undergone by the internees. It will be vital to understand the dynamics of these collectivities, what binds or unbinds their members, what 'attracts' subjects and what 'binds' them.[37] Elucidating the mechanisms in operation within the collectivity and isolating the particular properties of each group using the reactions and behaviours of the individuals who declare themselves members of it would allow us to: 1) understand more fully what happened inside the concentration and extermination camps; and 2) suggest therapies for survivors of the camps suffering from psychological dysfunction as a result of these mechanisms of disaffiliation.

In other words, a psychology of the camps should adopt the opposite approach to that taken by Bettelheim with 'universal psychology'. It needs instead to be a form of psychopolitics – a psychology based on psychological concepts which correspond to the precise features (values, ideas, ways of life) of the political party to which the subjects in question belong; it needs to be an ethnopsychology, an ethnopsychiatry, a psychology based on concepts elaborated from

the particular features of the ethnic group, culture or religion of the collectivity to which these subjects belong. It can never be a social psychology, any more than it can be psychoanalysis.[38] It must make central to its theoretical framework concepts which are specific to the group to which the subject is affiliated.

False Hopes

Unfortunately, instead of putting forward new concepts, as he had himself explicitly called for, Bettelheim turned back to the ideas of which he had already been a devotee before his internment. Instead of exploring the new psychological notions which he had intuitively glimpsed such as 'aggression stemming from deliberate strategies', 'metamorphoses of identity', 'group antagonisms' and 'reinforcement of cultural and social properties' – psychological notions with the potential to provide an account of what makes up a concentration camp and what the camp *imposes* on its inmates – Bettelheim went back to old psychoanalytical models. He called upon these notions which he had already mastered, the thinking of the group which he aspired to join, the theory in which he had already been 'initiated' and which he desired to serve with all his being now that he had emigrated to the United States and decided on this new career.[39] Bettelheim, then, despite having sought to innovate, in making this choice both eliminated any possibility of enriching psychology with new concepts and erased the specificity of the experience of the camps. Any human being has already experienced the psychological processes gone through by the internees in his or her childhood, unconsciously, between birth and the age at which the Oedipus complex is resolved. In taking this stance, Bettelheim refuses to recognize the metamorphosis of the internees in the camp, and refuses to recognize their suffering as they were forced to become different people.

The Homogenization of Difference

Through his recourse to psychoanalytical concepts, Bettelheim also denies the distinctions between different categories of people, most obviously between the SS and the internees.[40] This aspect of his writing is particularly problematic, from both a clinical and an ethical point of view. Yet such a position is demanded by psychoanalytical theory. According to this universalizing psychology, SS guards, Jews, Jehovah's Witnesses, communists, resistance fighters, homosexuals, German priests opposed to Nazism and common criminals have no distinguishing traits. Indeed, the picture which it paints is one of a world in which these groups are

no longer opposed to each other, are no longer at war and even come to appear identical:

> For example, both Jews and SS behaved as if psychological mechanisms comparable to paranoid delusions were at work in them. Both believed that members of the other group were sadistic, uninhibited, unintelligent, of an inferior race and addicted to sexual perversions. Both groups accused each other of caring only for material goods and of having no respect for ideals, or for moral and intellectual values. In each group there may have been individual justification for some of these beliefs. But the strange similarity indicates that both groups were availing themselves of analogous mechanisms of defense.[41]

Identification with the Assailant versus Reinforcement of Identity

Quite apart from clearly being scandalous as far as survivors are concerned, Bettelheim's argument is quite simply wrong. We have seen that, on the contrary, torture situations resulted in most cases in the consolidation of the group affiliations of victims and torturers alike, and thus marking distinctions even more sharply. Most likely for reasons of cognitive coherence, the victims' attachment to what led to their torture is generally reinforced (Jews become even more Jewish, communists even more communist, homosexuals even more homosexual, etc.), as is that of the torturers to the motives behind their role as the agents of the suffering of others.

Internment in the Nazi Camps: The Culmination of a Psychoanalyst's Initiation

When Bettelheim examines and evokes the terrible experiences that he went through, he makes practically no reference to the fact that he is Jewish.[42] As his interpretations suggest, although he never explicitly discusses this – to my mind essential – aspect of his concentrationary experience, Bettelheim was, and always remained, a psychoanalyst. His affiliation to this theory never left him throughout his internment. It is true that psychoanalysis is not merely a theoretical tool for decoding psychological pain, but a real philosophy of existence, an ideology offering an overarching vision of the world shared, even today, by a group of some tens of thousands of individuals who have confirmed their affiliation to it through a long and costly process of initiation. Psychoanalysis permits entry into a social and professional network. The processes of transformation undergone by Bettelheim,

I would suggest, reinforced what he already was; it is even conceivable that his experience in the camps helped make him, shortly after his release and emigration to the United States, the highly unorthodox figure, remarkable both as a psychoanalyst and a writer, which he was to become.[43] In France, a well-known Lacanian psychoanalyst, Anne-Lise Stern, a German-born Jewish deportee, whose parents had already been strong advocates of psychoanalysis, has recently written about her experiences of deportation. In her book, *Le savoir déporté*, she reveals the same ambiguities which Bettelheim had spoken of sixty years earlier. Stern argues that psychoanalysis does not allow us to understand the Holocaust and cannot really heal survivors; yet she insists upon the fact that her having been analysed by Jacques Lacan and later becoming a psychoanalyst, a respected and influential member of a Lacanian psychoanalytic association, helped her to survive.[44]

Bettelheim, like his fellow psychologists and psychoanalysts who have looked into the psychological effects of the concentration camps had, at the beginning of his work, begun by accepting the central premise that an event of such exceptional violence possessed a very singular ability to metamorphose subjects, whatever these had been before. Such a realization required that the event itself be made the object of investigation. However, Bettelheim's subsequent recourse to the theory of the subject had the unfortunate effect of 'dissolving' the event in order to preserve the theory to which he was so committed.

Conclusion

Bettelheim left a deep and long-lasting mark on psychological thought with the very early publication of his article on psychological processes in the Nazi concentration camps. The Holocaust would subsequently become the paradigm case of psychic trauma in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.[45] It is hardly surprising, given this, that the psychoanalytic notions presented in Bettelheim's famous text were reprised almost verbatim and applied to traumatic situations with no connection whatsoever to the Nazi camps and the Holocaust. This was in spite of the fact that these notions, such as 'feelings of guilt' and 'grief-work',[46] were highly controversial, often contributed little to an understanding of the internees' experience, and had in fact proved ineffective when used to treat survivors.

What can account for this great success, given the proven irrelevance of these concepts? Through their claim to universality, such concepts allow for the dispensing of a detailed examination. They allow us to get our thinking about evil and suffering – of whatever nature – out of the way once and for all, for henceforth any great catastrophe can be considered as just one facet of a psychological event about which we already know all there is to know. These concepts allow

us to erase the singularity of events, giving us the mistaken impression that we understand everything about everyone, everywhere.

It is most likely for this reason that the notions in question have not appealed to survivors of the camps, who have never stopped hoping that, one day, somebody would take into account their specific identity as Jewish survivors. Somebody who could explain how they were still able to live among other human beings, after having had to spend so long in close proximity to horror, putrefaction and the bodies of the dead because of their Jewish identity. Somebody who could show them how to live again after their own death, make love again and start a family, discover once more the ability to laugh, to think and enjoy life. Somebody who would at last reveal the secret: the secret of how, but especially why, did they come back when their village, their family, their culture had been annihilated? Why them? Only them?

Further Reading

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Notes

1 B. Bettelheim, 'Individual and Mass Behaviour in Extreme Situations', *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* (October 1943). The article was edited and reprised in B. Bettelheim, *Surviving and Other Essays* (New York, NY: Knopf, 1979) and B. Bettelheim, *The Informed Heart: Autonomy in a Mass Age* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1986). See C. Fleck and A. Müller, 'Bruno Bettelheim and the Concentration Camps', *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, vol. 33 (Winter 1997), pp. 1–37.

2 On the use of quotations from Bettelheim's writings on the concentration camps in specialised literature, see Fleck and Müller, 'Bruno Bettelheim and the Concentration Camps'.

3 See N. Zajde, *Enfants de survivants* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 1995).

4 E. Federn, 'Versuch einer Psychologie des Terrors', *Synthèses. Revue mensuelle internationale* (1946), reprinted in R. Kaufhold (ed.), *Versuche zur Psychologie des Terrors. Material zum Leben und Werk von Ernst Federn* (Giessen: Psychosozial-Verlag, 1998); E. Federn, 'The Terror as a System: The Concentration camp (Buchenwald as it was)', *Psychiatric Quarterly Supplement*, no. 22 (1948), pp. 52–86; E. Federn, *Witnessing Psychoanalysis: From Vienna to Vienna, via Buchewald and the USA* (London: Karnac, 1990); E. Kogon, *The Theory and Practice of Hell: The German Concentration Camps and the System behind Them* (New York, NY: Farrar Strauss, 1950); P. Neurath, 'Social Life in the German Concentration Camps Dachau and Buchenwald', PhD dissertation (New York, NY: Columbia University, 1951); E. Cohen, *Human Behaviour in the Concentration Camp* (London: Free Association, 1988); V.E. Frankl, *From Death-Camp to Existentialism. A Psychiatrist's Path to a New Therapy* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1959). See also the important texts on the concentration camps, critical of Bettelheim, which were published by authors who were not themselves survivors: T. Dés Prés, *The Survivor: An Anatomy of Life in the Death Camps* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1976); and C. Smith, *A Critique of Sociological Reasoning* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979).

5 P. Marcus, *Autonomy in the Extreme Situation: Bruno Bettelheim, The Nazi Concentration Camps and the Mass Society* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1999).

6 Anna Freud, daughter of Sigmund, herself quite logically resorts to using psychoanalytic concepts in order to speak about caring for child survivors of Theresienstadt camp.

7 It is rarely noted that psychoanalytic theory, despite its claim to be a system of thought allowing human behaviour to be decoded and understood, was of no use in comprehending the intentions of the Nazis, predicting their actions or warning of the deadly danger faced by their millions of future victims. Its founder, Sigmund Freud, seems to have shown very little interest in decoding the political situation of his time and the intentions of the Nazis.

8 See N. Zajde, *Guérir de la Shoah* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2005).

9 Bettelheim, *Surviving and Other Essays*; Bettelheim, *The Informed Heart*; B. Bettelheim, *The Empty Fortress: Infantile Autism and the Birth of the Self* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1967); B. Bettelheim, *Le poids d'une vie* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1991).

10 R. Pollak, *The Creation of Doctor B.: A Biography of Bruno Bettelheim* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1997); P. Roazen, 'The Rise and Fall of Bruno Bettelheim', *Psychohistory Review*, vol. 20, no. 3 (1992), pp. 221–50.

11 I. Stengers, 'Le laboratoire de l'ethnopsychiatrie', Preface to T. Nathan, *Nous ne sommes pas seuls au monde* (Paris: Seuil, 2001).

12 See Pollak, *The Creation of Doctor B*. This is not entirely certain, however. See Fleck and Müller, 'Bruno Bettelheim and the Concentration Camps'.

13 Bettelheim, *The Informed Heart*, pp. 147–8.

14 Bettelheim, *Surviving and Other Essays*, p. 72, emphasis added.

15 While Bettelheim does not say so specifically, one can assume that this refers to the Jewish God.

16 Bettelheim, *Surviving and Other Essays*, p. 60, emphasis added.

17 Bettelheim, *Surviving and Other Essays*, p. 60.

18 Bettelheim, *Surviving and Other Essays*, p. 61. Psychological and psychiatric evaluations carried out during the trials of Nazi war criminals and research on Nazi doctors have shown that the murderous activities of educated torturers had nothing to do with any personal perversion but was rather the product of a professionalism put at the disposal of the Nazis, the governing power at the time. Rather than experiencing any problems of a moral or psychological nature, the torturers complained of having encountered technical and institutional difficulties.

19 Between 2,000 and 3,000 Jehovah's Witnesses died in the Nazi camps.

20 Bettelheim, *The Informed Heart*, pp. 20–21. Later, Bettelheim says of Jehovah's Witnesses that 'They were even less affected by imprisonment and kept their integrity thanks to rigid

religious beliefs.' It should be noted that the value-judgement implied in the adjective 'rigid' contrasts strongly with the (positive) notions of integrity and adaptation to one's surroundings. Bettelheim, *The Informed Heart*, p. 122.

21 See the excellent book by M. Pollack on the development and the power of homosexual love between women in the concentration camps: M. Pollak, *L'Expérience concentrationnaire, Essai sur le maintien de l'identité sociale* (Paris: Métailié, 1990).

22 This idea would inspire the creation of his famous boarding school for autistic children, the Chicago Orthogenic School: Bettelheim, *The Empty Fortress*.

23 Bettelheim, *The Informed Heart*, p. 15, emphasis added.

24 Bettelheim, *Surviving and Other Essays*, p. 64, emphasis added.

25 Bettelheim, *The Informed Heart*, p. 131.

26 These internees were in fact clearly right in thinking this. Bettelheim was interned and then freed before the start of the Second World War.

27 Bettelheim, *The Informed Heart*, pp. 168 and 201.

28 Bettelheim, *The Informed Heart*, p. 168.

29 Charlotte Beradt, *The Third Reich of Dreams* (Chicago, IL: Quadrangle, 1968).

30 Dés Prés, *The Survivor*.

31 Bettelheim, *The Informed Heart*, p. 130.

32 Bettelheim, *The Informed Heart*, p. 120.

33 Bettelheim, *The Informed Heart*, pp. 217–18.

34 Bettelheim, *Surviving and Other Essays*, p. 66.

35 Strangely, it is this very question that Marcus and Rosenberg identify as being particularly relevant in their article criticizing Bettelheim's psychoanalytic interpretation of the Nazi camps: P. Marcus and A. Rosenberg, 'Reevaluating Bruno Bettelheim's Work on the Nazi Concentration Camps: The Limits of His Psychoanalytic Approach', *Psychoanalytic Review*, vol. 81, no. 3 (Fall 1994). They claim that Bettelheim's analysis of the camps as an extreme situation attacking the autonomy of the subject needs to refined. Since the concentration camp was, in Bettelheim's view, a model of a social space in which the violence of mass society (and the supremacy of technology) is imposed on individuals, influencing them in the most extreme way and depriving them of their freedom of choice and judgement. This is also one of Hannah Arendt's major arguments in her study of totalitarian societies.

36 Frankl, *From Death-Camp to Existentialism*.

37 T. Nathan, *À qui j'appartiens? Essai sur la psychothérapie, la guerre et la paix* (Paris: Seuil, 2007).

38 The systematic and generalizing character of social psychology would appear to be a major reason why analyses of the experience of the Nazi camps derived from it have not been positively received by survivors. See Smith, *A Critique of Sociological Reasoning*.

39 Bettelheim, in his autobiographical essay, even speaks in terms of his 'conversion' to psychoanalysis at the age of thirteen. B. Bettelheim, *Le poids d'une vie* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1991).

40 Primo Levi quite rightly denounced this argument. Quoted in C. Wardi, 'Le cliché de la "déshumanisation" des victimes de la Shoah ou la fascination du mal', in J. Gillibert and P. Wilgowicz, *L'ange exterminateur*, *Revue de l'Université de Bruxelles*, vol. 3–4 (Cerisy: Edition de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1993), pp. 91–104.

41 Bettelheim, *The Informed Heart*, p. 221. For a damning critique of Bettelheim's observations and interpretations regarding the notion of identification with the aggressor, see the statements made by one of Bettelheim's former co-detainees, Neurath, as reported in Fleck and Müller, 'Bruno Bettelheim and the Concentration Camps'.

42 His adherence to psychoanalysis and his universalising psycho-sociological stance clearly outweighed his Jewish affiliation when he became one of Hannah Arendt's staunchest American supporters during the famous controversy surrounding the publication of 'Eichmann in Jerusalem'.

43 As mentioned, he would create a new approach to autism and found a world-renowned institution, the Chicago Orthogenic School.

44 Anne-Lise Stern, *Le savoir déporté* (Paris: Seuil, 2004).

45 N. Zajde, 'Der Holocaust als Paradigma des psychischen Traumas', in Jose Brunner and Nathalie Zajde (eds), *Holocaust-Trauma. Kritische Perspektiven zur Entstehung und Wirkung eines Paradigmas*, Conferences vol. 3 (forthcoming).

46 Recent scientific studies have raised serious doubts regarding the use of such notions to decipher the psychology and psychopathology of survivors. See E. Witztum and R. Malkinson, 'Examining Traumatic Grief and Loss among Holocaust Survivors', *Journal of Loss and Trauma*, vol. 14, no. 2 (March 2009), pp. 129–43; J. Lomranz, 'The Skewed Image of the Holocaust Survivor and the Vicissitudes of Psychological Research', *Echoes of the Holocaust*, no. 6 (April 2000). I myself would suggest a radical shift in our understanding: Holocaust survivors have never suffered from 'feelings of guilt', but rather from the non-recognition of their position as 'accusers'. The concentrationary experience has changed them into veritable 'prosecutors' against the guilty parties and even their own God, prosecutors who have suffered all their lives from the absence of any ad hoc tribunal which would allow them to express the ungovernable emotions resulting from their new existence, their new state of being. As far as the other widespread notion associated today with the survivors of disasters and other traumatic events where loved ones have been lost, namely 'the impossibility of grieving', it would seem here that we need to implement an even more radical overturning of perspectives: it is the dead who are most concerned by death, and not the living, for the latter 'cannot die' in the past event. In the case of the Holocaust, it is the dead who cry out desperately for proper funerary rites or, at the very least, some compensation for their having been brutally murdered and, in particular, incinerated. Here, too, we must work out tailored, rather than general and systematic forms of reparation. See Zajde, *Guérir de la Shoah*.

8

Comparative Genocide

Donald Bloxham

The Holocaust and the Concept of Genocide[1]

One scholar, Zev Garber, called the Holocaust the paradigmatic genocide.[2] A second, Guenter Lewy, has rejected the applicability of the term genocide to a number of candidate events for reasons that seem largely if only implicitly to stem from the dissimilarity of these events to the Holocaust.[3] A third, Steven Katz, has gone so far as to contend that the Holocaust is the only 'proper' genocide, owing to the Nazi determination to murder every last member of the victim group.[4] These three different views share the common ground that the Holocaust should be at the centre of our comprehension of genocide, though they vary as to how closely other cases have to approximate to the Holocaust in order to qualify as genocide. The assumption of the Holocaust's centrality to the concept of genocide also underpins much popular comprehension of the phenomenon, as well as the furious 'denialism' of states such as Turkey and Sudan, as those states seek to avoid a label that – they feel – evinces co-identification with the ultimate international pariah state, (Nazi) Germany. Such views are not shared by most international jurists who have applied the only legal definition – the 1948 United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide – to other historical episodes.[5]

The earliest comparative scholar of genocide was also the man who invented the term and helped persuade the UN to adopt it: the Polish-Jewish jurist Raphael Lemkin. Lemkin was determined that the Holocaust was but one example of genocide among many throughout history, and not the paradigmatic one.[6] His determination to codify the crime was not just shaped by the murder of most of his family by Nazi Germany, but by the Armenian genocide of the First World War, the increasingly aggressive and intolerant ethnic nationalism of the early twentieth century in Eastern and central Europe, and, ultimately, a wide-ranging historical interest in group destruction. Lemkin was in some respects a Herderian

(after eighteenth-century philosopher Johann Gottfried von Herder), believing in the ethno-linguistic 'essence' of individual peoples, or 'nations', and was as concerned with perpetrator attempts to destroy the cultural patterns and reproduction of victim groups (by, for example, language bans and the attack on communal institutions) as with the physical destruction of the peoples themselves.[7]

Lemkin had a still broader view of genocide than that ultimately enshrined in the UN Convention and especially consequent judicial decisions. International law stresses direct and indirect physical annihilation, including prevention of biological (more than cultural) reproduction, and sets a relatively high standard for the level of such destruction intended by the perpetrator. But just as Lemkin was a social scientist as well as a jurist, so genocide is a social-scientific concept as well as a legal one, and legal orthodoxy cannot presuppose the adherence of non-jurists. Genocide scholars as a whole show no signs of converging on one or other side of a debate that alternately stresses the *conceptual continuum of group destruction* by whatever means, including cultural destruction, and the *phenomenological similarities of particular sorts of destruction* (for instance, direct as opposed to indirect physical destruction, or either of them as opposed to cultural destruction). The choice of sides one takes in that debate has clear ramifications for one's conceptualization of the Holocaust within the spectrum of genocides.

'Uniqueness'

Much of the early scholarly engagement with the Holocaust *qua* genocide emerged from the context of a debate about whether it is *sui generis* – 'unique', where unique means more than the everyday uniqueness of any historical event. The uniqueness claim itself is relatively old, but continues to influence the way the Holocaust is studied in relation to other genocides. 'Uniqueness', or at least some of its key correlates, has arguably entered the doxa – the common belief – of parts of Holocaust studies, and thus does not necessarily need to be explicitly invoked to remain significant. It is a special sort of specialness that is claimed. 'Uniqueness' refers to the Nazis' supposedly utopian intent to murder all Jews, everywhere – a totality of intent that does not seem to have been present in any other genocide – in the absence of any political dynamic that might be discernible in other instances.[8]

Putting the political issues aside for a moment,[9] it is clear that the intellectual case for the Holocaust's uniqueness ultimately rests on comparative considerations: if it did not there would be nothing to individuate the Holocaust against. But if comparison is in practice sometimes complicit in the uniqueness claim there is nothing in principle requiring it to be so. The only thing comparative study presupposes is that the comparators evince some similarities and some differences, with enough of the former to make comparison worthwhile in the first place: it does not

a priori prioritize any of the compared features, nor does it provide any means to do so, and therein lies the intractable problem for the proponent of uniqueness. As A. Dirk Moses puts it, 'whether the similarities [between the Holocaust and other genocides] are more significant than the differences is ultimately a political and philosophical, rather than a historical question … Uniqueness is not a category for historical research; it is a religious or metaphysical category'.[10] The claim that an historical event is 'unique' is an incomplete proposition. Something can only be 'unique' in such and such a respect because there is no unitary 'meaning' or 'significance' of any event. As soon as this is admitted, the idea that 'the Holocaust' itself is especially unique at the level of the overall event must be discarded. What remains is the mundane sense of uniqueness stemming from combinations of causes and circumstances that are in some measure similar to combinations elsewhere, and in some measure different.

The three least satisfactory forms of comparative scholarship follow from the arbitrary prioritization of similarities/differences. If the first seeks to 'prove' that the Holocaust was 'different' to all other genocides, by pinpointing its peculiarities at the expense of its commonalities, the second seeks to 'prove' that other given genocides were 'just like' the Holocaust, which involves the opposite procedure.[11] The third form is more pernicious in its connotations, since it implies mitigation of historical responsibility for genocide. It emerged in the West German 'historians' debate' (*Historikerstreit*) of *c.*1985–8. The leading conservative protagonist, Ernst Nolte, implied that Nazism was a sort of cultural-political reaction to the phenomenon of revolutionary Bolshevism, and by extension Auschwitz was a Western version of the crimes of the Bolshevik regime, as manifested especially in the GULag labour camp system. The idea that Nazism and its most notorious product were effectively mirror-images of pre-existing political forms and crimes was held to undermine the notion that either were 'unprecedented', thereby alleviating Germany's historical burden of guilt.[12]

Trajectories of Comparison

Whatever the precise situation regarding uniqueness, there are grounds for optimism that comparative genocide scholarship is on the way to incorporating the Holocaust in the spirit in which comparison is conducted in other less sensitized fields of historical inquiry, and the study of the Holocaust can, in turn, fertilize 'genocide studies'. One purpose of comparison is to illuminate differences, and therefore the uniqueness (in the mundane sense) of any given object of study in its individual contexts, in a way that studying the object alone would not allow. A second purpose is to aim at generalizability within limits, meaning that comparison can be one sphere in which history meets political science and sociology.

The very act of identifying broadly similar phenomena in different temporal and cultural settings suggests that those phenomena – in this case, genocides – are not simply aberrations, but are somehow characteristic of broader historical patterns, wider trends in the development of human societies. In that sense, *comparative* study may also satisfy a further goal, by becoming *contextual*.

Comparative study stands or falls according to methodology and empirics. On the methodological side, precision in comparison and the way comparative questions are framed are vital. On the empirical side, the matter hinges on the comparability of primary and secondary material from which to establish the history of the component cases. There is an obvious practical problem to extensive comparative study including the Holocaust, because the scholarship and accessible evidence on the Holocaust is larger than that on many other cases combined. Armenia, Rwanda, Cambodia, Yugoslavia (putting aside the question of whether 'genocide' is the correct label for aspects of Yugoslavia's disintegration) and now the Herero and Nama genocide occupy a distant second place, and innumerable other instances are barely known beyond small specialist or activist circles. This problem is only gradually being amended. Earlier comparative scholarship was also not well placed to redress the balance because of the nature of prevailing approaches to genocide, which returns us to methodology.

Most of the early comparative questions concerned the causation and patterns of genocidal events at a very general level.[13] The early scholars tended to be social and political scientists who did not have much empirical data to work with. The 'first wave' of genocide scholarship, as it has been called, was crucial in stimulating a wide interest in the subject and setting the tone for later debate by publishing collections of case studies and creating the first typologies.[14] Some of these scholars, who began working systematically and in numbers only in the 1980s, were clearly inspired in their work by the Holocaust, but also sought to varying degrees to avoid a conceptual domination of the field by the study of the Holocaust. Comparative genocide scholarship, which until recently has been the major product of 'genocide studies', thus spent its early developmental years in an ambivalent relationship to Holocaust studies, as part by-product, part rejection.

Pioneering work will by definition be open to substantial revision, and the following observations on the first wave of genocide scholarship should be read in that positive light. The first observation concerns the weakness of the early taxonomic approaches. Similarity and difference were sometimes adjudged as the outcomes of meta-level comparisons and classifications – classifications, that is, that purported to encapsulate the essential quality of these genocides as dictated by the overall motive of the perpetrator or the type of political system within which the perpetrators operated. Kurt Jonassohn deemed that genocides could be divided into overall categories according to four guiding motives: elimination of perceived threat; spreading terror; wealth acquisition; and the

implementation of an ideology.[15] On deeper inquiry, these categorizations are unsatisfactory because they collapse into each other. On one hand, for instance, genocides in the European colonies that Jonassohn discerned as economic in motive could only occur given the distinctly ideological prerequisite of the colonizers' belief in the inferiority of the colonized.[16] On the other hand, 'ideological' genocides clearly also have, for instance, contexts of economics, diplomatic realpolitik, geopolitics, terror, scapegoating or threat *perception*.[17]

Other types of meta-level classifications are equally wanting after closer investigation. Alison Palmer argued relatively early on that the term 'colonial genocide' conceals as much as it reveals, rhetorically homogenizing often very different referents whose primary connection is simply that they were perpetrated in the course of territorial expansion by (white) settlers.[18] Much the same criticism could apply to other supposedly definitive labels like 'bureaucratic genocide', 'industrial genocide' and even 'modern genocide', each of which is an abstraction from certain aspects only of any given case.

In Jonassohn's scheme, and that of Leo Kuper,[19] the Holocaust was very definitely one of the 'ideological' genocides. By 'ideological', Jonassohn meant something like 'utopian', which explains the crossover between the panoply of perpetrators of his 'ideological' genocides and those states that have elsewhere been called 'totalitarian'. Scholars such as R.J. Rummel and William D. Rubinstein have laid great emphasis on 'totalitarian' as well as 'authoritarian' regimes, one of the implications of which has been to distinguish them from those in the liberal democratic tradition.[20] This notion that 'moderate', liberal states are immune from genocide has been summarily undermined by many scholars of colonial history as they examine, say, white settlement in the Americas or Australasia: while such states may be less likely to commit domestic genocide, the rule, if such it is, does not apply in their foreign affairs.[21] As Karl Marx pointed out, domestic harmony may often be based on overseas exploitation and worse.[22]

There are important positive exceptions to my generalizations about the trends within 'first-wave' genocide scholarship, and they tend to be cases where the compared genocidal instances were relatively few and the comparisons concomitantly deep rather than schematic. The best early exemplars of this sort of work were Helen Fein and Robert Melson, and the tradition they began finds continuation today in the work of Jacques Sémelin.[23] Melson's work on specific precipitant themes in genocide, notably the causal linkages between war, revolution and genocide, also forms some of the intellectual background to the latter-day comparative work of the likes of Michael Mann, Eric Weitz and (on war specifically) Martin Shaw.[24] It is no coincidence that the Holocaust and the Second World War play a central role in the work of most of these scholars. Like Melson and Fein, Kuper was also concerned with structural determinants of genocide. He put particular emphasis on a theory basis on ethically plural societies, a line of thought

developed in the works of Susan Olzak and Roger Peterson on the violent potential attendant upon rapid changes in stratified inter-ethnic relations.[25]

If the temptation to lay the world's ills at the door of authoritarian and particularly totalitarian states was strong for obvious reasons during the Cold War, one term that captured the political and, therefore, historical imagination after the end of the bipolar Cold War was 'globalization'. The idea of an ever-more interconnected world centred on a Western political-economic core sent scholars from across the humanistic and social scientific disciplines scurrying to find historical precursors and antecedents in the expansion of the West before the twentieth century. The notion of tying discrete events and national histories to transnational and international processes was replicated in genocide scholarship.[26] A contemporary interest in the connections between genocide in the European colonies and genocide at Europe's core should be understood within this framework, and the work on that nexus, by the likes of Jürgen Zimmerer and A. Dirk Moses, represents some of the most theoretically sophisticated comparative scholarship.[27]

Most of today's comparative scholarship hinges less on meta-level comparisons and more on meso-level themes: particular structures, contexts, perpetrator cohorts, moments of precipitation and so on. The most fruitful comparative endeavours are exemplified by: Moses' twin emphasis on 'colonialism' as shorthand for the relations and crises engendered by the 'real' structured process of coercive settlement, and as an 'ideal' conception of domination that 'legitimates' violence by the 'colonized' irrespective of real power relations;[28] Benjamin Valentino's study of the strategic and functional purposes genocide can serve for political elites;[29] Mann's interest in explosive moments of expanded political participation and contestation,[30] and Christian Gerlach's related focus on the role of social strata outside the realms of formal power, and temporary coalitions of violence;[31] Adam Jones and Elisa von Joeden-Forgey's consideration of the gendered aspects of perpetration as well as victimhood;[32] and studies of the organization of genocidal states, or the role of bureaucracies, paramilitaries, armies and police forces.[33] Systemic shortcomings in such studies tend to arise only if their authors claim too great an explanatory potential in any given case. Mann's *The Dark Side of Democracy* is very successful in many respects but (by Mann's own candid admission) less so at fitting the Holocaust into its depiction of the violent potential of ethnically plural societies as they pass through key developmental phases when the ethnic identity of the state and its territorial integrity is contested from within. Those studies that have gone furthest in putting Nazism into colonial perspective have indeed shed much light on European and Nazi colonialism, but German colonial designs and the Final Solution were not always interdependent, and the Final Solution spread for complex reasons well beyond the space designated for the future German empire.[34]

There will always be tensions between general and specific approaches in any field of inquiry, but tensions can be productive, as specialists and grand

conceptualizers hone each other's assumptions and methodology. Arguably the scholar to have fused approaches to best effect is Mark Levene. His work *Genocide in the Age of the Nation-State* sees the state form as the prime expression of a hyper-competitive, resource-hungry modern international political economic system. The system forms the basic unit of analysis in a post-Industrial Revolution and post-French Revolution world. The pressures pursuant to intra-systemic competition may be expressed in external war and expansion, both of which can issue in annihilatory tendencies *beyond* state boundaries, but also in a demand for *internal* homogeneity in the interests of assuring the loyalty and collective endeavour of the population. The theory has the virtue of broad explanatory claims that nevertheless depend neither on spurious universalism nor essentialism. It has temporal and political-cultural parameters, however broad, and puts the explanatory emphasis for genocide on crisis moments within this system, rather than atavistic hatreds or radical ideologies or totalitarian movements, each of which is seen as a product of the competitive system rather than a root cause of its problems.[35]

Perhaps unsurprisingly, since a still large number of genocide scholars (like most people in general) remain inclined to think in terms of the basic beneficence of an international order dominated by ideologies of developmentalism and growth maximization, Levene's theory has not been tested as it should have been. His theory is, after all, as susceptible as any other to qualification on the basis of empirics, and even if its major premises are granted, then there is still much debate to be had even at the theoretical level about the weighting that should be given within the 'system' to, say, specific ideologies, state forms and sorts of crisis, as well as to the question of what constitutes a crisis.

Future Trends in Genocide Studies?

One important aspect of comparative scholarship is not historical *per se* but rather *historiographical*. It entails the deployment in the study of other genocides of analytical tools honed in the study of the Holocaust. Here comparison is implicit rather than explicit. The danger with this tendency is that it can further the process of imposing a Holocaust 'model' on to other genocides but it has the potential benefit of avoiding blind alleys and pitfalls that have already been negotiated in Holocaust studies. It is, for instance, a hallmark of the early study of diverse genocides that they are depicted as highly premeditated events – the first historiographical shoots on the Armenian and Rwandan genocides illustrated this pattern, as did that on the Final Solution, each of which seemed to assume that events of the terrible dimensions of genocide must have been preceded by discrete and monumental decisions, or detailed blueprints. And yet the accumulation of knowledge about context and the complexity of policy-making within the

perpetrator polity has shown in each case either that more than one 'decision' took place, suggesting phases of policy-escalation, or that no specific decision *per se* was ever taken, implying an ongoing series of dialectics between intention and contingency, structure and agency, and agents within and beyond the geographical, hierarchical and official power centres respectively.

As genocide studies matures, however, it may be a victim of its own popularity, because the establishment of genocide as a legitimate, 'mainstream' subject of interest within various disciplines may mean its partial incorporation or even subsumption as those disciplines accept and in turn remould it. This process of remoulding may be particularly significant beyond disciplines like international law, where acquaintance with the disciplinary concepts and idioms are more important than deep knowledge of the events considered in the disciplinary forum. Thus, for instance, area-studies specialists building an interest in genocide into their standard investigative activities into their 'area' have some significant advantages over genocide studies generalists because of their linguistic skills and acquaintance with regional histories, archives and peoples.

The area-studies factor is of added import when we consider the strong policy-orientation of some genocide scholarship, given that since 1945 genocide has tended to occur outside the 'West' from which most comparative genocide scholars spring. And it will presumably continue to occur disproportionately outside the West, especially in those poorest areas of the world least prepared infrastructurally for, and likely to be most affected by, the coming wars of resource scarcity and refugee movement that will accompany anthropogenic climate change.[36]

Reflecting on 'new' contexts and forms of genocide raises another question. The rejection of the idea that there is a 'paradigmatic genocide' has already occurred for many academics, but there are signs that even an expanded conception of 'genocide' may not be adequate to contain the range of phenomena of mass violence that are now being studied more intensively than ever before.[37] Civil wars, insurgency and counter-insurgency campaigns, state-induced (or state-exacerbated) famines, and the 'structural violence' of developmentalism and environmental degradation each overlap to a lesser or greater extent with changing series of ideas of what genocide is. And, in truth, it has never made much sense to abstract events that happen to pass the bar of qualification for genocide from other instances of violence that do not pass the bar, but that are still enacted by the same perpetrators and/or around the same time and place. The Nazi case provides as clear an example as any of instances of outright genocide that cannot be understood without reference to other sub-genocidal mass murders and mass deportations conducted in the same context of empire and race-warfare.

Even if these speculated trends mean that 'genocide studies' mutates into something less focused on the 'g-word' and more pre-occupied with, say, the contextual study of mass political violence as broadly defined, they do not signal the end of

comparative study, only its modification. Some such modifications have been suggested by Scott Straus. Straus observes that comparative genocide studies at present have a 'no variance' character: students of genocide examine cases that have happened but not instances where genocide might have been predicted but did not occur. The search for key variables in the onset or otherwise of genocide and other instances of mass violence necessarily involves studying both types of case. In the interests of meaningful 'testing' of variables, Straus points out that it is better to restrict comparative study to more in-depth analysis of particular areas of the world that have more internally similar cultures, political systems and resource issues, rather than comparing across vast tracts of time and space where fewer of the variables are constant.[38] This seems like a fruitful way of maintaining, within manageable intellectual parameters, the moral-intellectual task that inspired genocide studies as a discipline: establishing patterns of genocide perpetration with a view to prevention.

As genocide studies develops, the comparative historiographical process can also work in reverse, with the study of other genocides informing that of the Holocaust. For instance, one can detect a connection between the growing interest in the hands-on, neighbour-on-neighbour violence of the Holocaust in the killing fields of Eastern Europe (particularly eastern Poland, the Baltic states, Belarus and Ukraine) in the 1990s and the similar violence of the Rwandan and Yugoslavian genocides of the same decade.[39] Study of the sexual violence of those recent genocides has also gone alongside a growing interest in the issue in the Holocaust years. Likewise, Petersen's work on 'political emotions', assessing the relative significance of factors like fear, or intergroup resentment of perceived status differences, has influenced the work of Anton Weiss-Wendt regarding local collaboration in the Holocaust in Estonia.[40]

Certain new forms of intellectual integration ironically result in a partial disaggregation of the Holocaust. Greater access to Eastern European archives after the end of the Cold War facilitated a wave of regional studies of the Final Solution based not just on German sources but on local documentation; these studies highlighted local specificities and the rather ad hoc beginnings of an overall policy that only gradually crystallized into something like a coherent whole. The regional turn has recently been enhanced by the study of bystanders to, and non-German participants in, the Holocaust in their own national, social and economic contexts. Cathie Carmichael, Alexander Prusin, Timothy Snyder and I have written of the way that the murder of the Jews by Germans and others in large swathes of Eastern and East-Central Europe during Second World War fits to some extent with a pre-Nazi chronology of inter-ethnic violence from the earlier crises and collapse of the Romanov and Habsburg empires whose borderlands comprised the region.[41] Holly Case shows how vital was the long-standing Hungarian-Romanian antagonism over Transylvania to the variable radicalism of each state's Jewish policy in 1941–4.[42]

My own recent work (*The Final Solution: a Genocide*, 2009) has tried to ask what light the policies of other states around the period throw on to the Final Solution and vice versa, both in terms of general patterns or logics of mass murder, and in terms of more direct causal connections. I introduce a thumbnail sketch of it here simply as an example of fusing *comparative* studies into a *contextual* approach to the life of a continent undergoing its greatest upheaval since the Thirty Years War. (The reader of my book will note that I discuss the specificities of German and Nazi history in great detail there; those specificities are largely absent here for the reasons of space and of focusing on the international comparative and contextual themes.) I have sought to respect the singular and shared aspects of what we now call the Holocaust by incorporating it into a wider and longer history of violence in which it was a partially but not entirely discrete entity. What, in brief, might the Holocaust look like in this light?

A Comparative and Contextual Approach to the Holocaust[43]

The broad context is provided firstly by the crises and dissolution of the older European dynastic empires (the Ottoman, Romanov and Habsburg) from the later nineteenth century onwards, and the establishment in their stead of a number of insecure, aggressive post-imperial polities, especially nation-states. Secondly, we have the intrusion of three new imperial influences into the contested spaces vacated by that process of imperial dissolution, from the Baltic to the Black Sea and the eastern and southern Mediterranean, and from the changing eastern and western borders of Germany and Russia respectively: fascist Italy, the Soviet Union and, particularly for our purposes, Nazi Germany. These contested areas were the places where, for the most part, the most violent population politics were enacted during the Second World War era, but they were also the site of much other violence in the quest for land and ethnic supremacy, particularly since the effective end of the Ottoman empire in Europe as precipitated by the eastern crisis of 1875–8. The violence that Europe projected into its colonies in the nineteenth century was brought back into the continent from the end of that century as Europe imploded under its own modernizing pressures.

The geographical context was also the location of the interface between the three great monotheistic religions, and it is a widely overlooked aspect of the period that many of the most vicious intergroup dynamics were superimposed on religious cleavages. That was as true for the different Christian sects in the Polish-Ukrainian and Croat-Serb conflicts of the Second World War as for the much more protracted Muslim-Christian-Jewish dynamic. The greatest violence of the later nineteenth century had Muslims as it victims, as Tsarist Russia expanded its borders at

the expense of the Ottomans, and the Christian nationalists of new Balkan states 'ethnically cleansed' Muslims associated with historic Ottoman dominance. Then it was the turn of the Ottoman Christians, as Istanbul used violence against allegedly disloyal populations: the Armenians and Assyrians suffered waves of massacre culminating in genocide. Continuing with the ethno-religious theme, Tsarist and 'White Russian' violence against Jews in the turmoil of the First World War and the Russian civil war was a particularly pronounced feature of the general mass anti-civilian violence in the wide western marches of the Romanov empire, as in Central Asia in 1916 was Russian repression of Kyrgyz Muslims. At the end of the First World War era, the internationally sponsored ethnic cleansing of 'Turks' and 'Greeks' (meaning Muslims and Orthodox Christians) was the last burst of such violence – until the attacks on and evictions of Balkan Muslims in both the Second World War and after the Cold War.

Among many victim and perpetrator groups both in and beyond Europe at this time of intensified nationalism, rapid industrialization and heightened imperial competition, Jews were a particularly common target. Like Christians in the Ottoman state, pre-existing cultural stereotypes, based particularly on ideas of economic exploitation and transnational affiliation, provided the template into which ethno-nationalist and even racist conceptions of their otherness could fit. Both Ottoman Christians and European Jews ultimately suffered more than they had ever done before with the advent of a secularizing modernity that promised to empower them by emancipation and thus seemed to the majority populations to be reversing traditional patterns of domination.

The alleged rise to power of the Jews in the Bolshevik revolution was only the most powerful indicator of this supposed trend, and thus the most powerful motor of antisemitism. Without the newly stoked indigenous antisemitisms that, along with other factors, prompted tens of thousands of Latvians, Lithuanians, Ukrainians and (to a lesser extent) Belarussians to collaborate with German forces in the Soviet territories and beyond, the Final Solution could not have achieved the dimensions it did there. Yet some similar reactions can be observed to the minorities treaties imposed on various polities by the great powers at the end of the 'eastern crisis' in 1878 and again after the First World War. The notion that Armenian Christians had broken the contract with the Muslim state by appealing to the great powers for the 'protection' that manifested itself in the Berlin Treaty of 1878 was a key moment in the deterioration of relations that led to the First World War genocide. At the height of the Holocaust in 1942 Ion Antonescu observed that his predecessor as Romanian leader, Ion C. Bratianu, had, by his acquiescence to the Berlin Treaty terms, granted civil rights to Jews which 'compromised the Romanian economy and the purity of our race', and that after the First World War the 'Yids' had conspired with Britain and the United States to dictate the treaty terms.[44] There was an element of contingency to Germany's

leading the European assault on the Jews, but it is much less 'surprising' that much of the continent as a whole turned upon the Jews at this time.

The idea of continuums of prejudice across the temporal and physical boundaries of Nazi Germany brings other polities helpfully into view. As a legitimation for genocide, racism sits alongside other exclusionary beliefs that have the potential to attribute malign characteristics to all members of another group, or at least to justify their destruction in the name of a higher goal. The connections on which we might focus inhere in actions and institutions: there is indeed a connection with, on the one hand, Nazi ideology and practice as manifested in, say, the SS's central offices for immigration and emigration that operated in Poland, and, on the other hand, the late Ottoman state's Directorate for the Settlement of Tribes and Immigrants, which simultaneously housed and strategically settled Muslim refugees from the Balkan conflicts of the First World War era and marshalled the murderous deportations of the Armenians, or Romania's State Undersecretariat of Colonization and Evacuated Populations, established in 1940 to manage a Romanian-Bulgarian population exchange and tasked also with 'Aryanization' and the general 'Romanization' of the state.

Self-evidently Nazi antisemitism was more codified and central to state ideology than was the antisemitism of other states at the time, but as years of 'functionalist' scholarship have shown, there was still no straight line from Nazi racism to genocide, no logic of policy even if there was arguably a logic of abstract idea. To that I would add that there was no straight line either from genocide in the territories of the growing German empire to the fully European-wide genocide that we now recognize. (By 'the growing German empire' I refer primarily to Poland, the occupied territories of the USSR, Germany itself and those lands annexed to Germany from 1938–41, as well as the Netherlands which was scheduled to be incorporated – but the same logic of murder in directly German-ruled territory applied to Greece and Serbia.) As with other genocidal regimes, I would argue that the German perpetrators were primarily concerned with an 'inner enemy,' albeit that the territory within which that 'enemy' dwelt was, by late 1941 and by dint of German conquest, enormous and containing a large proportion of the world's Jewish population. That concern with the 'inner enemy' was perhaps inevitable at the level of simple politics, given the heavy bias of interests amongst regional administrators, from SS officials on the ground to the German Gauleiter and the civil administrations in the east, towards getting their own areas 'free of Jews' by increasingly radical means, as initial attempts at emigration, expulsion and then deportation were frustrated firstly by the expansion of German territory (and concomitant increase in the number of Jews under German rule) and secondly by the protracted war situation.

German dominion in the east in particular, in this area of the ethnic German diaspora, 'inferior' Slavic populations and the 'seedbed' of world Jewry – the Pale of

Settlement – was predicated upon assumptions about the 'diminution' and enslavement of many millions of non-Germans and the removal of the Jews, whether through deportation or, as it transpired, murder. Genocide, whether immediate or by attrition, was inherent in these designs *in a way it was not* in Germany's relationship to the Jews of Europe outside of the areas denoted. Even solely confined to 'greater Germany' and the eastern and southeastern lands of direct German rule, the Holocaust would of course have consumed about five in six of the Jews that it did, and some of Himmler's pronouncements about the progress of genocide in the year 1943 suggest the extent to which 'cleansing' the German empire of Jews was arguably the highest priority of Jewish policy from the perspective of its central overall executor. Most important, Himmler's infamous October 1943 secret Posen speeches discussing the murder of the Jews were phrased in the *past tense*. They were made shortly after the last transports of Jews from in and around the Generalgouvernement (the new administrative district including the German-occupied part of Poland not annexed to the Reich) had arrived at the Aktion Reinhard extermination camps, and at a time when the vast majority of Jews in the USSR had already been murdered, and almost all of the Jews of the expanded 'Reich' and other areas of direct German rule had been deported to their deaths.

The idea that Himmler should have talked in the past sense at this point only sounds strange with hindsight, since hindsight tells us that some of the most infamous episodes of the Holocaust in wider Europe would only occur several months later. It is certainly clear that by late 1943 there *had* long since been extensive (if in many cases only partially successful) attempts to induce other states to deport their Jewish populations. But the extension of genocide to the rest of Europe depended on three major and connected factors, none of which was exclusively ideological in Jonassohn's utopian sense. The first factor was the competitive administrative-political agendas of the two agencies whose influence in Jewish policy was (unlike the Gauleiter and other offices already mentioned) invested in its extension beyond Germany's imperium: the Foreign Office and, especially, the SS's Reich Security Head Office (RSHA). The second factor concerns the German state agenda as a whole – its agenda as a regional great power at war. Whatever the SS's manifest dedication to as extensive a deportation programme as possible, more important than the principle of genocide for the state in itself was using the complicity of other states as a way of binding them to the German war effort. This brings us to the third factor: the fluctuating attitudes of Germany's allies in the contexts of alliance policy and the geopolitical contestations of the post-imperial 'space' of Eastern and South-eastern Europe.

Nazi Germany's agenda as a great power in the interwar period had involved playing on ethnic fears and antagonisms as a way of fracturing the 1918 peace settlement. But Germany could only encourage what was already there, and the independent states concerned only went as far in antisemitic policy as was in their

own economic and geopolitical interest. Germany was especially successful in first instance in states that had emerged from the First World War with territorial losses. As Germany divided up Eastern Europe along with the USSR in 1939–40 it was in a position to reverse a number of the post- First World War boundary awards, with Hungary and Bulgaria gaining territory at the expense of Romania, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and Greece.

As territory changed hands, any so-called 'foreign' populations dwelling on it were in danger from their new masters. They were in danger firstly because they were seen as potential grounds for future irredentist claims by the recently dispossessed state; because as non-conationals they were simply distrusted; and because since the territory was only freshly acquired there were often fewer issues of citizenship and fewer ties of integration into the non-Jewish community or even residual compassion with which to be concerned. Thus Bulgaria followed up its acquisition of Dobruja from Romania with a population exchange of Bulgarians and Romanians between the two states, and was prepared to allow Germany to deport to their deaths Jews from the Macedonian and Thracian territories acquired from Greece and Yugoslavia. Hungary evicted into the Ukraine Jews from the areas it acquired from Slovakia. Romania swiftly learned the lesson. The desire to regain the territory it had just lost led it to join the German alliance under a much more radical leadership, and as it regained Bessarabia and Bukovina from the USSR on the German invasion of summer 1941, it began expelling and ultimately murdering the Jews of the two regions. It was not prepared, however, to surrender to German hands the Jews of the core lands of 'old Romania'.

It was not just a matter of German policy influencing other states and peoples; the process worked in reverse, too. It is no coincidence that the first SS Einsatzgruppe (mobile killing unit) to progress to the murder of Soviet Jews of all ages and both sexes did so in the context of much local collaboration in killing in the Baltic. On 19 August 1941 Hitler not only suggested that Europe was presenting a 'united front' against the Jews, he also implied that Romania was actually showing the way by the extent of its killing in Bessarabia and Bukovina, which was more extensive at that point than was the SS murder of Jews in neighbouring Ukraine. As to the expanding deportation programme, from the end of October 1941 the German Foreign Office approached Romania, Slovakia and Croatia about the possibility of deporting Jews of their citizenship who happened to be living in Germany. This would help fill deportation quotas of German Jews bound for Poland, and in retrospect it set a precedent for later, more extensive deportations from those states themselves. The states agreed, not caring less about these relatively few Jews, and being at the height of their own antisemitism. This initial diplomatic success explains the certainty of RSHA head Reinhard Heydrich and the Foreign Office representative Martin Luther around the Wannsee conference of January 1942, as they proclaimed to foresee no difficulties in getting other countries to surrender their Jews.

But Heydrich's confidence about the fully European success of the Final Solution was not justified, except for places like Slovakia where Germany capitalized early on antisemitic synergies and deported to their deaths most of the Slovakian Jews from late March 1942 onwards. We should not see the Slovakian deportations of 1942 as something foisted on to Slovakia by the hegemonic power, though clearly Slovakia existed in Germany's shadow: the deportations were more a matter of Germany encouraging and facilitating the removal of an unwanted population whose demise also enriched many Slovakians and the Slovak state. With German defeats from mid-1942, however, and especially after the Stalingrad defeat at the close of that year, the antisemitic 'multiplier effect' was cancelled out as other states began to anticipate an Allied victory and reduced their cooperation with Germany over Jewish policy, such that few of the RSHA's deportation programmes from outside the area of direct German control were fully carried through. There was little even Hitler could do about the reluctant states through diplomatic pressure, despite his exhortations to Hungary's Regent Horthy and Bulgaria's King Boris in April 1943. But Hitler's direct, pro-active involvement is telling, since it was rare in the genocide.

Here, I would argue, it is important to conceive of Germany less as a racial state with an implacable desire for genocide on principal and more as an utterly ruthless great power concerned with the control and solidity of its sphere of interest, in the form of its wartime alliance – though these two things were by no means necessarily incompatible. As the war progressed, and Germany's fortunes were reversed, increasing diplomatic pressure was exerted upon the other Axis states to deport their Jews, lest the Allies have a wedge to drive between them. That said, Germany could not push too hard lest it drive its partners away: in other words, tens and hundreds of thousands of Romanian and Bulgarian Jews were actually within grasp *had* the Nazis been prepared (as they were not, contrary to the popular view) to compromise the war effort to reach them. In another variant of the pattern, in subordinate France, where French reticence on deportations of 'fully French' Jews was not associated with potential 'betrayal', but only with the possibility of impeding economic and other forms of collaboration if all categories of Jews were pursued en masse, Himmler was prepared to suspend mass deportations of French citizens at an important phase in late 1942 to mid-1943. This decision contributed to the high survival rate of French Jews as opposed to the Jewish non-citizens residing in France, which should be contrasted with the far higher deportation and death rates for all categories of Jews in the to-be-incorporated Netherlands, where the German civilian and SS presence was far more intrusive and uncompromising.

Now the picture of a deceleration of the Holocaust across the continent outside the German empire from early 1943, even as murder continued apace within that empire, is most obviously qualified by the murder of Hungarian Jewry in 1944. But the Hungarian episode was also the part of the genocide that

hinged most on wartime contingency. In other words, it might well not have happened. Moreover, the prospect of deporting Jews was not a significant factor in the Wehrmacht's strategic decision to enter Hungary in March 1944. The Allied push into Italy the previous autumn and the continuing Soviet advance through the Ukraine had led the Hungarian leadership into considering Allied peace overtures. Since Hungary had wobbled in the Axis alliance, however, the Jewish question provided a means to pressure Budapest to prove its allegiance to Germany through criminal complicity, as well as fulfilling the exterminatory desire that would otherwise have been thwarted in Hungary.

The most obvious way in which the German influence was channelled into the Hungarian administration was through the rapid establishment of more radically antisemitic personnel at the head of the government and gendarmerie, and the presence of a relatively large number of German Sicherheitspolizei (the SS Security Police) and other police personnel. But the issue of different classes of Hungarian Jew, of different levels of Hungarian concern for Jews in different places and with different levels of assimilation, did not disappear. The country was divided into different deportation zones. The first and largest deportations to take place were from the Carpatho-Ruthenian region taken from Czechoslovakia in 1938, and from northern Transylvania, taken from Romania in 1940. The Jews there were not considered 'Magyarized', and their removal would elicit less of an outcry. Nearly 290,000 of the 438,000 deportees came from those regions. Most of the rest came from the provinces. Of the 255,000 Jews (based on the obviously problematic Nazi 'racial' definition) who survived the Holocaust in Hungary as a result of the developments enumerated below, some 190,000 had been citizens of Hungary within its 1920 borders.

Why did the deportations end before Hungary disgorged even these more favoured Jewish citizens? Because the balance of alliance politics was about to shift again, with Romania's defection to the Allied side on 23 August 1944. Germany could not then push the Jewish question for fear that Hungary might follow Romania's example and trade sides if pressed too hard. Hungary re-emphasized its alliance commitment because it now saw the opportunity to gain territory at Romania's expense during the war. On 25 August, once Hungary had seemingly bound itself to Germany in the war effort again, and in tune with the mood in Budapest that ran against an ever-more all-encompassing deportation policy, Himmler forbade further deportations. Despite horrifically violent antisemitic Hungarian aftermaths, and later forced-march deportations for forced labour for Germany, the centralized genocide of the Hungarian Jews was drawing to an end. The changing dynamics of the very *European* crisis that had created the conditions for the continental assault on the Jews now helped curtail the assault.

The Hungarian story shows that what we now call the Holocaust can be *partially* dismantled into national and regional components. At one point in European

history these components came together in a way that was neither inevitable, as can be seen by their divergence later in the war, nor purely fortuitous, as can be seen by the common choices of target – most obviously Jews, though also very often Roma, too.

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9

The Body

Christopher E. Forth

Can one imagine the Holocaust *without* thinking about bodies? The graphic images of the slaughter are now etched in Western consciousness like the tattoos imprinted on the arms of inmates. Emaciated limbs, gaunt faces and hollow eyes stare out at us from countless photographs since the camps were liberated, and numerous survivor accounts have filled in the details of daily life during the Holocaust. As Primo Levi observed, in the camps the human body was treated as 'an object, an anonymous thing belonging to no one'; it was thus capable of being put to any number of uses – medical experimentation, sexual violence, casual brutality, pointless killing.[1] Survivors recalled that the divestment of everyday expectations about such basic things as hygiene accelerated this collapse of the person into sheer physicality.[2] In addition to the emaciation and diseases it also brought, starvation destroyed the libido and halted menstruation. Food became the sole object of personal fantasies: women were sometimes reducing to trading sex for bread[3] while the so-called *Muselmänner*, those so degraded that they resembled the walking dead, inhabited a kind of limbo between human and inhuman that no one wanted to behold.[4] But it is perhaps the dead bodies that most haunt the imagination, some left in piles to rot for weeks, others bulldozed into mass graves, still others turned into 'human smoke' and never seen again.[5]

No doubt we may have now passed the 'saturation point' beyond which, as Susan Sontag famously predicted, these images may fail to deliver the impact they once did.[6] Yet however we respond to these images today, it is the bodies that stick with us as the most palpable visual record of the Holocaust. Such shockingly instrumental approaches to the human body and utter disregard for personhood were also displayed during the Nuremburg trials – most famously a shrunken head, flayed skin and a bar of soap supposedly made from human fat – as further evidence of what a deviation from civilization the whole Nazi enterprise represented. Such 'evidence' reinforced for many the satisfying belief that the Holocaust was a

monstrous 'crime of atavism' rather than one of modernity, thus aligning the Nazis with the 'barbaric' practices of the head-shrinkers and cannibals of the world and distancing them from the 'rational' mainstream of Western society.[7]

Despite recounting these gruesome facts, in making a case for including 'the body' in our approach to the Holocaust it is not my intention to catalogue the atrocities inflicted by the Nazis, details of which can be obtained from just about any memoir or history of the camps.[8] Rather, I propose that, in approaching the relationship between the Holocaust and 'the body', we are better off expanding our view of how corporeality functions in relation to race, gender and memory. This means thinking beyond our common-sense view of what 'the body' is. For instance, in a recent book the noted historian Jeffrey Herf underscores the overwhelmingly *political* threat that Jews were made to represent during the Second World War. As supposed allies of the Soviet Union and Britain, and then of the United States, the Jews were transformed through Nazi propaganda into the internal enemies of the state. Herf thus contends that 'the radical anti-Semitic ideology that justified and accompanied the mass murder of European Jewry was first and foremost a paranoid political, rather than biological, conviction and narrative … From the Nazis' perspective, it was the Jews' actions, not their bodies, that justified mass murder'.[9]

Herf's historical point is well taken – others have convincingly written about the complex factors leading up to the Final Solution – but his relegation of 'bodies' to the domain of biological racism underestimates the extent to which Jews and 'Jewishness' were viewed as quasi-physical problems, both 'material' in the sense of being racially different, but also phantasmic in the indeterminateness of the threat they seemed to pose. What many scholars mean by the 'body' is as much imagined as it is physical, an experiential ground of perceptions as well as a figure of cultural representations. This is one reason why the extermination of Jews reflected not only the pseudo-scientific need to ensure the purity of the Aryan 'race', but a vague and slippery sense of Jewish 'otherness' conveyed most vividly through metaphors of pollution, contagion and contamination. It is this imagined – but still viscerally experienced – threat that allows Zygmunt Bauman to write persuasively of how 'the conceptual Jew has been historically construed as the universal "viscosity" of the Western world'.[10]

The logic by which certain people are relegated to the category of the disgusting and polluting is as old as figurative conceptions of the nation-state as an organic whole, though such thinking has arguably become more acute since the gradual integration of medical tropes and political thought since the seventeenth century.[11] When enemies of society are executed it is hard to reduce the deed to purely 'political' considerations, especially in light of the highly charged rhetoric than is often used to describe these threats. Traitors and cowards have historically been viewed as examples of disgusting softness and corruption, as if their very

presence represents an intolerably troubling reminder of human weakness and vulnerability, just as criminals have been imagined as dangerous 'microbes' since the late 1800s.[12] The growing use of medical imagery in political discourses has helped to sanitize, and thus seemingly rationalize, measures taken to 'cleanse' or 'cure' the body politic of its perceived threats: to destroy a political menace is like cutting away from the body politic a cancer or infection, and is thus treated as an advisable form of violence committed by the body politic upon itself. Even when political rationales for extermination outweigh medical ones in policy making, the body remains essential for thinking about genocide, if only as a powerfully mobilizing metaphor seeking to describe the phantasmic threat posed by those condemned to die. The role of the body in the Holocaust thus cannot be reduced to scientific racism alone.

In this chapter I briefly consider three ways in which the body has been employed by scholars to approach the complexity of the Holocaust. Although some of this discussion addresses the body in a more general and abstract way, due to space restrictions my emphasis will be on Jewish bodies and experiences.

The Body and Civilization

Seeking to account for the political and emotional structures that have served to legitimate mass killing, some social theorists have approached totalitarianism as intimately related to wider Western anxieties about the body, which since antiquity has been devalued as a basis for knowledge and distrusted as the seat of unruly passions. Rather than viewing state-sponsored antisemitism merely as a development localized in a specific time and place, theorists like Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno see it as one possible consequence of the general movement of Western civilization.[13] Since ancient times, they claim, the body has played a double role in Western culture. Historically rejected as a source of weakness and vulnerability and the locus of emotions that threaten to cloud rational judgment, it is also secretly 'desired as something forbidden, objectified, and alienated'.[14] This love-hate relationship with 'the body' – which in this usage really refers almost exclusively to the body's capacity for emotional excess, 'softness', vulnerability and mortality – has produced some negative and even disastrous effects. Viewed from the perspective of a purely instrumental rationality concerned with efficiency rather than properly human interests, the body is defined as a mere thing capable of being possessed and deployed in industry, business or warfare. Like the rest of a disenchanted nature turned into objects for human manipulation, it is effectively deprived of a life of its own, becoming just another 'dead thing, the "corpus"'.[15]

For Horkheimer and Adorno this is true even of the most apparently benign practices that aim to structure and control the body: even methods of discipline and physical training bear 'the closest affinity with killing' in that they too seek to conquer the living spontaneity of embodied existence. Gymnasts, boy scouts, bodybuilders and all others engaged in an apparent glorification of the body thus end up destroying it in other ways, not least because they consciously seek to emphasize its machine-like qualities while trying to efface its unpredictable and thus troublesome potential: 'They see the body as a moving mechanism, with joints as its components and flesh to cushion the skeleton. They use the body and its parts as though they were already separated from it.'[16]

The authors argue that Europe's 'underground history' is taken over by the negative ways in which it has systematically treated the body as something separate from and inferior to the mind, creating a situation in which our 'relationship with the human body is *maimed* from the outset' [emphasis added].[17] As a kind of 'maiming' this breaking apart of the unity of the human being is like a form of 'trauma' whose effects persist well beyond the initial wound. After all, given our essential and inescapable embodiment, such an imaginary severing of body and mind would need to occur constantly, even if its effects are at best illusory and ephemeral. Moreover, the kind of person who inflicts and endures such wounding is not some abstract human being, but is quite frequently male. Seeing in Odysseus' encounter with the Sirens an example of the masculinization of reason against the putative 'femininity' of the passions, Horkheimer and Adorno elsewhere observe that men 'had to do fearful things to themselves before the self, the identical, purposive, and virile nature of man, was formed', by which they mean the attempt to separate from themselves all that seems soft, feminine and weak. These 'fearful things' have to be continually re-enacted, for 'something of that recurs in every childhood' and becomes an integral element of the Western male self, for whom the 'strain of holding the I together adheres to the I in all stages; and the temptation to lose it has always been there with the blind determination to maintain it'.[18]

This 'maiming' of the male self bears a striking resemblance to the 'trauma' that is now the dominant paradigm for academic thinking about Holocaust survivors. While I will discuss survivor trauma below, at this point we may wonder if we can view the Holocaust as both the generator of horror as well as the acting-out of the normalized trauma that is male subjectivity in the West. Horkheimer and Adorno certainly see a relationship between self-maiming and the will to inflict damage on others that was most fully developed by the Nazis. These and 'all the werewolves who exist in the darkness of history' evince a fascination with the human being but 'want to reduce him to a physical substance; nothing must be allowed to live'.[19] It is through such terminal measures that 'Puritanical excess takes its desperate revenge against life',[20] which they view in Nietzschean terms as spontaneity, unpredictability and instinctual expression.

Such broad generalizations have understandably dissatisfied historians and political scientists seeking to understand fascism and totalitarianism in more specific and empirically verifiable ways. Of course it is simplistic to reduce the intricacies and inconsistencies of human practice to the abstractions of high theory, just as it is an exaggeration to reduce the complexity of fascism and the Holocaust to a transhistorical version of 'masculinity'.[21] Yet despite these reservations one may still argue that the 'viscosity' of the 'conceptual Jew' owes much to the specific ways in which dominant masculinities have often been formed in the modern West. This claim is at the heart of Klaus Theweleit's ambitious *Male Fantasies*, which examines how certain German soldiers imagined themselves as being in a state of constant tension with a dangerously engulfing 'femininity' represented by certain 'dangerous' women and other perceived threats that threatened to swamp, contaminate and drag them down.[22] As such feverish yet culturally commonplace anxieties about the feminine were also bound up with perceptions of Jews, it is easy to see how antisemitic stereotypes drew upon gendered anxieties in order to project the immense dangers posed by these people. It is out of a more general 'viscosity' fuelled by masculine contempt for 'the feminine' that the specific viscosity of the conceptual Jew may come into focus. By examining how closely Jews have been linked to the body in general – and 'faulty' bodies at that – we may gain a greater appreciation for how corporeality played a role in the Holocaust.

Jewish Bodies

Anxieties about embodiment, and particularly misgivings about human frailty and mortality, structured how Jews have often been represented in the modern West, and it is beyond doubt that physical difference was a basis of the antisemitic propaganda that contributed to the Holocaust. Even when the Jewish threat was represented as being more political than narrowly medical, organicist images of the nation as a body under siege figuratively transformed Jews into dangerous microbes and other contaminating agents. In this section I focus mainly on the physical differences ascribed to Jews rather than the role of corporeal imagery in political discourses.

Arguments about the irredeemable *singularity* of Jewish people are quite common in the West. Despite claims that biological racism is a distinctly modern development, allegations about the intrinsic difference of Jewish bodies have circulated at least since the early Christian era. As Daniel Boyarin points out, rabbinic Judaism did not share the same mind/body dualism that characterized much Hellenistic thought and, by extension, patristic theology. One consequence of this openness to the body was a far more favourable view of sexuality among Jews.

By late antiquity these different approaches to the body became serious sources of contention between Jews and the Church: if Jews failed to comprehend the mystery of Jesus as an incarnated divinity it was not because such an idea violated reason or even the basic tenets of Judaism, but because these people were so beholden to physicality that they could only read scriptures in a 'carnal' manner, that is, in a literal rather than figurative way.[23]

If Jews were imagined to be collectively more mired in the flesh than Christians, the flesh they inhabited was widely seen as problematic in its own right. Since the Middle Ages Jewish males were seen as deviating from the Gentile standard, whether as the result of custom and environment or congenital difference (these various 'causes' were often confused). Jewish men were so womanish that they menstruated, or so the story went in medieval times. In this way religious and economic anti-Judaism, which are sometimes distinguished from the more recent phenomenon of biologically reductive antisemitism, resorted to similar essentializing gestures when seeking to exclude Jews from the mainstream. Some have even discerned evidence of scientific antisemitism in the Middle Ages.[24] In *The Jew's Body*, Sander Gilman describes the key role played by physical difference in the antisemitic imagination (mostly in the nineteenth century), where everything about Jews – noses, penises, chests, speech and even the way they walked – was made to speak volumes about the gulf that separated these people from the human mainstream.[25]

Outright Jew-haters have not had a monopoly on Jewish corporeal stereotyping, and if some insisted on the irredeemable differences between Jews and Gentiles, others argued that such variations were mainly due to custom and environment. Even non-racist forms of antisemitism, which were sometimes applauded as 'philosemitic' proposals to ease the assimilation of Jews into the Gentile mainstream, demanded the erasure of Jewish differences in creed, culture, hygiene and dress. The eighteenth-century fascination with neoclassical aesthetics placed greater pressure on Jews as well as Gentiles to conform to idealized corporeal forms, which led pro-Jewish writers like the Abbé Grégoire to insist that the 'regeneration' of the Jews be partly carried out in relation to their sick, weak and nervous bodies.[26] French defenders of Jews during the Dreyfus Affair agreed with most antisemitic images of abject Jewish bodies and practices, as did those well-meaning Germans who supported programmes for greater Jewish assimilation.[27] Finally, we must also consider the many Jews who tacitly accepted antisemitic stereotypes to actively remake their bodies so as to more closely approximate Gentile ideals.[28]

As a 'scavenger ideology'[29] scientific racism exploited the multiple and sometimes contradictory anxieties that animated Europeans in the early twentieth century, forging odd associations among groups stigmatized as falling outside conventional norms of gender, health, sanity or hygiene. The corporeal stereotyping of the Jew depended on other ideological agendas in order to be transformed

into political practice. Saul Friedländer observes how the wave of antisemitism that swelled in Germany fused racial fears of degeneration with a quasi-religious eschatological vision that saw in the eventual elimination of the Jewish menace a form of 'redemption' for Aryans generally.[30] As Roger Griffin has recently shown, fantasies of regeneration and rebirth have been a common feature of modernist political as well as aesthetic ideas, where allegations of exhaustion, disease and collapse where accompanied by calls for rebirth and even the creation of 'new men' and 'new women'.[31]

There is thus a reflexive and defensive dimension to the 'scientific' desire to create new bodies while eradicating others: people already reduced to examples of the disgusting seem to exempt themselves from a common humanity and thus are considered as less deserving of humane treatment. Yet even attempts to reduce people to the most repulsive physicality evince a tacit acknowledgment of a shared yet disavowed humanity. It was in recognizing this fact that Primo Levi grasped the logic of the humiliations inmates experienced in the camps: 'before dying the victim must be degraded, so that the murderer will be less burdened by guilt'.[32] That is, the victim must be transformed from a human being into the most repulsive kind of physicality, all the better to persuade oneself that what is being killed is less a fellow human being than a form of slime, vomit or excrement (the 'universal viscosity' of which Bauman writes).

In this way some of Horkheimer and Adorno's broad claims about the body and Western civilization make some sense: in antisemitic logic Jews are said to represent sheer corporeality (as opposed to mind or spirit) and thus possess diseased and contaminating bodies. If many of these bodies were exterminated as part of the Final Solution, the aftershock of the experience marred the bodies and minds of those who survived.

The Body Remembers

Trauma, the root of which is the Greek word for 'wound', is the dominant academic and aesthetic framework for conceptualizing the long-term effects of the Holocaust on survivors and their children. Whatever emotional distress that attends the survivor experience, the wounding implied in trauma is not thought to be of a purely mental nature. Rather psychologists commonly note how the initial traumatic experience is often displaced into physical symptoms, which has led to claims that in trauma it is the body that 'remembers' or 'bears the burden'.[33] After all, camp life precluded the ordinary rituals of grieving for those separated from spouses, children and other family members, so it is unsurprising that some of these emotions would remain internalized.[34] What Cathy Caruth writes of trauma in general seems particularly apt for approaching survivor experiences: 'The traumatized … carry an

impossible history within them, or they become themselves the symptom of a history that they cannot entirely possess'.[35] The attempts of many survivors to put the past behind them often failed, despite arranging to have their identification tattoos erased and trying to begin their lives anew in other lands.

Bodily distress was of central importance to the Jewish Austrian émigrés whose memoirs have been studied by Jacqueline Vansant. Since being visibly 'Jewish' was an extreme liability after the Anschluss, many reported becoming much more aware of their bodies than they previously had, even leading some to wish for an invisibility that would allow them to blend in seamlessly with the rest of the population. Those with darker hair or who looked more 'Jewish' than others were at risk of being harassed and beaten or worse, and those who could move about on the streets more freely lived in constant fear of being identified. Even the abuse of fellow Jews could generate physical symptoms. After witnessing one such incident Minna Lachs reported feeling terrible pains that night, presumably as a manifestation of her emotional stress. In some cases, even being relatively *invisible* as Jews could have negative consequences after leaving Austria, as in the experience of Hans Thalberg, who was subject to abuse outside his French internment camp because the townspeople mistook him for a German! In addition to being the bearer of actual violence or a site of emotional expression, the body appears as a metaphor for the trauma of being separated from one's homeland and having one's life completely disrupted. Despite marrying and starting a new life in Switzerland after the end of the war, Thalberg likened the brutal interruption of his Austrian life to an 'amputation' that, much like a phantom limb, remained a source of emotional pain despite having been figuratively cut away.[36]

Many other survivors report the lasting impact of their experiences in the camps as lingering somatic experiences. Sent to Auschwitz and Ravensbrück for her activities in the French resistance movement, Charlotte Delbo lived to recount her experiences in several volumes of memoirs.[37] Delbo describes how her past in the camps would unpredictably intrude upon her present in the form of physical symptoms. Within the framework of trauma seemingly banal words for physical needs thus take on extraordinary importance. Echoing Wiesel's experience of having been reduced to a stomach in the camps ('I was nothing but a body. Perhaps even less: a famished stomach'),[38] for Delbo words like *hunger* and *thirst*, which in everyday life have a 'frivolous' denotation referring to mild discomfort, took on 'heavy' significance when the need for food and drink became all-consuming and life-threatening.[39] For those survivors who did not record their own experiences, their lingering pain was quite visible to their family members. In *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*, Art Spiegelman writes of how his survivor father Vladek would moan with pain in his sleep, apparently reliving the horrors of the past. The title that Spiegelman gave to first volume of his graphic novel evokes the somatic residue of Vladek's ordeal: 'My father bleeds history'.[40]

Even the children of survivors are known to suffer the effects of the Holocaust, albeit indirectly through the experiences of their parents (although some question the use of the word 'trauma' in relation to the second-generation: as one author notes, strictly speaking they experience 'the scar without the wound').[41] Although writers like Nadine Fresco describe this as being also a visceral sensation not unlike a phantom limb, this 'pain' springs mainly from the metaphorical amputation of an appendage one never possessed. The identification tattoos that had been 'indelibly imprinted into their parents' flesh' and visible to the children were in a sense 'stamped into the consciousness of the second generation'.[42]

More directly physical evidence of trauma on the second generation is perhaps more confronting, not least because some believe that the science that supports it bears a family resemblance to the biologistic thinking that authorized the Final Solution. Neurobiologist Rachel Yehuda has recently proposed that the children of survivors suffering from Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)[43] tend to have lower levels of the stress hormone cortisol and thus a greater chance of experiencing PTSD themselves after being exposed to trauma.[44] Although considered controversial among many specialists in the humanities and social sciences, such an interpretation raises the troubling possibility of the body 'remembering' the Holocaust long after the survivor generation has passed away.

In the face of Sontag's concern that images of the concentration camps are already losing their impact, some have sought new ways of making the Holocaust relevant to the present. In some cases the children of survivors have gone so far as to tattoo themselves as an act of solidarity with their parents and their people.[45] Artistic projects aimed at commemorating the Holocaust, which have become more popular in recent decades, have also come round to approaching their subject in terms of the body and trauma. Facing the challenge of making the memory of the Holocaust available and useful for the present and future, especially in light of the passing away of the survivor generation, many have adopted an 'aesthetics of trauma' that seeks to establish:

> new standards for critically engaging with Holocaust memory by introducing the concept of bodily memory that involves a new sensory experience of space not limited to the visual. Postmemory has drawn attention to the body as the site of interpretation, displacing the traditional mind-body dichotomy in aesthetic modes of reception and enabling viewers to integrate bodily affect and critical reflection.[46]

In Tatana Kellner's two-volume photographic work, *Fifty Years of Silence*, based on the recollections of her survivor parents, tattooed and seemingly severed arms feature among the most memorable signs of what her parents experienced.[47] Through such creations the body not only 'remembers' but is consciously employed as the platform for a trauma that should never be forgotten.

Conclusion

In this very brief overview the relationship between the Holocaust and the body becomes more important than the usual academic focus on atrocities or on state-sponsored eugenic programmes seem to suggest. At once a material reality and a phantasmic presence, the Jewish body was seized upon as tacit symbol of corporeality itself as well as discrete bodies deemed diseased and contaminating. While we cannot minimize or forget the specific circumstances that produced the Holocaust, we must also acknowledge its more general conditions of possibility. In many ways the beaten, starved, humiliated and finally murdered Jewish body encapsulated the conflicted and often destructive relationship that many Westerners have had with the body in the modern era, notably the clash between its idealized capacities for youthful beauty, strength and vitality, and the abject facts of ageing, weakness, disease, decay and death. As Martha Nussbaum argues, wishing for a body that denies the latter is to engage in a 'fantasy of self-transcendence' in which 'crucial elements of the human are lacking … Next door to the fantasy of a pure state is a highly dangerous and aggressive xenophobia'.[48] If exterminating millions is rightly dubbed 'inhuman', so too are the fantasies of corporeal purity that coax such deadly projects into being.

Further Reading

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Notes

1 Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, trans. Raymond Rosenthal (New York, NY: Summit Books, 1988), p. 123.

2 For SS officers, disgust at the sight of prisoners squatting to relieve themselves confirmed their suspicions of the basic otherness of the Jews: 'people like this deserve their fate, just look how they behave'. Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, p. 111.

3 Anton Gill, *The Journey Back from Hell: An Oral History* (New York, NY: William Morrow and Co., 1988), p. 105.
4 Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (New York, NY: Zone Books, 1999), pp. 46–8.
5 This is what the imprisoned Nazi General Franz Halder called the flakes of smoke blowing through the window of his concentration camp cell. Nicholson Baker, *Human Smoke: The Beginnings of World War II, the End of Civilization* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2008), p. 474.
6 Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York, NY: Picador, 1977), p. 20.
7 Lawrence Douglas, 'The Shrunken Head of Buchenwald: Icons of Atrocity at Nuremburg', in Barbier Zelizer (ed.), *Visual Culture and the Holocaust* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001), p. 278. As Douglas observes, the bar of soap (which was never proven to have been made from human fat) also pointed to a link between 'barbarism' and modern hygienic and industrial practices.
8 For a recent overview see Annette Becker, 'Exterminations. Le corps et les camps', in Georges Vigarello (ed.), *Histoire du corps: 3. Les mutations du regard. Le XXe siècle* (Paris: Seuil, 2006), pp. 321–39.
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14 Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 232.
15 Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 232. See also Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London, Penguin, 1991).
16 Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 235.
17 Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 231.
18 Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 33.
19 Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 234.
20 Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 235.
21 George Mosse argues that 'fascism merely expanded and embellished aspects of masculinity that had always been present' without collapsing masculinity *tout court* into its fascist versions. Moreover, much has been written about how enthusiastically many German women supported Hitler and rallied around antisemitic causes. See George L. Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 153; Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family, and Nazi Politics* (New York, NY: St Martin's Griffin, 1988).
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44 Rachel Yehuda, M.H. Teicher, J.R. Seckl, R.A. Grossman, A. Morris and L.M. Bierer, 'Parental Posttraumatic Stress Disorder as a Vulnerability Factor for Low Cortisol Trait in Offspring of Holocaust Survivors', *Archives of General Psychiatry*, no. 64 (2007), pp. 1040–48. Some practitioners resist using the label 'PTSD' as it is a simplified category that, like the older ideas of 'survivor syndrome' and 'shellshock', fails to address the complexity of the phenomenon. See Hassan, *A House Next Door to Trauma*, p. 42 and Chapter 4 of this book.
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10

The Ethics of Representation in Holocaust Museums

Ana Carden-Coyne

In recent years, Holocaust museums have seen exponential growth across the globe. At their core, such museums engage with a painful question of representation and memory: how can the Holocaust be represented both accurately and ethically, without sensationalizing, trading in 'edutainment' or encouraging macabre fascination with atrocity imagery? This problem arose in response to a growing culture of Holocaust commemoration in museums, films and popular culture, as well as tourism to concentration camps reconstructed as museological sites. Scholars debated the use and abuse of Holocaust material culture (especially photographs and victims' personal belongings): how can the historical truth of the Nazi genocide of Jews and many other groups be presented at the same time as respectful memorialization? Memory studies also queried the way that museums both select and subsume certain memories in exhibition displays and curatorial practices.

While debates about the ethics of Holocaust representation have occurred across many different scholarly fields, they had special significance for museums. How can curators navigate the demands of memory, especially in diverse diasporic, cultural and national contexts? It may be surprising to many students of History and Museum Studies that the representation of the Holocaust was a highly contested, emotionally charged and politically sensitive endeavour. The debate began as a philosophical and moral question about aestheticizing suffering that registered as a practical problem for museums: how to represent the unrepresentable? This chapter first explores the origins of the debate about the ethics of representation. Second, it examines the Holocaust museum's memorial function in relation to the politics of architecture and display, with particular focus on the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM). Third, the parallel debate about the use of Holocaust photographs and images of atrocity is discussed. Fourth, this

chapter identifies a shift from the preoccupation with memory to concerns about consumerism, 'dark tourism' and 'entertainmentality'. Fifth, it considers some of the political contexts in which museums navigated the issue of responsibility. Finally, this chapter discusses recent developments in Holocaust museology.

Origins of the Ethics Debate

In the 1990s, the development of Holocaust or Shoah Studies across the Humanities invigorated a debate about the ethics of representation that brought together questions of historical veracity, aesthetics, memory and politics.[1] The debate followed a trajectory from Theodor Adorno's much-repeated quotation, 'it is barbaric to write poetry after Auschwitz', an indictment of the conundrum of the moral imperative to represent and describe the Shoah, and yet the impossibility of the task; language and imagery were inadequate tools to justly confront the inconceivable (see Chapter 2 in this volume for further discussion). Scholars interpreted Adorno to mean that while there was a 'moral obligation to bear witness to the heinous crimes', writers and artists were 'threatened with speechlessness' (and formlessness) of the 'unimaginable event'.[2]

With *Probing the Limits of Representation* (1992), Saul Friedländer was established as a key figure in proposing that 'Adorno's often misunderstood utterance' became the 'point of reference' for imagining the Holocaust. Indeed, the 'question of the limits of representation of Nazism and its crimes has become a recurrent theme'. In the 1970s, film and literature opened new discourses, while the historians' debates of the 1980s raised questions about truth and representation; aesthetics were implicated in moral arguments. Following a crisis in historical method, articulated between Hayden White's postmodern relativism and Carlo Ginzburg's objective truth, Friedländer argued that the Holocaust existed beyond the limits of representation as 'the willfull, systematic, industrially organised, largely successful attempt totally to exterminate an entire human group'.[3] Although Adorno did not intend his dialectic to have a silencing effect, issues of historical truth and remembering underpinned concerns about ethical representation. Meditating on the Holocaust museum, Harold Kaplan explained, 'Adorno meant that poetry had been given an exorbitant task'. While the museum cannot speak for the victims, 'it is a rebuff to meet their silence with our own'.[4] Writers, artists and museums were acutely aware of the potential dangers of aesthetic spectacle, preventing victims' voices from being heard.

The conundrum proposed that if the Holocaust was an 'unimaginable' and 'unique' 'limit event' – the enormity and incommensurability of which cannot be materialized, realized or fully understood – how could it be represented? For public museums – where survivors, historians, child educators and political discourse

converged – this 'ethics of representation' encompassed multiple demands. Part of the dilemma about ethical representation was linked to the continued struggle to know, understand and find meaning in the Holocaust; as one survivor said: 'to understand Auschwitz would be even worse than not to understand it … I hope I never do.'[5]

Why was the question of an ethical representation so critical for museums, their policies of collecting and practices of display? Susan Crane writes that, 'Being collected means being remembered institutionally, being displayed means being incorporated into the extra-institutional memory of the museum visitors.'[6] Museums, then, not only reiterate popular and nationally sponsored memories, but they also have the potential to *create* memories that can either reinforce or challenge the acceptable past. Museums had the task of deploying 'difficult objects' (such as children's shoes, hateful signs and antisemitic documents, images of abuse, photographs of corpses, Nazi film footage of medical experiments and liberation films of concentration camps), while also remaining sensitive to those whose stories were being told – those who perished and did not have the right of reply or whose living relatives still grappled with the painful heritage of persecution and murder. Also, museums had to meet the challenge of visitors objecting to the way that 'difficult histories' are told with contested or 'hot objects'.

This important, reflexive debate about representation at times extended into a false dichotomy between historical realism and authenticity versus abstraction and replication. Some museum practices – such as identity cards and large-scale photography – were accused of turning pain and suffering into an entertaining spectacle of horror. Identifying with victims via mass culture seemed to provide false uplift and obfuscate meaning, leading to the much more serious charge of transforming remembering practices into forgetting the Holocaust. For museums, how to curate the material culture of the Holocaust – not just documents and photographs, but the cultural symbols and material belongings of those who had perished – became fraught. This was foremost evident in the political and cultural negotiations around the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), in Washington, DC.

The Struggle to Remember: The Politics of Architecture and Display

While the Holocaust museum's main function is that of remembrance, with the epithet 'never again', many scholars have questioned what precisely is being remembered. Do museum's collectivize, reduce and singularize memory? How can the museum historically situate victims, bystanders and liberators? Where do the perpetrators feature? Given heated debates amongst historians, in which museums

were highly involved, who were the perpetrators?[7] In Edward Linenthal's chronicle of the building of the USHMM (1978–93), he found this latter question conspicuously absent.[8] How to represent victims and perpetrators has often depended on location. Indeed, scholars have investigated the different national narratives and modalities of remembering. Holocaust museums around the world have been studied in terms of ideology, nationalism, 'nativism' and local perspectives, the role of the sacred and the relationship with non-Jewish audiences.[9]

In the United States, the local and global converged in the negotiation between political elites and survivor families. Chaired by renowned Auschwitz survivor Elie Wiesel, President Carter's Commission on the Holocaust (1978) began as a deeply political exercise in international relations, foreign policy and domestic affairs. The outcome of the USHMM involved consultation with survivors and the American Jewish community; however, it also aimed at recognizing non-Jewish Americans while offering a universal message: the Holocaust as a 'supreme example' of inhumanity and 'a warning against evil'.[10] President George Bush stated that it was a 'moral compass' for the nation; historian Peter Novick suggested such discourse asserted the certainty of truth in a world of uncertainties.[11] Other scholars noted the complex undertaking of aligning testimonies with historical scholarship, and the need to explain Nazism and antisemitism without extensive display of Nazi memorabilia. The 'dangerous allure' of imagining perpetrators threatened the solemn memorial to victims.[12] Construction began after eight years of discussion between stakeholders, the Memorial Council, the US Commission on Fine Art and various architects regarding the appropriate site and design. The museum, however, generated widespread discussion about the politics and ethics of representation.

At this time, the discipline of the 'new museology' investigated museums' roles and purposes in society, engagement with audiences, public programming and strategies of display.[13] Cultural studies and postmodernism explored the 'politics of space' and architecture.[14] The USHMM exemplified the problem of aestheticizing and containing the horror of genocide, but also the profoundly political construction of museums.[15] The facade was etched with President George Bush's words during Operation Desert Storm in 1991 and the First Gulf War against Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait. Scholars found incongruity between this political discourse and the injunction of Holocaust memory: 'Here we will learn that we must intervene when we see evil arise.'[16] After the Iraq War, which began in 2003, and the debunked 'weapons of mass destruction' rhetoric, the mobilization of the Holocaust for political purposes formed the basis of deeper museological critique. Some scholars saw the Holocaust being framed in 'uniquely American terms', contrasting the contemporary museum with American indifference and inaction during the Second World War, but also that it 'is swathed in the images and idioms of American political culture', with words from Jefferson,

Washington, Eisenhower, Carter, Reagan and Bush inciting the audience to 'bear witness'.[17] Increasingly, museums were seen as lending official or dominant meanings to the Holocaust in exhibition practices and school education programmes. For Timothy Luke, the museum failed in its aims to awaken 'responsibility' and 'democratic values'. He noted the terrible irony of President Clinton's 1993 dedication; this museum could hardly 'mobilize morality' at a time when ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, Rwanda, Chechnya and Iraq was ignored.[18]

Reviewers articulated James Young's influential text on Holocaust representation, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (1993), which compared Germany, Austria, Poland, Israel and the United States in order to investigate different national agendas in commemorative practices.[19] In a second text, *At Memory's Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture* (2000), Young noted how 'the Nazi photograph has itself become part of the iconic currency of the Holocaust'. Discussing Libeskind's Jewish Museum in Berlin and his own involvement with the project, Young identified the problem of 'vicarious memory'.[20] While the Holocaust forms just one part in the narrative of Jewish history, Libeskind's use of dark corners, dead ends and empty spaces or 'voids' in the building's internal construction was designed as a 'model for absence', which aimed to estrange visitors from the collection and deprive the museum of its redemptive capacity.[21] Indeed, visitors still find great difficulty in navigating the space. As well, for many Jewish visitors the lack of a strong Holocaust narrative was 'not what we expected'. However, one stated goal was to prevent Germans (75 per cent of visitors) 'from thinking only of Auschwitz' when they think of Jewish people.[22]

Alongside architecture, scholars debated the politics of display, including the construction of historical narratives, the writing of textual labels and the arrangement of material culture. Testifying to the victims' existence, children's shoes, luggage, spectacles and toothbrushes were not just objects of historical meaning, but also personal signs of life. Although these 'hot objects' contained painful and sacred symbolism – cases of women's shaved hair or boxcars that people had died in during forced transportation – the material culture of victims set the tone for Holocaust museums globally. That murdered Jews were known in museums by their 'scattered belongings', James Young thought 'the ultimate travesty': their lives were 'recalled primarily through the images of their death'. Following this thinking, Oren Baruch Stier argued that the 'classic object-driven museum … remains flawed'.[23]

Indeed, the case of thousands of kilos of women's shaved hair was a source of great anxiety at USHMM. Survivors worried about insensitive handling and the violation of feminine identity; this was resolved with a photograph rather than displaying the hair itself.[24] This deeply personal 'material of life' was too 'hot'; the photograph's distancing effect seemed more reverent. Such objects were also

associated with sacralization: material culture had the affect of religious 'aura', transforming objects into symbols of suffering and redemption. Stier argued that while such objects make strong connections to the past, the sacral aspect interrupts the remembering, in contrast to the Simon Wiesenthal Center's Museum of Tolerance (Los Angeles), which relies less on artefacts than emotions and digital displays in its Multimedia Learning Centre. Especially for subsequent generations, museums are seen as producers of collective and popular memory by exhibiting and narrating cultural material and, most importantly, using new technologies, such as video testimonies.[25]

In consultation with Jewish and survivor communities, the collection of audio and video testimony (e.g. Imperial War Museum, London, Sound Archive, 1978; The Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, Yale University, 1982) has become a central museological and political strategy against Holocaust denial, deployed as the 'authentic voice' of history's material culture.[26] Susan Crane writes that by drawing together both victim and liberator testimonies, the USHMM appealed to a wide demographic and to historical truth: 'horror devoid of voyeurism is a powerful teaching tool which draws on personal experience and creates memory'.[27] In writing his key text, USHMM advisory board member Edward Linenthal paralleled the preservation of memory and the creation of the museum as a 'struggle'. Gesturing toward the postmodern turn, he defended the museum as an ideal space where the 'pluralistic ownership of memory' can be explored with great benefits for future generations.[28]

Holocaust Photography and the Critique of Spectacle

The politics of display and the role of remembrance implicated one of the major sources of the museum's material culture: Holocaust photographs. A significant body of scholarship on Holocaust photography proposed that such imagery has a double burden: 'to act as history lessons for future generations so we never forget' and to provide a means of mourning.[29] Photographs of Bergen-Belsen, of bodies bulldozed into pits, or skeletons packed into bunks in Buchenwald, or Margaret Bourke White's survivors at the wire for *Life* magazine in 1945, were crucial documents of the 'truth' of the Holocaust published not long after the war. Their continual recirculation, however, prompted some photography theorists to question the use and abuse of images. Repetition without historical context was seen as producing a Holocaust 'aesthetic' and embroiling historical truth in a 'spectacle of horror'. Voyeurism and dehumanization were seen as the result of such photographs becoming signifiers of reduced meaning and mere depictions that stood in for – rather than explained – the Holocaust.

Responding to the internet, mass media and the globalization of image production and circulation, some saw Holocaust imagery as risking saturation point. Renowned photography scholar Susan Sontag warned of being easily inured to the visual impact of such shocking imagery: 'Photographs shock insofar as they show something novel … Once one has seen such images, one has started down the road of seeing more and more. Images transfix. Images anaesthetise … After thirty years, a saturation point may have been reached [and the Nazi death camps become banal]'. Sontag concluded that the photographs should not be hung on museum walls.[30] Her treatise was perhaps influenced by Barbie Zelizer's seminal text on Holocaust photography, *Remembering to Forget* (1998), which argued that photographs of the camps taken by the liberating armies, the core material culture in Holocaust museums and exhibitions, 'continued to do in memory what they had done at the time of the camps' liberation – to move the atrocity story from the contingent and particular to the symbolic and abstract'.[31]

Scholars argued that while millions of photographs produced by perpetrators, liberators and some victims were circulated, the archives were not being sufficiently mined. The same few images repeated over again subverted the original context and meaning. Shock value led to desensitization, concealing any critique of the production and reception of Holocaust images. Zelizer argued that some images were mislabelled, obscuring the specificity of sites into general signifiers of horror. Marianne Hirsch suggested that such repetition fragments and limits our understanding of history. She wondered, do Holocaust photographs become 'like clichés, empty signifiers that distance and protect us from the event? Or, on the contrary, does their repetition re-traumatize, turning distant viewers into surrogate victims, so that viewers appropriate the images into their own memories.' Is Holocaust photography melancholic replay, false identification or the enabling of memory and mourning? Hirsch suggests that such images become canonized, immersing memory into forgetting once the rupture has become familiar.[32]

Yet in his critique of Zelizer's work, Alan Trachtenberg questioned whether the erosion of reference points is really the result of the habituation of such imagery? This is not a problem for photography, he argues, but a political problem. People need to learn to *read* images – not just recover their context or believe in them as documents: 'to learn how to translate the witnessing evoked by images into effective political action, a problem within the political culture in which the images are assigned certain work to perform'.[33] Recently, Holocaust photography has again been rescued from the symbolic to the real of historical truth.[34] Yet the context in which that truth is obtained is also debated. Photography scholars examined Nazi images of the Lodz ghetto, for instance, through discourses of trauma and witnessing, but recently the question of complicity in looking at photographs taken by either perpetrators or bystanders has been articulated as the 'dilemma of interpretation' suggesting that 'new modes of reading' still need to be developed.[35]

These debates resonate profoundly with how museums use photography in their displays.

At the USHMM, the visitor first encounters a wall mural of an iconic image of American liberation: US Army officers at Ohrdruf Concentration Camp (by Harold Royall, USHMM Photo Archive). Hirsch argues that it aims to place the visitor in the position of 'the unbelieving onlooker or retrospective witness, who confronts the contemporary witnesses and sees both them in the act of looking and what they saw'. Moreover, she argues that when compared with the family and group portraits in the museum's Tower of Faces, they join together to force the viewer to appreciate 'the extremity of the outrage' and its 'incomprehension'.[36]

The museum's first Director, Martin Smith, a British documentary maker, spoke about the use of photographs:

> I find just looking at people's heads and feet when they are deceased as distasteful as anything else, like pubic hair and everything else that has caused me any number of worries. My belief is that if you do not put them on display, then you are diminishing the extent of the horror and what the experience actually meant. But I would be absolutely opposed to sanitising it … I don't think [the fact that the material culture is offensive] is the fault of the institution – it is the fault of the subject matter.[37]

Documentary photography and historical records cannot be trusted, Smith said, since they come through the 'filter system of human memory', whereas material culture – the barracks from Auschwitz-Birkenau, the railcar, rescue boat, uniforms, shoes – 'establish the physical reality of the Holocaust'. Instead of using photographs as objects, USHHM used them as 'evidentiary and storytelling vehicles'. Andrea Liss argued that Smith was 'caught between displaying the horror' and guarding against 'the worst of the material', as he called it. Defending its use, she concluded that the victim's face on the identity card promised to ward of false realisms or facile re-enactment and mimesis.[38]

Attempting the move the debate along, Zelizer advised that the concept of representation should be explored as 'translation work' and to acknowledge its 'frailty', since 'no act of translation succeeds by reproducing the original event in its entirety'. Zelizer also highlighted that atrocity narratives in photographs ignore the gendered experience of the Holocaust. The representation of women in the camps, circulated in British and American newspapers after 1945, is either stereotyped or neutered. Women were depicted as victims, survivors and witnesses, maintaining gendered constructions of female vulnerability, domesticity and maternalism.[39] Zelizer recalled Claudia Koonz's discussion of how museums erase the specificity of women's experience in the camps. Despite the volume of documents that relate to their imprisonment and murder, women were iconic,

noble victims.[40] Museums have 'a gendered Holocaust canon' that narrate men's and women's experiences in different ways, and may also avoid difficult discussions, such as about sexual violence.[41]

From Commemoration to 'Dark Tourism' and 'Entertainmentality'

From the mid-1990s, a major debate about memory and forgetting questioned whether 'there is a type of truth beyond telling, beyond narrative, that a straightforward linear narrative or an objective historical account misses?' How could the unimaginable be imagined or represented? Was it possible that all the memory work conducted in the museum was becoming a 'form of forgetting'?[42] The museum was linked to a similar crisis in media representation: the saturation of iconic images, with history reduced into clichés derived from a single picture; repetition was silencing memory and compulsive remembering was now seen as acts of forgetting. Jenny Edkins observed that this concern with exhibiting objects of Holocaust memory was not about 'the difficulty of representing a horror beyond imagination but with *who* gets to mourn, in what way and with what political outcomes'.[43] This resonated with the critique of 'dark tourism' and the commercialization of memory, as Holocaust sites became associated with 'entertainmentality'.

Commemoration of the Holocaust within concentration camps originated with surviving prisoners at the time of liberation. Through the 1950s and 1960s, momentum gained for memorials that also functioned as public museums, influenced by political contexts in Eastern Europe, Germany, Austria and Israel. Opened in Jerusalem in 1953, Yad Vashem: The Holocaust Martyrs and Heroes Remembrance Authority was created by an act of Israel's parliament. Berel Lang described it as 'the quasi-official symbol of the state', noting Israel's objection to the building of the USHMM in Washington, DC.[44] With an important documentation centre, the museum emphasized education and commemoration but also inter-generational encounters. Material culture accentuated 'Jews as experiencing subjects rather than objects in Nazi hands'.[45]

Memorial museums began with former concentration camps, however Auschwitz death camp has been the subject of a significant body of memory and representation work. In 1947, the Polish government opened Auschwitz-Birkenau (Poland) as a museum; its railway tracks and gates have become an iconic symbol of the Holocaust; its 'work makes you free' sign (*Arbeit macht frei*) has been repeatedly visualized in literature, documentary (Resnais' *Night and Fog*, 1955; Munk's *Passenger*, 1963; Lanzmann's *Shoah*, 1982) and cinema (Wajda's *Landscape After the Battle*, 1970; Spielberg's *Schindler's List*, 1992). While film sustained the popular memory of the Holocaust, some critics wondered if it was also being generalized and the

history obscured. Hollywood spectacle was confused with documentary testimony, leading scholar Miriam Hansen to insist '*Schindler's List* is not *Shoah*'.[46] Yet film also generated global interest in these sites, including educational visits from schools and universities as well as commercial tourism.

In theorizing the phenomenon of 'dark tourism' – visits to former extermination camps, labour camps and other sites of atrocity – Lennon and Foley distinguished between personal pilgrimage and the development of a major global industry that paralleled education. 'Dark tourism' or 'thanatourism' (from *thanatos*, the Greek word for death) proposed that tourists' motives were less about history and empathy than fascination with perpetration and the technologies of genocide. Indeed, a stream of anthropology, performance studies and tourist studies closely examined museum policy and tourist behaviour at atrocity sites, and the complexities of commercialization when 'the dark attraction has swelled visitor numbers and catalysed economic activity'.[47] Recent studies considered whether it was driven by 'tourist demand or attraction-supply', probing visitor motivations such as education, redemption, voyeurism or 'fantasies of witnessing'.[48]

Against the view of 'dark tourism' and 'entertainmentality', however, was the participation of local communities in museums. Living survivors have acted as exhibition guides (Sydney Jewish Museum and Melbourne Holocaust Museum). Controversially at USHMM, visitors were invited to 'share' the victim's identity in simulated document cards. This strategy aimed to create empathy, and to overcome the problem of collectivising victims, yet some critics argued it enacted a 'hopeless mimicry of the dead'?[49] Dominick LaCapra warned against both 'vicarious victimhood' and 'fetishising traumatic narratives'. Over-identifying with victims diminishes history into containable, digestible fragments of meaning.[50] Incompatible with solemn remembrance, museum scholars worried about the shift to 'entertainmentality'. Timothy Luke likened the USHMM to 'the cultural economies' of Disneyland or Universal Studios. While acknowledging its crucial role in refuting Holocaust denial, Luke argued that horror is transformed into 'spectacles' and history is 'recounted from the perspective of victorious Americans'. In the debate about representing the 'unknowable', Luke writes: 'the unspeaklable is said. The unimaginable is seen … in ways that are far too "entertaining"'.[51] However, others have seen such critiques of 'Americanization' as political discourse based on a flawed understanding of the role of mass culture.[52] Indeed, the development of this strand in the ethics debate is a long way from the USHMM's concerns that 'too much horror' might turn visitors away; for project director Michael Berenbaum one of the early contentions was precisely how to engage Americans.[53]

These academic arguments travelled across the syndicated press. In an often-cited article, acclaimed author Philip Gourevitch described visiting the USHMM, and afterwards stumbling on a replica identity card discarded in a garbage can in the Washington Mall. For him, it highlighted an obscene irony in

this disposable, consumerist object: 'Holocaust museum identity card No. 1221, Maria Sava Moise, born June 1, 1925, in Iasi, Romania. Maria, a gypsy, had survived the war, only to wind up as part of the litter of a Washington tourist's afternoon.'[54] The museum was reduced to a theme park.

Scholars nevertheless defended 'experiential' strategies in Holocaust museums as 'part of a larger trend in American mass culture toward the experiential as a mode of knowledge'. Visitors to USHMM are transported back in time; as they reach the top floor, the elevator opens on to the large-scale photograph of US Army 'liberators'. Visitors then weave through three floors divided into themes: 'Nazi Assault, 1933–39'; 'Final Solution, 1940–45'; and the 'Last Chapter'.[55] Rather than an affront to historical rigour, the experiential mode was seen as relying less on authenticity and realism and more on 'knowledge, responsibility and empathy'. Visitors without family connections to the Holocaust are encouraged to 'attach themselves to pasts they did not live', which is potentially radical. Alison Landsberg argued that the 'blurring of the boundary between "entertainment" and "history" might not be a purely negative event'. Far from being 'unrepresentable' as a unique trauma or needing to be repeated and worked through, mass cultural sites and technologies enable visitors to 'learn to wear the memories of such traumas so that they become imaginable to us, thinkable and speakable to us'.[56] As discussed earlier, for some scholars the mode of this 'imagining' is precisely the problem. Nor is it one specific to the American context. Similar accusations of 'commercialisation and trivialisation', as Jenny Edkins points out, were repeated in the UK, with the Imperial War Museum, London, and its permanent exhibit on the Holocaust (opened in 2000).[57] The large model of Auschwitz-Birkenau came under particular scrutiny. Scholars were also critical of British narratives of 'standing alone' to defeat Nazism, and the use of harrowing images taken during the liberation of Belsen.[58] Nevertheless, in its first year, it attracted 140,000 visitors.[59]

Entertainment, however, was useful in targeting young audiences. Following protracted negotiations, the Anne Frank Memorial Museum (Amsterdam) and the Anne Frank Memorial Trust supported a Spanish musical-play based on the 'diary'. The role of the museum was crucial in enabling the musical to be produced. Copies of *The Diary of Anne Frank* appear as material culture in Holocaust museums. The diary is an integral object of global Holocaust education; it has sold more than twenty-five million copies worldwide, has been translated into fifty languages and has inspired an Oscar-winning film (1959) and several plays. Recently, the former transit and labour camp at Westerbork (Netherlands) hosted a special historical exhibition for what would have been Anne Frank's eightieth birthday. Visitors to the museum camp and memorial centre were invited to walk in the footsteps of Anne Frank, who spent three weeks there before her deportation to Bergen-Belsen (where she died of typhoid). The museum reaches out to contemporary teenagers with Anne Frank's issues of adolescent bodily change

and burgeoning sexuality.[60] Young audiences respond well to such developmental parallels and emotional triggers, which has become an accepted Holocaust education strategy. Thus museum scholars studied the uses of affective emotions and bodily responses in spaces, exhibits, sounds, visuals and performances.[61]

Political Contexts and the Ethics of Responsibility

From the 1990s, many museums dealing with the Holocaust were opened outside of Europe – Sydney (1992); Washington, DC (1978–1993); Los Angeles (1993); Houston (1996); New York (1997); and Cape Town (2000) – where the issue of responsibility was no less politicized.[62] National and international politics mixed with memory, as discussed in relation to Yad Vashem and the USHMM, continued to underpin the construction of Holocaust museums. This was also the case for the reconstruction of camps as memorial museums. James Young showed how Buchenwald's reconstruction was mapped on to the political rhetoric of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and placed within the context of communist anti-fascist struggle. Jews were stripped of Jewishness, of their identity as a persecuted group. Under the Soviets, the use of the camp in purges of anti-communists and Nazis was forgotten. After 1989, however, museums in the GDR conflated the victims of Nazism with those of Stalinism.[63]

Indeed, museums that opened in former communist countries tended to examine both Nazism and Soviet rule in the one space, associating the two regimes as equally brutal 'foreign occupiers' of a subjected local population, minimizing local participation (Museum of Genocide Victims, Vilnius, Lithuania, 1992; Museum of Occupations, Tallinn, Estonia, 2003; Latvian Museum of Occupation, Riga, 1993). Indeed, Rudy Koshar identified a similar attitude amongst Dachau citizens, 'that the camp had been imposed on them by the Nazis, an alien force whose barbarism had destroyed the reputation of a town … known for its beauty and culture'.[64]

Established in 2002 by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, the Terror Háza ('House of Terror') in Budapest presents Hungary as the victim of two evils: Nazism and Stalinism. (The Terror Háza is located in the former 'House of Loyalty', the headquarters of the Arrow Cross party which was instrumental in the mass murder and deportation of Jews – and the assassination of many of them in Budapest itself – in 1944–5.) The persecution of Jews and anti-communists is undifferentiated. Perpetrators are 'Germans' or Hungarian Arrow Cross leaders; grass-roots collaboration and perpetration is subsumed under post-socialist nationalist discourses. Some critics have suggested the reframing of the Holocaust in such museums threatens to bolster ultra-nationalism and neo-fascism.

The politicization of Holocaust museums enabled the remembering of victims while obscuring the extent of local perpetration. Back in 1995, however, a controversial exhibit of atrocity imagery – *Crimes of the Wehrmacht* – toured Austria and Germany, inciting right-wing threats against deep reflection on the question of culpability. Confronting history was made personal as visitors 'were forced to reconsider their own relatives' potential involvement in genocide'. Rather than spectacular, some of the most horrific photographs possessed the 'uncanny ability' to 'render the past visible'.[65] It was an important moment of personal and national self-reflection. Yet the way that museums confront the past and present of Holocaust imagery continues to be hazardous.

In 2002, the Jewish Museum of New York held the exhibition *Mirroring Evil: Nazi Imagery/Recent Art*, generating outcry amongst leading members of the American Jewish community, such as Elie Wiesel. Rather than the acceptable tone of mourning victims, the curator immersed visitors in the work of young contemporary artists' from eight countries who engaged with Nazi imagery, in an attempt to expand the debate about how to represent the Holocaust. The curator aimed to confront taboos about fascism, glamour and eroticism, or conversely the mundane, to explore the commodification of the Holocaust and 'dark tourism' and to problematize the distinction between representation and reality. Accusations of sacrilege, trivialization, narcissism and pornography were levelled against the artists. The other critical issue was timing: it opened perhaps too soon after 9/11 and during controversial military events (Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Protective Wall in Israel), amongst growing concern with anti-Zionism and antisemitism.[66] Apart from a few supporters, overwhelmingly the exhibition failed to engage audiences in debates about the ethics of representation; the artists' attack on the redemptive capacity of art was overshadowed.

Recent Developments

The debate about the ethics of 'representing the unrepresentable' peaked almost as soon as it began. Andreas Huyssen sensed this in his seminal text, *Twilight Memories* (1995): 'The exclusive insistence on the true representation of the Holocaust in its uniqueness, unspeakability, and incommensurability may no longer do in the face of its multiple representations and functions', as post-Holocaust generations access education in the mass media and popular culture.[67] Some Holocaust museums have shifted the terms of the ethics debate, finding new ways of communicating history and memory. Self-reflexive museums have conducted their own critical studies into visitor experiences and responses to exhibits. Multimedia technologies, interactive kiosks and digital consoles are installed, as well as extensive online materials that enable a connection between

the home-viewer and the site. Home-viewers access material without a strong museological narrative to shape the interpretation. Some have argued, however, that new technologies 'replicate familiar patterns … by following established memory tropes that are essentially people and story centred'.[68]

Far from resisting the imagining of the Holocaust, the Anne Frank Memorial Museum deploys a graphic novel entitled *The Search*, which visually describes the experiences of two fictional Jewish families, Hecht and Canter.[69] The novel is aimed at thirteen to sixteen year-olds, and materials for teachers are available. Now published in Dutch, English, German, Polish and Hungarian, the Museum argues that this visual format enables young people 'to learn the most important facts about the Holocaust in an accessible way', and describes different roles of victims, perpetrators, helpers and bystanders 'and the dilemmas and choices with which they were confronted'.[70] Much of the imagery is based on historical photographs repeated in student texts. The choice of the graphic novel medium resulted from lengthy consultation with historians, with pilot learning programmes for 3,000 students conducted in Germany, Poland and Hungary. Visualizing the Holocaust, even in the museum, is still a precarious endeavour. While the value of Holocaust museums is undoubted, scholars argue they have 'the potential to mislead as well as to enlighten' – antisemitism and violence can be obscured; issues of persecution, perpetration and collaboration can be over-generalized.[71] Nevertheless, educating young people remains a major museological objective.

Alongside the quest for new ways to engage audiences, the other major development has been the global interest in human rights and humanitarian causes, which are often incorporated into exhibition programmes and such material is even requested by visitors. While scholars and politicians debated the definition of 'genocide', USHMM offered small exhibits on Darfur and the former Yugoslavia; the Imperial War Museum examines 'crimes against humanity' and participates in Holocaust Memorial Day with its broad human rights agenda. Sharing knowledge of 'human suffering', by illuminating other genocides and atrocities, highlights the international community's commitment to history and memory, and 'the advancement of human rights worldwide'.[72] Yet, arguably, human rights discourse cannot mediate the political conflicts about how and why atrocities continue.

Finally, in the age of mediatization and virtual highways, where flows of Holocaust denial are easily trafficked or diverted into pro/anti-Israel polemic, museums continue to teach and remember the Holocaust, resisting potential distortions of historical truth. While the representation debate has shifted, tracing its history reveals how Holocaust museums have navigated these intellectual, political and ethical questions in the light of their considerable role as producers of public knowledge and as agents of cultural memory.

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