

“FROM DARWIN TO THE DEATH CAMPS:” A COLLAGE OF HOLOCAUST
REPRESENTATION FOCUSING ON PERPETRATOR ATROCITY
DISCOURSE IN LITERATURE, DRAMA AND FILM.

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT
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In this dissertation my plan is to take a collage of representational forms that deal with the subject of the Holocaust and to point at the discourse of the perpetrator as possibly a more postmodern form of representing an event that many would term unrepresentable. Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel once stated that the holocaust defies imagination, and when he was queried about the problem that arises from perpetrator discourse his response was “the perpetrators are someone else’s concern.” This dissertation tends to concern itself with the perpetrators and how they used the language of atrocity to do something that is still today viewed as horrific, for most of the

perpetrators saw their tasks-the genocide of the Jews-as simply as a task that had to be completed. By this “task” I mean, as for example, in one of the films chosen for this project *Conspiracy* and a text, *Commandant of Auschwitz*, shows us is the completely normal bureaucratic essence of the Nazi architects of genocide and the banality and completely “normal” chain of command that they all followed in the destruction of European Jewry. This “normalcy” of the chain of command is evident in all the texts, films and plays chosen for this dissertation, and all show in the discourse of the perpetrator a tenet of Michel Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of a Prison*, that tenet being, the “legal process of judge, jury, and executioner are proved valid and those who rule are to be obeyed” (10). This dissertation wants to show that for representative art dealing with the Holocaust a view at the institutions that allowed for the language of discipline and punishment to be rationale for eugenics, nationalist fervor and governmental anti-Semitism as the political platform for national socialism, could serve as a more representative model than what we usually get when one represents the Holocaust, that being a story told completely from the victim standpoint and then what we get too much of is helpless Jews and monster-Nazis. This dissertation shows the only too frightening nature of the un-monster-like Nazis and when this project does use certain victim testimony in literature, drama and film, it shows then victim’s trauma more in the sense of survivor guilt and outsideness more than any type of helpless victim. In the larger area of perpetrator discourse in literature, film and drams this dissertation hopes to evince the representative need for future art forms dealing with the holocaust to understand that if the Holocaust is the paradigmatic event of all discourse on atrocity then

those who attempt to approach it in future art and discourse should be forewarned that this event defies representation but also screams to be remembered from beyond the barbed wire of Auschwitz. A great deal of criticism of representation of the Holocaust in the areas of my collage center on the **presumption** that what actually happened in the death camps of Auschwitz, Treblinka, Birkenau etc., can be known, understood and communicated., This dissertation argues that what “cannot be communicated,” the type of signifying evil that can only be demonstrated in the covert language “inside the language” of national socialism and Hitler allows readers a better forum for possible representation. It would be too easy to view the “Final solution of the Jewish Question” as the machinations of Hitler--the modern “Mephistopheles”--and his Nazi minions as just a nation of jack-booted fascist “Faust’s,” but I think when one comes to power, like a Hitler, and decides to ensure public good by force and selective uncivil liberties, then what happened to the Jews during the Holocaust may be better “understood” by viewing even more closer the language of “ordinary Germans,” who became “extraordinary murderers” during the Holocaust.

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I. INTRODUCTION

“There was no *why* in Auschwitz, only a *was*.” (*Auschwitz: Inside the Nazi State*)
“There only remain 120,000 children of poor parents annually born. The question therefore is, how this number shall be reared and provided for.”
(Swift, “A Modest Proposal”)

Beginning this project I use the voice of an Auschwitz survivor, a Jewish woman from Poland, and the satirical voice of Jonathan Swift to make the case that because of the language of enlightened reason and positivist science something as ludicrous as Swift’s answer to the overcrowding and domestic horror of seventeenth century Ireland could have found its fruition in the death camps and laboratories of the Third Reich of Adolph Hitler. The endgame of the enlightenment that Swift parodies ended with the greatest horror of history—the Holocaust—and what this project will do is try to find answers to what the Jewish survivor mentions in the opening epigram; that being to try to understand that any attempt at finding the “why” to the Holocaust in any form of art is impossible, but if scholars, filmmakers and writers look for the “was” then a more complete and cognizant type of Holocaust representation may be possible.

In this dissertation, I intend to analyze a collection of representations of the Holocaust from the installment of Adolph Hitler’s Nuremberg laws to the “final solution” to contemporary representations in art [more precisely between the years 1945-2000] in order to understand the language of systems and the effects they have on history and the

language that re-tells history. The historical precedent set by Darwin's *Origin of Species* and its language of "survival of the fittest" was taken by the Nazis and used as a rationale in medical and scientific language to justify genocide on the Jewish people and the subsequent horror that pervaded Nazi-occupied Europe during World War II was the result. The representations of the event in film, literature and drama since 1945 have covered a gamut of voices attempting to heal and also to instruct but many, like Steven Spielberg's critically acclaimed *Schindler's List*, fall prey at points to sentimentality and the "Hollywood formula."¹ One can understand a film business that is based on profits and bottom lines to encourage a film that allows for the event to be shown but to leave the audience with a hopeful feeling instead of an ending like Lanzmann's *Shoah*, which allows for nothing but silence.

An event like the Holocaust defies any attempt to moralize or leave one feeling good—if anything one should return to the film for knowledge about the impossibility of understanding. Spielberg and many others use film to depict Jews as sacrificial lambs and Nazis as maniacal monsters saved by the figure of western patriarchy—a great white father-figure—Spielberg's Oskar Schindler—to save them all. This is where the problems arise. The echoes of paternalism, colonialism and inequality pervade this type of representation and may allow the event to be less horrible than it must be. A more thought provoking representation in film may be *Conspiracy*, which shows the completely normal bureaucratic meeting that decides the fate of the Jews—what Hannah

¹ Robert Kolker, in his study of the films of Steven Spielberg in *A Cinema of Loneliness*, discusses one of the problems with the film *Schindler's List* as having to do with a "Hollywood-type formula" that takes an event like the Holocaust and manipulates the event to "get them"—in other words to get an emotional response from the audience that allows for a distancing from the "otherness" of the Holocaust and allows the audience to view the event from a "safe" distance, thereby possibly misrepresented the horror that this event entails for history.

Arendt calls the “banality of evil.”²² This “normalcy “of the chain of command is why I feel, like Foucault that “the legal process of judge, jury and executioner are proved valid and “those who rule are to be obeyed” (Discipline and Punishment 10). Once institutions allow for the language of discipline and punishment to be rationale under the guise of eugenics, nationalism or simple governmental order, an event such as the Holocaust can be explained and somewhat understood. My work is interdisciplinary in scope. Both the event [Holocaust] and the methods I will use, such as film studies, postmodern criticism, historiography and performance theory will cross boundaries and help show that any discipline that makes the event of Holocaust representation its own is misguided at best.

What I would like to do in this project is take a collage of Holocaust representations and using history and literary criticism as a buffer zone, a “boot in the face”, according to one critics view of Sylvia Plath’s use of Holocaust imagery in her work. The problem *Al Strangeways* has with Plath’s use of Holocaust images in art is the same problem evident in most attempts by art to represent the Holocaust. In other words, “the problem of Plath’s utilization of the Holocaust can be broadly divided into two parts: the motives behind her use of the material, and the actual appearance of it in her poetry ... a conflict which finds its ultimate focus in her consciousness of the importance of remembering such an event, but also of the voyeurism implicit in attempts at remembrance” (*Strangeways* 1). This dissertation will attempt to show representations

² Hannah Arendt, in her study of Nazi war criminal Adolph Eichmann in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, discusses the “normalcy” of many of the Nazi SS in their bureaucratic machinations in dealing with the mass murder of the Jews. The term banality of evil lends itself to the double personality theory of many of the Nazi “death head” units in the sense that they could kill without remorse and return to their everyday lives without any hint of guilt or responsibility. The banality became the code word for a group of soldiers unable to accept responsibility for genocide.

[Resnais's *Night and Fog*, Hoess's *Commandant of Auschwitz*] that fill in the grey areas between remembering the event [bearing witness] and using history and literature as learning tools. I plan to show that representations like Spielberg's *Schindler's List* and Plath's "Daddy" and other works of art may actually allow the Holocaust to be trivialized and border, in some cases, on the carnivalesque and may allow for dangerous modes of revisionism. I will use a historiographical framework that will encapsulate the literature, film, drama and poetry of that dark period [1945-2000]. My intent is to show that sometimes the "literature written by the losers" [mine] may be the most significant because, in this language of atrocity, the "silences" that pervade the re-telling and representation of this "event" can possibly aid in forging a type of representation that is not offensive or injurious to the victims.

The focus of this project will be on representation and how the discourse of atrocity plays into the power systems of historical epochs before, during, and after the Holocaust. I feel the interdisciplinary approach allows for the disciplines to write across the curriculum and help forge a more plausible representation of atrocity in Holocaust discourse. I feel that a collection or collage of different genres—film, theater, literature and poetry—can accomplish this aim. Though no complete understanding can ever be forged, contemporary misuse of the Holocaust in language and media can add to what Leslie Fiedler terms "horror pornography."

Fiedler's problem with modern Holocaust interpretations lies in the commodification that underlies "the motives of the publishers and producers were, quite obviously, crassly commercial ... but what prompted their paying audiences, both Jewish and gentile, was, I could not help feeling, something worse: on one hand, a kind of

sadomasochistic voyeurism ... and on the other a desire, which they have easily confessed, to assuage the guilt they suffered for their earlier blindness” (Fiedler 398). This blindness Fiedler talks about plays well into my project in terms of perpetrator dialectic and the discourse of the killers. The words of Eichmann and Hoess and the depictions of Kurt Gerstein [“The Deputy”]and Reinhard Heydrich/Wansee Protocols [“Conspiracy”] bring the reader/viewer back to an understanding that any type of Baudrillardian postmodern ersatz-type Holocaust representations—for example the Disneyland-type re-creation of Dachau and Auschwitz as tourist stops—is troubling at best. I feel this dissertation will adhere to the current discourse in holocaust and genocide studies, trauma studies, cultural studies, film and drama criticism, psychiatric studies and historiography. This dissertation will present my supposition, detail initial research of primary and secondary materials and methods, and point to why this project will be of interest to scholars of the Holocaust and those who attempt to represent this horror in art.

The Holocaust is the paradigmatic event of all discourses on atrocity and because the Holocaust negates literary inspiration the most representative model to test theories about the changing perceptions of language, representation, performance and culture in Holocaust representation. Because any discourse that attempts to address an event like the Holocaust is unimaginable, the problem of how to deal with the horror is difficult but imperative as Elie Wiesel warns us: “You must listen more ... you must listen to more. I repeat, if Wiernik [former member of the *Sonderkommando*] had the courage to write, you must listen” (Roth 415). Lawrence Langer said the men of the *Sonderkommando*, Jewish prisoners who had the horrendous task of burning their brothers and sisters in the crematory ovens, were given a “choiceless choice.” This project will show that the

“choiceless choice”³ of the survivors is important but the “choiceless choices” of the perpetrators is paramount to any clear understanding of the horror of the “Final Solution.” What should inspire scholars of the Holocaust, as well as those in performance and film production, is the acceptance of their “choiceless choices” to represent more accurately the event, and to forget any type of “Hollywood” ending, and to recognize how sacrilegious it could be to the victims.

Survivor testimonies, diaries and films/plays depicting the plight, horror and voices of the Jews are too numerous to mention but will be addressed to buttress the main focus of the project—the perpetrators and how re-examining perpetrator discourse in film, literature, drama and poetry can be a more accurate gauge of how we recreate art of this atrocity. For the survivor the anatomy of melancholy in the notion that “it’s *my skin*. This is not a coat. You can’t take it off. And it’s there, and it will be there until I die” (Roth 418), is important only when it is balanced with the words of an Eichmann or Hoess. Eichmann brings the horror discourse back to the forefront with his inability to accept guilt: “I did not want to destroy my feelings of compassion for human suffering, I’ve always felt them, but usually I paid no attention because I was *not allowed* to be soft” (Todorov 172).

What is so interesting about the discourse of the Death’s Head regiments and the Nazi bureaucrats is the overwhelming absence of any type of recognition of the horror

³ The term “choiceless choice” was cited by John K. Roth in the article “Review: Langer’s Listening: Holocaust Testimonies in the Ruins of Memory,” published in 1991 in *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* on Holocaust Sonderkommando survivor Lawrence L. Langer. Langer discusses the “choiceless choice” that faced new arrivals at Auschwitz. The choice being to take a job in the Sonderkommando as Jewish worker in the crematorium and help other Jews burn the bodies of their fellow Jews. Their choice to survive may have saved their lives but Langer talks about their horror at the end of the war when they faced the responsibility for that “choice.”

they produced. Another interesting parallel to the SS discourse is the character of Howard Campbell Jr. in Vonnegut's *Mother Night*. Campbell, by playing at being a Nazi, realizes at the end that one "must be careful what one pretends to be."⁴ It is the same idea when one attempts to recreate the Holocaust in art-one must be careful when pretending with the *language* of this horror-the Holocaust defies language and pleads for thought.

It is too easy just to declare Nazis monsters and perverted sadists and this is why perpetrator testimony and the oral discourse in Lanzmann's *Shoah*, the voice of Speer in *Inside the Third Reich*, and the historically driven theatre recreation of the Vatican Concordat with Hitler in Hochhuth's *The Deputy* allows the Nazis to speak in their deliberate mindset, free of any need to feel. When this is balanced with the voices of victims/survivors in Bellow's *Mr. Sammler's Planet*, Wallant's *The Pawnbroker*, and Muller's *Eyewitness Auschwitz*, the language of the horrors of restricting life at its worst point and the emptiness each feels in the ability to mourn makes the voices of their tormentors even more accurate and more devastating. The ability to view literature in fictive and non-fictive means allows the reader the ability to decipher possibly the intent of the artist and how to recreate this horror in a postmodern form free of any restriction that may allow the event to be diminished or downgraded to any type of understandable tract. If the Holocaust is the final act of modernism and the leap into the truly postmodern than semiotics must allow for a new form that inhibits misrepresentation and encourages

⁴ Kurt Vonnegut in the introduction to *Mother Night*, talks about the major lesson that his main character Howard W. Campbell Jr., learns in taking on his role as spy for the CIA against the Nazis. Because Campbell is so good at being a spy he loses his identity and as Vonnegut explains in the introduction what does Campbell in is his success at spying: "this is the only story of mine whose moral I know. I don't think it's a marvelous moral; I simply happen to know what it is: We are what we pretend to be, so we must be careful about what we pretend to be."

cognition and discussion. Dissuasion in a postmodern form allows for a more complete recognition [if there can ever be a recognition] of the event through language that cannot be trivialized or twisted [vis-à-vis Spielberg when he uses language like “I am Schindler” to give the audience a hero figure].

Can there ever be a depiction of a real hero-figure in Holocaust art? Herein lays the point of my project to use the voices of the Einsatzgruppen [mobile killing units in the East] and the Nazi final solution apparatus [Reich Security Office Section B-4] to show how art takes all this into consideration when any attempt to bring the Holocaust to an audience is made. A good deal of this project will focus on criticism of Holocaust films; especially Hollywood formula films such as *Schindler's List* and *The Pawnbroker* and documentary films like Resnais's *Night and Fog*, Lanzmann's *Shoah*, as well as *Conspiracy*. Judith Doneson does a very thorough job in critiquing American film representation of the Holocaust. One problem area Doneson sees with the Hollywood formula in American films about the Holocaust is how Hollywood strives for a happy ending and a moral to the story. Neither *Schindler's List* nor *The Pawnbroker* have happy endings, nor do they effectively paint a moral picture of good Germans, guilty survivor Jews or monster Nazis.

This project will look at the position that, if the films had paid more attention to the ethos of genocide and the words of the perpetrators, then possibly Nazerman would not be a victim of the Final Solution all over again in *The Pawnbroker* and possibly Schindler would not be the great white savior in *Schindler's List*. When Yitzhak Zuckerman, second in command of the Jewish Combat Organization in the Warsaw Ghetto, is interviewed in Lanzmann's documentary film *Shoah* he states, “I began

drinking after the war. It was very difficult. Claude, you asked for my impression. If you could lick my heart, it would poison you” (Lanzmann 196). This is where one should start when analyzing the Holocaust; especially if one attempts to use the Holocaust in any type of art. By understanding the horror of Zuckerman’s words, one must return to the perpetrators to show how their actions, deeds and technologically-driven language are responsible for the trauma that Zuckerman and so many survivors feel to this day. Holocaust survivor inability to reckon with their horror and their inability to speak of it is exactly the reason that this postmodern “Auschwitz effect” makes so much sense in representation linguistically and in terms of viewing as well.

What makes the language of the killers important in the postmodern ideal is its normalcy. Zygmunt Bauman discusses this realm of normalcy in terms of the problems of “enlightened” reason in understanding how the Holocaust could happen. From Thomas Doherty’s “Postmodernism: An Introduction”: The horror at the evil of the Holocaust is, for Bauman, actually a horror at the rationality of the Holocaust. The Enlightenment project, which was conditioned by humanity’s desire to master nature in the process of disenchantment, enabled the development of an extremely rationally ordered and self-sustaining social process. Part of the legacy of this is the development of efficiency in industry, and the ongoing development—often a self-serving development—of technology [which shows that] every ‘ingredient’ of the Holocaust....was normal, ‘normal’ not in the sense of the familiar....but in the sense of being fully in keeping with everything we know about our civilization, its guiding spirit, its priorities, its immanent vision of the world. (12)

What Doherty is espousing here is Bauman's understanding that this banal nature of the pure technocrat, something Hannah Arendt sees as the crux of the Nazi crimes, is not exclusive to the Nazis. What the language of the perpetrators shows is how the Nazis manipulated language with euphemism and innuendo to forge a complete and very normal "development of technology." Arendt states that Eichmann followed the Kantian dictate that "a law is a law [and] there could be no exception" (Arendt 137). Eichmann himself stated that to disobey was just not something he was raised to do and whatever he did he was bound to a "loyalty oath" to Hitler, and an unquestioned obedience to authority which is echoed in the words of Hans Frank, Nazi Governor-General of Poland when he stated the categorical imperative of National Socialism: "Act in such a way that the Fuhrer, if he knew your action, would approve it" (*Die Technik des Staates* 15-16).

The language of power and discipline that enforces dialectic of spectacle and order is what Foucault discusses in *Discipline and Punishment*. The perpetrators must accept the responsibility for the language of the Final solution that was inscribed on them by Hitler. The semantics of death they purveyed will be very important in my project to show how the meaning of language in the words of the power brokers in Nazi occupied Europe helps provide a more thorough framework for any type of representation of the Holocaust in the future. To test theories of how one may represent the discourse of atrocity in art semiotically this project will use as its model *The Holocaust*. The core of this project lies in analyzing the banal language of the technocrat and how that "language of the final solution" should influence any representation of the Holocaust in art. By re-examining the language of Totenkopf Brigade—the SS Death Head Regiments—and listening to the voice of totalitarian authority allows one a much clearer view into the

mind behind the words. Dr. Rudolph Lange, a former lawyer in charge of Einsatzgruppen units in Latvia, states in *Conspiracy*, “I think it is important to know what words mean. I have become distrustful of language but a gun means what it says” (HBO FILMS *Conspiracy* 2001). Because the memory of survivors can be tainted with time and understandably hatred for the killers, this project will show that the mind and memory of the killers is at times more precise and without hatred, and its banality lies in the Nazis “inability to accept guilt,” which Auschwitz commandant Rudolph Hoess summarizes in his own words. From Commandant of Auschwitz:

The Fuhrer commands, we follow.... It was completely impossible. Certainly many SS officers grumbled and complained about some of the harsh orders that came from the Reichsfuhrer SS, but they nevertheless always carried them out. Many orders of the Reichsfuhrer SS deeply offended a great number of his SS officers, but I am perfectly certain that not a single one of them would have dared raise a hand against him, or would have even contemplated doing so ... his orders, issued in the name of the Fuhrer, were sacred. They brooked no consideration ... no interpretation. (145)

Hoess is not a great writer and surely not a great intellect but in his words the essence of the “system” and how language inscribes personality is a more effective representation for history and art than any type of “creation” from the Holocaust. For many like Hoess, Eichmann and also Albert Speer, the notion that they did anything but “follow orders” is incorrect at best. A large part of my project will use sources like Daniel J. Goldhagen’s *Hitler’s Willing Executioners* and Hannah Arendt’s *Origins of Totalitarianism* to show that many of the SS units in the killing areas became “conditioned” to the language of the

Final Solution. The killer's rational defense of the atrocities in the occupied East permits the reader to see them as a paradoxical by-product of systems—the “victims” of the language inscribed on them by Nazi totalitarianism. The issues of good versus evil, monster versus victim, are important to this discourse but the language behind the historical machinations of the Jewish experience [pogroms, anti-Semitism, The “Protocols of the Elders of Zion”] have allowed the discourse of Social Darwinism and the Nuremberg laws to reach fruition in the Death Camps.

Goldhagens' text is very helpful for this project in its take on what he terms “Eliminationist Anti-Semitism.”⁵ What Goldhagen does with the Nazi legal system is show how the codification of the Nuremberg Racial Laws, as well as the imprinting of the Jew as physical cancer on German blood, allowed for the language to become law, and more importantly, how this language allowed Darwinist science to begin the process in the Euthanasia T-4 program at Hadamaar. Goldhagen recognizes the “normalcy” of the perpetrator and how they can be seen as less “otherworldly” if we look close enough. We may like to believe films and art that show Nazis as inhuman monsters allows us a comfort zone from the killers, but this is counter-productive when rationale for genocide becomes policy. Goldhagen comments on how the system can be seen as normal and how it can happen: “It must be emphasized ... that the incentive structure itself is causing people to act, but only that it *in conjunction with the cognitive and value structures* are

⁵ The theory put forward by Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, in his study of the perpetrators of the Holocaust (*Hitler's Willing Executioners*), that looked at the evolution of German anti-Semitism over history and shows how the culmination of many facets of Jewish persecution over the centuries brought the Nazis to the fruition of genocide, which Goldhagen claims a “particular type of anti-Semitism that led them [the Nazis and ordinary Germans] to conclude that the Jews *ought to die* ... simply put, the perpetrators, having consulted their own convictions and morality and having judged the mass annihilation of Jews to be right, did not *want* to say “no.” (14)

together producing the action. Explaining the perpetrators' actions demands, therefore, that the perpetrators' phenomenon logical reality be taken seriously. We must attempt the difficult enterprise of imagining ourselves in their places, performing their deeds ... viewing what they beheld" (*Hitler's Willing Executioners* 21).

This difficult enterprise of "imagining ourselves in the shoes of the perpetrator" is covertly the underlying message of my whole project. This is why the combination of literary and historical method is so important to my project. I feel scholars must follow William Shirer's journalistic dictate to read between the lines with history and better to decipher language to codify events. This is the plan of this project-to re-analyze the works as part literary scholar, part historian and part journalist. William Shirer, one of the voices of history that was in Berlin during Weimar and after the Nazi takeover seems to have a sense of what this project will attempt to do in terms of looking for the signifiers and language underneath the surface that is so integral to Holocaust and historical representation. From Shirer's *Berlin Diary*: "For the last few months I've been trying to get by on my wits ...; to indicate a truth or an official lie by the tone and inflexion of the voice, by a pause held longer than is natural, by the use of an Americanism which most Germans, who've learned their English in England, will not fully grasp, and by drawing from a word, a phrase, a sentence, a paragraph ... all the benefit I can" (511).

Many artists, Sylvia Plath for example, may have not followed Shirer's method or read enough between the lines. What a director like Steven Spielberg has not caught from a film like *Shoah* is what is "not said." This is the point where we need begin any work of art in this genre. The Holocaust is not a concrete interpretative event and what I want to do with this dissertation follows historian R.G. Collingwood in his discussion of modern

French historiography in *The Idea of History*. This project's application is literary in full but historical in part. The method follows what the French historian does in the sense of Bergson's rule that one must "*s'installer dans le mouvement*, to work himself into the movement of the history he is studying, and to feel that movement as something that goes on within himself" (Collingwood 189). I have always been fascinated by man's inhumanity to man. When I began studying the Holocaust as an undergraduate I knew that this project would be the commencement of my scholarly interests and would influence how literature can be taught under an umbrella of genocide and holocaust studies.

The primary hypothesis is that a narrowed analysis of certain works of Holocaust literature centered mostly on the dialectic of death in autobiographical literature of perpetrator and victim [Hoess, Speer, Eichmann, Muller], fiction [Vonnegut, Bellow and Wallant], performance drama [Hochhuth's *The Deputy* and Sherman's *Bent*], film [Spielberg, Resnais, Lumet, Lanzmann, Pierson and Cavani] and Poetry [Plath and W.D. Snodgrass]. For this dissertation the "executioner's song" will take center stage while survivors will be used as voices to echo their victimization and point to their oppressors. For example when one observes a line of poetry from Vilna ghetto survivor Abraham Sutzkever; "They come toward me, blue bones in a row—Frozen Jews over plains of snow. My skin is covered with a marble veil. My words slow down, my light is frail" ("Frozen Jews" 19-22), and a line from Plath's *Daddy* "I could be a Jew," the problem is evident; Plath's identification with a horror she can never know. Any attempt to associate oneself with victims is problematic.

The autobiographical voice of Hitler is obviously important to this project and many primary and secondary sources in this project will evince the all important dictate that there was a driving force behind the Holocaust-an anti-Semitism that starts and ends with Adolph Hitler or in essence the ethos that “without Hitler there could not have been a Holocaust.” Though much of Hitler’s ravings about the Jews came in *Mein Kampf*, it is important to note that, even in Hitler’s “table talk” with party members and his inner circle, his language is the voice of authority with a clever manipulation of semantics and signifiers disguised in what I would call *Hitlerspeak*. A good example of this is when he talks about the Jewish “question”:

The Jews must pack up, disappear from Europe. Let them go to Russia. Where the Jews are concerned, I’m devoid of all sense of pity, They’ll always be the ferment that moves peoples one against the other.... It’s entirely natural that we should concern ourselves with the question on the European level. It’s clearly not enough to expel them from Germany. We cannot allow them to retain bases of withdrawal at our doors. We want to be out of danger of all kinds of infiltration. (*Hitler’s Table Talk* 260)

This dialectic is important to the language of the killers and underlies their argument that they were just doing what their leader ordered. The language of Hitler in *Mein Kampf* and the fuhrer’s private conversations recorded for oral history are not merely the ravings of a rabid anti-Semitic monster, but the controlled dialectic of a man determined to rid the world of a parasite he saw as polluting the Darwinian racial pool of German culture. By employing close textual analysis of *The Holocaust* in many of the popular forms generally associated with this event this project attempts to add to the

discussion of an event that needs representation, but the way it is done is the key discourse and by noting the many ambiguities and inconsistencies in many literary texts, films, plays and poetry we can re-direct the away from the abyss of problematic Holocaust representation and open the forum for more care in dealing with this horrific postmodern event.

What the collage of Holocaust forms allows for this project is the re-visiting of the notions that for perpetrators their “inability to mourn”⁶ must be better understood, and for their victims the release from melancholia may be possible if the perpetrators realize and acknowledge their lack of mourning for the victims of Nazi persecution. The act of re-evaluating perpetrator literature is not new in terms of any criticism of the Holocaust, but it is relatively small in the overall discussion of Holocaust literature and representation. Social theory after the Holocaust begins to play a more visceral role in postmodern criticism as well in the “modernity gone awry” world of postmodern thinking. This modernity gone awry is echoed by Heidrun Friese in his essay on Paul Celan in Richard Fine’s *Social Theory after the Holocaust*. For Friese much of what we must rediscover about the Holocaust lies in the silences, the “terrifying silence and the thousand darkneses of murderous speech. The reference here is to speech whose power enforces falling silent, brings nameless and unspeakable death and silence, the reference is to the silence of words and to the possibility or impossibility of re-presenting what happened through language and writing” (160). Friese’s train of thought follows the

⁶ The term “inability to mourn” was the title of psychologists Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich’s study of the behavior of Germans in post-holocaust Germany. The Mitscherlich’s work identified a group of character traits that showed that many Germans after the war mourned the loss of their father-figure Adolph Hitler, but failed to have the ability to accept the guilt of collective responsibility for the Holocaust, or to show any type of remorse or mourning for the Jews that were murdered under the National Socialist regime.

dictate of Jean Francois Lyotard's that "to characterize a state in which something has to be said that cannot be said.... [Is like] 'suffocated words': finally a terrible falling silent" (Fine 160).

This type of secondary source material can aid scholars in the Adorno-type ideal that after Auschwitz art is impossible. This project will deal more with these "silences" using theoretical works of Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida as well. Levinas, in Time and the Other, discusses what I think has much relevance for the Holocaust survivor and perpetrator, that is the idea that the horror is not something *that is*. For many of those who participated in the horror there can never be any type of rest or sleep. For Levinas it is a form of insomnia: possibly a loss of the *there is* or *there was*. By insomnia Levinas means sleeplessness "constituted by the consciousness that it will never finish.... [and] from the moment one is riveted there, one loses all notion of a starting point. The present is welded to the past....it renews nothing" (48). The agreement with Levinas is that when one has no possible recourse to rest or peace the notion of one's existence affirmed by his annihilation or "otherness" is what I would term the "Holocaust syndrome." This idea of "other" will also be a large part of my work when analyzing my collage. The notion of "otherness" for both executioner and victim came to full fruition in the concentration camps and Derrida and Julia Kristeva also lend to the theoretical framework for analysis. The same type of insomnia Levinas speaks of is also echoed in Derrida's words in Adieu: A Farewell to Emmanuel Levinas, when he states that "Death: not, first of all annihilation, no-being, a nothingness but a certain experience for the survivor of the 'without response'" (6). This "without response" and annihilation is very similar to Levinas loss of the "here is" for those who lived through the horror. For Derrida the

message is “to learn it from oneself and by oneself....to love....is not learned from life, taught by life. Only from the other and by death....from the other at the edge of life” (Specters of Marx xviii). What I find most relevant to most of the work with this project is just this understanding of “the other” at the “edge” of life that makes this event so impossible at times to come to terms with. The recognition of being so close to the edge of the abyss may help form a consensus that one can abide to some extent. This notion of annihilation of self and the psychological horror that Kristeva terms “abject horror”⁷ find parallels in my project in terms of trauma theory and how this impacts the language of the survivors and perpetrators.

The methodology of trauma is an important didactical framework for re-evaluating the dialogue of atrocity in the original documents, for examples the Wansee Protocols, or Plath’s use of Holocaust imagery in “Daddy.” An important secondary critic of this idea of trauma theory and the Holocaust is Dori Laub. She sees the notion of an “Other” in a place like Auschwitz as impossible and for the perpetrators Laub, sees the importance of those Foucaultian power structures and how they imprint the horror on their subjects and after the horror is over they become prisoners: “their attempts to rationalize the unprecedented scope of the destructiveness, brutally imposed upon their victims a delusional ideology whose grandiose coercive pressure totally excluded and eliminated the possibility of an unviolated, unencumbered and thus sane, point of reference in the witness” (“Truth and Testimony” 66). Laub also sees a major problem for survivors in

⁷ Julia Kristeva, in *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, sees that “the abject has only one quality of the object—that of being opposed to *I*” (1). In this text the notion that an event like the Holocaust and the universe of the concentration camps for the perpetrators and the victims would constitute a good example of a universe totally oppose to “*I*” and the horror of being taken to the gas chamber as well as the horror of being the instrument of so many deaths would be a good theoretical directive for this dissertation.

the impossibility to bear witness when one can no longer communicate the uncommunicatable. This sounds much like Emmanuel Levinas's "responsibility for the Other,"⁸ and how future generations may look at the survivors of the Holocaust and their need to be loved crucial to any type of representative communication. The producer of art relating to the Holocaust owes those "without response" a response. Laub sees this abject horror, much like Levinas and Derrida, in the sense that "this loss of the capacity to be a witness to oneself and thus to witness from the inside is perhaps the true meaning of annihilation, for when one's history is abolished, one's identity ceases to exist as well" ("Truth and Testimony" 67).

When this theoretical apparatus is used with executioners the whole ideal becomes the picture of another type of annihilation—the inability or refusal of the Nazis and their cohorts to accept their annihilated selves as well, and this is also what needs to be made clear in this dissertation. It is not hard to understand a survivor having problems with an annihilated self, but for the SS Death's Head units, the inability to accept annihilation is where the language of the Nuremberg Trials and after will be important. This annihilation of the human spirit is the language of the camp *musulman*—the living dead in the death camps—characters who survive in Saul Bellow's *Sammler Mr. Sammler's Planet* and Edward Lewis Wallant's *The Pawnbroker*. I will talk about both of these works in the fiction section of this project but a larger part of the discussion will be

⁸ In *Time and the Other*, Emmanuel Levinas discusses the ethics of social responsibility and obligation and the Holocaust comes up many times in the discussion and in the notion of responsibility to an Other. Levinas states that "the face signifying to me 'thou shalt not kill,' and consequently also 'you are responsible for the life of this absolutely Other,'" (108) would add an interesting ideal that may allow for a bridge in the gap between survivors, perpetrators and future generations.

the non-fictional voice of the Nazis Eichmann and Albert Speer and how they have trouble to their last breath with their collective guilt.

One assumption I will make when using historiography and postmodern criticism is the reevaluating of Nazis like Albert Speer and the “literature of the losers,” and how this type of revisionist history can be revised to see some type of acceptance of guilt, whether collective or individual, by the killers and bureaucrats. Oral history of such an “unimaginable” period in time is very problematic and if one is not careful with that reproduction of this history it falls apart. Albert Speer states that after Kristallnacht—“The Night of Broken Glass” pogrom of the Jews in 1938—he “did not see that more was being smashed than glass” (*Inside the Third Reich* 111). It is not impossible for one to say “how could he not know” that the “more” that was broken were the Jews. But after this statement Speer adds: “did I sense, at least for a moment, that something was beginning which would end with the annihilation of one whole group of our nation.... I do not know” (*Inside the Third Reich* 111). Speer’s statement begs for an explanation of language. It is too easy to accept the caricature of monster Nazis. Whether monster or technocrat, we must listen and accept the horror of their normalcy; it is part of all of us. Like any good historian/literary scholar, to install oneself in the movement vis-à-vis Speer or Eichmann, can lead to a sort of clarity. Possibly Speer is facing the same type of “traumatic realism” Michael Rothberg speaks of in this horrible event. Rothberg urges the artist to understand that the language of survivors and perpetrators can be clouded with the problems of decaying of time, survivors dying off, and historical revisionism Rothberg directs his analysis into two specific areas of “how to deal” with Holocaust

representation and the “catch-22” that evolves. From *Traumatic Realism: The Demands of Holocaust Representation*:

On the one hand, a demand that representations of the genocide be realistic registers the desire for an undistorted documentation of history and the fear that flights of the imagination or of philosophical speculation will trivialize the events, mock the “literalness” of the victims’ suffering, and lend ammunition to Holocaust negationists. An antirealist tendency within Holocaust studies, on the other hand, argues that the reluctance to attempt epistemologically challenging analyses of the Holocaust that constitute its specificity.... Here, instead of calls for realism, are found attacks on realism and calls for silence. (Rothberg 108)

Rothberg mentions that even philosophy has its limits. This is what I plan to do with my project; test the limits of representation and come to a better understanding of Holocaust language and how not to carnivalize or trivialize its message. Any scholar or artist that attempts to interpret the Holocaust must realize that, unless they were in the camps, whether as guard or prisoner, they can never truly claim ownership of their work or that *event*. Only someone who lived through the *anus mundi* of the camps has complete agency to speak of it and claim ownership. My job is to analyze the discourse of atrocity and make a case for better attention to the message we send when we recreate the Holocaust.

Another assumption that directly influences this project has to do with performance and how Holocaust drama and films are “acted” and their influence on generations of audiences who might be experiencing a Holocaust medium for the first time. Because *Schindler’s List* is the most idealized and heralded Holocaust film in

popular culture, this project will address the need to rethink Spielberg's film as problematic in some parts and do more with films such as Lanzmann's *Shoah*, Resnais' *Night and Fog*, and Cavani's *The Night Porter*. The voices of both victim and perpetrator in *Shoah* may not be stylized with Spielberg's "Holocaustspeak," but they speak volumes in the abject semiotics of hate and sorrow. There can be no "great white man" ethos in a film about such inhumanity. Spielberg's film basically feminizes the Jewish victims while patronizing the great "Schindler." A more critical interest in diaries, interviews and autobiography need to be addressed more in drama and film thereby taking away the type of commercial trivialization of the Holocaust seen in popular shows like *Seinfeld* when they make a comedy episode out of viewing *Schindler's List*. The same problem of commercialization was parodied by many in the "Nazi Chic" culture that surrounded Martin Sherman's *Bent* in the leather bars of New York and San Francisco in the 1980s. The use of Sherman's play as some kind of fetish attraction nor only glorifies the idea of Nazi sadomasochism for profit but more dangerously allows for a misuse of history and the defilement of homosexual victims of Nazi persecution.

This project will push for the needed re-evaluation of how the Holocaust has become commodified in consumer culture when a form, for example Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, becomes a Baudrillardian Disney-land with a portrait of "Mickey Mouse" behind a camp caricature. Perpetrator discourse can be used effectively to evince a traumatic realism that allows one to see the madness that induced the mayhem as well as the warning of history not to trivialize the Holocaust. In essence, we need to recognize that "to play a Jew or not to play a Jew" is as important in Holocaust drama and film as "to play a Nazi or not to play a Nazi" and with that in mind possibly the Holocaust will be

dealt with in a much deeper artistic medium at all times In Hochhuth's *The Deputy* SS officer Kurt Gerstein attempts to convince the Vatican of the horror of the camps and to his dismay they do nothing. Why this play is a more effective use of history and does not glamorize its hero Gerstein is in the sense that Gerstein commits suicide and this play is based on the actual history of this personage.

Hochhuth's play is true to history and Gerstein ironically may have been the only Nazi who "Played a Nazi" and did not become a murderer. Schindler, like Gerstein, was a real figure as well, but his glorification by Spielberg and the "Schindler Jews" is problematic at certain junctures and though Spielberg's film is of importance to audiences of the Holocaust, it also must recognize the areas of possible discussion. In Hochhuth's drama the Nazi eugenic experts and doctors, including Joseph Mengele, are portrayed as they are supposed to be; as historical personages that committed the greatest atrocity man has ever known. Hochhuth, like Martin Sherman, does not play "fast and loose" with history and this may be the more complete way to represent the Holocaust in performance and film and may point more to the importance of what Schindler did without trying to moralize why he did it.

In conclusion, a great deal of criticism of representation of the Holocaust in the areas of my collage center on the *presumption* that what actually happened in the death camps of Auschwitz, Treblinka, Birkenau, etc., can be known, understood and communicated. I feel it is that which "cannot be communicated;" that type of signifying evil that can only be demonstrated in the language inside the language of totalitarianism that my project will focus on to help readers to a better understanding of representation. Foucault's definition of a police state will be an omnipresent theme in my project. It

would be too easy to see Hitler as a modern “Mephistopheles” and his Nazi minions just a nation of jack-booted “Fascist Faust’s,” but I think that when one comes to power and decides to ensure a public good by force and selective uncivil liberties, then what happened in Germany can be understood. Obviously, any reconstruction of the Holocaust is influenced by the predominant cultures but this assumes that the “entire” culture will react to the artist’s message in the way it was intended. If we become willing adherents to the Spielberg’s or Plath’s use of the Holocaust we run the risk of corrupting the message, and if the message of history is not adhered to do we not all become, to use Goldhagen’s term, “willing executioners” of the memory of those who survived and died.

The voice of the real executioners should help remind us how the discourse and dialectic of the Holocaust can allow for a diminution of the horror and a revisionist amnesia that will be disastrous for future generations if we do not remember that as Zizek says “the paradoxical experience of an *increase* in the libidinal impact of an object whenever attempts are made to diminish and destroy it? Consider the way the figure of the Jews functioned in Nazi discourse; the more they were exterminated, eliminated, the fewer their numbers, the more dangerous their reminder became, as if their threat grew in proportion to their diminution in reality” (Zizek 6). What Slavoj Zizek is saying in *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture* is exactly what many Nazis in captivity have said years later, that being “we had to kill the children, don’t you see.” Re-examining this type of dialectic is imperative to my project and will aid in my discussion of “why” perpetrators, as time passes, are a more accurate gauge of that horrible time than many of the victims. My work plans to follow Foucault’s lead in the notion of a Post-Auschwitz ethic—to see Auschwitz through the gaze of an “other”

and hopefully find some relevance to the end of enlightened reason and try to make some inroads into how and why Auschwitz was possible. Lanzmann's lens has helped us to see and hear the voices of that distant hell on earth and Foucault has allowed scholars the ability to understand a close proximity to the Holocaust and to view it on intimate terms and question and re-evaluate it in art of all kinds.

Though performance and film are important to the historical and literary discourse of atrocity in the Holocaust, it is of vital importance for the overall learning experience that we understand performance and film cannot reveal **all**. My project will use the collage of atrocity forms to push for answers and the knowledge that we as viewers, scholars, directors, writers and filmmakers must tread lightly on the graves of those so horribly murdered in the name of National Socialism. By using many modern methods including trauma studies, genocide studies and perpetrator studies I feel my project can be a most useful reconstructive tool in dealing with the perpetrators of the Final Solution, the people they murdered in the Holocaust, and the people who attempt to use the Holocaust in future artistic discourse. In essence, we must encounter and walk lightly with the Holocaust, in effect write as if "our minds can feel the barbed wire" of those horrible camps.

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II. PART I—KURT VONNEGUT

“We are what we pretend to be, so we must be careful about what we pretend to be.”

(Mother Night V)

“Nazi and fascist totalitarianisms found themselves now on one side, now on the other in this war of ghosts ... and there are so many ghosts in this tragedy, in the charnel houses of the camps, that no one will ever be sure of being on a single and same side ... the whole history of European politics ... would be that of a ruthless war between solidary camps that are equally terrorized by the ghost, the ghost of the other.” (Specters of Marx 149)

The fiction of the Holocaust, in terms of representation, is the most difficult to portray. This is due to the fact that the writer is taking liberties with the stories of the dead and making them his/her own, and employing character sketches as the means for producing their works. Whether writing fiction, or as a historian, using history to make good fiction, the problems that arise in terms of what is “unspeakable,”⁹ and how to incorporate this into a fictive or non-fictive work becomes a major area of concern. What is important for all the authors in this section is the area between “what is said” (the distancing of language with dark comedy/satire), and “what is unsaid” (the reality of the holocaust’s horror) which is, for Vonnegut especially, the distance at times from the

⁹ Peter Haidu, cited in *Probing the Limits of Representation*, edited by Saul Friedlander, discusses what he terms “the dialectics of unspeakability: language, silence, and the narratives of desubjectification.” Haidu is talking about how historians must use the work of other historians to relate an event but when it comes to the Holocaust problems will arise that have much to do with what is said and what is unsaid.

horror of the Holocaust and the Nazi regime to make the reader laugh very much in the manner of Shakespeare's fools. In *Mother Night*, Vonnegut gives us many funny characters but Dr. Lionel Jones, D.D.S., D.D. is particularly Shakespearian in the sense he is somewhat wise from book learning but such a racist and bigot he cannot be blinded to reality, but ironically, Jones is the only genuine friend Campbell has. His theory that "the teeth of Jews and Negroes proved beyond question that both groups were degenerate" (64), is just a sample of his neo-Nazi ravings, but Campbell also sees that he has been serving madmen since World War II so why not embrace another: "Why should I have honored him [Jones] with such a full-dress biography? In order to contrast myself a race-baiter who is ignorant and insane. I am neither ignorant nor insane. Those whose orders I carried out in Germany were as ignorant and insane as Dr. Jones. I knew it. God help me, I carried out their instructions anyway" (69). In an interview with *Playboy* in 1973 he discusses periodical breaks, like Dr. Jones, D.D.S., D.D., from the horror in his work: "When Shakespeare figured the audience had had enough of the heavy stuff, he'd let up a little, bring on a clown or a foolish innkeeper or something like that, before he'd become serious again" (Cited in *Conversations with Kurt Vonnegut* 90-91).

When Vonnegut returns to the horrors of reality and the semiotics and signifiers of possibility and learning, he usually brings the reader back to the representation of the event—for *Mother Night* the event is Nazi Germany, WWII, and the Holocaust. What will become evident in Vonnegut's text is the need for the possibility of a higher mentality, a relation to God possibly, and Vonnegut's Campbell, in his secular drive to be an artist and then to be silent after the war [in relation to his crimes], may have led to the

despair that comes to what Kierkegaard terms a spirit-less man in *The Sickness Unto Death*:

[If] one regrets ten times for having spoken to once for having kept silent-and why? Because the external fact of having spoken can involve one in difficulties, since it is an actuality. But to have kept silent! And yet this is the most dangerous of all. For by maintaining silence, a person is thrown wholly upon himself.... Such men, who, so to speak, mortgage themselves to the world ... they have no self, no self for whose sake they could venture everything, no self before God. (34-35)

Kurt Vonnegut is very adept at giving the reader the notion of said and unsaid and even incorporates this idea into the coded messages that Campbell is sending during his time as an American/Nazi spy. What Vonnegut does with unsaid in *Mother Night* is to espouse the ideas that propaganda, whether the Goebbels-type or the Howard W. Campbell-type¹⁰, is a function of good lies. Ironically, when an artist like Campbell serves two masters he runs the risk of serving the evil empire more than the good. What Vonnegut's message is, in *Mother Night*, is not only "we are what we pretend to be" but, when an artist serves society he better be doing it for the good of society and not the dictates of madmen. Vonnegut discusses the role of the artist and the state in an interview

¹⁰ For Vonnegut propaganda as the art of stating the "unsaid" is deliberate in his character of Howard W. Campbell, in the sense that Campbell is playing a game with the Nazis that he, the dramatist, overplays thinking that to play this great part may actually be effective in covertly using art to counter the actuality of the Goebbels type of propaganda which is visceral and frighteningly truly what many fervent Nazis like Goebbels believed to be policy. Unfortunately Campbell's attempt to play both sides against the middle as an artist is doomed to fail, for the idea of art in the fight against tyranny is to quote W.H. Auden that "nothing he ever wrote prevented one Jew from being gassed and in the end poetry [like Campbell's playing the part of the double agent as dramatist] is "stale beer."

with Frank McLaughlin in 1973: “I agree with Hitler and Stalin about a lot of things. Basic agreement with them and with Juan Peron and with almost every dictator is that an artist should serve his society, and I would not be interested in writing if I didn’t feel that what I wrote was an act of good citizenship or an attempt, at any rate, to be a good citizen” (*Conversations* 72). And for Vonnegut to be a good citizen he must tell good lies, and unlike his Howard W. Campbell Jr., avoid the bad ones. In an interview with *Life* magazine in 1969 he elaborates on this notion of good lies: “People need good lies.... There are too many bad ones” (*Conversations with Kurt Vonnegut* 12).

William Allen explains this technique of Vonnegut as having been engendered in him from his experience as an American POW in World war II and especially his time in Dresden during the firestorm of allied bombings: “The cruel part [for Vonnegut] was learned from life. His war experiences...were a harrowing exercise in absurdity” (*Conversations* 12). I agree with Allen that Vonnegut’s experience in Dresden as a “corpse miner” [the POWS were put to work digging up the burned corpses of the Dresden dead] has made *Mother Night* first a black comedy but also at the end an anti-war text. Many classify the humor in Vonnegut’s text to be from the nihilism they feel he has acquired from his war experience but for Vonnegut his black humor is a warning that we as citizens should be aware of our leaders and never stop questioning authority. In an interview with *Playboy* in 1973 Vonnegut expounds on this theme: “Freud had already written about gallows humor, which is middle-European humor. It’s people laughing in the middle of political helplessness.... The gallows humor that Freud identifies is what we regard as Jewish humor here: It’s humor about weak, intelligent people in hopeless situations” (*Conversations* 90-91). Allen comments that “he [Vonnegut] goes on to

describe the Midwestern Germans as skeptical and cultivated, though with a tendency to cruelty in their humor. His own starts out cruel too—death and disaster are the basic jokes—but is wrenched in the direction of kindness” (Conversations 12).

Vonnegut’s Howard W. Campbell Jr. is not as autobiographical as Billy Pilgrim in *Slaughterhouse Five*, but his allusions to “corpse carriers to the guardhouse” and the “smug briquettes” do allow his experience in Dresden to take note in his work and by distancing himself in the voice of the corpse miner forms an important voice of the Holocaust without having any experience [the unsaid] in the camps after the liberation. Thomas Marvin, in *Kurt Vonnegut: A Critical Companion*, comments on how Vonnegut’s time in Dresden remains with him in all his work. The work as a corpse miner “confirmed Vonnegut’s pacifism and led him to conclude that war, and the unquestioning nationalism that encourages it, are the real enemies of mankind” (74).

His spying will take on a two-fold horror after the war and the unsaid will actually be his undoing at the early part of the text. The importance of lies are important parts of his broadcasts throughout Nazi Germany and occupied Europe and Campbell does not even know he has broadcasted his beloved wife’s death for all is code—or better yet, unsaid: “The news that I had broadcast the coded announcement of my Helga’s disappearance, broadcast it without knowing what I was doing, somehow upset me more than anything in the whole adventure.... I would have liked to mourn as an agonized soul, invisible. But no. One part of me told the world of the tragedy in code” [*Mother Night* 184]. What Vonnegut does throughout the novel as does Wallant and Bellow is always remind the reader that whatever they may perceive as a concrete truth is a pipe dream and the only tangible criteria that can be found in re-telling this time in history is

in what Haidu calls the “antiworld of speech,” that being a “silence ... [that is] ... polyvalent, constitutive, and fragile. The necessary refuge of the poet, the theologian, and the intellectual, [and] it is equally the instrument of the bureaucrat, the demagogue, and the dictator” [Friedlander 278].

In terms of *Mother Night*, Campbell [and Eichmann] is the bureaucrat; Goebbels is the demagogues and Hitler the dictator. The semiotics of propaganda so well presented by Hitler and Goebbels was manufactured and linguistically charged with silences that were authoritarian in manner and not to be questioned. Hannah Arendt states in her grand treatise *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, that though terror is the main counterpart of successful propaganda in a totalitarian regime, the effectiveness of a certain type of propaganda, what she terms “power propaganda” is what I feel Vonnegut has given the reader in his depiction of Howard W. Campbell. The problem for Campbell comes down to knowingly or not knowingly serving two masters, FDR and Hitler: “Power propaganda...made clear to the population at large that the power of the Nazis was greater than that of the authorities and that it was safer to be a member of a Nazi paramilitary organization than a loyal Republican.... They ... never apologized for ‘excesses of the lower ranks’ ... and impressed the population as being very different from the ‘idle talkers’ of other parties” (*The Origins of Totalitarianism* 344).

Vonnegut’s text shows that the party big-wigs like Goebbels and Hoess, as well as Dr. Jones, recognize that when a country like Germany in Weimar times for Goebbels and Hoess, and America for Dr. Jones is “falling into the hands of the wrong people ... some heads are going to roll” (223), but Campbell realizes that in his propaganda before and after the war he has made men like Goebbels and Jones into the pure bureaucrats of

the totalitarian state: I have never seen a more sublime demonstration of the totalitarian mind, a mind which might be likened unto a system of gears whose teeth have been filed off at random. Such a snaggle-toothed thought machine, driven by a standard or even a substandard libido, whirls with the jerky, noisy, gaudy pointlessness of a *cuckoo clock in Hell*” [my emphasis] (224). Vonnegut’s depiction of the totalitarian state and the language of the power state echoes Michel Foucault and Arendt. I say this because the reader can get lost in long, drawn out historical tracts and for the art of fictive representation a character and a few very direct metaphoric allusions like “a cuckoo clock in hell” and “snaggle-toothed gears” can be more direct and more representative for art forms dealing with the Holocaust. Though Vonnegut’s text does not allude to Arendt or the workings of totalitarian semiotics. Campbell’s mistake is knowing his propaganda can be hateful and destructive, yet he does not really believe that such atrocities are possible, and is still “just an actor in a play.” What Vonnegut does with the simplicity of Campbell’s rhetoric is to allow him to debate this atrocity complicity with an Eichmann-type in Haifa who did believe that atrocity, in the name of the state, was actually necessary: “My case is different. I always know when I tell a lie, am capable of imagining the cruel consequences of anybody’s believing my lies, know cruelty is wrong.... If there is another life after this one, I would like ... to be the sort of person whom it could be truly said, ‘Forgive him—he knows not what he does’” (*Mother Night* 166), is give the reader a more accessible view into the historical and cultural dialectic of the Nazi regime and allows for, I feel, a more comfortable distance but also a more signified aesthetic to the Holocaust without really mentioning it. At this point in the text Vonnegut does not allow Campbell lax into over sentimentality or see himself as heroic

when Eichmann tells Campbell that though he has much responsibility for the six million Jews murdered in the Final Solution he also tell Campbell he is responsible as well: “Eichmann made a joke. Listen ... about those six million ... I could spare you a few for your book.... I don’t think I really need them all” (167).

Adolph Eichmann’s joking with history and the bureaucratization of the Nazi death camp administration only lends credence to Vonnegut’s understanding of the totalitarian murder machine Hitler’s SS pervaded on occupied Europe as well as the time he was writing *Mother Night*, which was during the Eichmann capture and trial in Jerusalem. Vonnegut, I feel, parodies Eichmann’s own statement in a *Life* magazine piece in November of 1960 that he [Eichmann] “freely admitted to apprehending Jews and arranging for their transportation to the camps, but he claimed that this did not make him a “mass murderer,” but claimed he was “a man of average character, with good qualities and many faults” (Cited in Marvin, *Kurt Vonnegut: A Critical Companion* 75). I feel it is important for representation in the fact that it alludes to the Nazi bureaucracy much like a discussion on a talk show or an op-ed page, sort of “totalitarianism for dummies.” The totalitarianism of the Nazi regime alluded to in *Mother Night* is what is prevalent in any type of political machination that uses the art of propaganda [good lies] to mask the true intention of the power mongers but allows for their plans, such as the “Final Solution.” This is why all the texts in this section are so vital for Holocaust representation, in the sense that the unsaid is the most dangerous weapon one will face if it is not recognized and deciphered. Only this type of deciphering and recognition [the double life of the spy] can see the signifying power of the language of evil and, for Vonnegut, may lead to a partial understanding of the horrors of WWII and warn future generations of its

uselessness. According to Telford Taylor, “the great horror of the Third Reich is not that it was a government of monsters, but that it was a monstrous government of, with relatively few exceptions, ordinary human beings” (*Saturday Review*, Oct. 1960: 23-24).

Kurt Vonnegut takes a fictional Nazi/American spy as his protagonist and Lewis Wallant and Saul Bellow employ the victims of the Holocaust—Jewish camp survivors—as their protagonists. The problem that arises is in the “making up” of situations, language and the abject horror of the event for artistic purposes. How does the artist do a credible job to the victims and how does he speak for the executioners if they become caricatures of the Holocaust, in essence stock characters—the monster Nazi and the slaughtered Jew. The risk of carnivalizing the Holocaust is most troublesome in the area of fiction and in all of the works in this section there are moments of black humor and sardonic comedy that cannot help but bring laughter. Does this become problematic? Can anything be funny about this horror?

To reduce the risk of making the art of the Holocaust problematic and misunderstood Vonnegut’s technique of black comedy and serious horror/history is an important device to be reckoned with by those who represent the Holocaust. Jerome Klinkowitz echoes what I feel is the ingenuity behind Vonnegut’s style for *Mother Night* and how it is complex and simple at the same time: “The trick is to draw two axes and between the vertical of ‘good fortune/bad fortune’ and the horizontal of the hero or heroine’s progress to map the rise and fall in conditions. The result is comically reductive: that narratives as simple as “Cinderella” and, I would argue, as complex as Kafka’s *The Trial*” (*Vonnegut in Fact* 16). What Klinkowitz shows is the importance of

Vonnegut use of a modern literary convention—the hero/antihero¹¹—in some of the words of Howard W. Campbell Jr. after World War II when he is meeting with his blue fairy godmother Frank Wirtanen: “If I’d killed myself when you expected me to kill myself ... maybe a moral would have occurred to you” (185) as he moves from hero to anti-hero “That wasn’t me” (187) in answer to Major Frank Wirtanen query, “they knew you for what you were too” (187). Vonnegut has brought this important literary mode to give the reader the Holocaust from both sides without signifying a death camp or a survivor memoir, and like Vonnegut stated when discussing the bombing of Dresden, “there is nothing intelligent to say about a massacre” (Klinkowitz 12). What Vonnegut has done in *Mother Night* is shown the reader that there is nothing intelligent to say about the Holocaust, but there is something to learn if we can “feel sadness as well as indignation when he [and we] look at the damned human race” (Klinkowitz 12), then this may be the appropriate method for dealing with the unspeakable—the Holocaust.

To be sure, horror in film, drama and non-fiction will also have problem areas for representation but there is a valuable component to the gaze of a work of non-fiction or performance art—whether film or drama—that fiction will not allow. By this I mean the nature of the reader always to keep in mind that the work and the characters in the fiction works are the writer’s creation and come with the writer’s baggage and presuppositions

¹¹ The modern literary convention of hero/anti-hero is an important literary mode that can be seen in many different genres of literature. This idea of hero/anti-hero can be traced from the fiction of Shakespeare’s Sir John Falstaff, “What, art thou mad? Is not the truth the truth?...Instinct is a great matter; I was now a coward on instinct”(*Henry IV: Part I* 2.4 229-230, 272-273), to Mark Twain, “It was mean of me, and base—I know it; but I meant it for the best, I did indeed—I can swear it” (*Pudd’nhead Wilson* 129), to Flannery O’Connor, “I call myself the Misfit....because I can’t make what all I done wrong fit what all I gone through in punishment” (*Complete Stories* 131), to non-fiction, Capote’s Perry Smith, “I wasn’t kidding him. I didn’t want to harm the man. I thought he was a very nice gentleman. Soft-spoken. I thought so right up to the moment I cut his throat” (*In Cold Blood* 244).

about the holocaust. Granted, Vonnegut did survive Dresden as an American POW and Bellow and Wallant are Jewish, but this is not like Primo Levi or Elie Wiesel because they did not endure the horror first-hand and this always will be a problem area for holocaust fiction. The question will always arise even if one writes fiction and did survive the Holocaust; “why make up the art if you have the creation in mind from living through the event?” Possibly many may say that the only way to recreate the Holocaust is fiction for actually to address the event from the first-hand experience is too horrible or an injustice to the dead. But for this project I will disagree and by using the authors and poets in this study hope that the problem areas are less stringent with these forms of fictive representation.

Saul Bellow’s Sammler, in *Mr. Sammler’s Planet*, and Edward Lewis Wallant’s Nazerman in *The Pawnbroker*, feel an inner guilt at having survived while so many other Jews perished in the camps is the crux of their ghostly existence after the war. This is an important tenet for Holocaust representation in its ability to urge readers to understand that there is no ability that lies with either man to forget and find happiness after what they have been through. The ghosts of the camps are incomprehensible and any significance in life for them lies in their silence and in their need to work out the unworkable. For Vonnegut’s Howard Campbell Jr., the ghosts are partially of his own making: “I am an American by birth, a Nazi by reputation” [*Mother Night* 1]. Campbell is so good at “playing a Nazi” that, after the war, the conflict that arises in his inner battle with the duality of his role as patriot/executioner is the important theme that this text brings to the surface.

The notion that “we are what we pretend to be” not only is important for Campbell ultimately to realize in his cell in Israel, but also for those who attempt to represent the Holocaust in any form. Scholars and artists must be on guard to remember that “we are what we represent” and possibly this is what Vonnegut’s text is suggesting. All the texts in this study fall into the broad category of postmodernism, but Vonnegut seems to be the most relevant to this type of fiction. What Vonnegut does in *Mother Night* is challenge the audience to allow the intertextuality of “what is not said” to come to the forefront and, if anything, Vonnegut’s style deconstructs any type of pure representation of the Holocaust but does address the event in the picture of Campbell in his decentered form. By decentered I feel Campbell the character and Vonnegut the artist, “challenge both closure and single centralized meaning” [Boon 150]. For perpetrator literature, the challenge to any form of closure or meaning can be seen in the characters like Vonnegut’s Campbell, whose strategy is one that has been taken by many post war west German fiction authors, that being the narrative strategies that attempt to “repress, deny, or avoid speaking about the Nazi regime and the genocide” [Schlant, *The Language of Silence* 10].

What Vonnegut does in *Mother Night* is precisely what Ernestine Schlant advocates in her study of West German literature and the silences of so many authors in the postwar period in relation to the Holocaust. Vonnegut’s depiction of Howard Campbell Jr. as a defeated, decentered hero/antihero implores the reader to ask the question that Schlant posits in her study: “If silence is an admission of knowledge, then the paramount question is what knowledge about the Holocaust is being repressed, denied, avoided, and how does this avoidance find expression?” [Schlant 10]. Schlant’s

theory of repressed language and the presenting of repressed knowledge through impression is an integral part of Vonnegut's technique in *Mother Night*. Vonnegut's Howard Campbell Jr. is constantly asking questions in much the matter of a scientist testing theories. He is constantly testing all his friends and foes who are all double and triple personalities and this leads to theories on Vonnegut's text, that of chaos theory¹² and that of "schizophrenia."¹³ Schlant's repressed knowledge idea will find resonance when the reader sees Campbell and his quest through the gaze of chaotic trials and repressed schizophrenic trauma that is always the result of living double lives; exactly the idea of the dilemma of spies. Vonnegut's modified scientific approach to writing can be attributed to his own earlier studies in chemistry and his family's scientific background: "scientists like his brother Bernard are always asking "what if" questions and then designating experiments to answer them. Vonnegut does the same thing in his fiction by creating unlikely situations to see what they reveal about human nature" [Allen, *Conversations* 5].

¹² Chaos theory. Donald E. Morse, in his study of Kurt Vonnegut's novels in *The Novels of Kurt Vonnegut: Imagine Being an American*, cites Kevin Alexander Boon's study of Kurt Vonnegut's novels in the area of chaos theory which concludes that "human beings in Vonnegut's novels are necessarily boundary creatures, and therefore both order and chaos are necessary in order for life to continue" (Preface xvi), and for Vonnegut "things cannot be nailed down no matter what kind of hammer [or noose-mine] you use" (Preface xvi). For Holocaust representation the notion that we as artists or readers cannot nail anything down would seem a safer way to deal with the unknowable.

¹³ Lawrence R. Broer, in his study *Sanity Plea: Schizophrenia in the Novels of Kurt Vonnegut*, discusses how many of Vonnegut's characters teeter and cross the borderline of psychosis and find themselves in an area of split personality they can not control, what Boon sees as being "both sane and crazy. In these days nobody can tell which is which" (6). Boon cites Roland Barthes and his idea that the author involves the reader in a complex tangle of ambiguities, contradictions and inconsistencies that would echo Vonnegut's Campbell and challenge "what is sane or not sane" (6), and which leads the character into a "schizophrenic shell, a deliberate cultivation of a state of death-in-life existence that isolates and divides him against himself" (6).

Howard Campbell Jr. is constantly asking questions about the duality of his predicament in *Mother Night* and the Vonnegut's own questioning of his dual nature as an American GI and a German-American who was asked by his German captors in Dresden "why he was fighting against his "brothers" [*Conversations* 6], would seem to play a part in the schizophrenic language of a divided self in Campbell when he questions his own past and his supposed captor Bernard V. O'Hare, "I'm not your destiny, or the Devil either! ... Look at you! Came to kill evil with your own bare hands, and now away you go with no more glory than a man sideswiped by a Greyhound bus! And that's all the glory you deserve!... That's all that any man at war with pure evil deserves" (*Mother Night* 251). This constant schizophrenia in Vonnegut's characters in *Mother Night* follows the ideal put forth by Kevin Boon that "Vonnegut's fiction in light of chaos theory [shows] we cannot predict *when* any event may occur but we can predict *that* it will occur" (Cited in Morse, *The Novels of Kurt Vonnegut: Imagine Being an American* xvi). In *Mother Night* Boon's theory of predicting *when* and *that* something will occur are evident in Howard W. Campbell Jr., for he knows [much like Adolph Eichmann] *that* he will hang, he just doesn't know *when* he will hear Mrs. Epstein state "he *has* to go" (259), and then add what she heard as a prisoner in Auschwitz every day, "*Leichenträger zu Wache....* A beautiful language isn't it? Translation? Corpse carriers to the guardhouse" (259). This exchange between the perpetrator Howard W. Campbell and the survivor Mrs. Epstein fits a psychological matrix that puts both victim and executioner in a death-in-life existence that gives Campbell the schizophrenic trauma of being, first an effective spy, but on the other hand a war criminal. As Major Frank Wirtanen queries Howard "How else could a responsible historian classify you?" (188). Campbell could answer

[quoting Jean Paul Sartre's *No Exit*] *Wirtanen* that in being an effective spy "can one evaluate a lifetime by one single action? The answer is a decisive Yes" (Morse 55). The answer lays right into the schizophrenic mind that always trails a successful spy, that "One, he must be a double agent—he must work for both sides or he's doomed—and, two, he is schizophrenic. He is not well. Only a sick person could do it" (Morse 54). Campbell's divided self and his chaotic situations can only lead to living as already dead. Campbell, like Wallant's Nazerman, is alive but metaphysically dead, and the only relief for them is what is not of this world.

Though any form of closure or centrality is rarely evident in Vonnegut's fiction, but it is slightly possible in *Mother Night* in the sense that many see Campbell, like Vonnegut, as a nihilist and his use of satire is one of doom. Campbell would seem to be a voice for the future after the horror is over and he realizes he has been duped. Vonnegut uses Campbell not to show the uselessness of human existence but as a messenger to those who may come to power that they should listen to the words of Campbell or in reality Vonnegut's writing and hope "you catch people before they become generals and presidents and so forth and you poison their minds with humanity to encourage them to make a better world" [*Conversations* 15]. I see him as a writer truly in tune with the consciousness of existence and the moral of his tale is not for any type of ending or lesson, but an affirmation of humanism that begs us to look beyond the grand narratives of the Holocaust and find the "petite histoire"—the essential signifiers—that allow those who were not around this event, the Holocaust, to be more aware of delving into it. Though it is easy to see Howard Campbell Jr. as nihilistic when he states "no one knows I am alive" or in his loyalty to his dead wife Helga ["our nation of two"], I am not fully in

agreement with Charles Harris that “Vonnegut’s belief in purposeless universe constitutes his main theme ... the futility of human endeavor, the meaninglessness of human existence” [Boon 150], but I can see why many scholars see Vonnegut as advocating doom, but if one re-examines Howard Campbell’s trek through *Mother Night*, they may see it as is one of constant reevaluation and questioning the part he [Campbell] played, his “to not be or be.”

What Vonnegut does is not as much nihilistic as it is absurdist, in the sense that by deconstructing the grandiose specters of history—Hitler, the Camps, National socialism, the reader comes to Campbell’s ironic place at the end of the war, that being his “effect” on those Nazis who may have questioned their devotion to Hitler as wrong. When his father-in-law tells him that “I realized that almost all the ideas that I hold now, that make me unashamed of anything I may have felt or done as a Nazi, came not from Hitler, not from Goebbels, not from Himmler-but from you” [*Mother Night* 99], Campbell tries to decipher where he stands. Is he a patriot for spying for America or a war criminal for being [acting the part] such a good Nazi? At this stage Campbell enters the place in the novel which deals most intensely with the psychological, what Kathryn Hume terms “the infernal subdepth’s” of Vonnegut’s fiction where “Vonnegut’s art functions most ingeniously and where he achieves his most compelling emotional effects. Only when we plumb the buried tensions of this chilling, Kafkaesque underworld ... can we understand the bizarre phobias, paranoid delusions, masked aggressions, and desperate escapist compulsions of Vonnegut’s psychically maimed heroes” (Broer 5). The art of Holocaust representation is better served when the artist deals with the phobias, delusions and buried horror of both victims and executioners and this is why

Vonnegut's Campbell in a state of "catalepsy, likened to that of a "friendly robot" who must be told where and when to move next" (Broer 5):

I froze. It was not guilt that froze me. I had taught myself not to feel guilt. It was not a ghastly sense of loss that froze me. I had taught myself to covet nothing. It was not a loathing of death that froze me. I had taught myself to think of death as a friend. It was not heartbroken rage against injustice that froze me.... It was not the thought that God was cruel that froze me. I had taught myself never to expect anything from him. What froze me was the fact that I had absolutely no reason to move in any direction. What had made me move through so many dead and pointless years was curiosity. Now even that had flickered out. (232)

The trauma that many survivors and perpetrators suffer without end would parallel what Campbell says in this speech in the sense that for many survivors, God no longer existed, and for perpetrators, their guilt is frozen to such a point they do not have the ability to mourn or to take responsibility. The ethos of being frozen and not having any reason to move in any direction or into any type of future in many ways echoes the non-fictional voice of Auschwitz survivor Elie Wiesel, for example, who stated after the war that "there was no God in Auschwitz"¹⁴ and the fact that Wiesel went from rabbinical student to atheist would attest to this and Vonnegut's use of fiction to allow us to understand the non-fictional cataleptic voice of an Elie Wiesel would seem beneficial to representation.

¹⁴ In Elie Wiesel's non-fiction novella *Night*, he describes his time in Auschwitz as a young Jew and his loss of belief in God and religion. Wiesel's cataleptic remarks to this day show that he is "frozen" to the notion that there can be any type of God after Auschwitz as he states in *Night* "why, but why should I bless him? In very fiber I rebelled. Because He had had thousands of children burned in the pits? ... Because in His great might He had created Auschwitz" (64).

Campbell begins to realize the gravity of the horror his seemingly harmless acting had caused and the despair that follows the same line as the Holocaust “Muselmann”¹⁵ that became part of the living dead of the camps. It is at this juncture that Howard Campbell Jr., much like Sammler and Nazerman, encounter what Kierkegaard in *The Sickness Unto Death*¹⁶ labels as the torment of not being able to master one’s despair. Campbell’s torment in terms of Kierkegaard would be “precisely what keeps the gnawing alive and keeps life in the gnawing, for it is precisely over this that he [Campbell] despairs: that he cannot consume himself, cannot get rid of himself, cannot reduce himself to nothing”[18-19]. Campbell’s despair as a “perpetrator and a Nazi” is much different from the torment of Nazerman and Sammler but the Kierkegaardian ethos of “reducing oneself to nothing” and their abject inability to do this—is the same for all three characters. It is only in the motivation for that despair that the characters differ. Much of this project will re-examine just this duality that Campbell faces and structure it inside an argument that posits that this type of “small history,” inside a metanarrative of grand history, may make for a more textualized representation of the Holocaust, a representation that allows for a signifying event, the Holocaust, to be more accessible than absurd by looking at the personal story of one man instead of the grand narrative of either survivor or perpetrator.

¹⁵ Kramer, Naomi and Ronald Headland. *The Fallacy of Race and the Shoah*. In this text the authors have a chapter on the Muselmann or last selection and their words “I was in a state of despair. One must be in communication with others to become oneself. There had been no friendly conversations, no human gestures.... With the flick of the hand I was a *Muselmann*-I don’t know if a part of me died then.... I know only that there is no way of describing this unless you have been there.” This will really sum up not only Vonnegut’s Campbell as a prisoner of the Jews but Nazerman and Sammler as prisoners of their memories of the camps.

¹⁶ Kierkegaard, Soren. *The Sickness Unto Death*. In this text the idea that death is not the end of sickness or despair lies mostly in the theoretical Christian understanding of Kierkegaard that “from a Christian point of view, no earthly physical sickness is the sickness unto death, for death is indeed the end of the sickness, but death is not the end....it must be sickness of which the end is death and death is the end.”

In this chapter of fiction as Holocaust representation, how all three texts work as a triumvirate of Holocaust representation, lies in their main characters' attitude after the horror of the Holocaust. For Wallant's Nazerman and Bellow's Sammler—two Jewish survivors of the death camps—the “inability to forget” is the crux of their problems dealing with the world after the war. For Vonnegut's Howard Campbell Jr. the “inability to mourn” becomes more of an “inability to understand,” but unlike the Adolph Eichmann character in *Mother Night*, Campbell is able to “accept guilt” but must find this out after coping with the anxiety and despair that comes from being “too good at being and or playing a Nazi.” Campbell may also be guilty of another type of despair, put forth by Kierkegaard, which stems from being tricked into becoming a “mass man”:

Surrounded by hordes of men, absorbed in all sorts of secular matters, more and more shrewd about the ways of the world—such a person forgets himself, forgets his name divinely understood, does not dare to believe in himself, finds it too hazardous to be himself and far easier and safer to be like the others, to become a copy, a number, a mass man. [*The Sickness unto Death* 34]

What is most telling about the “mass man” theory of Kierkegaard and Campbell is its relevance to those who follow blindly the dictates of totalitarian movements like a Campbell or Albert Speer or an Adolph Eichmann, but also the Jewish elders in the Jewish ghettos that I will discuss later in Bellow and Wallant. But the point that is important for representation lies in the mentality of the follower and how language, when misappropriated in dysfunctional nationalism/fascism, can be disastrous to those who survive it, whether victim or executioner, or in Campbell's case, the propagandist/spy.

For my interests the beginning of *Mother Night* with Campbell in his cell in Haifa, Israel where he is waiting for his trial for war crimes, is the most important part of the text for future generations to understand because the absurdity of history and the flip-flop of executioners and victims indicts the dark side of the personality in all of us. In essence, “nobody escapes without being shown, in a polite way, what an ass he is” (Morse 35). By “using war and espionage as basic metaphors, Vonnegut explores the nature of personality, values, and reality—all of which appear contingent upon having and maintaining a clear identity. As Emerson remarked at the conclusion in “Self-Reliance,” “Nothing can bring you peace but yourself. Nothing can bring you peace but the triumph of principles. But *pretense*, [mine] rather than principles, rules the world of *Mother Night*” (Morse 35-36). He is watched over by four Israeli guards and each has his own conversations with Campbell. One of the guards, Bernard Mengel, a Jew who survived “by playing so dead that a German soldier pulled out three of his teeth without suspecting Mengel was a corpse” [15], is impressed that Campbell is “the only man I ever heard of ... who has a bad conscience about what he did in the war. Everybody else, no matter what side he was on, no matter what he did, is sure a good man could not have acted in any other way” [15].

This opening verbal joust between Campbell and Mengel is important for representation because it answers the most well-used alibi for the executioners of the Holocaust; that being the “I followed orders. I am not responsible” voices of the Eichmann’s and Speers. Campbell’s conscience may be troubled more by the notion that man has allowed this to happen and that man’s final gasps at modernism and enlightened reason has brought us to the charnel of the camps and the inability to see that after the

horror we have no answers but to put our necks in the noose and kick away the chair, and when Campbell can no longer “make sense of the world around us because [for him] we are [not any more] linguistic or semiotic creatures, already shaped by our capacity for language”(Loree Hackstraw, cited in Boon, *At Millennium's End* 55), he has nothing but nothingness to comprehend. Campbell also seems to understand the abject nature of his crime as premeditated and that this premeditation erases any chance he has for relief from his torment. Campbell comes to realize what Julia Kristeva discusses in her take on the abject nature of crime: “He who denies morality is not abject: there can be no grandeur in amorality and even in crime that flaunts its disrespect for the law.... Abjection ... is immoral, sinister, scheming, and shady; a terror that disassembles, a hatred that smiles ... a friend who stabs you” [*Powers of Horror* 4]. The Nazi system that Campbell feels he can use as his theater of the absurd becomes his stage of abjection and in the end he becomes its terrified subject.

The guards' part of the text is important for the ironic stance it takes in showing that the Israeli guards function as a sort of dark doppelganger for Campbell. He is not only a prisoner, but the guards, especially Mengel and Arpad Kovacs are the epitome of the ethos the Nazis had instilled in their totalitarian police state; that ethos being inflexible harshness. Both guards are cold, ruthless and unfeeling toward Campbell and any other war criminal, exactly the same mind-set put forth by Himmler's SS except the SS are now in Israeli uniforms. Kovacs, who posed as an SS man during the war and was—like Campbell—an effective double agent. Kovacs though was rewarded for his work during the war and Campbell, because he is on the losing side, so to speak, must suffer the downfall akin to all of history's losers, to quote Reich Marshall Herman Goring

at Nuremberg, “*the victor will always be the judge, and the vanquished the accused*” (Gilbert *Nuremberg Diary* 10). Kovacs even points fingers at the Jews who went to their deaths like lambs to the slaughter: “give it to the complacent bastards! Tell those smug briquets! [11] Campbell, on the other hand, sees Kovacs as a solemn realist who understands that “by briquets he meant people who did nothing to save their own lives or anybody else’s life when the Nazis took over, who were willing to go meekly all the way to the gas chambers”[11]. This exchange is important for in it lays the crux of many of the questions asked by Nazis and Jews alike after the war: That being “why didn’t they fight back?” What Vonnegut does here in his use of fiction is take the banter of the jailhouse between history’s victim, the Jew, now in the position as history’s oppressor, and flip flop it to accuse us all in the aftermath of the Holocaust. In essence, we are all under questioning and the answers are very difficult to grasp and may be impossible ever to understand, but we must at least give them voice.

The question that arises from this depiction of Jew posing as an SS man: “What an Aryan I made! [13] would naturally be “Is this not morally reprehensible to play fictive words games with such a horror”? but I feel Vonnegut’s use of Kovacs and Kovacs declaration that Campbell’s rhetoric is weak: “you disappoint me.... Its so weak ... it has no body, no paprika, no zest! I thought you were a master of racial invective! [12], is so powerful in the sense that without going into all the detailed horror of the propaganda of Goebbels. Kovacs speech encompasses all the historical gesticulations of the power of racist language that Nazi propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels and Nazi racial theorist Albert Rosenberg used in the racial dictates of the Nuremberg laws, as well as historical antecedents of hate mongering against the Jews throughout the history of

anti-Semitism in Europe. These tenets of hate and racial propaganda were the basis for Rosenberg's *The Myth of the Twentieth Century*, which, like Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, put forth the removal of the Jews from Europe as well as their removal from the gene pool of Aryan man. Vonnegut, in one simple exchange between Campbell and Bernard V. O'Hare allows the reader a constant view of historical anti-Semitism and hate without reason that allows blame to function covertly under the seam and permits the reader to recognize the dual nature of propaganda and stereotyped hate and how it can be corrupted in any form and—whether Jew, Nazi or American patriot—how the oppressor lies in all of us; “There are plenty of good reasons for fighting ... but no good reason ever to *hate* [mine] without reservation, to imagine that God Almighty Himself hates with you, too. Where's evil? It's the large part of every man that wants to hate without limit, that wants to hate with God on its side. It's that part of every man that finds all kinds of ugliness so attractive” (*Mother Night* 251).

Much of Vonnegut's work is a reflection of his experience at Dresden where he witnessed in his words, “Hiroshima many times over” (*Vonnegut In Fact* 90). When Bernard Mengel discusses the wrapping of his suitcase with a leather strap as the same job as hanging Hoess with the same leather strap it is the same idea as carpet bombing or the atom bomb was as macrocosm of World War II. The idea being when man is unleashed of all that makes him sane and human, then all is horror and “so it goes” we could have a Holocaust and in essence all can become detached observers, much like Howard W. Campbell Jr., if proper care is not taken in how we read and understand the signifiers of governmental and totalitarian abuses of power. The implementation of the guards at the beginning of the text lay the groundwork for the doubling character of the

prisoner/hero ethos that surrounds Campbell from the beginning of his spy work for the Americans and carry him thorough to the unsatisfying loneliness of his “naked city” dehumanized existence in 1960 lower New York City. Vonnegut’s text is ripe with character doubling and the main characters of Campbell, Helga/Resi Noth and Frank Wirtanen/Blue Fairy Godmother etc. will make for much of the dark sardonic trip that Campbell must traverse but in the guards, much like Shakespeare’s’ sirens or fools, we see the wisdom of anti-history in the sense that they are the “un-seers” from the other side and though they are dead inside from the horror of the holocaust must be a sort of dark guide for those [Nazis, Jews and future generations] that must be forced to recognize the horror they pervaded by deed and by silence and to be aware that writers like himself must “not [be] very grateful for Darwin, although I suspect he was right. His ideas make people crueler.... But I continue to think that artists—*all artists* [mine]—should be treasured as alarm systems” (*Conversations* 76-77).

PART II- EDWARD LEWIS WALLANT AND SAUL BELLOW

“I do not trust God or politics or newspapers or music or art. I do not trust smiles or clothes or buildings or scenery or smells.... I do not trust expressions or colors or the feel of texture.... But most of all, I do not trust people and their talk, for they have created hell with that talk, for they have proved they do not deserve to exist for what they are.”

(Wallant, *The Pawnbroker* 114-15)

“The idea of making the century’s great crime is not banal. Politically, the Germans had an idea of genius. The banality was only camouflage. What better way to get the curse out of murder than to make it look ordinary, boring or trite...They expect a wicked hero like Richard III. But do you think the Nazis didn’t know what murder was?”

(Bellow, *Mr. Sammler’s Planet* 18)

The move from perpetrator [Campbell] to survivor is an important area for any type of Holocaust representation, but for this project I will use what are usually the primary voices—the death camp survivors—as a backdrop to the perpetrators. I feel that viewing the survivor as microcosm of the horrors of the camps serves the cause of art and the victim of the Holocaust more cautiously than many repeated stories of victimized horror. I am not trying to downplay the horror for the victims, but I feel that what Wallant and Bellow do is take the reader out of the camps—except in flashbacks—and bring the victims of the Holocaust to a more visual and temporal light in their surroundings *after* the event.

What both epigraphs show is the “camp ethos” of the survivor that is not only instilled in the memory of both men but remains in their present as trauma that manifests itself differently for both Nazerman and Sammler. For Sol Nazerman his post-traumatic memory is making him a prisoner again. Like many survivors of the Holocaust,

Nazerman suffers “survivors guilt,”¹⁷ and unlike many survivors who after years of psychiatric treatment have found life to have meaning. Nazerman falls into another category, what Elias Canetti sees as the survivors replacing “survival [based on] ... mere self-preservation [with survival] ... targeted on the other, not on the self: “they want to survive their contemporaries. They know that many die early and they want a different fate for themselves” (Cited in Fine, *Social Theory after the Holocaust* 9). Nazerman seems to only recognize himself and all around him as other but the difference between Nazerman and Canetti’s survivor is that for Canetti the survivor “wants to stay alive so as not to have others surviving him” (Fine 9), but for Nazerman the problem is: “What would be the sense in anyone surviving anyone?” For Nazerman, if there is no actuality of a positive other and only a doomed humanity he cannot escape from, then why try to find life meaningful. This idea of other and the impossibility for Sol to believe in a human community after Auschwitz is quietly presented in a small exchange between Nazerman and Ortiz when Ortiz asks Sol about the numbers on his arm: “Hey, what kind of tattoo you call that?” (20), to which Sol answers sounding very much the other: “It’s a secret society I belong to ... you could never belong. You have to be able to walk on water” (20).

For representation, the voice of trauma and the psycho-traumatic oral rendering of the memory of the camps can be as effective in the fictive genre than some non-fiction

¹⁷ Zygmunt Bauman, in his essay “The Holocaust’s Life as a Ghost,” discusses the “Survivor’s Guilt” syndrome. This term was used by psychiatrists after the Holocaust when dealing with Jewish survivors. Survivor’s guilt became “a complex psychological ailment which they ascribed to the survivors’ asking themselves why they stayed alive when so many of their loved ones perished. According to that interpretation, among the survivors the joy of escaping death was permanently poisoned by the acute moral uncertainty about the propriety of sailing safe out of the sea of perdition, with disastrous consequences for the survivors’ will to live and succeed in life after the rescue” (Cited in Fine, *Social Theory after the Holocaust* 8).

works. Nazerman's journey is quite clinical in its constant question and answer with the outsiders in the novel. The idea that Nazerman goes between patient and psychiatrist and cannot seem to answer as patient or doctor lays the foundation for Wallant's psychosexual semantically charged characterizations which allow the reader a distance from the historical non-fictional voice of survivors, but with clinical descriptions of survivor guilt in the psychoanalytic writing style of the text the voice of horror may be rendered more accessible. What the propaganda depicted in the anti-Semitic propaganda of 1930 Nazi Germany: "You begin with several thousand years during which you have nothing except a great, bearded legend, nothing else. You have no land to grow food on, no land on which to hunt.... Only you have a little brain in your head and this bearded legend to sustain you and convince you that there *is* something special about you.... A merchant, a man with secret resources, usurer, pawnbroker, witch, and what have you" (Wallant 52), has for many survivors led them to believe they are a figment of history's cruel imagination: what Alain Finkielkraut terms "*le juif imaginaire*—a Jew manifesting his Jewishness, so to speak, in living on the account and at the expense of a categorical martyrdom of his ancestral martyrs without paying the price for the glory" (Cited in Fine, *Social Theory after the Holocaust* 9). Sol Nazerman, saw his wife and family martyred but cannot see himself as a true survivor and a voice of memory so needed for his present survival, and instead takes the role of a Jew who allows himself the label of victim though he cannot abide by the consequences of remembering the horror and by perpetuating the horror on himself and those around him.

In *The Pawnbroker*, the overburdening of Jewish victims (Nazerman and Tessie Rubin, in particular) with guilt is an effective use of history, voice and psychology

Wallant uses. For Nazerman, the nightmares, flashbacks and overall horror lends itself to Freud's account of traumatic memory: "Traumatic memory ... may involve belated temporality and a period of latency between a real or fantasized early event and a later one that somehow recalls it and triggers a renewed repression or foreclosure and intrusive behavior. But when the past is *uncontrollably relived* [mine], it is as if there were no difference between it and the present" (cited in Moishe Postone and Santner, Eric *Catastrophe and Meaning* 212). This notion of an uncontrollably relived past is what Wallant captures in *The Pawnbroker*. Sol Nazerman is not only doomed to relive the past but, unlike Bellow's Artur Sammler, who seems to be partially able to be hopeful. Nazerman follows Freud's dictate that "whether or not the past is reenacted or repeated in its precise literality, one feels as if one were back there reliving the event, and distance between here and there, then and now collapses" (*Catastrophe and Meaning* 212).

Nazerman is truly reliving the event and his memory would seem to play into Julia Kristeva's depiction of the abject horror of the subject who has been witness to the horrors of Auschwitz, which becomes a spell in Nazerman's mind to play over and over again: "In the dark halls of the museum that is now what remains of Auschwitz, I see a heap of children's shoes ... something I have already seen elsewhere, under a Christmas tree.... The abjection of Nazi crime reaches its apex when death, which, in any case, kills me, interferes with what, in my living universe, is supposed to save me from death: childhood, science, among other things" (*Powers of Horror* 4). For Nazerman the museum of abject horror in his mind has moved from the death camp of Auschwitz to Harlem, and "the terror that disassembles, a hatred that smiles, a passion that uses the body for barter instead of inflaming it" (*Powers of Horror* 4), is all Nazerman can see in

himself and all he comes in contact with in the pawnshop and its environs, and this is why any form of friendship, “Forget all that. Don’t think, don’t feel.... Don’t suffer, don’t fear. Soon enough will come the ax.... Don’t pay attention, don’t cry!” (229), or human contact, “I don’t have to have human rubbish in here” (20) is shunned by Nazerman. The reason for Nazerman’s disgust with human kindness or contact can only be understood by one who survived the camps where instead of “becoming hardened by the humiliations [one] ... had suffered in camp, [he] had on the contrary lost his last protective armor” (Kogon, *The Theory and Practice of Hell* 306).

The importance for representation in *The Pawnbroker* is the proliferation of stereotype after the horror. Nazerman’s struggle with memory and trauma has put him, so to speak, back into another death camp [KZ], but this time it is one of his own choosing and, in some sense, he becomes the oppressor for the many diverse/lost people he deals with in the pawnshop in depressed 1960s Harlem. The irony of Nazerman becoming the oppressor, and his seeming adeptness at being anti-human, parallels what would have been deemed an anti-Semite before the war. Wallant’s characterization of Sol Nazerman is clearly in line with Jean-Paul Sartre’s depiction of the oppressor in the *Anti-Semite and Jew*:

The anti-Semites have the *right* to play with discourse for, by giving ridiculous reasons, they discredit the seriousness of their interlocutors, they delight in acting in bad faith, since they seek not to persuade by sound argument but to intimidate and disconcert.... He has chosen also to be terrifying. People are afraid of irritating him. No one knows to what lengths the aberrations of his passion will carry him—but he knows, for this passion is not provoked by something

external. He has it well in hand; it is obedient to his will: now he lets go the reins.... He is not afraid of himself, but he sees in the eyes of *others* [mine] a disquieting image—*his own* [mine]. (Sartre 20-21)

Place and role reversal loom large in this novel and Wallant very succinctly portrays Nazerman as hero/anti-hero and, in the end, the Puerto Rican, Jesus Ortiz, is his victim/deliverer. The classic literary technique of hero/antihero and victim/deliverer are tools that still matter for representation in an era of much scholarly revisionism and over-theorization. What Wallant does is keep the reader involved in the dialectic and the history of the event with voices that recognize the horror without too much over-theorization, which can take away from the power of the text—the voice of the victims. The structure of the novel and how Wallant presents the Holocaust from the counter of a pawnshop in Harlem sets the reader in a place and a time that for representation would seem appropriate and also be fair to what Peter Haidu would term “the Event.” In “The Dialectics of Unspeakability” Haidu discusses the crux of attention to structure, especially when one is using history and fiction to deal with the event—the Holocaust:

These considerations identify a crucial aporia. History shares certain characteristics with fiction, not as an accidental weakness, but as the unavoidable price of being constituted as textualized thought and research. This conclusion runs directly counter to, and is absolutely unacceptable to, the *sacred horror* [mine] with which we cannot help but view the Event. There is a radical contradiction between what I call a secular textual theory, along with its information of historiography, and an ethical and religious approach to the Event which addresses it with the requisite responsibility toward the dead, their

suffering, and the piety appropriate to the Event. (Cited in Friedlander, *Probing the Limits of Representation* 281)

Wallant's use of Harlem as the "second KZ" for Nazerman is important because the people that the pawnbroker deals with are all despised outsiders much like he was in Hitler's Europe. This is not some Wallant/s simple artistic critique of the slums of New York and Auschwitz, but the parallels—sans the bureaucracy of murder—are very similar in the sense that both socio-economic environs are alike in their abuse of the lower classes to feed the rich. Slave labor is relative to the oppressor and the workplace; whether depressed slum pawnshop or KZ, whether Jewish ghetto or Black ghetto. Nazerman's pawnshop is a front for prostitution, drugs and organized crime money in much the same way as I.G. Farben and Krupp used Nazi concentration camp inmates as slave labor; the only difference being KZ inmates were made to work to death while the miserable human beings of Nazerman's Harlem make their own misery of death, vice and corruption. The misery of the camps for Jews, and their having no choice in terms of being worked to death, was termed a "closed world" by Terrence Des Pres in his study *The Survivor: An Anatomy of Life in the Death Camps*. Des Pres discusses the horror of the slave labor that ruled the camps and the hierarchy that changed so many—victim and oppressor—to things; much like Nazerman does to his "prisoners":

For them [survivors] any camp was a closed world in which one's chances of coming through was nearly zero. To describe existence in the camps as a condition of life-in death is neither to exaggerate nor to fall back on metaphor. To preserve life survivors had to use the means at their disposal; they had to manipulate facilities within the camp itself ... and chief among these were

functionary jobs [Kapo] which, if strategically used, became a principal weapon of defense. Occupying such a position made the prisoner less vulnerable to chance and “selection”; it also meant better food and shelter; and finally it allowed a vital margin of influence in situations where camp policy was carried out by the prisoners themselves. “You must get yourself a ‘function,’” said one Soviet inmate to a newcomer, “it is your only chance.” (Des Pres 115)

He [Nazerman] becomes the “Kapo” in a sense, hardened by his dealing with the people that visit his shop and his language parallels the Nazi oppressor he faced in the camps. For a victim/survivor like him it is very telling: “I have a funny feeling about the *Shwartsa* who works for me. He is a strange kid. Anyhow, I have this suspicion that he has something up his sleeve. He hangs around with these criminal types.... Some more animals. What is there to say! The whole world is a big zoo. Maybe I will go to Alaska, to the North Pole.... The polar bears should be amusing company” (Wallant 193).

By taking the role of oppressor and using the same lexicon of the camp Kapo used so skillfully to label Jews as plodding criminals, Nazerman now is following one of the specters of the Holocaust that haunt so many of its victims *in reverse*; what Zygmunt Bauman terms in “The Holocausts Life as a Ghost,” the notion that “we are all to some degree possessed by that memory, though the Jews among us, the prime targets of the Holocaust, are perhaps more than most”(cited in Fine, *Social Theory After The Holocaust* 7). What Nazerman does is take the memory of the oppressor and *act on it*; in essence he takes the tone of the camp survivor, “better him than me,” and just changes the striped uniform of the prisoner for the black and white suit and tie of the oppressor. The other possibility could be that Nazerman projects the Jewishness of the *juif imaginaire* and he

is taking out his martyrdom on those he deals with now, especially Ortiz who works for him, “You are nothing to me” (Wallant 180), and Tessie Rubin and her father Mendel who is dependent on him for money, “Yeh, don’t esk qvestion, it’s a Jew—gas him, burn him, stick him enough through vit hot needles” (61) and, in a sense, has made their oppression his release from any feelings that cognitively bring him to recognize his own horror art survival in his present alien surroundings.

By alluding to his customers and family as “creatures” and scum he has relegated them to the same level of the Jew in Nazi camps and only proliferates the historical class horror propaganda that formed the racial platform of many of the racial theorists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, most notably Comte Artur de Gobineau¹⁸ and Houston Stewart Chamberlain.¹⁹ Both men believed that the lowers races were dangerous to mainstream Aryan bloodlines and were the prompt for the coming eugenic movement of the early Nazi period, as well as the theory of Theozology²⁰ put forth by Jorg Lanz in

¹⁸ Comte Artur de Gobineau published in 1853 the *Essai sur l’Inegalite des Races Humaines* [The Inequality of the Human Races], which espoused that the question of race dominates all the problems of history and that of the three principle races, white, yellow and black, the Aryan as “jewel of the white race” (Shirer *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* 103-104) must not intermix with races of inferior blood.

¹⁹ Houston Stewart Chamberlain, an anti-Semitic Englishman wrote what was for many like Hitler himself the “bible” of eugenics with his *The Foundations of the 19th Century*, which put forth that Jesus was of Aryan rather than Semitic blood, and that Hitler was the savior ordained by God to return the German people to the Teutonic ideal of the past. Hitler was a devotee of Chamberlain’s rhetoric and his book and termed Chamberlain “one of the great armorers whose weapons [anti-Semitism] have not yet found in our day their fullest use” (Cited in Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* 109).

²⁰ Theozology was the theory put forth by the founder of the occultist order of the new Templars, a Cistercian monk, Jorg Lanz in his journal *Ostara*. An excellent contemporary work by Ian Kershaw, *Hitler: 1889-1936: Hubris*, discusses the work of Lanz and *Ostara* and how it can make a reasonable case for the adherence of Hitler to its dictates. Lanz “followed in the ideological footsteps of Guido von List ... guru of the cultist believers of the superiority of the Aryan-German race, destined for mastery of the world. List had helped popularize the swastika, the sign of the sun ... which he took as the sign of the ‘Unconquerable’, the Germanic hero, the ‘Strong One from Above’” (Kershaw 50), in essence a “Hitler.”

his journal *Ostara* and then picked up by the early Nazi racial theorists. Hitler was an avid reader of *Ostara* and according to historian Ian Kershaw “Hitler read *Ostara* and was at least to some extent influenced by it. Writing in *Mein Kampf* of his ‘conversion’ to anti-Semitism, Hitler recounted ... all proceeded from the supposition that in principle the reader knew or even understood the Jewish question ...[and] favored the thesis” (*Hitler: 1889-1936 Hubris* 50). Whether or not *Ostara* or the racially-driven eugenics of the time had a major effect on Hitler’s policy of extermination is always debatable, but what is not debatable is Hitler’s firm anti-Semitism. All this racial science and rhetoric came to the forefront of Nazi ideology and the traps [Nuremberg Racial Laws] that trapped the Jews of Nazi-occupied Europe like Wallant’s Sol Nazerman.

Nazerman is also subservient his own “Hitler” figure in the crime boss Albert Murillo. The trap Nazerman is in now is twofold: He has the memory of his wife and children dead in the camps of Europe under Hitler, and his own present degradation and vice-ridden existence under his new “fuehrer” Murillo. Both situations return to memory all the parallels to Nazi terror evident in Nazerman attempt to disassociate himself from the vice of Murillo’s organized crime:

What you *want* don’t interest me one bit. I am a little concern about what you say and do though. So listen to me, Uncle, listen careful because it is very important to you.... You can’t get out on your own terms. I want things just like they are. The very best you could hope for is that I let you out without a penny, with nothing to show for your work except a few wrinkles.... Well I’ll tell you in plain words, Uncle. I could kill you ... kill you dead. Uh huh, that’s what I said. It’s no big thing to me. You don’t want to live no more, Uncle? (Wallant 162)

The sad irony, that even though Sol has a sort of autonomy in the pawn shop, that in the camps was reserved for Kapos and, he still has a type of Nazi hierarchy to answer to. The difference is that in Auschwitz he wanted to survive—to live—but here he wants to die, to be released from the abject horror that has made him both victim in memory and in a strange sense, executioner in actuality; in essence his own executioner. When his sister Bertha tells Sol “You are not yet the dictator around here” (96) Sol’s answer to her would belie the sadness of Nazerman’s role reversal; “You will be still now ... you may continue your cannibalism; I do not take sides or interfere with your miserable pleasure. But here what I say. I do *not* need you fro a family-that is *your* myth. If you wish to be able to continue it, be silent!” (96). The veiled threat “if you wish to be able to continue” is eerily familiar with the Kapo’s threat of life and death over his slaves. Wallant very adeptly uses fictive voice to show how this ironic move from victim to oppressor could manifest itself in the one person most would feel farthest away from being “Nazified”—Nazerman—but this characterization allows the argument to continue not only of the insanity of that time but the results of the memory of totalitarian horror and institutionalized racism and how the roles can be reversed to where the horrors of the victim can become a new horror for those he [Nazerman] must encounter in his hell.

Memory is the executioner and Nazerman keeps returning to the hell of the camps, especially the continual rape of his wife and the torture of having to watch it and do nothing: “*for a minute or two the SS men handled her breast and her loins vengefully. Her mouth stretched in soundless agony. As though he had been waiting for that, the SS man pulled her to her knees and forced her head down against his body*” (Wallant 169). Memory will have a double meaning in this text for Nazerman. On one hand it keeps

dredging up the past and on the other hand it is ascertaining a dead future that no longer allows him the memory and tears of forgiveness for his beloved wife during her torture in the camps: “*But he was not worthy of her award and took the infinitely meaner triumph of blindness, and though he was reamed by cancerous, fiery torments, he was no longer subject to the horrid view, no longer had to share the obscene experience with her*” (Wallant 169).

This testing of memory and role reversal will be constant in Wallant’s text, and I feel this self-examination in the utmost throngs of abjection and despair, makes this work such a valuable and timeless representation of the Holocaust. The “talk” that Nazerman mentions is the crux of the linguistic tangle that Wallant gives the reader thereby showing not only the power of totalitarian rhetoric during the conflict, but how its imprint remains with both victims and executioners long after the horror is over. The fact that “talk” here is a euphemism for silence in Nazerman would lend much to a reading of the abjection he faced in seeing his wife swallow the tool of hate—the phallic penis of an SS man, which could be interpreted in a Kristevian fashion as an “abjection of self: the first approach to a self that would otherwise be walled in. Abjection of others, [the Nazi phallic penis shoved in his wife’s throat] ...the ‘I feel like vomiting the mother’ ... the only violent link to the world. A rape of anality, a stifled aspiration towards another as prohibited as it is desired—abject” (*Powers of Horror* 47). Fifteen years after the liberation of the camps Nazerman is still speaking much like Goebbels or Rosenberg when Ortiz asks Sol what is worth caring about. Sol’s answer is straight from the anti-Semitic propaganda of Julius Streicher’s *Der Sturmer*: “Money ... that may repel many people less practical than you.... The old story with Jews, hah!... Next to the speed of light, which Einstein tells us

is the only absolute in the universe, second I would rank money. There I have taught you The Pawnbroker's Credo, Ortiz. What else is there to know!" (Wallant 115).

Why would Nazerman speak the language of the stereotypical Jew on one hand and the executioner on the other? The answer finds resonance in Holocaust survivor Eugene Kogon's *The Theory and Practice of Hell*, when he discusses the mindset before and after the war for camp survivors. The survivors, while in the camps, cannot come to understand how their jailers could lead "normal" lives outside the camp and that this left the prisoner "full of resentment toward the outside world. He had a sense of having been *abandoned* [mine]. Did anyone pay any attention to him on the outside? Ah, they went on living without giving him a thought. What did they know about the bitter reality that faced him every moment?... Such thoughts often rankled with the outcasts ... not only among the prisoners in the camps, but after the liberation within the families and in public" (Kogon 321). Nazerman, unlike Bellow's Artur Sammler, is not relegated to a somewhat privileged life, but to another kind of hell and abandonment—whether New York [suburbia] or Harlem or Auschwitz- that at every turn brings him back to what he cannot express in any form or language; what Julia Kristeva would term a sublime alienation, a forfeited existence. By disavowing himself of his murdered family in the camps, "*a mountain of emaciated bodies, hands, and legs tossed in nightmare abandon, as though each victim had died in the midst of a frantic dance, the hollow eyes and gaping mouths expressing what could have been a demented and perverse ecstasy*" (*The Pawnbroker* 197), and his "living dead" family in the pawnshop and at home, Nazerman experiences a "jouissance in which the subject [Nazerman] is swallowed up but in which the Other, in return, keeps the subject from foundering by making it repugnant. One thus

understands why so many victims of the abject are its fascinated victims—if not its submissive and willing ones” (*Powers of Horror* 9).

Nazerman, at times, does seem to be fascinated by the repugnant horror he has seen but can no longer feel or express, but when a social worker, Marilyn Birchfield, makes the mistake of attempting to understand his Holocaust experience: “I have some idea of what you’ve been through, Mr. Nazerman. I would expect a great deal of sadness and grief to be in you. But why are you *bitter*?” (Wallant 14). Nazerman answers her with the history of the Holocaust in a few lines. Nazerman tells her that “there is a world so different in scale that its emotions bear no resemblance to yours: it has emotions so different in degree that they become a different *species!*... Bitter.... Why should you say that? Do you hear me curse people? Have I delivered a diatribe on the evils of fascism, the infamies of Hitler? Do not be silly. I am a man with no anger and no desire for vengeance” (Wallant 146). The silent apathetic distress in Nazerman’s speech resembles what Emmanuel Levinas terms the loss of hospitality which accompanies the call of distress that is never answered. This loss was no better evinced than by the people in the camps and the crimes committed against them physically and for Levinas, most importantly, mentally: “The crimes against hospitality, endured by the guests and hostages of our time, incarcerated or deported day after day, from concentration camp to detention camp, from border to border, close to us or far away” (Derrida *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas* 71), are the result of the unanswered distress call of those six million in the death camps.

Sol Nazerman’s journey in *The Pawnbroker* is an unanswered response to unanswered hospitality and the impossibility to believe in the future. Sadly, Sol can no

longer understand human kindness or the act of hospitality for his world is now and forever one of despair and abject silence. The kind of silence that Ernestine Schlant would categorize as two-fold, and I feel Schlant's silence parallels Sol Nazerman's "ten dollars for your body and soul" (Wallant 259) hopeless journey: "First comes from too much knowledge, while the second is a refusal to become aware. This second silence is the escape into which memory and guilt are repressed ... the silence of the Holocaust is the silence prompted by the terror of the atrocities committed" (*The Language of Silence* 7). The theoretical metaphor of hospitality for mankind and the repressed silence of loss and horror in Wallant's *The Pawnbroker* is an important addition to the debate that is simple in its application but in terms of history and the accounts of such horror lends much to the importance of human love and compassion as answers to repressed silence and horror.

Kierkegaard discusses much about the loss of believing in *The Sickness unto Death* and this idea is pertinent to Nazerman's loss of any form of possibility. Nazerman's struggle [his state of being opposed to *I* in Kristevian terminology] depends on whether "the embattled one collapses [due] solely upon whether he [Nazerman] obtains possibility, that is, whether he will believe" (*The Sickness unto Death* 39). For Kierkegaard the person can only reach the dialectic of believing if "he understands that, humanly speaking, his collapse is altogether certain" (39), but for Nazerman his understanding is of another level. His cognition can no longer understand existence as anything but "a very bad accident ... of birth. He was in the Camps" (Wallant 191), and how anyone who survived the camps can explain Auschwitz. For Kierkegaard, with God all is possible, but for Nazerman God no longer exists. He remarks: "The foolhardy

person rushes headlong into danger with this or that possibility, and if it happens, he despairs and collapses” (39). This would explain why Nazerman tells Murillo, “if that is all you can do to me Murillo, you are much weaker than I thought. Kill me then... I will be out of this, one way or another” (Wallant 260), to which Murillo answers, “you know something, Uncle? I’m not a stupid man ... I don’t kick corpses ... I believe there is no point to killing you... No, I’m writing you off, not that you care” (Wallant 261-62).

Wallant’s lesson, if there is one for Sol Nazerman and I feel anyone determined to write or attempt to understand something about the Holocaust should be able to discuss the question of the Holocaust’s ghost that Derrida poses in *Specters of Marx*: “Could one *address oneself in general* [Nazerman] if already some ghost did not come back? If he loves justice at least, the ‘scholar’ of the future, the ‘intellectual’ of tomorrow should learn it and from the ghost. He should learn to live by learning not how to make conversation with the ghost but how to talk with him, with her ... they are always *there*, specters.... They give us to rethink the ‘there’ as soon as we open our mouths” (Cited in *The Derrida Reader* 163).

Before beginning a discussion of Saul Bellow’s *Mr. Sammler’s Planet*, I feel the framework for literature and representation can view Vonnegut’s *Mother Night* and Wallant’s *The Pawnbroker* as the representations of a modernist ideal in fiction writing moving toward a postmodern idea that is what Bellow’s *Mr. Sammler’s Planet* evinces. The idea that Vonnegut and Wallant are a modernist link to the postmodern ideal in fiction would echo Ihab Hassan’s take on postmodern fiction, and show why Bellow’s text may be the most contemporary fictive piece of this project: “the postmodern spirit lies coiled within the great corpus of modernism” [and] ... postmodern literature is the

new awareness of the postmodern” (*The Idea of the Postmodern* 40). I would argue that Vonnegut and Wallant show in their main characters is an “un-awareness” to face the past, which becomes a silence that leaves them trapped in a modernist aesthetic mythology and a belief in purpose that postmodernism denies.

For Hassan “the two accents of silence, [that] ... persist in postmodern literature [are] the negative echo of language, auto-destructive, demonic, nihilist [and] its positive stillness, self transcendent, sacramental plenary” (40). The modernist appeal to knowledge and unity of self in a transcendent vision are lost in Vonnegut and Wallant's characters because the characters see nothing that transcendent horror but horror but Bellow's Artur Sammler understands that the Holocaust transcends horror but to accept it as a finite dictate of man would keep him from finding “the difference and distance between subject and object must be accepted, not denied through metaphorical or mythical means; unity of self and world through transcendental knowledge is an illusion” (Bertens 34).

Whereas Campbell and Nazerman are aware of their loss of self they attempt to rationalize their horror with what Leslie Fiedler would term a “case of narrow eurocentrism” which gives them a sense of “repressive and reductive rationalism, of elitism, and of intellectual self-deception” (Bertens 34), whereas Sammler, though initially an anglophile and an elitist, after the Holocaust and in the radical 1960s becomes a sort of Fiedlerian post modern man by his “new anti-modernisms that they [he] seek to theorize and, on the other hand, presented as liberating, democratic, open, respectful to both the human and the non-human, and sensitive to desire” (Bertens 34). This would explain Sammler's problems with the intellectuals in the novel as well as his saving grace

in the character of Elya Gruner, who is really the only transcendent character in *Mr. Sammler's Planet*.

If we are truly in the postmodern era or simply moving away from modernism then for me Bellow's *Mr. Sammler's Planet* is the novel of the three discussed in this chapter to be the most important for Holocaust representation. I say this because where the importance of Vonnegut and Wallant's novels is that they show what Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno espouse in their essay, "The Dialectic of Enlightenment," allows the reader to see in the characters of Nazerman and Campbell as being in a situation that is beyond difficult and for them; impossible. This impossibility is "the frightening conclusion that enlightenment is the only road to social freedom and it inevitably leads to totalitarianism. Modernity leaves us, [Campbell and Nazerman] then, in an impossible situation" (Cited in Cahoon Ed. *From Modernism to Postmodernism* 243), Bellow's Sammler takes the same impossibility and finds possibility, not in a total deconstruction of all meaning and language but, as Hassan states, "a post structuralist metaphysics of absence and its ideology of fracture [that] refuse[s] holism almost fanatically. Everything collapses inward on language itself, on structures within/without structures ... literature that is also explosive" (Bertens 45).

Hassan's essay expects *more* from language and Bellow's text does as well. Artur Sammler debates his contemporaries and does not allow them to fall back on hardened pseudo-intellectual academic dogma by constantly reconstructing in his thought process his place in existence and the ludicrousness of characters over adherence to vice, theory and cultural populism. Sammler implores characters in his debates quietly but with language that can only fall back on itself to meaning: "man is a killer. Man has a moral

nature [but] the anomaly can be resolved by insanity only” (Bellow 197). Hassan’s description that the “postmodern imagination is an existential imagination [and] is governed by the impulse to engage literature in an ontological dialogue with the world on behalf of the recovery of the authentic historicity of modern man” (Bertens 48). And this can be paralleled with the insanity Bellow speaks of Sammler’s recognition that without constant attention to the dialectic of possibility and the need to expect more from language than hardened theoretical position, which is, in essence, totalitarianism of the mind. Bellow’s novel can be seen in the postmodern “anti-literature of the absurd” ideal of Hassan that “employs an aesthetic of de-composition that reveals to us the primordial not-at-home, where dread as Kierkegaard and Heidegger and Sartre and Tillich tell us, becomes not just the agency of despair but also and simultaneously of hope, that is, of *freedom and infinite possibility*” [my emphasis] (Bertens 47-48).

Adorno and Horkheimer have shown is that, when science and mathematical reasoning replace individual thought, the system that develops can be one that would become a national socialist state and that “enlightenment reason empties itself of all religious and metaphysical sources of value, leaving only power and self-interest as its goals” (Cahoone 243). In the characters of Nazerman and Campbell the involvement in the Nazi system—one as perpetrator and one as victim—finishes them as thinking human beings. They no longer possess any sense of self agency and for them thinking “objectifies itself to become an automatic, self activating process; and impersonation of the *machine* [my emphasis] that it produces so that ultimately the machine can replace it ... mathematical procedure became, so to speak, the ritual of thinking ... it turns thought into a thing, an instrument” (Cahoone 245). Both Campbell and Nazerman no longer

think or act as independent, cognitive agents but the residue of enlightened reason and their downfall and lack of any attention to spiritual or metaphysical possibilities is why their stories are important for representation of the lost victims of the Holocaust and in Bellow we do get a more forward looking character in Artur Sammler.

By forward looking I feel that Bellow's attention to the spirit is similar to what Cornel Bonca sees in his essay, "Significant Space and the Postmodern in *Mr. Sammler's Planet*" as a "restoration of significant space" (3). For Bellow, this is where his novel moves from anti-modernist tract to a more postmodern aesthetic requisite for contemporary representation in the fact that "the impoverished view of man Bellow gives us in *Mr. Sammler's Planet* seems to reflect either a real shifting of philosophical ground ... or a fictionally indigested reaction to the frustrations of mid-twentieth century existence ... and the book offers no absolute reactions but rather postulates possibilities" (Wethington, "Re/Establishing Boundaries in Bellow: Postmodernism and *Mr. Sammler's Planet* 3-4). Though Artur Sammler laments the problems of modern society in the characters of Margotte, Bruch, Shula-Slawa, for example, he sees in their eccentricities the ignorance of the spiritual that is his quest in the novel and, though he is not looking for finites, he does seek possibilities and he does understand the modernist break with the times he is part of:

Sammler perceived different developments. The labor of Puritanism was now ending ... the sexual ways of the seraglio and of the Congo bush adopted by the emancipated masses of New York Amsterdam, London... He saw the increasing triumph of Enlightenment—Liberty, Fraternity, Equality, Adultery! ... the right to be uninhibited, spontaneous, urinating, defecating, belching, coupling in all

positions.... And now all the racism, all the strange erotic persuasions, the tourism and local color, the exotics of it had broken up but the mental masses, inheriting everything in a debased state, had formed an idea of the corrupting disease of being white and of the healing power of black.... Like many people who had seen the world collapse once, [The Holocaust] Mr. Sammler entertained the possibility it might collapse twice. (*Mr. Sammler's Planet* 33)

For Campbell or Nazerman the possibility of another Hitler or Holocaust would be all they can envision for future societies, but for Sammler there is a chance that the world may or may not collapse and the only possibility for avoiding a collapse is to recognize that “all naturally were frightened of the future. Not death. Not that future. Another future in which the full soul concentrated upon eternal being” (89). Bellow sees that the over-intellectualizing and narcissistic excesses of the sixties can be released from ‘the blameless state of madness’ (89) in his characters’ constant dialogue, which can be included in a modernist/postmodern discussion that “postmodernism as a distinct shift in the way that humanist intellectuals ... view the relation of their cultural work to society at large” (Wethington 6).

Sammler recognizes that the modernist view of a utopian geo-political/fiscal monolith under the form of capitalism was the worst possible solution and though Sammler is uncertain about the results of the monolith of western capitalism, he is worried that “calling on the intellectuals to do the work of dismantling this monster” (Wethington 7) may lead to over-intellectualization, which must not be trusted: “Whether the worst enemies of civilization might not prove to be its petted intellectuals who attacked it at its weakest moments-attacked in the name of proletarian revolution, in the

name of reason, and in the name of irrationality, in the name of visceral depth, in the name of sex.... For what it amounted to was limitless demand—insatiability, refusal of the doomed creature ... to go away from this earth unsatisfied” (Bellow 34). The importance of Sammler’s worry about the intellectualization of history and I feel the Holocaust, would echo Frederic Jameson’s theory of a “perpetual present”²¹ which results in a pastiche and schizophrenic discontinuity that will lose respect for the past and allow “parody without ulterior motive, without the satirical impulse, without laughter, without that still latent feeling that there exists something *normal* compared to which what is being imitated is rather comic” (Bertens 162). Jameson’s idea about the effects of late capitalism and commercialized simulacra does see a foreseeable problem when dealing with past cultures and history, and for representative art of the Holocaust this would seem to have an important application.

If the Holocaust becomes simply “a transformation of reality into images, [and] the fragmentation of time into a series of perpetual presents,” then the postmodern can be seen [like Sammler’s “Planet”] “as a profound crisis in representation. [where] History has disappeared and the present has dissolved into images” (Bertens 164), like when a student heckles Sammler when he attempts to lecture on Britain (*Cosmopolis*) in the 1930. When the student eludes ad hominem to Sammler being old and impotent he is putting Sammler in the category of dead history; in essence, a pseudo-aristocratic old

²¹ In Fredric Jameson’s *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of late Capitalism*. Duke UP: 1991, Jameson does a macro-analysis of the postmodern and its recent debates on the culture of commodification and the idea of pastiche and schizophrenia as one of its topics in dealing with postmodern literature, film and commodity culture that according to Jameson, condemns the artist “to lifeless imitations and permutations, that is, to produce art about itself and more, specifically, about its own failure”(Cited in Bertens, *The Idea of the Postmodern* 163), and it seems we “have become incapable of achieving aesthetic representations of our own current experience” (Bertens 163).

eastern European Jew, has nothing to say to a modern leftist audience: “Why do you listen to this effete old shit? What has he got to tell you? His balls are dry. He’s dead. He can’t come” (Bellow 42). In a sense Sammler has become a commodified production of the image of a man born “in the Austro-Hungarian Empire [who] ... when he was older [had his mother] ... bring lean, nervous Sammler his chocolate and croissants as he sat in his room reading Trollope and Bagehot, making an “Englishman” of himself” (61), and the survivor of the Holocaust, but unlike Campbell and Nazerman will not stay as a production of popular culture. Jameson argues that “what has happened is that aesthetic production today has become integrated into commodity production generally” [and] this whole global, yet American, postmodern culture is the internal and superstructure expression of a whole new wave of American military and economic domination throughout the world: in this sense, as throughout class history, the *underside* [my emphasis] of culture is blood, torture, death and terror” (cited in Cahoon 560).

For Sammler, that underside is that “man is a killer” with a moral nature and during the Holocaust he was “only an old Jew whom they had hacked at, shot at, but missed killing somehow” (197), who had seen a “peculiar transformation: a people changed into uniform, masked in military cloth and helmets, and coming with machinery for the purpose of murdering , boys, girls, men, women, making blood run, burying, and finally exhuming and burning rotten corpses” (197). Bellow has given a synopsis of the Holocaust here without drawn out historiography or political affirmation, just images and silence of fractures history in a pseudo fractured fictive voice. When Sammler’s nephew, Wallace, argues that his uncle’s quarrels with modern society are just “old-fashioned polish politeness” (102), Sammler asks his nephew Wallace to be practical but his answer

in a way echoes Jameson theory of the logic of late capitalism: “my father has X thousands of dollars in the house and he won’t tell where it is. He’s sore at us. *He’s in the capitalistic-family-psychology struggle...* There are higher aims in life.... Now listen to this. People are like simple whole numbers. Do you see?” (102). Sammler answers “no, of course not, Wallace” (102), but Wallace is locked into the positivist mind-set that Sammler knows has allowed the technological “miracle” that produced Auschwitz and Hiroshima “austere technicians—almost a priesthood” (67), but like the intellectuals he deals with Wallace will not budge: “numbers also bear an important relation to people. The series of numbers is like a series of human beings—infinite numbers of individuals” (102).

Sammler is trying to help Wallace out of his pseudo-intellectual complacency but his questioning resonates in Jameson’s questions related to finites in cultural production: “Can we in fact identify some moment of truth with the more evident moments of falsehood?” (Cited in Cahoon 568), and “does it not tend to demobilize us and to surrender us to passivity and helplessness by systematically obliterating possibilities of action under the impenetrable fog of historical inevitability” (Cited in Cahoon 568). Sammler would seem the passive observer in the novel, but in essence he is the one character thinking internally and not giving in to the passivity, “conquered people tend to be witty” (98) but in the same sentence he very quietly sees that not all possibilities of historical inevitability are evil, “I think on the whole I like them [The Poles] better than they like me” (98).

Instead of the dreary nihilistic views of Campbell and Nazerman about their enemies and tormentors during and after the war, Sammler, in his debates with Wallace,

shows the possibility of understanding in a small way the aftermath of the Holocaust. Even the depiction of the “one good Pole” who saved him after the war but returned to being a hardened anti-Semite again is an excellent example of this understanding: “Cieslakiewicz had had his time of honor and charity. He had risked his life to save Sammler. The old Pole was also a hero. But the heroism ended. He was an ordinary human being and wanted again to be himself” (91). Sammler goes on to say that the old pole has a right now to “relax [or relapse] into old prejudices” (91).

Whereas Nazerman can never find an instance of post-holocaust thought worth revisiting except for emptiness, Sammler has put the onus on humankind understands now that many see him [Artur Sammler] as “personally a symbol [and] his friends and family made him a judge and a priest [rabbi]” (91). Sammler questions the absurdity of his past and his life as symbolic: “was he a symbol? ... Was it because he had survived?” (91). And if so not really surviving according to Sammler: “it wasn’t surviving, it was only lasting. He had lasted” (91). Like Nazerman, Sammler realizes the past is gone and “the other life—was gone, taken away, there would remain for Sammler, while he lasted, that bad literalness, the yellow light of Polish summer heat behind the mausoleum door” (92). Though Sammler is on a quest to understand and see possibility in the future his Holocaust experience has left him, according to Regine Rosenthal, “perfectly aware of the abnormality of his own experience. He does not trust his own judgments because his lot has been extreme and one cannot come out intact” (“Memory and the Holocaust”, cited in Bach, *The Critical Response to Saul Bellow* 335). Artur Sammler was buried alive and escaped but does see his wife murdered and could not help her. The historical

relevance to the massacre of Jews at Babi Yar²² prompts Sammler to ask, “Is our species crazy?” (92), and because he is searching throughout the novel to prove otherwise feels this quest is the only integral reason to keep living; for Sammler he must get past “the punishment for having failed to find *coherence*” [my emphasis] (92).

Bellow uses history and event as backdrop for Sammler, but in his description of the horror, “when he and sixty or seventy others, all stripped naked and having dug their own grave, were fired upon and fell in. Bodies upon his own body. Crushing. His dead wife nearby” (92), it would seem that it is Bellow’s technique to use Sammler as a sound board for all those that survived in the term; coherence. Many survivors traumatic memory of extremes in the death camps follow a pattern of three choices that the psychoanalyst Bruno Bettelheim discussed after the war, Bellow’s dialogue in relation to Sammler and Babi Yar validates the search for coherence that Nazerman will not find but Sammler may. In Bettelheim’s classifications both Nazerman and Sammler fit a group that for Nazerman is doomed to nothingness, but for Sammler leaves a possibility of “something-ness,” perhaps God: “Sammler didn’t know how to take himself. He wanted, with God, to be free from the bondage of the ordinary and the finite. A soul’s released from nature. From impressions, and from everyday life. For this to happen God himself must be waiting” (Bellow 117).

²² Babi Yar. The site on the outskirts of Kiev of a once famous Jewish cemetery that had become one of the most infamous scenes of Nazi mass slaughter of Jews in the early 1940s. Babi-Yar was of added importance for it was the site that when SS Reichsfuehrer witnessed the bloody mass shooting ordered SS Gruppenfuhrer Reinhard Heydrich to find a “better way” to complete the work of murdering the Jews in the east. Two excellent historiographies of Babi Yar and the massacre at “Grandmothers Ravine” are Yehuda Bauer’s *A History of the Holocaust*: 1982, and Richard Rhodes *Masters of Death*: 2002.

Bettelheim classifies survivors as being “destroyed by the experience ... these individuals have lost all hope to reintegrate their shattered personalities” (*Critical Responses to Saul Bellow* 335), or those survivors who “refuse to acknowledge any lasting effect of the event on their lives, they are marked by repression and denial” (335), or those who “are willing to face in a life-long struggle the extreme situation they have lived through and to turn it, if possible, into a positive experience”(335). What Saul Bellow accomplishes in *Mr. Sammler’s Planet* is the crux of my thesis about representation and the Holocaust: the need to question relentlessly the coherence of art and life in the shadow of the horrors of an era that made Auschwitz possible. Bellow does not use a pseudo form of Hitlerspeak or Holocaustspeak to bring the event to the forefront and, though *Mr. Sammler’s Planet* is a novel partly about the Holocaust, Artur Sammler it is not entirely swallowed up in the event like Wallant’s Pawnbroker Nazerman. Unlike Nazerman Bellow gives Sammler a distance from the event and this distancing for Sammler him a better notion of “to see or not to see.”

Sammler’s ability to see and not see what is needed at times would fit into the third category of Bettelheim survivors, and by unraveling the horrors he has witnessed and survived—the slaughter of his family, his own killing of a Nazi and his discussion of Nazi Adolph Eichmann and Lodz "Eldest of the Jews" Chaim Rumkowski—Artur Sammler chooses to see, whereas Nazerman and so many others blind themselves to their past, their history and any possibility to learn from it. Regine Rosenthal discusses this ability to see for Sammler as his being a “one-eyed God in the land of the blind ... or is he a seer whose perceptions are keener” (*Critical Response to Saul Bellow* 336). This would seem quite relevant for Sammler for had one eye blinded from a Nazi gun and with

his one blind eye can “look inward and backward in time. Only by an intricate interplay of both roles--the blind wise seer and the acutely observant critic of modern society—can Sammler try to balance and overcome the limiting and limited perspective of each” (*Critical Response to Saul Bellow* 336).

Saul Bellow’s Artur Sammler is like Wallant’s Nazerman in the sense that both survived the Nazi terror, but Sammler is willing to talk about the Holocaust, not as a victim but more like a historical observer, in some ways an academic. Whereas Nazerman evinces the horror and guilt of surviving the Holocaust through his *silence*, Sammler deals with the Holocaust in an almost pedantic tone, but pedantic in a research-type search for an answer, not to be scholarly but to really find a cognitive temporality of a limited kind; a partial view of the un-viewable. What Sammler searches for is his own understanding and how to do this while being ensconced with characters of a modern age who want to distance themselves from the reality of an event that can repeat itself. For representative art Bellow’s Sammler is possibly more important for the discussion of Holocaust fiction.

Whereas Nazerman may learn to feel again after the death of Ortiz, he is still shut down to any possibility of humanity after Auschwitz, whereas Sammler, in his constant questioning, pushes the debate of modernism/postmodernism in his move away from the metanarratives of the Holocaust and history in general to a more “contradictory phenomenon that uses and abuses, installs and then subverts, the very concepts it challenges” (*Saul Bellow Journal* 5). Instead of revisiting the memory of the camps and the grand narratives of totalitarian punishment and discipline Sammler seems to move more toward Derrida in the importance of learning that through the immanence and

memory of abject violence and death [surviving the Holocaust and being buried alive at Babi-Yar] one may find the key to understanding life which for Sammler may be to “learn it *from oneself and by oneself*, all alone, to teach *oneself* to live ... to live ... is not learned from life, taught by life. Only from the other and by death ... from the other at the edge of life” (*Specters of Marx* xviii).

Where one may be hard pressed to see Sol Nazerman as learning from the death and destruction of the Holocaust, it is different in Bellow’s Sammler. Sammler does evince what Derrida saw in the ghosts of the Marxist state in the sense that the Sammler has come to view the murder and the systems that allow for organized murder like Nazi Germany as not banal but in terms of pure good or pure evil and the logical extension of an apocalyptic world that is devoid of humanism can give us a holocaust: “The idea of making the century’s great crime look dull is not banal... What better way to get the curse out of murder than to make it look ordinary, boring, or trite?” (18). What Bellow’s Sammler is saying is that we must recognize that, by putting the Nazi in a category marked “banal and do not touch” we figure that that regime and that horror was a once in a lifetime atrocity, but Sammler’s discourse is telling us that when man reaches a point where intellect becomes paramount and god is pushed aside than humanness and love are lost to technology and machines. If this happens then the term banal can apply to any of us and that may be the postmodern moment Wallants’ novel pushes us to reconsider.

Banal can be nothing more than a euphemism for “monster of efficiency” and monsters come in many forms when power or careerism is at the root of the discourse. Does this make the novel uniquely postmodern? Dirk Wethington, in his article “Re/Establishing Boundaries in Bellow: Postmodernism and *Mr. Sammler’s Planet*,

states that Bellow's text "can be conceived in two parts: one in which the business of progressing through the narrative events and dialogue is carried out, and a second which functions as something of an academic diary, in which the protagonist of the novel reacts to the shift from modernism to postmodernism" (*Saul Bellow Journal* 3). I feel the text is most importantly divided in three covert areas, and all deal with the Holocaust, the Eichmann section, the Rumkowski section and the section where Sammler "kills" a German and allows the reader the opportunity to see how the killing is satisfying. Sammler understands that the killers are not simple banal and that Jews like Rumkowski will gladly send other Jews to die so he can live like a king. The Rumkowski parallel is important for in his capacity as the "Eldest of the Jews"²³ the horror and corruption he brought on his own people as an elder and a sage can be paralleled to Sammler in his very "un-Rumkowski" way of trying to find the answers to all who were involved in the Holocaust—perpetrators and victims alike—and to refuse compliance in becoming silent like Wallant's Nazerman or Vonnegut's Campbell.

Sammler begins to understand that the perpetrators were not mechanical bureaucrats and the idea of a banal monster, like Eichmann or a monster despot like Hitler or Richard III, is too easy an answer for what happened in the Holocaust. For Sammler it was the fact that people became *things*, [both victim and executioner] and neither victim nor perpetrator could "understand his words. Literally not the same

²³ The term "Eldest of the Jews" was given to the Chairman of the Jewish ghetto in Nazi-occupied areas of Poland. Many of these elders were honest and tried to make the lot of their Jews as good as possible but some, like Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski, became infamous in their corruption and compliance in the death and transportation of the Jews he was supposed to care for. His reign on the Judenrat of Lodz Ghetto is one of the most troubling historical remnants of the Holocaust. For a comprehensive account of Rumkowski and the Lodz Ghetto see Alan Adelson and Robert Lapides *Lodz Ghetto* 1989.

language. Not the same feelings. No comprehension. No common concepts. Out of reach” (*Mr. Sammler’s Planet* 188). Sammler is not going to be persuaded by Hannah Arendt’s “banality of evil”²⁴ to the extent that he allows the executioners off with the “I follow orders” technocrat, instead he says that the problem lies in the persecutors inability to *look* at their victims and see human beings: “A human look was exchanged Tolstoy says you don’t kill another human being with whom you have exchanged such a look” (*Mr. Sammler’s Planet* 188). What Sammler may be finding here is that, though postmodernism may be at the crux of his questioning in 1960 New York, it is not a break with modernist ideals but an extension of them to a point that the warning will become one of history repeating itself if society does not begin to pay attention. Sammler’s speech here in the text is an important point for holocaust representation because the notion that any fictive language that keeps the reader vigilant to the power systems can make history a horror or a boon to mankind.

What Bellow has done is not only permit the reader to see that the threat of another Hitler or Holocaust is possible in the future if “everything [is] in a debased state,” but in Sammler’s commenting on the many developments of the modern world his conceptualizations of the radical changes in modern society are problematic because, like his depictions of some of Sammler’s in-laws and acquaintances, they all become the worst caricatures of modern capitalism, and instead of giving the world the modernist utopia its theorists envisioned, give us “a world in which society would be able to stand

²⁴ Hannah Arendt’s groundbreaking work *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, has as its major thesis—much like Goldhagen’s *Hitler’s Willing Executioners*, the idea that ordinary Germans and ordinary German bureaucrats saw both jobs—that of administrator and purveyor of death in the same way—banal—without guilt, feeling or emotional pain; simply a job that had to be done efficiently and fiscally responsible like any major governmental engine.

autonomous ... creating its own governing principles”(*Saul Bellow Journal* 6), but “around 1945-50, after World War II, some argue that monolithic world order was realized, though not in the pure and aesthetic creation the modernist hoped for” (*Saul Bellow Journal* 6).

In conclusion, in the area of victims the return to Bettelheim’s classifications would show that Sol Nazerman cannot reintegrate himself into mankind. When Marilyn Birchfield thinks she sees a human side to Sol, “you were off guard for a moment.... I’m beginning to think you’re hiding a human being under your cold manner (142), he answers without hysteria or emotion, “do not bank on it Miss Birchfield” (142). Sol is not only sick of the categorical imperative of Mendel Rubin and all survivors, “I have died too many times already” (89), but refuses to acknowledge the self imposed stigma he has also assigned to himself, “we have been in hell and we have escaped. We are no one (119), whereas Sammler has used self examination and a willingness to face himself and his executioners by recognizing that “they say you were in the grave once” (189), but from being buried alive he has found a sense of purpose and a belief in life “that we all know God, that we know, that we know, we know, we know” (313). Nazerman gives us the impossibility of hope; Artur Sammler gives us hope.

PART III—SYLVIA PLATH AND W. A. SNODGRASS

“An engine, an engine. Chuffing me off like a Jew.
A Jew to Dachau, Auschwitz, Belsen.” (Plath, “Daddy” 31-33)

“And yet I have these albums, these pictures proving it all so. We danced together; we sat together over tea; even the wedding ceremony.... My grandmother’s brocade—I left it at the mountain; I had to wear my long black taffeta. This ring delivered for me by the Gestapo... I am black but beautiful ye daughters of Jerusalem. *With this ring I thee wed; This gold and silver I thee bring* ... this ring torn off some Jew’s hand.” (Snodgrass, “Eva B Hitler, geb. Braun” 71-85)

Beginning with two examples of poetry employing Holocaust images the reader can see how powerful an image like “chuffing me off like a Jew” (“Daddy” 32), or “this ring torn off some Jew’s hand” (“Eva B Hitler, geb. Braun” 85) can be in terms of specificity and horror. The problem area lies in the appropriation of these lyrics without proper attention to the harm that can be done to victims as well as those who may attempt to trivialize the experience of the Holocaust. Whereas Sylvia Plath allocates the victim rhetoric for herself without due attention to the historical resonance for victims, W. D. Snodgrass uses the actual history of the last days of Hitler and Eva Braun in the bunker to evince a more balanced and fair representation in poetry of the images of the Holocaust.

Though no one would doubt Plath’s power as an artist and the power of the *Ariel* collection, many critics, M.L. Rosenthal, for one, recognize Plath’s “fascination with death” (*Rough Magic* 341), while A. Alvarez sees the platitudes of good and bad in her collection: “*Ariel*’s poems might be despairing, vengeful, and destructive, they are ultimately works of great artistic purity and despite all the nihilism, great generosity” (*Rough Magic* 341). Though Alvarez is one of Plath’s great defenders, he is misguided in

his belief that Otto Plath was a Nazi sympathizer and that Sylvia Plath had any Jewish blood. Both of these facts are untrue and, according to Edward Butscher, the main poem of this study, "Daddy," is "spoken by a girl with an Electra complex. Her father died while she thought he was God. Her case is complicated by the fact that her father was a Nazi and her mother very possibly part Jewish. In the daughter the two stains marry and paralyze each other" [but] "the references to her own psychological situation are obvious, though patently absurd ... her mother had no Jewish blood, and Otto's whole philosophy was inimical to fascism" (*Method and Madness* 337). According to most research on Otto Plath, he was horrified by the rise of Hitler in Germany and I would argue Plath's confused state and troubled psyche allowed her to appropriate these images for herself. As Irving Howe states, the problem here is Plath's belief that "the poetry of an American girl writing from the remote perspective of the 1950s could ever capture the actual, brutal reality of the holocaust" (Butscher 327).

The question that remains is why target mother, father and eventually husband Ted Hughes in her lashing out in "Daddy" and "Lady Lazarus" and, if so, why the images of the Holocaust. There are other images that she could have employed to evince a woman who sees herself as a victim of her time. According to David Holbrook, the psychological repercussions of the driven Sylvia Plath explain why she used images that appropriated Holocaust metaphors, and though they are the ravings of a delusional artist, they are indeed Plath's mind-set: "In truth, it would seem that the angry blame directed at mother and father in some of Sylvia Plath's writings *has no grounds*, but arises out of the same delusions which made her regard suicide with such rapture or fantasize her father as a Nazi" (*Poetry and Existence* 9). Plath's problem is her direct use of the images of the

death camps and by not allowing for any sort of distance she opens a problem area for representation that W. D. Snodgrass avoids by using the perpetrator as metaphor/muse instead of victim as muse/metaphor in his prose.

When Snodgrass mentions the “ring torn off a Jews hand,” the possibility that something stolen from Jews [as much was in the camps] could have ended up on Eva Braun’s finger may seem farcical, but when taken into account the final days in the Bunker the notion that the perpetrators could have stolen something from their victims rings true and allows for a sort of pseudo-historical dream sequence that keeps the victims as sacred and keeps the horror alive without allocating the victim muse for poetic effect. The poet, W.H. Auden, stated that “nothing I wrote saved a single Jew from being gassed.... It’s perfectly all right to be an engaged writer as long as you don’t think you’re changing things. Art is our chief means of breaking bread with the dead” (*In the Autumn of the Age of Anxiety* 22). But can anyone break bread with the type of dead we get from the horrors of the Holocaust? Snodgrass’s *The Fuehrer Bunker* was criticized for humanizing Hitler and his minions, and for being too deviant from the customary limitations of art. The idea that Snodgrass humanizes the Nazis I would argue is incorrect. The petite histoire of Hitler and his minions allows for a glimpse of history that makes them *human* only in the sense that their domestic sides, when paralleled with the side they showed the world, makes them more *inhuman* than human, What is important is the fact that they had normal likes and dislikes, for example, Hitler’s’ love of sweets, “Suppose my diet cook should be awake yet? Suppose we could still find a little chocolate cake? A little schlag, perhaps?” (*The Fuehrer Bunker* 13), or Goebbels diminutive size and his philandering, “Here’s Runt Joe, the cunt collector Who grew to

greatness.... Our little Doctor, Joe the Gimp.... Let Hermann swell up, grosser, fatter,
Weighed down by medals, houses, clothing; They leave me lean, secured in loathing”
(*The Fuehrer Bunker* 34-35), and this prose shows readers there was human history
behind the monstrous megalomania.

The petite histoire that Snodgrass offers in the images of Hitler and Goebbels in
the lines just mentioned has nothing to do with the meta-narratives of Hitler—the Fuhrer
and Goebbels—the propaganda minister and their *Hitlerspeak* and Nazi propaganda, but
what we get in *The Fuehrer Bunker* poems is the “Monsters at midday “[mine] depictions
of the meta-monsters when they are simply living their eccentric lives behind the curtain
of national socialism. In essence, these people still had normal lives behind the parades
and blitzkriegs. Snodgrass alludes to his technique in *The Fuehrer Bunker* poems as not
an attempt to glorify these monsters, but as a way of accepting their normalcy: “Well, I’m
sorry. I’m an atheist, but my answer to that is you can’t blame me for what God did. You
know, they are human, and if you don’t want to admit that, then I think you don’t want to
admit that you share some of their qualities, and I think that’s very dangerous”
 (“Snodgrass Underground: An Interview.” Cited in *Tuned and Under Tension* 105).

Snodgrass’s answer to the question put to him by an interviewer “that what you’re trying
to do here is put faces on these monsters” (*Tuned and Under Tension* 113), he answers
with, I would argue, the recognition that we are all capable of great evil: “That would suit
me alright (put faces on monsters). They are monsters, but they’re human monsters, and I
think we all have those capabilities” (*Tuned and Under Tension* 113). Where I would
argue Plath’s poems using Nazi imagery are motivated by vengeance, a “thin disguise
over her own obsessive and hostile attachment to the ‘internalized bad object’,”

Snodgrass's *The Fuehrer Bunker* poems are more attuned to W.H. Auden's idea that "We must realize that we *are* Hitler" (*In the Autumn of the Age of Anxiety* 59).

Both Plath and Snodgrass kind of play with the dead, but, whereas Plath may do harm to the memory of the murdered dead of the camps, Snodgrass would make more sense in his understanding of Auden that "poetry makes nothing happen. It surely makes life no simpler or easier. Except that, if you can jar your mind awake every three weeks or so, it may surprise itself by a discovery and so become better prepared for the world and its own contradictions" (Snodgrass, *To Sound Like Yourself* 49). Snodgrass allows for retrospection and thought in his poetry whereas Plath's mistake is her immediacy and her failure to be introspective before allocating for herself the role of troubled woman in a troubled marriage and to play with history and put herself, "chuffing off like a Jew," in the guise of a victim, in this section to show that what Plath has done, whether conscious or not, is allow for the possibility for a trivializing, or for a revisionist attitude to come forth in representative forms of poetry dealing with Holocaust images. Plath, I feel, attempts to use a feminist ideology of victimhood and equate it with the holocaust but I feel that she would have benefited from Adorno's dictate that "ideology is to be avoided. For ideology is untruth—false consciousness, a lie ... [and] the greatness of works of art lie solely in their power to let those things be heard which ideology conceals" ("Lyric Poetry and Society" 58).

In essence, Plath may have better used her talent as a poet by equating her mental torment with images that fostered an ideology of victimization, vengeance and *internal*

*fascism*²⁵ towards those who she feel hurt her, Ted Hughes, for example, instead of an ideology of victimization that she feels allows a parallel to Jewish suffering in the death camps. Snodgrass allows the underneath, the petite histoire, of the holocaust under the guise of Eva Braun and Hitler's personal relationship, to function quietly while the horror is evident to anyone who has studied or researched the Holocaust. The importance lies in the need for readers not just to accept the poetry but to read it more critically with the understanding of the smaller voices of history, in this case Eva Braun.

Though a great deal of criticism is pointed at Plath for her use of Holocaust images, there was also a great backlash to the publication of Snodgrass's *The Fuhrer Bunker* poems as well. Where holocaust victims questioned Plath's use of victims as muse, many critics problem with Snodgrass was what they saw as a glorification of the Nazi hierarchy at the end of the war. Though I will address the problems inherent in both Plath and Snodgrass in terms of revisionism and trivializing the aftermath of Hitler and the Holocaust, Snodgrass, I would argue, does not glorify the Nazis at all but, if anything, by humanizing them, could make them even more horrible and more historically accurate in the domestic sides of their personalities that lie under the megalomania. In an article in the *Partisan Review*, Donald Hall seems to understand where my stance on Snodgrass

²⁵ In *Sylvia Plath: Poetry and Existence*, Al Alvarez, according to David Holbrook, discusses the fact that Sylvia Plath was motivated by vengeance in *Daddy* and *Lady Lazarus*, and this is a point of agreement for Holbrook, but I agree with Holbrook that when Alvarez equates Plath's mental struggles with the idea that her 'internal fascism' was the same as that suffered by Jews under the Nazi, it becomes problematic. Holbrook cites Victor Frankl, an Auschwitz survivor, and Frankl's take on 'internal fascism' as problematic for anyone (other than one who was under the Nazi jackboot) equating oneself with that horror. To Frankl, according to Holbrook, "it was the Nazis in whom the 'internal fascism' was to be found. Yet even then, once you new them, these individuals were only mixed and imperfect human beings. Frankl's way of preserving meaning, not least by 'taking his suffering upon himself, was by cherishing human qualities in himself and others through the process of love'" (Holbrook 292-293).

lies in terms of the appropriation of the personal and the historical in *The Fuehrer Bunker* poems:

At the start his poetry recounts personal loss and betrayal. Loss and betrayal continue but turn general as Snodgrass perceives human error [selfishness, treachery, deception, narcissism, murder] first in himself and then in everybody. Appropriately, the personal situates itself in the historical.... His vision of humanity, bleaker, than Calvin's accounts for some nervous rejections of his work. His work is hard to take. Hardest is *The Fuhrer Bunker*, in which Hitler himself, Eva Braun, Goebbels, Goring, Himmler, and the rest of the cast speak poetic monologues during the last days.... The poetry of outrage continually reaches past shock to obscenity, making a catalog of sin like Dante's Hell without a Purgatory, much less a paradise. The fundamental vision, constantly misread, damns not merely *them*—Germans or Nazis *out there*—but the viciousness we share with them. In no way does Snodgrass let these people off the hook; we find it offensive that we feel the same hook caught in our own jaw. (Cited in Haven, *The Poetry of W. D. Snodgrass* 286).

The importance to representation for poetry here lies in the understanding of the different kinds of poetic form that “outrage” the reader, to use Hall's term. The *poetry of outrage* in Snodgrass differs from the outrage that could accompany Plath's poetry in the sense that good poetry should outrage the reader in a manner that impels one to look inside oneself and not to be outraged at those the poetry might offend. By outrage, I mean it should be an artistic assault on the senses that makes us look *inward* at the notion that we all have a dark side, a side that could produce a “Hitler in ourselves.” The outrage

should not only be geared to poetry, but to art in general. To be *outraged is to be informed*, [italics mine] and it is also a warning from history that Auden tells us we should heed: “Art is our chief means of [hearing the voices of the dead] but the social and political history of Europe would be exactly the same if Dante and Shakespeare and Mozart had never lived.... I suppose that if Hitler had been a better writer, people might have become alarmed earlier. It’s all her in *Mein Kampf*, but it’s so boring” (*In the Autumn of the Age of Anxiety* 22).

When Snodgrass shows us through poetry that Hitler loved his dog Blondi, loved his apple strudel and tea time as well as Himmler’s devotion to mysticism, he allows us to wonder about the closeness we all have to outrage and horror and the importance to listen to the “voices from the bunker,” as not a group of lunatics but as a cognitive assurance that we must recognize that we all have a great capacity for evil as much as we have a great capacity for good. Plath, in much of her poetry and in her novel, *The Bell Jar*, does allow us into the fine line between good and evil and sane and insane in much the same way that Snodgrass does with his historical caricatures of Hitler and his minions, but in “Daddy” and “Lady Lazarus” the outrage is different because it allows us the opportunity to *see ourselves as victims of the death camps* and this I would argue is impossible. Plath did read about the Holocaust but seems to have undertaken to appropriate history for her own art without recognizing those who will be disturbed.

In the previous discussion of fiction in this chapter I talked about the *distance* that Kurt Vonnegut, Saul Bellow and Edward Wallant employed in their texts. All three bring the Holocaust to the reader, but not in its immediacy. Poetry is a more immediate art form—a more direct representation of language, voice and tone—and when an artist

crafts this immediacy in prose, in conjunction with the Holocaust as metaphor and a Nazi muse, I would argue that great care should be taken. If not, the artist risks what critic Leslie Fiedler views as problematic with any use of the Holocaust by any other than one who was *actually* there: “It is true, of course, that Hitler would have considered me a Jew.... [but I still have] no right to exploit—rhetorically, politically, philosophically—the ultimate misery of those alien others with who, he would have lumped me” (*In Every Generation* 386).

Fiedler, an American Jew who was not a victim of the Holocaust or Nazi oppression, seems to back up what many survivors have stated about art of the Holocaust, that being what survivor and Hebrew author Aharon Appelfeld states in relation to making sense out of echoes of the holocaust in representative art. That is to find “the one portion of the story that lends itself to some ‘sense,’ that is amenable to a narrative closure, as gruesome as that may be. This is *not* the cathartic, life-affirming Zionist closure of his Israeli peers; and paradoxically, it is not textually represented in his story. It is the *unrepresentable extra-textual horror* [mine] that represents—in its absence—the historically unavoidable closure of the assimilated culture of his childhood” (Friedlander *Probing the Limits of Representation* 231). I would argue that not only does Plath do exactly what Fiedler would not do—that is appropriate the Holocaust victim as metaphor for herself—“A sort of walking miracle, my skin/Bright as a Nazi lampshade/My right foot/A paperweight/My face a featureless, fine/Jew linen” (Lady Lazarus 4-9), because she was not Jewish and certainly not a victim of Nazi terror—but she also does the opposite of what Appelfeld espouses by attempting to bring what she sees as her horror in her problematic personality in relation to a Holocaust metaphor.

Plath makes her horror seem textualized and representable as having a *presence* in a poem suggesting Holocaust images, where, if anything, her need to espouse victimhood should engender an *absence* of an event [the Holocaust] that she has only read about. If survivors like Appelfeld can only write about the unrepresentable portions that make “sense” than those on the outside, like Sylvia Plath, might rethink their art and recognize that the Holocaust is a sacred realm. I do agree that Plath, though a great artist, should not be castigated as knowingly trivializing the holocaust, but her bipolar illness may have made her not able to recognize the problems with the images she chose. Where many of Plath’s critics miss the problem with her holocaust images, many critics of Snodgrass see *The Fuehrer Bunker* poems as downplaying the Nazi horror. Snodgrass, in his cycle of *Fuehrer Bunker* poems, makes Hitler the subject of the horror but in all his minions the reader gets the idea that all of these cyclical images form a totality of a “Hitler.” What *The Fuehrer Bunker* poems do in the cycle is use the petite histoire of the Nazi machinery and allow for the “cycle’s focus [to be on] the functionaries—some cynical, some obsessed, some repulsive, and some just trying to get out of the war with their skins ... [and this] suggests that all the bunker’s inhabitants are parts of Hitler ... making Hitler an ultimate instance of the shattered subject” (*Tuned and Under Tension* 118). The portrayal of so many characters under Hitler gives the reader a sort of “everyman” figure that does not allow for a specificity of the larger meta-narrative of the Nazi leadership.

The technique that Snodgrass uses is not preaching, but allows the poet to speak from the bottom of history and not the edifice, as Devon Miller-Duggan cites in *Tuned and Under Tension*: “By choosing to write in the voices of the complicitous as well as the active, Snodgrass eliminates the problem of preaching. Including voices ranging from

Hitler's to his secretary's and the Goebbels' children's, he writes the voice of *Every German* [italics mine], or every human, and so speaks from within the congregation—from the pit, not the pulpit" (118). Whereas Plath was lauded Snodgrass seems to have been greatly misunderstood, and, if anything, his depictions show the Nazis for what they were—"fearfully evil" and "that one of the chief Nazi crimes was to deny humanity to the Jews" (Snodgrass, *After Images* 155-56), [but] by not denying the humanity of the Nazis Snodgrass shows how frightening they were because they were human. The Nazi hierarchy was so human that again I reiterate what Snodgrass has said all along about his fuhrer bunker poems, that the idea that the human behind the inhuman is what all these poems evince. Snodgrass does not give us the historical fuhrer or the historical Himmler, but he gives us the private Hitler, that his Eva Braun poems capture so well and, for representation, I would argue, more important than any historical prose. Snodgrass gives us history from the kitchen and not the chancellery, and Snodgrass's *The Fuehrer Bunker* poems show us the terrifying nature of normalcy, as Snodgrass attests to in his afterward to *The Fuehrer Bunker* collection:

Eva Braun's favorite song was "Tea for Two;" she even made up German words for it.... [and] Until late in the war, most of the top Nazis loved Disney cartoons; after that, Hitler himself preferred movies of the drawn-out torture and deaths of those who tried to kill him on July 20, 1944. There is another film ... which records his sexual perversion; Eva Braun had it secretly filmed, fearing that he might abandon her. (*The Fuehrer Bunker: A Cycle of Poems in Progress* 67)

Whereas Snodgrass appropriates the private history of Nazis to, if anything, make them more terrifying in their normalcy, he leaves the idea of the Holocaust (that Hitler

and his men made happen) in an area of remembrance that shows that normal people committed genocide while they played Disney films. I would argue Plath's poems are different for they put the holocaust images out front and this could take away some of the victims humanity by allowing her prose to feign an understanding of holocaust images and parallel them to herself.

What is troubling in Plath's use of these images can be supported by psychologist David Holbrook in *Sylvia Plath: Poetry and Existence*. Holbrook looks at Plath as one would a patient and he sees in a clinical sense that her behavior follows that of a bipolar, paranoid schizophrenic individual who cannot understand the suffering of those in the Holocaust and to appropriate those themes in her mind is problematic. Holbrook understands the artistic temperament but he feels Plath lacks the needed objectivity to understand these metaphors are incorrect in terms of her poetry: "The objectivity she [Plath] displays in some poems is like the cold-bloodedness of a schizoid individual who *does not know how to respond to human suffering*" (Holbrook 290). Holbrook response here comes from Plath's dictate in an interview that the artist should be able to craft and work any experience—even the Holocaust—into his or her own words and to be able to explain existence however she chose to: From an interview with the British council:

I believe that one should be able to control and manipulate experiences, even the most terrifying—like madness, being tortured, this kind of experience—and one should be able to manipulate these experiences with an informed and intelligent mind. I think that personal experience shouldn't be a kind of shut box and mirror—looking narcissistic experience. I believe it should be generally relevant, to such things as Hiroshima and Dachau, and so on. (Holbrook 290)

Though I agree that artists have the power and ability to manipulate images for their art, I feel some subjects should be taboo. The Holocaust is a shut-box experience, to use Plath's phraseology, but to see a Holocaust victim as narcissistic is to view them as almost trivialized. By trivialized I mean to see camp survivors as using the experience to commodify their horror in the camps for a reason other than to inform future generations about the Nazi terror and to be somewhat vain about surviving the horror, all of which distorts and appropriates the historical reality of the Holocaust. Plath, according to Holbrook, missed the psychoanalytic "stage of concern, and so could not experience the capacity to make reparation, to feel for others" (Holbrook 290). Her attempts to use an image such as "bright as a Nazi lampshade" is almost flippant in its light-hearted prose and unlike Plath's *The Bell Jar* I feel the images here are offensive and not appropriate in any artistic form.

If Holocaust images such as lamp shades and boots in the face become catch-phrases for the Holocaust experience the camp survivor can become almost a parallel to the black minstrel of the pre-civil war and reconstruction South; instead of white man in black face, in the camps the Jew became simply "a Jew in no human face." By this I mean that cheapening the experience and allowing for almost commercial type entities—the "holocaust striped survivor" [Holocaust] and the "smiling mammy in the cookie jar" [American Slave South] could lead to a forgetting and lessening of the horror of the holocaust. A resurgence in neo-Nazism and fascist thinking can and will follow, especially if one looks at the holocaust revisionism that is brought about every day. If anything, the reason I feel Snodgrass is a more appropriate form is that, if there is any form of minstrel that comes from his poetry about the Third Reich, it only minstrelizes

Hitler and his minions by using the caricature in poetry of a bloated Herman Goring or a limping Joseph Goebbels, “turn away; check your manicure; pull on your gloves. Take time; make sure ... pass on, and infect history” (“Dr. Joseph Goebbels” 9-10, 16).

I would argue that the effect is not a carnivalizing of the Nazi regime, but shows the reader how a totalitarian regime—no matter how flawed in its leaders—can come to power; “Heidelberg, Danzig, practically undamaged.... Half a million squirm out of our glory ... to gutless even to get killed” (“Adolph Hitler” 6-7, 9-10). Any allusion to the victims of the Nazis in Snodgrass is couched in the prose attacking the perpetrators, and this may be a better use of art than applying oneself to the victims as Plath does.

Snodgrass commented on why he focused on the perpetrators instead of the atrocities and his answer would seem to fit a better sense for interpretive art of the holocaust. Snodgrass sees a problem with focusing too much on atrocity as having “a certain amount of danger involved in it; you’re identifying there with the victim, and I think that’s a very dangerous thing” (Raisor, *Tuned and Under Tension* 114).

Sylvia Plath and anyone attempting to use the Holocaust in art must recognize Irving Howe’s theory that, in terms of Holocaust literature, “We are trapped. Our need for testimony that will forever place the Holocaust squarely within history requires that we respond to voice, nuance, personality” (Cited in Friedlander *Probing the Limits of Representation* 228). What Howe understands is that, though we need to bear witness and the Holocaust must remain alive in our consciousness but without regard to who and what is being appropriated in reference to this event is the problem area, and “this problematic difference is also behind the extreme position that decrees silence [Elie Wiesel] on whoever *was not there*” (*Probing the Limits of Representation* 228). The “was not there”

is why I argue about Plath's Holocaust images in "Daddy" and "Lady Lazarus." Then the question must be asked, "Why did she use Holocaust and Nazi images, what does it mean for future representation in fiction, and what is next to answer?"

If art of the Holocaust is to deal with history in poetry then the use of this history of horror must follow certain dictates for the poet of fiction. Holocaust poetry, in my view, needs to be fair to the victims, and poetry written by victims or perpetrators that recognizes their actuality of the horror inside the event may be more appropriate. This form would fit a non-fictional genre but for those that attempt to use the Holocaust and its environs for fictive poetry then there are two categories that the artist must accept. One, it must follow the line of W.A. Snodgrass and use history as a metaphor or warning for future generations that any attempt to write poetry using this event must be adhered to with strict attention to historical antecedents, such as character, place and time. But to appropriate characterization, metaphor and an artist playing with history's horror is not acceptable. This is the category I feel Sylvia Plath falls into. The problem area Sylvia Plath ventures into attempts to use oneself [her "victim-hood" as a woman] inside the metaphor of Holocaust victim: "I think I may well be a Jew" ("Daddy" 34). Her poem "Daddy" is an assault on her own mental illness and to equate herself with a Holocaust survivor is troubling at the very least for representation.

Not only is this problematic for art but many feminists I would argue are misguided in allowing Plath to equate her dilemma as a woman in a male-dominated society to be compared to a woman in the concentration camps of Belsen, Dachau etc. who had no voice, no choice and no hope. I put the term "victim-hood" in quotes because I feel the crux of the problem I have with Plath's "Daddy" and "Lady Lazarus" is

her use of the victim ideal and the authoritarian Nazi muse for her poetry. Granted, Sylvia Plath was a troubled, bipolar personality, but it is too facile—especially in 1960-62 when the Eichmann trial was underway—to equate a male-dominated society with Nazism and to equate women’s struggles with holocaust victims. The mistake Plath makes here is with her fascination with death camps and nihilism that gives her the misguided notion that her prose can be a diversion to human understanding of an event—the holocaust—that she feels is parallel to her in some way. Holbrook recognizes this problem in Plath and specifies the crux of her seeming pre-occupation with death. Whereas a true survivor of the camps “could encounter responsiveness to and responsibility for those we love [and] ... find out greatest sense of meaning” (Holbrook 294), someone like Plath, who did not experience the camps, cannot equate her “fascination ... with death camps ... [and] obsession with nihilism, indifference, psychosis, hate and death that becomes a diversion for the *avant garde*” (Holbrook 294) with those who died. Her art lacks the responsibility to those who were in those camps and the notion that she “may be a bit of a Jew” (“Daddy” 40), is always problematic.

The critic Leslie Fiedler, himself a Jew terms himself an “unscathed survivor” (*In Every Generation* 398), and seems to back up my stance on appropriating the Holocaust for oneself in art forms when he talks about the fetishistic aspect of the Holocaust as horror pornography. I feel Plath treads on this terrain and, though Fiedler does not directly comment on Sylvia Plath’s Holocaust metaphors, he does comment on what would show his problem with her use of Holocaust metaphors in relation to herself. Fiedler states that “the covert relish of horror pornography I shared, as well as that guilt, plus the added shame of being, though a Jew, an unscathed survivor. Nonetheless, I

stubbornly resisted seeing any of those films or reading any of those books [or reading any of the poetry], because I told myself the vicarious atonement they afforded was too easy, to cheap” (*In Every Generation* 398), and though Plath is not mentioned the idea that one would appropriate the horror of the Holocaust as one’s own would be pornographic for representation and this should serve as a warning to future metaphoric abuse by artists when dealing with the Holocaust.

Al Strangeways, in his article, “The boot on the face: the problem of the Holocaust in the poetry of Sylvia Plath,” defends Plath as not so much abusing the metaphor of the holocaust but using the holocaust to show her interpretation of history and myth: “Arguably, such apparently arbitrary swiftness represents the surreally illogical though processes of the fevered subject; yet such an interpretation still leaves unexplained the very specific, unsettling contrast Plath sets up between the resonant nature of myth and the emblematic appearance of history” (*Contemporary Literature* 6), but I would argue it is her misreading of history or her appropriation of “history and the holocaust as female trauma” [mine] as problematic.

Fiedler, like Plath and Snodgrass, was very insulated from the horrors of the Holocaust and where he understands that the artistic distance from the event must be addressed when attempting to use the Holocaust in art, “I have always been afraid that in dealing with that subject [the Holocaust] I could not keep from seeming to suggest that I, who as an American was safely removed from the European catastrophe, have been insofar as I am allegedly Jewish, in some sense a victim” (*In Every Generation* 365). I would argue that though Sylvia Plath was a great artist, the schizoid personality and unfeeling anger towards those she felt hurt her gave her a condition that allowed her to

equate victimhood in any guise she chose. In terms of representative art of the Holocaust in poetry I feel Snodgrass is a much more adequate form for as Snodgrass says “Picasso said that all art is an aggression against the reader, or against the observer, the listener or whatever ... [and] if the work of art doesn’t bring the observer to see more of himself than he was aware of before, what use does it have to exist” (Raisor 138-39).

Snodgrass commented on his poems about Hitler’s architect Albert Speer that he “neglected his knowing” and in a sense I would say the same thing about Sylvia Plath. When it came to art and her poems using Nazi images she “neglected in knowing” what the repercussions would be for those who truly suffered. Plath was too great a poet to have to accommodate Holocaust images to be effective in her prose. I would argue Snodgrass never lets us forget the victims in his collection of poems in “the Fuhrer Bunker” because the perpetrators are not monsters and that they personify the evil that is in all of us if not controlled by humanity. The intent of Snodgrass’s poems in the fuhrer bunker are important for representation not because they are a direct link to meta-history, the Historical Nazis, but because they are a direct link to the hidden Hitler in all of us , as Snodgrass reminds us:

There is no need, after all, to reveal what the Nazis did or said; an enormous body of research already reveals what the Nazis did or said; an enormous body of research already reveals that in horrifying detail. The Nazis—like some others one may have encountered—often did or said things to disguise from the world ... their real actions and intentions. My aim is to investigate the thoughts and feelings behind the public façade which made those actions necessary or even possible.

My poems, then, must include voices they would hide from others, even from them-selves. (*The Fuehrer Bunker: A Cycle of Poems in Progress* 69).

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III. PERPETRATOR LITERATURE—INTRODUCTION

“Not to proclaim a phoenix reborn from the mutilation of mass murder, redeeming that time of grief, but to suggest a symbiotic bond linking art and ashes in a seamless kinship.” (*The Holocaust and Other Genocides* 100)

“The concentration camps are the laboratories where changes in human nature are tested.... In the death camps not only man died but also the idea of man.” (*Beyond Auschwitz* 15)

“Today I deeply regret having abandoned my previous way of life. My life and that of my family would have taken a different turn.... Yet who is able to foresee the intricate force of man’s destiny? What is right? And what is wrong?” (*Commandant of Auschwitz* 64)

Beginning with the idea that any form of art representing the Holocaust is a mistake I quote one of the most relevant scholars of the event, Lawrence Langer, to show the difficulty there is in dealing with the Holocaust. The idea that literature can make sense of this event remains the most vehement argument espoused by many survivors; most notably Elie Wiesel. Wiesel, much like Langer, reiterates that any form of “symbiotic bond that links art to the ashes,” is futile. Wiesel, who survived Auschwitz and lost his family in the camps, is perhaps the most recognizable Holocaust voice at the present time. Wiesel does not believe there can ever be any type of Holocaust literature, even though his non-fiction novel, *Night*, is one of the most powerful testaments to the hell that was Auschwitz. Wiesel scoffs at the idea that any form of representation is

possible for the Holocaust: “There is no such thing as a literature of the Holocaust, nor can there be” (*The Holocaust and Other Genocides* 100).

Wiesel is not espousing complete silence of the event, but I feel he believes any idea that leads to any type of aesthetic art, lesson or beauty is impossible and testimonies, like his autobiographical *Night*, are possibly the only form of representation that is possible. For Wiesel, like many Holocaust scholars, the problem lies in the fact that in another ten to fifteen years most of the victims and perpetrators will be gone and the probability of the Holocaust becoming an “event” lost in history can become a problem for future generations. This rationale is important but it begs the question; if we do not keep the discussion open and the discourse of Holocaust representation current do we not risk trivialization and revisionism? Langer also parallel’s Wiesel’s problem with identification in terms of those who would find any type of understanding from Holocaust representation in art. The only type of understanding that is possible is the horror and hell that man imposed on another man and Langer does not espouse silence but great caution with holocaust representation: “Because of the subject matter, we should not allow simple identification or the other desire for redemption or the longing for beauty conventionally conceived to guide our appreciation or shape our criticism of this literature. Whatever beauty Holocaust art achieves.... Is *soiled by the misery* [mine] of the theme” (*The Holocaust and Other Genocides* 100). Wiesel’s argument is very forceful and needs to be addressed, but it leaves an inherent problem. Will silence be the correct form of representation and if so what happens to the memory and oral discourse that allows future generations to not forget what man is capable of?

In *The Holocaust and Other Genocides*, Helmut Walser Smith recognizes the importance of what Wiesel and Langer state when they put a silent premium on most Holocaust art but he also recognizes—and this will be the crux of my argument for the importance of non-fiction as a Holocaust art form—that “a compelling and rich body of literature about the Holocaust has emerged. This literature *brings us closer* [mine] to the experience of the Holocaust and challenges our notion of what literature can do and how we read” (100). I agree with Smith that though we must be careful, as Wiesel and Langer advise, to silence completely future forms of representation would be problematic. For my area in this section on non-fiction the voice of the perpetrator, for example Heinrich Himmler stating that the destruction of the Jews would be “a glorious page on our history and one that has never been written and can never be written” (*The Holocaust and Other Genocides* 93), and the victim, ironically the head of the Jewish council in Lodz Ghetto Chaim Rumkowski, trying to explain to the adults in the ghetto that he must deport some of the children in the ghetto for extermination, “I must carry out this difficult and bloody operation, I must cut off limbs in order to save the body! I must take away children, and if I do not, others will be taken, God forbid” (*The Holocaust and Other Genocides* 49), will form a linguistic matrix of forbidden themes, covert language and the importance for future generations to understand that these two men evince the fundamental belief of totalitarian dictatorships; that being that in the ideology of totalitarianism “everything is possible.”²⁶

²⁶ In *Beyond Auschwitz: Post Holocaust Jewish Thought in America*, Michael Morgan cites Hannah Arendt’s *The Origins of Totalitarianism* to make an interesting case for the language of ideology that can “make everything possible.” For the Holocaust the idea that anything was possible was the death camps and the mechanized bureaucracy of death created in those totalitarian prisons. The crux of Arendt’s argument is the intellectual basis and realm of thought

The speeches of Himmler and Rumkowski, though horrible in their parallel missions, are, in a frightening way, both saying the same thing. Both Himmler and Rumkowski state that the many must be destroyed to befit, ironically, the chosen few. The ultimate irony being the play on the words “chosen people,” which goes from the perpetrators as beneficiaries of Nazi propaganda as pure Aryans and the Jew as subhuman to the post-war belief that the Jewish survivor of the camps was ironically the chosen super survivor of those horrendous camps; not the Nazi superman, now imprisoned as a sort of subhuman or better inhuman monster. What I feel is integral to my project and most especially in this chapter on non-fiction is the understanding that when ideology reduces man to the status of thing or simply cog in a huge government machine, then an Auschwitz is possible. The idea that something is “good for the state” was never more horrible visualized than in the death camps of Hitler and the texts chosen for this section all will evince the inner and outer horror of this bureaucracy of death and inhumanity. As Morgan cites Elie Wiesel in the epigraph to this chapter, “In the death camps not only man died but the idea of man” (*Beyond Auschwitz* 15), what we need as readers to get from Wiesel is the emotion that though he cannot imagine a human race after Auschwitz, we who are not survivors may have to make a case that there is such a thing as humanity after Auschwitz. For representation this notion that the idea that man died in those camps I would argue is true, [especially for Wiesel and many survivors] but to silence the voice of those who may have died mentally but survived physically, [both victim and perpetrator] is needed to bear witness. Representation in Holocaust art and

that could allow people to become things all under the guise of a national revival and nationalistic fervor. In essence the only desire of totalitarian regimes is “to dominate without restriction. They have no external desires, like happiness or prestige or wealth. Their only desires are internal, that is, to totalize ... to implement unlimited power” (Cited in Morgan, 15).

literature is integral to keep the horror always eternally present, or we risk, according to Arendt, a regime that “make[s] human beings superfluous” (*Beyond Auschwitz* 14). What non-fiction does is give us the language of both killer and victim and allows us to work through the semiotic maze of signifiers and signs that show how very “normal” this whole process became after Hitler’s decision to murder all the Jews of Europe.

The idea that the camps made people superfluous is a notion that will be repeated continuously in this project for this “unimaginable planet” that Wiesel called Auschwitz was the vehicle for the world’s mass forgetfulness of the “other” during the Holocaust. If the Jew became the despised and forgotten “other” what does this tell us about man’s ability to lose his humanity. Morgan, in *Beyond Auschwitz*, makes an interesting case for the notion that a comparison can be made to Holocaust prisoners and other prisoners of history’s penal colonies, gulags and slavery, but I agree with him that the comparison ends with the idea of detention. The Foucaultian nature of spectacle and scaffold was more a feature of the Holocaust in the sense that the prisoners served no function and unlike the prisoner of slavery, the penal colony or the gulag the Holocaust prisoner and guard were doomed to lose humanity or the idea that there ever was such a thing as humanity. Foucault’s theory of state power and punishment is exactly what Adolph Eichmann advocates in his memorandum written for Herman Goring in reference to the Jewish question. The ordinariness of totalitarian crimes under Hitler is very evident in this very office—like dictate from Eichmann to those who would “handle” the bureaucracy of death that was forthcoming. It is chilling in its boardroom quality. To illustrate here is a passage from *The Devil’s Disciples*:

Complementing the task that was already assigned to you on 24 January 1939, to solve the Jewish problem by means of emigration and evacuation in the best possible way according to present conditions, I hereby charge you with making all necessary preparations in regard to organizational, factual and material matters for a total solution of the Jewish question within the area of German influence in Europe. Should these come within the competence of other government departments then such departments are to co-operate. I charge you, furthermore, to send me ... an overall plan concerning the organizational, factual and material measures for the accomplishment of the desired final solution of the Jewish question. (Read 723-24)

What is important for my project is what Eichmann's memorandum shows—that being the realization that the executioners were not simply pathological monsters but ordinary men and that “unless we define abnormality—tautologically—as the behavior in question: nothing about the personalities or actions of the authors of evil, apart from this behavior, allows us to classify them as pathological beings” (*Facing the Extreme* 121).

The prisoners of the Holocaust were a spectacle of what the German state wanted to purvey in their propaganda. The message of the Kristallnacht pogrom on 1938 was not only used to fuel the anti-Semitic propaganda of Goebbel's hate machine but also put the Jews on a metaphysical scaffold that gave their tormentors, ordinary Germans and the willing executioners, the ability to see them as deserving of their fate:

Forced labor in prisons and penal colonies, banishment, slavery, all seem for a moment to offer helpful comparisons, but on closer examination lead nowhere. For in each case the victim has some *value* [mine], some role to play, some

function to perform, whereas to Arendt this is not true of the concentration camp inmates. For reasons like this, we should not say that the camps were an explicable development of existing institutions; they were rather a dramatic break with the past and our traditional conceptual and cultural resources. In a deep way, the camps make *no sense* [mine]; they are dark and obscure, contrary to all categories and logic. (*Beyond Auschwitz* 16)

What is important about Arendt's view is that what makes the holocaust the unimaginable event it was stems a great deal from the obscure nature of the prisoner as valueless non-commodity. History has shown that most totalitarian dictatorships use prisoners in a social-economic stratum that includes their slave labor as a form of supply and demand that benefits a war economy or a totalitarian leadership.

During the Holocaust the dictates of Hitler's SS denied any type of prison economy that had to do with the Jew as valued worker. Jews were only employed so they could be worked to death and any economic advantage was purely temporary. What is important for my project is the voice of the Nazi economic administrator, whether Hoess, Speer or Eichmann, and their very corporate style of administering a robot-type economy of temporary disposable workers that function not as human being but machines that were used to maximum and then discarded in the crematoria. The idea that human beings are disposable is what Arendt is talking about, for "the point of totalitarian domination is not control or use; rather it is an *alteration of human nature*, [mine] the creation of what Arendt calls superfluity or uselessness. Total power can be achieved and safeguarded only in a world of conditional reflexes, of marionettes without the slightest trace of spontaneity" (*Beyond Auschwitz* 17).

The death camps were the measuring stick for the unknown. Auschwitz remains the obscure, dark unexplainable realm that makes no sense but the importance for this project is to find some meaning or explanation for the obscure, senseless events of the Holocaust. The description of “marionettes without a trace of spontaneity” is integral to this project for in the realm of holocaust non-fiction the voice of perpetrator and victim all encompass a sort of marionette-type response before and after the event. The inability to remember and accept responsibility by the perpetrators parallels the inability to mourn and fight the nihilism of surviving by the victims in a very powerful discourse of atrocity. In the epigraph from Rudolph Hoess in the introduction to this chapter he states that he is confused after the fact: “What is right? What is wrong?” and when the reader encapsulates this idea they can put Hoess into a historical time-line that is, at the time [1946] of his detention and eventual execution. The irony for Hoess is in the notion that as one of Hitler’s marionettes/robots he now becomes exactly what the SS castigated the Jews as being, subhuman monsters that needed to be destroyed. At Nuremberg in 1946 the hangman [Hoess] becomes the hanged.

Hoess’s misappropriation of right and wrong and that he has been instrumental in probably the greatest horror in history still eludes him and his unfeeling emotion toward the despised “other” still remains. This matrix of inhuman ability to be human is something I hope to address in this chapter in the non-fictive voice of perpetrators like Hoess and Eichmann. Speer, though very much in the same functional mode as SS functionaries Hoess and Eichmann, offers a divergent voice in terms of accepting responsibility. Whereas Hoess and Eichmann speak the robot-like discourse of the soldiers following orders, Speer embodies all the qualities of the careerist intellectual or

supreme government functionary. For Speer, as well as Hoess and Eichmann, the ambition of a career fostered by an authoritarian god-like figure, Adolph Hitler, made for the ability of a system of totalitarian pressure and advancement to turn somewhat ineffectual men into very effective assembly-line executioners.

For representation of the Holocaust the area of non-fiction takes on a more stringent form that I would argue the area of fiction just covered in chapter 2. The writer of fiction is allowed a certain distance from the actuality of the Holocaust in the use of an imagined art form; even if it is composed from somewhat first-hand experience. For example, Kurt Vonnegut's view of Dresden or Bellow's allusions to holocaust survivors from his view as a spectator to history, do possess certain universal truths about the horrors of the camps, but without the *immediacy* [mine] of being part of the event, their art is still lacking. The importance of an immediate closeness to the event is why I feel the area of non-fiction holds the key to the precise need for accuracy—even with the memory distance those years will allow for—that can be a motivating factor to keep the subject or non-subject of understanding the holocaust always in the virtual present. The importance of keeping the Holocaust in a virtual present will prevent the revisionist tendency and misuse of history to push aside an event to an area where it can be commodified or so easily misunderstood. Though any type of understanding remains particularly puzzling, the key element is to keep the discourse open. The voice of the prisoner is the most representative for Holocaust representation and I will use Muller's *Eyewitness Auschwitz*. As well as Elie Wiesel's *Night*, and other witness narratives and testimony from Holocaust camp survivors in this chapter. But the area I feel makes for a most integral area of representation for the future in terms of a more critical response to

the Holocaust lies in the voice of the perpetrator. In this chapter the focus will be on two triumvirates of Nazi non-fiction oral discourse. The major triumvirate encompasses Nazi architect/minister [Albert Speer], Nazi commandant/functionary [Rudolf Hoess] and Nazi technocrat [Adolph Eichmann], and the minor triumvirate is Hitler's court discourse [Traudl Junge, Otto Gunsche and Hans Baur], under the overwhelming specter of Adolph Hitler and a totalitarian system that allowed for their machinations of death and horror.

The importance for representation lies in not only the nature of the system that allowed these men to become "monster-like" in a most "normal"²⁷ sense but allows the reader the immediacy of understanding what drove these men in their machine like attempts to flourish in the regime of national socialism. This chapter will focus on the two types of "prisoner as test subject." By this I mean that, during the Nazi regime, the Jewish camp survivor was viewed as subhuman and a creature to be tested in many ways, from the minor to the most traumatic, and after the war their testimony allowed those who were not their an immediacy to their horror as prisoner. For the perpetrator, the flip-flop from master to prisoner makes for an interesting matrix of representation that opens up the how and why for much of the obvious questioning that surrounds this unimaginable Holocaust. Maurice Blanchot has stated that for many survivors of the camps, "the disaster that came upon them so often pivoted around disorienting/orienting scarps of time, crucial moments involving what Blanchot calls the 'sovereignty of the

²⁷ The notion of the Nazi functionary as "monster-like" is also paralleled with the notion that many Nazis, especially Adolph Eichmann, Albert Speer and Rudolf Hoess, displayed almost pedagogical "system man" qualities that were more banal than monster-like. Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann In Jerusalem* and Gita Sereny's *Albert Speer: His battle with the truth*, are two of the better treatises on the notion of the mass man functioning like a pure technocrat or bureaucrat in the Nazi industry of death. Granted, there were sadistic monsters among the Nazi SS [Hauptascharfuhrer Moll in Muller's *Eyewitness Auschwitz* is the best example], but on the whole, the monsters were in the minority.

accidental” (Roth 416). This quote, especially the notion of the “sovereignty of the accidental,” is interesting for it can apply to both prisoner and perpetrator.

The idea that the disorientation that faced many victims in the camps also, I would argue, faced the perpetrators, and both victim and executioner were on a path to deadly confrontation. This is the crux of my argument for perpetrator representation. That crux being that the voice of Albert Speer, Adolph Eichmann and Rudolf Hoess may resonate more for future understanding of the Holocaust, as well as keep the warning alive that we must not forget the machinations of history and the problems that lie with totalitarian systems. Readers must always listen to the victims, but to the perpetrators more, not only to understand the horror they perpetrated, but unlike the victim, also to understand the perpetrators choice not to understand the *why* they perpetrated Hitler’s “Final Solution” or *why* they so blindly followed the dictates of a madman. Perpetrators also must recognize the system that fostered their power to do the unimaginable and their responsibility to history for their actions.

Survivors understand the system that fostered their imprisonment but they will always wonder *why* they were so despised and so abandoned by much of the world during Hitler’s regime. The secondary importance for my project is to recognize in Phillip Muller’s *Eyewitness Auschwitz* and Elie Wiesel’s *Night* and other survivor testimony their need for a road to an answer for *why* that goes beyond mere anti-Semitism and totalitarian machinations. But the main importance for my project is in showing that the perpetrator *why* in Speer’s *Inside the Third Reich*, Hoess’s *Commandant of Auschwitz*, Arendt’s *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, and the testimony of one of Hitler’s secretaries Traudl Junge, one of his SS adjutants Otto Gunsche and his pilot Hans Baur, in *Voices from the*

Bunker, may be a much larger entity for future representations of the Holocaust in History. Traudl Junge is a most important voice for Holocaust non-fiction. Being one of Hitler's secretaries she was privy to much of the "private Hitler" that with the women functioned much like a jovial country bourgeoisie and intimate employer. Traudl Junge may be the most honest voice after the fact in the sense she realizes:

Today, whenever I see and hear Hitler in old films and newsreels with those thousands of enthusiastic people cheering him, my heart remains cold. His gestures seem theatrical to me, his words hollow, his poses ridiculous and yet everything I wrote down forty years ago is *true*. [mine] I fell under his spell, gave him my trust and sympathy and felt good when I was near him. We cannot change the past but we can learn from it.... May there be no more war, no more hate and no more Hitlers! (*Voices from the Bunker* 166).

Traudl Junge is necessary for unlike the main perpetrators in my project she is one whose words speak not only of how she was at one time convinced of Hitler's superiority, yet can see forty years later what neither Speer, Eichmann or Hoess ever came to terms with; that learning from the past is the most integral part for man's attempt to recapture any form of possibility after the Holocaust. For Holocaust representation her voice must also be heard along with the purveyors of atrocity so future generations will find some means to keep the discourse of atrocity open. This project will attempt to make that case.

The *why* of perpetrator non-fiction will function as the basis for my argument that revisiting the words of perpetrators can unlock many of the riddles in the language that couches so much of the totalitarian rhetoric of hate that allowed for the Holocaust and may, in turn, help to explain why so many perpetrators refuse to accept responsibility a

long time after the fact. After the war most of the representative art dealing with the Holocaust came from the victims of Nazi atrocities, but what was missing is the dialectic of master and slave [Nazi and Jew] to the idea of the Nazi now as prisoner and the Jew [and the victors of World War II] as the “master.” The perpetrator “inability to remember” becomes the crux of an irony that parallels the survivor “inability to mourn.” The question that must be addressed in non-fiction of perpetrator is twofold. All three [Speer, Eichmann, Hoess] accept the dictates of totalitarianism that allowed for Hitler and national socialism but all answer the question *why* in terms of Hitler in their upbringing and socio-cultural training in respect to authority figures. The question they address and for this project matters most is: “How can following orders of the megalomania of Hitler justify genocide?” The other question relates to all three men in terms of careerism and empathy: “How could the economic and social climbing allowed by the Nazi regime make one forget their humanity and see Hitler’s policies as justified?” The mind of the perpetrator, whether bureaucrat or executioner, is integral for future generations in terms of recognizing the signifiers of totalitarianism and the problems inherent in systems of subjugation that results from stringent nationalism.

Rudolph Hoess—*Commandant of Auschwitz*

“Technically ... that wasn’t so hard—it would not have been hard to exterminate even greater numbers.... The killing itself took the least time. You could dispose of 2,000 head in a half hour, but it was the burning that took all the time” (Gilbert 229).

“I am entirely normal. Even while I was doing this extermination work, I led a normal family life, and so on.” (Gilbert 237).

In the introduction to Rudolph Hoess's autobiography *Commandant of Auschwitz*, Holocaust survivor Primo Levi tells us that most of us read a book for its high quality or scholarship or for the admiration of an author. Levi then goes on to state that Hoess's book is *none* of these and is written by a "stupid, arrogant, long-winded scoundrel" (19). If this is true why does Levi recommend this book, as I will, as one of the most important texts in terms of holocaust representation? The importance for Levi is not in the mostly unreadable, uneducated drivel of National Socialism that comes from Hoess in much of the text, but in the books overwhelming sense of evil and instructiveness in a world foreign to most of humanity; that being the world of Auschwitz.

For Levi, the book is "filled with evil, and this evil is narrated with a disturbing bureaucratic obtuseness ... and reading it is agony ... yet this autobiography of the Commandant of Auschwitz is one of the most instructive books ever published because it very accurately describes the course of a human life that was exemplary in its way" (19). For any attempt at representation of the Holocaust, the words of the pure functionary that was Hoess is even more important when one sees in his text what in a diabolical sense was an "exemplary life." The disturbing obtuseness of the language of Hoess and his minions only lends a type of terrible realism that allows the reader a way into the event that only literature of the perpetrator will permit. The literature of Hoess is less Satanic than say that of Hitler or even Eichmann. Both of them, it can be argued, used the language of totalitarianism to expound their mission on a global level, but for pure functionaries, like Hoess, racial fanaticism was bred from environment before, during, and after Hitler. For Hoess his indoctrination in "fanaticism is good" began with his

“father ... a fanatical Catholic ... [which] for Hoess, as in the overall Nazi vocabulary, the adjective ‘fanatical’ always has a positive ring” (*Commandant of Auschwitz* 20).

Hoess’s autobiography is a perfect vehicle for any reader to understand not only the nature of institutionalized evil but also the education of a pure perfect totalitarian subject. The perfect totalitarian subject is one like Hoess who found that in his own time as a prisoner he found his overwhelming ethos in life, that being obedience to authority. As Primo Levi states in *Commandant*, for Hoess “life behind bars was hard, but it suited him. He was no rebel, he liked discipline and order ... he was a model prisoner ... he had accepted the violence of war because it was *ordered by Authority* [my emphasis], but he was disgusted at the violence committed by his fellow inmates because their acts were spontaneous” (20). For this project the language of freedom or free thinking is alien to Hoess and in this lies one of the most important aspects of his autobiography for future representation, that being the understanding that somewhere these individuals lost the ability to think for themselves. For Hoess his moral universe was reduced to one single paradigm: “Duty, Fatherland, Comradeship, Courage” (20).

What Hoess’s text shows is how ideals like careerism, courage, comradeship and love of country could lead to taking part in the greatest horror in history, which even at the end, Hoess thought was right in his decision to follow orders to destroy an enemy of the state but in principal the extermination was wrong. When Hoess says wrong he does not mean that planning and murdering millions of human beings was wrong, but in terms of global misunderstanding that possibly cost Germany the war. For Hoess “the extermination of the Jews was fundamentally wrong. Precisely because of the mass exterminations, Germany has drawn upon herself the hatred of the entire world. It in no

way served the cause of Anti-Semitism, but on the contrary brought the Jews far closer to their ultimate objective” (*Commandant of Auschwitz* 178). The point of the language here is Hoess’s misguided yet belief in the notion that the world of national socialism can only be understood by its true believers and because there were many functionaries that were monsters and sadists, the pure functionary with love for the fatherland’s mission will go to his grave misunderstood. For Hoess his laments, “Don’t you see, we SS men were not supposed to *think* about these things; it never occurred to us” (*The Order of the Death’s Head* 389), though hard to fathom, are interesting. Unlike those who did take pleasure in murder and mayhem, he truly saw it a nothing more than a mission to fulfill and those that did not see Hitler and Himmler’s vision were the problem and not the true believers.

Many of Hoess’s SS comrades toward the end remained at their posts killing Jews but not with the zeal and belief that Hoess possessed. It is important for representation also to see the language of Hoess the true believer “For an SS-Fuhrer there are no problems. His task is continually to remove problems himself immediately they appear! Over the *how*, you blow your brains out, not I” (*The Devil’s Disciples* 758), in relation to the non-believer who is more a career SS like Odilo Globocnik who states in reference to Himmler’s orders “My heart’s no longer in it but I am so deeply involved in these things I have no alternative but to ride to victory with Hitler or go under” (*The Order of the Death’s Head* 388). The reader must recognize the power of the words in terms of the duality of the SS men here. Whereas Hoess knows the war is probably lost much like his superior Himmler and Globocnik he still feels his that the mission, not the career mobility like Globocnik, is the issue. Hoess takes the tract of self pity and, in a sense a tragic figure, that like Hitler and Himmler had been betrayed by those careerist that did not

share Hitler and Himmlers's vision of a Jew-Free Europe and a German Volksgemeinschaft based on "blut and boden."²⁸ His words are interesting for the reader not because he is misguided in his feelings of self pity but in his belief that "there was no escape for me. I had to carry on the process of extermination, of mass murder, to live with it, to be an unemotional spectator of something at which my whole soul revolted.... I often went through the stable and found peace among my beloved animals" (*The Order of the Death's Head* 388).

The reader must feel the hypocrisy of Hoess's lament but the despair in his words is important for they are spoken completely without any form of retribution. Hoess is not asking for forgiveness but in his own strange way he does request understanding. The irony for Hoess is much of his autobiography he attest to the fact that he loves his family and wife but without spirit or humility and when he needed solace he returned to animals, which ironically he parodies right before they hung him at Nuremberg when he stated he "was always pointed out as an especially interesting animal" (*Commandant of Auschwitz* 174). The book is powerful because it shows its author, Hoess, completely missing the point throughout so much of his writing. Hoess does not realize that he has put himself in the scaffold and has become the spectacle of which he could never understand was the Nazi SS system he so dutifully served. This is the same paradox that victims face when

²⁸ Heinrich Himmler and Nazi racial theorist Walter Darre espoused a return to a simpler, agrarian time of peasant Germans who lived and worked the land. These land-based Germans were seen as the new Germans and allowed the racial mythology of the pure Aryan SS and its Nordic heritage to flourish in the SS and in the propaganda against the horrors of the citified vice and criminal nature of the Jew-ridden Weimar Republic. The Blood and Soil ["blut and boden"] was supposed to return Germany to a more simple, more healthy gene pool and for Himmler, Darre and true believers like Hoess it was the return to the simple life of hard work and the pure German volk that had been poisoned by the intermixing and influence of the city and the Jews in particular.

they discuss the impossibility of understanding the Holocaust or the mind of those that perpetrated the horror on them. Both victim [non-believer] of what was being done to them and perpetrator [the true believer] who could not see that mass murder is beyond wrong still do not understand the *why* of the Holocaust, but must be allowed to speak. It is up to the reader and the artist to use their words better to represent this impossible event.

This notion of true believer is the best lesson for representation because of the underlying dynamic that follows the true believers and for Hoess, like Goebbels and Hitler, unlike Speer and Eichmann who valued their necks after the fact, Hoess knew he couldn't live in a world without National Socialism and this belies his complete honesty in his autobiography. What sounds like apathetic and bureaucratic obtuseness is just that but also there is the matrix of "we had to win" and the "Führer is right" mentality that pervaded the true Nazi believer: "The Führer spoke of holding firm at all costs. Goebbels spoke and wrote about believing in miracles.... It was impossible that our world should perish. We *had* to win" (168). According to Hoess, if Hitler did not win, then all Nazis should perish. The word "struggle" was the ethos for all true believers because it was given them by the prophet Adolph Hitler, and which those like Hoess took as gospel. Hoess believed fervently Hitler's dictate that "in this struggle the stronger, the more able, win, while the less able, the weak lose. Struggle is the father of all things.... It is not by the principle of humanity that man lives or is able to preserve himself above the animal world, but solely by means of the most brutal struggle" (*Auschwitz: A New History* 7).

The pseudo philosophy of quasi-Darwinism and survival of the fittest" suited the Nazi theorists well and those, like Hoess, who saw themselves as pseudo-racial genetic

engineers, allowed the language of science and the dictates of totalitarianism to mesh into the horror of Auschwitz. What Hoess's text shows that is integral for the study of perpetrator non-fiction is the incorporation of pseudo science and quasi-racial theorizing and the power they can evince when they are obfuscated by an Fuehrer or dynamic radical leader figure. For Hoess the job was the thing and the Fuehrer was the catalyst: "I put all my ability and my will into my work; I lived for it entirely.... I had eyes only for my task" (*Commandant of Auschwitz* 112-13). This singleness of purpose without feeling or emotion is another aspect of this text that instructs how the depersonalization of the individual can lead to this unfeeling murderous technocrat.

In *Facing the Extreme*, Tzvetan Todorov begins a discussion of Hoess with an italicized note to the reader that I think will work with Primo Levi's message that *The Commandant of Auschwitz* is an important text and should be studied and always mentioned in the discussion of representation. Whereas Levi says Hoess's testament is plodding yet instructive, Todorov states we should feel like "unclean voyeurs" as we follow Hoess on his depersonalization as a human being in the Nazi machine as well as his initial depersonalization of his victims into "things." Soren Kierkegaard in *The Concept of Anxiety*, states that, when man becomes spiritless he "become[s] a talking machine, and there is nothing to prevent him from repeating by rote a philosophical rigmarole, a confession of faith, or political recitative ... and if on a particular occasion spiritlessness is touched by spirit [an evil spirit-mine] ... a phenomenon occurs that corresponds perfectly to pagan fetishism ... it worships a dunce and a hero with equal veneration, but above anything else its real fetish is a charlatan" (94). Kierkegaard anticipates the manner in which systems like the Nazi pagan SS and Hitler as grand

charlatan not only took over a nation but the fact that they did and the fetishization of a race—the Jews—allowed for the horror. The nausea and problems Todorov faces every time he reads Hoess are, indeed, evident. By remaining forever disturbed by Hoess's text we may guard against the possibility of fetishism or a lack of spirituality. I feel that all the perpetrator texts should disturb and in that sense risk any form of trivializing or revision that affects the victims. Todorov states his case most vehemently and I feel it is a very poignant reminder for all of us who study and research the representation of the Holocaust. From *Facing the Extreme*: [The italics are cited directly]

Each time I read Hoess's book, I am deeply disturbed. It doesn't matter that it holds no surprises for me anymore. As soon as I start reading or copying down passages....a kind of nausea washes over me. None of the other books I've discussed triggers this strong a feeling. So why Hoess? Doubtless because of several factors combined: the enormity of his crime, the absence of sincere regret on his part, and the many ways he elicits my identification with him and manages to make me share his way of seeing things. The first-person singular point of view is also important, as in the absence of any other voice alongside his own.... Finally there is the complicity Hoess creates by inviting his reader to take advantage of his singular experiences to observe human beings as if they were laboratory animals.... When I read Hoess's book, I consent to share with the role of the voyeur who looks on as others die, and it makes me feel unclean. (Todorov 170-71)

Todorov asks the reader to get disturbed when reading about atrocity and in this sense of disturbance with Hoess's text, may evince a better understanding and a more

informed representation of the Holocaust. The reader must temporarily follow Hoess from his childhood, what Todorov calls “an apprenticeship in obedience” (169), to his confusing “good with power, or with the person holding it: In our eyes the Fuhrer was always right” (169), to our own understanding, in a purely metaphysical sense, of what it was like to become a “cog in the Nazi machine.”

The ability for the reader to see the depersonalization psychically in himself that made Hoess the methodical, heartless murderer he became in the name of duty is possibly the point Todorov is making in his problems reading Hoess. In a sense we are voyeurs and must be allowed inside the laboratory of horror and the camp door to really understand what Todorov is asking us to do. The reading of the Holocaust should always elicit nausea and a moment of reflection that should bounce off the reader much like the sting of the executioner’s whip or the rip of barbed wire on the flesh. When one views Hoess as a sort of 1] quasi- natural scientist, “Why did members of the Jewish race go to their deaths so easily?” and his professorial reply, “from my observation, I can state categorically ... the life and death of the Jews posed, in fact, a fair number of problems that I was incapable of solving” (*Facing the Extreme* 170), and 2] a man who wanted to fulfill his tasks with great skill and completeness, we must attempt to put our own need to succeed in its horrible parallel if only for the purpose of theorizing.

Todorov instructs the reader that there is always a distance for the holocaust for those who read or write about it, but without having been there the quality of unclean voyeur should allow for a more careful reading of the Holocaust. Any attempt to represent the Holocaust should make the producer feel unclean or disturbed for there is no possible way to encourage any sort of epiphany or beauty from this horror. What is

important for Todorov is Hoess's inability to think for himself and this type of indictment justifies Hoess in his mind that "my country, right or wrong! Far from justifying Hoess, [was] however, [how] the principle was itself compromised by the revelation of the acts to which it can lead. Auschwitz becomes possible when national interest is held above that of humanity" (Todorov 168).

Rudolph Hoess, the commandant of Auschwitz, states that he is "entirely normal." This simple line may be the crux of my argument that though the text *Commandant of Auschwitz* is not of any value in terms of artistic presentation, grammar or abstract philosophy, it does in a very simple way encapsulate the representation of the Holocaust from one of its most visceral arenas—that of the pure functionary. If Eichmann will be discussed as the ultimate technocrat and Speer the ultimate CEO, then Hoess would very much be the perfect description of the functionary who only can see his task as black and white and the human element only one in a chain of events that must be dealt with to fulfill the task.

When Hoess states that the killing of "2,000 head" is easy but the disposal and burning is the toughest, most time consuming task, the reader sees not only the mind-set of the callous functionary turned mass murderer, but more importantly, the reader sees the impossibility for Hoess to understand or recognize the horrible atrocity that would seem relevant to any human being. What made the Nazi machine so frightening is not the fact that they could murder so many in the name of national socialism, but that they could do it in such a modern, streamlined fashion. For this idea and others I have chosen the Nazi voice of the perpetrator in non-fiction to possibly show how integral these texts are in terms of representation. Hoess shows the reader the subtle, unknown reasoning of a

true mass man working inside a true mass system of orders, obedience and blind loyalty that does not allow for what most feels separates man from demon--basic human compassion. For Hoess the attention to detail and the need to find the best solution to mass murder followed a bureaucratic initiative that Raul Hilberg terms the active German bureaucrats search for “pathfinding ability.”²⁹

In *Facing the Extreme*, Tzvetan Todorov comments on Hoess’s “normalcy” in his description of men like Hoess and Eichmann as being ordinary men with ordinary virtues that “liked to see themselves as the simple executors of orders, cogs in a machine” (185), Todorov also sees that both Hoess and Eichmann “surely took no pleasure in controlling the lives of millions [because] the dovetailing of depersonalization and fragmentation is exactly what produces the perfect technocrat: it is as important to him to separate his private from his public behavior as it is to forget that he is dealing with human beings” (185). This is the idea I feel is very important to my argument that these somewhat simple non-fiction tracts like Hoess’s *Commandant of Auschwitz* lay an important groundwork for holocaust representation.

What Hoess’s text shows is not that the idea of mass murder or totalitarian mass murder is unique in history but what makes the Holocaust unique and Hoess’s role in it so

²⁹ In *The Genocidal Mentality: Nazi Holocaust and Nuclear Threat*, Robert Jay Lifton and Eric Markusen make a convincing argument of how the genocidal mind that was brought to the forefront by Nazi extermination policies can also allow for possible future genocides in a post-holocaust world. The notion of pathfinding ability was alluded to in its notion that the murder of the Jews fit a corporate matrix in Hitler’s Germany that “at every stage they [Nazi SS functionaries] displayed a striking pathfinding ability in the absence of directives, a congruity of activities without jurisdictional guidelines ... and an administrative jungle [that] led to a struggle on the part of all to achieve fidelity to the Hitlerian vision” (166). Further reading on this idea of Hoess and the SS bureaucracy of mechanized death see Heinz Hohne, *The Order of the Death’s Head: The Story of Hitler’s SS*, in which he recognizes in Hoess “an outstanding exponent of the hygienic mass-murder system, the clinically clean automatic process” (387).

unique is that the Nazis actually *pulled it off*. What was mostly theory for other totalitarian dictatorships was reality for Nazi Germany and a nightmare for the Jews and humanity. Todorov states that “there is no place for Satan in this roster of ordinary vices”(185), but he states what I feel is the reason the Holocaust is so unique and so in need of proper representation that keeps the perpetrator voice ever-present:

The novelty of totalitarian crimes lies less in the fact that heads of state could conceive of such projects—there have surely been others, throughout history, who have fantasized about exterminating substantial portions of humanity—than in the fact that these men were able to realize their projects, an *accomplishment* [mine] that required the collaboration of thousands and thousands of individuals acting on the state’s behalf and its behest.... The key factor is the *transformations* [mine] that all these thousands of individuals underwent so that they could suspend their usual responses to fellow human beings. (185)

I italicized the words *accomplishment* and *transformations* in Todorov’s citation for this notion of competition among those intent on a mission, for example to find best method for extermination, and how it transformed somewhat ordinary men like Hoess into robotic mass murderers, because this idea of man into ordinary monster is why I feel this text, though most simple, is actually the most complex. In his autobiography, Hoess is truthfully upset [transformed] by the mass shootings of women and children but not because they are innocent women and children but because it is sloppy and is mentally tough of the SS men who must do the shooting. When he learns of the newer use of gas to murder the Jews he is “relieved” to know that this [accomplishment] is a more “humane” way to murder and a more calming method for the executioners.

Hoess's statement is chilling in its misdirection almost as much as in its pitilessness and fastidiousness: "Now we had the gas, and we had established a procedure. I always shuddered at the prospect of carrying out exterminations by shooting, when I thought of vast numbers concerned, and of the women and children.... I was therefore *relieved* [mine] to think we were to be spared all these blood-baths, and that the victims too would be spared suffering until their last moment came" (*The Commandant of Auschwitz* 147). For Hoess the desk soldier it became much easier to murder from a distance which was allowed by the gassing to allow Hoess to "recede into the background now that I no longer came into direct contact with the prisoners as I had done at Dachau" (*Commandant of Auschwitz* 82), and "I must admit the gassing process had a calming effect upon me" (*The Order of the Death's Head* 378). The distance Hoess seeks is exactly the closeness we the reader must approach to deal with Holocaust representation. From the mouth of a robotic murderer like Hoess the lesson for historiography and literary research is given.

The Commandant of Auschwitz may not be a great work of literature, but it is a great literary-historical representation of the mind and time of unthinkable cruelty. Arthur Seyss-Inquart, the Nazi gauleiter of the Netherlands, stated best what sums up Hoess and himself and that is "the work of death is particularly successful when it is done without hatred" (*Facing the Extreme* 172). The zeal and way Hoess and the true believers attacked their nationalistic chore is exactly what allows Seyss-Inquart and Hoess to be so bluntly honest about it. Neither thought they were wrong and before he was hanged Hoess knows that "his world" [National Socialism] can never be again and that though, as he said, "unknowingly I was a cog in the wheel of the great extermination machine

created by the third Reich. The machine has been smashed to pieces and I, too, must now be destroyed. The world demands it” (*Commandant of Auschwitz* 181).

Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil

“Hamlet is beyond tragedy or the tragedy of tragedy. He understands that the ‘not to be’ is perhaps impossible and he can no longer master the absurd....Being is evil not because it is finite but because is it without limits” (*Time and the Other* 50).

“Officialese [*Amtssprache*] is my only language” (*Eichmann in Jerusalem* 48).

“Throughout my life, I’d been used to obeying. From earliest infancy right up to May 8, 1945. An obedience that had become unconditional” (*Eichmann par Eichmann* 422).

In *Time and the Other* Emmanuel Levinas discusses the notion of imagining all things, beings and persons in a state of nothingness. For Levinas, when the possibility of imagination is destroyed—which would somewhat describe any type of art after Auschwitz—what “remains after this imaginary destruction is not something, but the fact that there is [*il y a*]” (46). Adolph Eichmann’s machinations during the Holocaust and after at his trial in Jerusalem, are perfect parallels to this sense of the “there is.” When Eichmann states that “with the killing of Jews I had nothing to do. I never killed a Jew, or a non-Jew, for that matter—I never killed any human being (Arendt 22), nor did I ever give “an order to kill either a Jew or a non-Jew, I just did not do it” (Arendt 22), he is very much, unlike Rudolph Hoess, casting himself in a Hamlet-type tragic figure that for representation allows the reader a psychohistorical/literary matrix that permits an entry into the Holocaust that can be understood at certain levels.

Unlike Hamlet, Eichmann fails to see that his impossibility in grasping his crime under the idea, that akin to Hamlet, Eichmann is beyond tragedy or the idea of tragedy. Eichmann, much like Hoess, is a type of true believer that recognizes in his trail that the “not to be” for him and the other fanatical national socialists is impossible now and without a Hitler to guide their absurdity even the possibility to “not to be” is no longer possible. For Nazis like Eichmann the ability to die is even taken away by the enormity of their evil. What makes the enormity, according to Levinas I would argue, is the fact that for Eichmann and those like him in the SS “being is evil not because it is finite but because it is without limits” (51), and for Eichmann in Jerusalem the anxiety he feels has nothing to do with remorse or recognition of his monstrous crimes. Eichmann’s “anxiety,” which I would argue for representation is an integral ethos of all the perpetrators, is more attuned to Martin Heidegger as an “experience of nothingness. It is not, on the contrary—if by death one means nothingness—the fact that it is impossible to die” (*Time and the Other* 51). I would argue that, for Eichmann, and his ilk the “not to be” and the “impossibility to die” are the important literary tenets for those thinking of writing about the Holocaust.

When Adolph Eichmann states the only language he comprehends is “officialese” [*Amtssprache*], the absurdity of a blind servant comes to the forefront, and this is an integral point in the semiotics of atrocity language that pervades the literature of Eichmann and other perpetrators. This discourse of unconditional obedience preached by Eichmann is exactly the same rhetoric of Rudolph Hoess and, unlike but including Albert Speer, forms a triumvirate of Nazi linguistic formations that I would argue are important for representation, All three voices [Hoess, Eichmann and Speer] are constrained and

“rational” and the mind-set of this rationality and discourse is what is most frightening. Whatever ones gets from the perpetrator literature the most important facet that one must get it that “they knew what they were doing.” For example, with all of Eichmann’s denials he stated “I will jump into my grave laughing, because of the fact that I have the death of five million Jews [or “enemies of the Reich,” as he always claimed to have said] on my conscience gives me extraordinary satisfaction” (*Eichmann in Jerusalem* 46).

Eichmann, in many ways, the middle level administrator that would not only understand the language of officialdom but also in the case of Eichmann after the war; Arendt states that it was his need to be noticed, or in a sense to be the corporate gray man that misses his sense of limited or unlimited power over his minions, that sealed his doom. For Eichmann in South America his compulsion, according to Arendt, to be an important official again led to his undoing. His bragging led to “what eventually led to his capture” (47) and his “compulsion to talk big—he was fed up with being an anonymous wanderer between worlds ... must have grown considerably stronger as time passed, not only because he had nothing to do that he could consider worth doing, but also because the postwar era had bestowed so much unexpected “fame” upon him” (*Eichmann in Jerusalem* 47). For Eichmann, the postwar world offered him none of the “challenges” that his earlier career as an SS colonel had. The mind-set of Eichmann can be paralleled to any high-ranking military or political figure that is no longer part of the discourse of power. For many of the ex-Nazis this fueled their need to feel superior again. In the movie *The Odessa Files*, an ex-SS commandant at Riga concentration camp, tries to explain to a young German what it was like to be a Nazi SS man during the war: “You

young Germans cannot imagine what it was like. We Germans ruled the world and we, the SS, were the elite” (*The Odessa Files* Paramount Studios 1970).

I am not stating that the fictional character of Edward Roschman [Maximilian Schell] in *The Odessa Files* was modeled after Adolph Eichmann, but the character-type and the historical sketch that included the historically-accurate Riga death camp and the Odessa file which was a true function of the “Werewolf”³⁰ organization, are important tenets for representative art of the Holocaust. Eichmann, in his need to remain important even after the fact, is the perfect example of this misdirected celebrity that many Nazis went to their grave with, Eichmann especially so. For Eichmann, Hoess was the killer; he was the power administrator that supervised the minions but only in a chain of command position that should require celebrity and not infamy: “I don’t know anything except what I heard there, that is contained in beer [Zyklon B gas]. I mean, I’ve heard today for the first time it’s called Zyklon B.... I knew the killing was done with those round cardboard things. Hoess told me that.... Neither in Auschwitz nor anywhere else did I observe the extermination process” (*Eichmann Interrogated* 85). Eichmann’s stance is that of the superior who “could not get his hands dirty” but will allow for his underlings [those of less ability] to do the dirty work that an elitist of his stature could not possibly take part.

³⁰ After the war many of the former SS men who were instrumental in Hitler’s death camps went into hiding and were supported in their escape to South America by an organization called “Werewolf” that funneled money stolen from the murdered Jews to allow expatriate SS men to make a life in their adopted countries. An excellent source for information on the Werewolf organization and the Odessa network is Martin A. Lee’s *The Beast Reawakens* (New York: Little Brown 1997), Lee not only recognizes the resurgence of Neo-Nazism in Germany and America but also gives the biographies of SS Colonel Otto Skorzeny and General Otto Ernst Remer, two of the most influential Werewolf members and to this day a starting point of honor and revisionism for ardent Neo-Nazis and Holocaust revisionists.

What Hannah Arendt shows in *Eichmann in Jerusalem* is more than just a historical testament of a Nazi war criminal, it is also the psychohistorical record of a man and a system. What Arendt does in her text is what all the texts in my project attempt to do—that is fulfill Michael Rothberg’s call for specificity. Many theorists like Rothberg and Saul Friedlander make three fundamental demands for accurate Holocaust representation: “[1] a demand for documentation, [2] a demand for reflection on the formal limits of representation, [3] and a demand for the risky public circulation of discourses on the events” (*Traumatic Realism: The Demands of Holocaust Representation* 7). The oral discourse that Arendt receives from Eichmann is translated into the voice of the system that produced him. Arendt is an authority on the totalitarian language and dictates that allowed for an Adolph Eichmann to flourish and where his mea culpa fails after all is in his downplaying of his importance after the fact. Granted, Eichmann was captured due to a renewal of his bragging about his past fantasy life as an SS colonel, but when one views his upper level position in the RSHA and the SS it is obvious that much of the language of Wannsee³¹ and the “Final Solution” was, as historian Raul Hilberg, recognizes in Eichmann’s court testimony, Eichmann’s and Eichmann’s alone: “The Wannsee Conference lasted only nine minutes ... [and] in his official summary, Eichmann polished up the comments, using the customary euphemisms and ambiguous

³¹ In January 1942 high ranking members of the SS including Himmler’s number two man Reinhard Heydrich conducted a conference of German politicians, bureau chiefs and representatives of economic and the businesses community to discuss the final solution to the Jewish question. Using euphemism and covert language the secret of what was to be done with the Jews and how to do it most efficiently was discussed. The method-gassing and the organization of trains and the establishment of death camps was what was “accomplished” at this meeting. The destruction of the Jews of Europe was code named *Action Reinhard* in honor of Eichmann’s boss Heydrich and puts to rest any notion that Eichmann was only a small part of the Nazi machine of death.

terms suitable for an official document. Even so, Heydrich revised the summary three or four times before he let it be copied and distributed” (*Documents of Destruction* 101-105). Though Eichmann was no more than Heydrich’s recording secretary he was the SS’s authority on Jewish affairs, and like his boss Heydrich, and their ultimate boss Himmler, believed dogmatically Himmler’s dictate that “the Jews had infected the German body politic. We had the moral right, we had the duty with regard to our people, to kill this race that wanted to kill us” (*The Architect of Genocide* 243).

By addressing Eichmann, the bureaucrat in Jewish affairs, Arendt’s text lends much of the needed demand for documentation that indicts Eichmann and gives the reader the tract that when representing the holocaust in perpetrator eyes one must allow the atrocity maker, literally, as much as figuratively to hang oneself. Adolph Eichmann spent time in Haifa and in Palestine before the war working and studying the Jewish people and the Hebrew language. It is important to note, and Arendt does this methodically, that Eichmann does pursue all three levels of how the Nazis dealt with the Jewish problem. He first ascribes to deportation, then to concentration and finally to extermination. What is important for representation is the fact that Eichmann would have been in favor of deportation to Madagascar as had been the original plan and also the important notion that much of the non-axis world would not accept Jews also adds to the task that I would argue pushed the Nazis from the Nuremberg Laws³² of separation and

³² In Hannah Arendt’s *The Origin of Totalitarianism* as well as most any history of Hitler’s Germany discuss the Nuremberg Laws in great detail but for this project what matters most is the fact that “it goes without saying that the totalitarian regimes, where the police had risen to the peak of power, were especially eager to consolidate this power through the domination over vast groups of people, who regardless of any offenses committed by individuals, found themselves anyway beyond the pale of the law. In Nazi Germany, the Nuremberg Laws with their distinction between Reich citizens [full citizens] and nationals [second class citizens

anti-assimilation of Jews in German life and led to the most radical extension of the policy from deportation and separation to evacuation and extermination.

Arendt shows in *Eichmann in Jerusalem* is there was a part of Eichmann that was working under the law with Jewish leaders and with knowledge of Adolph Bohm's *History of Zionism*, and most importantly, Theodor Herzl's *Der Judenstaat*. Eichmann stated that "the reason he became so fascinated by the "Jewish question" ... was his own "idealism"; these Jews, unlike the Assimilationists, whom he always despised, and unlike Orthodox Jews, who bored him, were idealists" (*Eichmann in Jerusalem* 41). Herzl's book, according to Arendt, made a great impression on Eichmann and when Eichmann states that "he thought hardly anything but a "political solution" [as opposed to the later "physical solution," the first meaning expulsion and the second extermination] and how to get some firm ground under the feet of the Jews" (*Eichmann in Jerusalem* 41). What is important to note here is Eichmann the administrator who at this point does believe in theory the political solution to the Jewish question and the idea that a horror like actual extermination would be put to him I feel at this juncture he would have found too much. For Germans like Eichmann the separation of Jews from mainstream German life and the German business and academic worlds would have been enough. The reduction to stateless Jew would have sufficed and, as Arendt cites, Eichmann was no race-baiting sadist like many of the brown-shirted SA, but a technocrat serving a system: "since Hitler, in the Rohm purge in 1934, had broken the power of the S.A., the Storm Troopers in brown shirts who had been almost exclusively responsible for the early pogroms and atrocities"(40) and "since the Jews were blissfully unaware of the black-shirted SS, who

without political rights] have paved the way for a development in which eventually all nationals of "alien blood" could lose their nationality by official decree" (288).

ordinarily abstained from what Eichmann contemptuously called *Sturmer*³³ methods... they [Jews] even offered to cooperate in the “solution to the Jewish question” (*Eichmann in Jerusalem* 40).

I would not argue that Eichmann was blind to Hitler’s forthcoming policy on the extermination of Jews, but what is important for representation and what Arendt does most noticeably well is establish time-lines and accurate historiography pertaining, not only to Eichmann, but also to the Holocaust and the Third Reich as well. The voice of Eichmann as an authority on Jewish affairs and even his dabbling in Hebrew do allow the reader a sense that his closeness to the Jews he worked with could have been a form of idealism is important. Though he is a criminal after the fact there was a time when he did believe “that solution I envisaged as putting firm soil under their feet so that they would have a place of their own, soil of their own” (*Eichmann in Jerusalem* 57). Though this was Eichmann’s thought pattern for a brief period, it was noteworthy that he thought “the Madagascar plan struck me as a new hope for a solution.... “I first went to the Reich Office for Emigration at the Ministry of the Interior and made inquiries about the geographical, climatic, geological, and other conditions....From the juridical point of view, I had in mind an autonomous Jewish region of Madagascar” (*Eichmann Interrogated* 66-67). Why this quote is interesting is though it is told to an Israeli police interrogator Avner Less after his capture, the language that Eichmann uses fifteen years

³³ *Der Sturmer* was a virulent anti-Semitic journal published by Nazi race-baiter Julius Streicher. Not only was *Der Sturmer* violently opposed to Jews in any form of German life, it also portrayed Jews in sexual pornographic images to increase the propaganda of Goebbels and Streicher in mainstream Nazi life. After the war Streicher was convicted and hanged for crimes against humanity in the trial of the major war criminals at Nuremberg. Ironically, and also of importance for representation, is the fact that certain contemporary legal scholars argue that Streicher should not have been hanged at Nuremberg. Streicher’s trial has become a “cause celebre” subject of much revisionist legal history dealing with the Nuremberg trials and the Nazi period.

after the event, I would argue, is the truth. It shows how the middle-manager who at one time had a general “hope” for a life-giving “solution” can become the mass murderer with a new solution to a death-producing bureaucracy of horror—all in the name of bureaucracy and government policy. The important cognitive process that takes place here—how one goes from Jewish authority espousing a “land of their own” to finding the best way to murder millions in a “hell of their own”—forms the dichotomy that should puzzle generations of representation of the Holocaust to the end of time.

What is ironic is Eichmann’s duality. Whether middle management or mass murderer, Adolph Eichmann is exactly what the totalitarian system expected him to be—a depersonalized executioner. As Tzvetan Todorov recognizes, though Eichmann does initially do some thinking on his own, whether or not he would act on his thinking is another case altogether. For Eichmann, much like Hoess, “to disobey was both inadmissible and impossible.... Not only does he obey orders, but he never *wants* to do otherwise. Personal initiative frightens him; he always tries to make sure he is covered” (*Facing the Extreme* 173). It is interesting that Rudolph Hoess does show personal initiative in his quest to murder millions, but for Eichmann his initiative is only at the behest of his superiors. Whereas at the end of his life Hoess understands “he must be destroyed,” Eichmann takes flight in his mind in the typical lament of the totalitarian dictator turned mannequin when he can no longer hide behind the face of Hitler and national Socialism saying, “I am not the monster people want me to be” (Todorov 174).

What is interesting in conclusion is that Eichmann doesn’t see himself as a monster or a murderer but as “not quite your average man, that he deviated a bit from the norm, but....I was an idealist.... By his definition the idealist is someone who prefers

ideas to human beings” (*Facing the Extreme* 174). What Todorov and Arendt show in their writing about Eichmann is what I find so imperative for representation: How doing one’s job and how “focusing on the methods of execution and never on what is at stake in the action” (Todorov 174) is a lesson and a language that can only be given to us from a perpetrator. For in his delusion, Eichmann [and Hoess as well], does not understand why the world trembles at the horror that they would view as the fruition of a mission.

Arendt’s final word on Eichmann follows this thought pattern for what she sees in Eichmann’s change of moods, something Hoess never evinces. From *Eichmann In Jerusalem*: “As far as Eichmann was concerned, these were questions of changing moods, and as long as he was capable of finding, either in his memory or on the spur of the moment, an elating stock phrase to go with them, without ever becoming aware of ... inconsistencies. As we shall see, this *horrible gift* [mine] for consoling himself with clichés did not leave him in the hour of death” (55).

Albert Speer: Inside the Third Reich

“I no longer give the answer with which I tried for so long to soothe the questioners, but chiefly myself: that in Hitler’s system, as in every totalitarian regime, when a man’s position rises, his isolation increases and he is therefore more sheltered from harsh reality; that with the application of technology to the process of murder the number of murderers is reduced and therefore the possibility of ignorance grows; that the craze for secrecy built into the system creates degrees of awareness, so it is easy to escape observing inhuman cruelties” (*Inside the Third Reich* 112-113).

“Don’t you know that this is the question I have asked myself a million times, continuously hoping that I would be able to give myself an answer I could live with? My answer is always the same.... I would somehow have gone on trying to help that man win his war” (*Albert Speer: His Battle With Truth* 368).

“For a commission to build a great building I would have sold my soul like Faust” (*Speer: The Final Verdict* 35).

“After years of frustrated efforts I was wild to accomplish things-and twenty-eight years old.... Now I had found my Mephistopheles. He seemed no less engaging than Goethe’s” (*Inside the Third Reich* 31).

I have left Albert Speer to the end of perpetrator discussion because I feel that whereas Hoess admitted “knowing” about the Holocaust, he differs from Speer in the sense that it could be argued he really could not think past the idea of obedience and that the Jews were an enemy of the state. Hoess went to the hangman without saying a word except that he felt that the destruction of the Jews was still, in his mind, “right.” For Eichmann he also admits knowing about the Holocaust but from the specter of the distant manager who may have had something to do with policy and who could never have pulled the switch or killed any other human being. For Eichmann it was all about the ideal and the ideal was more important-as the task was more important to Hoess-than any relation to the human beings they slaughtered. The “ideal” for Eichmann—“My sole endeavor was to make some suggestions or other that somewhere ... land had to be

placed under the feet of the Jews” (*Collected Memories: Holocaust History and Postwar Testimony* 9) and the “task” for Hoess—took the place of human beings. There was no “other” for Hoess and Eichmann. They had reduced human beings to the lexicon of ideas and nation building. All this reasoning and cognitive association that Hoess and Eichmann had with Hitler, Himmler and the “war against the Jews” would not fit into any matrix of thought, discourse or training that would characterize Albert Speer.

For Albert Speer, the topic of the Jews was always a question that even after his release from Spandau Prison, according to one of his biographers Gita Sereny, produced in Speer a “mixture of seriousness, exhaustion, and nervousness” (*Speer: The Final Verdict* 333). For Sereny and many contemporary viewers of Albert Speer, it is hard to fathom he did not know about the death camps and Hitler’s genocide of the European Jews. At Nuremberg Speer denied knowing about the murder of the Jews but he did accept responsibility as a minister in Hitler’s circle and spoke of a shared responsibility for all the Nuremberg defendants in the murder of the Jews. This was either a truthful acceptance of shared responsibility by Speer at a time when he was on trial for his life but many see Speer as just a clever manipulator of the discourse of language that very adeptly pushed responsibility away from himself and onto other more well known Nazis, for example Herman Goring and SS Chief Ernst Kaltenbrunner and Jew-Baiter and publisher of *Der Sturmer*, Julius Streicher. This is why Sereny keeps asking Speer the question and “when Speer admitted that he “sensed” that dreadful things were happening with the Jews” (Fest 333), Sereny then replied to Speer: “But if you sensed ... then you knew” (Fest 177).

Speer is important for the idea of research and representation, for his indecision implores us to look deeply at what words mean and to decode the discourse of atrocity especially when someone like Speer “repeatedly emphasize[s] the difference between “knowing” which was based on evidence, and “suspecting,” which, while not coming from nowhere, did not mean certainty” (Fest 333). The paradox of language and the recognition that Speer’s word games have a duality of purpose that will remain a riddle many years after his death are just another example of why a text like *Inside the Third Reich* may be a more thought-provoking and important statement of institutionalized evil to reckon with when dealing with the area of Holocaust representation. When Speer says he sensed something dreadful was happening to the Jews is this not a tacit acceptance of his knowing?

The demands of Holocaust representation always require an endless series of tacit acceptances but they are only purposeful when the perpetrator moves from the idea that he believes in what he obviously knows happened—the Holocaust—and like Hoess goes to his grave accepting what he knows happened. Speer, for all his privilege, intelligence and I feel shared feeling of responsibility for the horrors of the Third Reich, still seems only to accept the fact that the only sorrow or the only person he ever cried for was not the Jews he inadvertently or advertently knew were killed with his knowing but the day Hitler committed suicide. For Speer it can be deduced that though what happened to the Jews was horrible for the world, for him “on the evening of May 1, when Hitler’s death was announced ... I found the red leather case containing Hitler’s portrait ... my nerves had reached the limit. When I stood the photograph up, a fit of weeping overcame me. That was the end of my relationship to Hitler” (*Inside the Third Reich* 488).

Though Speer can only truly remember the portrait of his dead Mephistopheles figure Hitler, he does also recognize most importantly that though he still will not completely admit he knew the Jews were being systematically murdered he does know that “this assembly-line genocide—primarily of the Jews—was a unique phenomenon on the world’s history of cruelty and violence, even within the Nazis monstrous overall program for murder” (Sereny 344). What is most interesting here is that a program for murder was nothing new to history great barbarians but the assembly-line quality and the bureaucratic monolith that was unique to Nazi Germany is why the Holocaust is the paradigm for the unimaginable in human history and horror. Speer attests to this unprecedented nature of the Holocaust as well as the incredible power of Evil when it is stronger than the power of good when he stated at Nuremberg that “during the accursed era, a factor in addition to human depravity had entered history, the factor that distinguished our tyranny from all historical precedents ... a technocracy which ... used all its know-how in an assault on humanity” (*Inside the Third Reich* 519-520).

In *Traumatic Realism: The Demands of Holocaust Representation*, Michael Rothberg employs philosopher/historian Walter Benjamin’s “Theses on the Philosophy of History” emphasizes the importance of representation in the production and interpretation of history. Benjamin espouses “the concept of the constellation in a way that has direct bearing on this project: as the name for the in-between space that ties together the present and past” (10). This “in-between” nature of present and past is not only a integral part of my project, but for representation, and for someone like Albert Speer, the reader can evince many notions of Speer as not only ambiguous about his “honesty” in talking about his life and Hitler, but also in his understanding that the modernity Benjamin talks about

as the root of the modern continuum of history was never more horribly realized than in Nazi Germany. Speer sounds much like Benjamin's idea of a the contemporary revolutionary historian in the sense that Speer writes his memoirs knowingly or unknowingly that "in this post-holocaust and post-Marxist period, Benjamin's messianic historian has become an *encoder* and *decoder* [mine] of constellations that bear witness to the traumatic legacies of modern historical extremity...[with the] elusive goal of working through-instead of repetitively acting out-the traumas of the past" (*Late Marxism: Adorno, or, the Persistence of the Dialectic* 56). Speer, when writing his memoirs in Spandau Prison, whether knowingly or unknowingly, does what neither Hoess or Eichmann could do; that is understand the nature of true totalitarian power and modern industrial technology but also how the last and future were fused during his time with Hitler and the importance to bear witness and revisit this time are integral. From *Inside the Third Reich*:

The extent of the crimes was also due to the fact that Hitler was the first to be able to employ the implements of technology to multiply crime. I thought of the consequences that unrestricted rule together with the power of technology-making use of it but also *driven by it* [mine]-might have in the future. This war ... had ended with remote-controlled rockets, aircraft flying at the speed of sound, atom bombs, and a prospect of chemical warfare.... The nightmare shared by many people ... that some day the nations of the world may be dominated by technology—that nightmare was very nearly made a reality under Hitler's authoritarian system. Every country in the world today faces the danger of being

terrorized by technology; but in a modern dictatorship this seems to me to be unavoidable. (521)

Speer's insights, when the reader understands that this was a speech he was making at Nuremberg and was expecting to be hanged, makes it all the more important for my project. Speer shows that he was driven to be a successful architect and, yes, Hitler because his Mephistopheles. Speer shows in this text that he does have the intellect and the need, even if it is to save his neck, to understand and show the civilized world that, whether monster Nazi or "civilized" allies, the technology of the modern era started by Hitler and aided by him as armaments czar, must be kept in the open forum or we risk catastrophe. Also what is evinced from Speer's warning is what the reader should encode from his language. The idea that technology is a signifier for the Hitler regime can also be paralleled to the idea that one man—Hitler—was the only reason the Holocaust was possible: "It was ludicrous ... for anyone to claim that this [Holocaust] could have been anyone's idea but Hitler's. It shows a profound ignorance of the nature of Hitler's Germany, in which nothing of any magnitude could conceivably happen, not only without his knowledge, but without his orders" (Sereny 7).

The knowledge of someone like Speer giving us what was in the mind of Hitler is an important part of my project in terms of representation. When one attempts to revisit history an integral aspect must be to use the voices of the past, but one problem always arises: what voices are the most accurate and most instructive? The quote Speer offers in his discussion with Gita Sereny is to answer the revisionist historian David Irving, whose novel, *Hitler's War*, attempted to make the case that the Holocaust happened without Hitler's expressed order. Any form of representation dealing with the Holocaust or Hitler

can best be served not only with the voices of the killers and functionaries like Eichmann, but, more importantly, in the educated and somewhat duped intellectual of Speer's design. Though Speer has many problems with his "knowing or not-knowing"³⁴ when it comes to the subject of "Hitler the person," he is a more balanced and trustworthy voice of history than one of the true believers, like Goebbels or Himmler. Granted, Speer was part of Hitler's inner circle, but because he was an artist was not involved in the "court intrigues" that always follow the machinations of power, his dialogue of that time may be more reliable and may allow for the recognition of the history that lies beneath the battles and court intrigues. Whereas Goebbels, and also Goring and Himmler, even when they knew their chief was leading Germany to catastrophe, remained loyal, Speer was always an "insider who was always an outsider" [mine] because he was an artist first, a military man/bureaucrat second, and third he was not a convinced national socialist. Whereas Goebbels, Goring, and Himmler were disciples, Speer was a newcomer and according to Joachim Fest "Speer failed to see this. He was unaware of how hopeless his situation was. Having no power base, he had lost the battle before it started" (*Speer: The Final Verdict* 172). What is of note is that toward the end of the war [1942-45] Hitler saw Speer

³⁴ In Gita Sereny's *Albert Speer: His Battle With the Truth*, the author constantly goes back and forth with Speer on his inability to say yes or no his knowledge of the murder of the Jews in Hitler's death camps. Though Speer is extraordinarily candid about his seduction by Hitler, "in those first years close to Hitler....I was ready to follow him anywhere he led" (154), he becomes evasive whenever the question of his knowledge of the Jewish question is concerned. Without direct response the many dichotomies Speer can not seem to answer are mostly work orders and train schedules that deal with construction and transports to Auschwitz under his ministry and under the signed orders from SS Economics Chief Oswald Pohl. All Speer seems to remember about his dealings with Auschwitz and Pohl are that his ministry "discovered catastrophic sanitary conditions at Auschwitz which really did alarm me" (383). The gulf between "knowing and not knowing" relates back to Walter Benjamin's thesis of historical philosophical writing and for this idea pertaining to Speer does allow for an important historiographical continuum of the event and the debate about Speer as its residual effect.

as the next man after Goring to succeed him. Hitler “also measured his successor against the ideal of the “artist politician,” as he liked to consider himself” (Fest 171).

Though this must have been heady stuff for Speer, he always managed to keep his head above the fray of court intrigue, and this may be why his re-telling of events may also serve as a more cognizant discourse for future representation. Speer’s being inside the court and his own belief he was just an unpolitical artist and sometime technocrat was not the same idea many in Hitler’s entourage had of Speer. What rivals Goebbels, Himmler and Bormann saw was “the awkwardness with which he [Speer] went about becoming the “second man in the state” could not have made his point more convincingly. He didn’t have the slightest notion of the real power games he would now have to play” (Fest 171). Whether Speer was a clever manipulator of Hitler’s minions or an awkward “Führer-capable” minister, his ability to play both sides and his ability to work in between the roles of architect and armaments minister are a fascinating entrance for anyone trying to understand the signifiers and lexicon of Nazi power during the Third Reich and the covert nature of the silent horror that allowed for the machinations of power in Hitler’s Germany to make the Holocaust happen.

The writing and dialogue of history told from the inside with the perspective on the outside that Speer never lost sight of is evident in his self-effacing take on his own position as armaments minister as well as Joachim Ribbentrop’s misplacement in the role of foreign diplomat. As Speer writes in *Inside The Third Reich*: “I said it was as foolish to entrust an artist with paying off debts as-in the past-to put a champagnes salesman in charge of the Foreign Ministry. I asked to be relieved of the affairs of the Minister of Economics and Production” (499). Speer’s autobiography is full of statements that seem

self-effacing, and other dualities of language in his retelling of history are interesting because they can be seen as on one hand to be offering justifications for his behavior to paint himself in a better light, or they can be seen as taking responsibility for his actions. The only problem or interesting fact about these dualities in Speer's discourse is when the subject of the Jews comes up. Then the confident Speer becomes enveloped in language such as "sensed" and "I can't talk about it." Speer is adept at using the refrain that "I no longer give the answer which I tried for so long to soothe questioners" (*Inside The Third Reich* 112), and "I would somehow have gone on trying to help that man win his war" (*Albert Speer: His Battle With Truth* 368), to allow himself the distance from the final solution in the stance of "neglecting his knowing." For Speer, according to Gita Sereny, Speer believes or rationalizes that "people cannot find a place in their consciousness ... their imagination ... or finally the courage to face [or allow themselves to remember] unimaginable horror. It is possible he [Speer] said, to live in a twilight between knowing and not knowing" (*Albert Speer: His Battle With Truth* 335).

Tzvetan Todorov does not use the words I use to describe Speer in his machinations of history and power politics, but I feel his description on Speer, in relation to Eichmann, very much fits my project outlines and for representation makes another cognitive in-road to the mind and purpose and depersonalization of Hitler's architect. For Todorov, both Eichmann and Speer fit the same organizational matrix, both "were pragmatists [who] were ultimately responsible for at least as many deaths as the fanatics [Hoess]" (*Facing the Extreme* 175). Whereas Eichmann's idealism eventually led him to "problems [with] the deportation of Jews ... the organization of roundups, the loading of railroad cars" (Todorov 175-76), Speer also parallels this same organizational monolith

that allow the question to remain “How did he not know about the Jews? For Speer the language of the technocrat is his constant refrain and Todorov recognizes that Speer’s *realpolitik* lends itself to a silence that would fit better into *Holocaustspeak*. Speer writes “apart from all humanitarian considerations, the rational arguments were on our side” and “my obsessional fixation on production and output statistics, blurred all considerations and feelings of humanity” (*Facing the Extreme* 176).

Heinrich Tessenow, Albert Speer’s architectural professor and mentor [until he met Hitler] once told Speer that his [Speer] joining the Nazi party was a great mistake. Though Speer told his old mentor he was not a political man and only joined the Nazi party for his “work,” Tessenow told him that he [Speer] was a more dangerous Nazi than either Goebbels, Himmler or Goring because he “was respectable,” and though he should know better, according to Tessenow, “you [Speer] just can not resist Adolph Hitler.” This idea that Speer could not resist Hitler is a tenet of Speer’s text that lends to the discussion of the mind of the driven technocrat under Hitler, but also allows for a look at Hitler that most contemporary biographies or studies of Hitler miss. What all the perpetrator texts do in my project is allow the specter of Hitler and *Mien Kampf* to work inside and outside their language. All three perpetrators discuss their “struggles” working for Hitler and the National Socialist regime. Whereas Hoess and Eichmann saw Hitler at a distance and their words are those of a devoted subject, Speer was different. He was, if it was possible, the closest thing Hitler had to a real friend and a colleague. Though most of their friendship was when Speer was primarily Hitler’s architect, the words of Speer, after the fact, do evince a side of Hitler that was somewhat normal, and in Speer’s words, the

lament that he and Hitler never finished their architectural megalomania, is still something regrettable. From *Speer: The Final Verdict*:

It remains to be said that the confession episode, as reported by Speer, fits perfectly into the picture of his character. In the half dream-like and half melancholy mood he was in during those weeks in particular, he might really have believed that the Great friendship with Hitler, which was then drawing to a close, needed a grand Finale and should be appropriately ended by an act of complete openness. It one May use an extravagantly romantic image, but one which belonged to his way of thinking, it was if he wished once more to build a “cathedral of light,” with him—Self as the last hero in the apse. (Cited in Fest: *Notes* 385)

Holocaust representation requires an attention to truth that I would argue is not as integral in many other tragic events in history and when Speer, after the fact, can compartmentalize the murder of the Jews as an area he accepts tacit acceptance of knowing, but when he thinks of his unfulfilled career as Hitler’s architect, the “inability for Speer to forget” his position of greatness, is the type of voice so important for Holocaust representation. Speer reiterates more about missed opportunities as an architect than any real guilt about the Jews: “during the twenty years I spent at Spandau prison I often asked myself what I would have done if I had recognized Hitler’s real face and the true nature of the regime.... The answer was banal and dispiriting: My *position* as Hitler’s architect has soon become indispensable to me.... I saw before me the most exciting prospects an architect can dream of” (*Inside the Third Reich* 32). The plight of the Jews, again, is forgotten in the name of ruthless careerism.

Most perpetrator literature tends to do one of two things: 1] Couch the knowledge of the holocaust in terms of militaristic discipline vis-à-vis “I followed Orders” or 2] couch the knowledge of the holocaust as being purely bureaucratic/technocratic *functionaryspeak*, the “I was a cog in a machine,” ethos. For Speer we have the ability to look back and forth and constantly follow his thought pattern thirty years after the horror. Speer shows that he would prefer that the world accepts his “tacit responsibility for the Holocaust” as an explanation for being a pawn—though a high placed pawn—in a totalitarian chess game. Speer recognizes that he should have known better and possibly that what Professor Tessenow had said was true, that ‘he was more dangerous than the party hooligans and race baiters because he was respectable,’ but he still offers justification more than true acceptance of his power and guilt under Hitler’s regime: “In retrospect what perhaps troubles me the most is that my occasional spells of uneasiness during this period were concerned mainly with the direction I was taking as an architect, with my growing estrangement from Tessenow’s doctrines” (32), but “I must have had the feeling it was no affair of mine when I heard the people around me declaring an open season on Jews.... I thought I was not implicated if I myself did not take part” (33). It is important to see Speer’s honesty here on certain levels to recognize that he did not see himself as a true national socialist in his mind, but a driven careerist with tunnel vision. For Speer, “the ordinary party member was being taught that grand policy was much too complex for him to judge it. Consequently, one felt one was being represented, never called upon to take personal responsibility. The result was total sterility of all conversations and discussions among these like-minded persons” (*Inside the Third Reich*

33). In other words, we all became robots under Hitler and whatever “the Fuehrer proposes and disposes for all” (33) was correct.

Much of what Speer offers also could come under the heading of tacit “knowing” and his occasional ability almost finally to accept responsibility as concrete and not on some metaphysical level of word games. Speer is most adept at rationalization; especially when it was in the service of his own life. As Gita Sereny shows in *Albert Speer: His Battle With Truth*, Speer’s tacit acceptance after the fact in 1978 can be translated to “mean [that] looking away, not by knowledge of an order or its execution.... Is as grave as the second” (708). When Sereny asks Speer why it has taken him so long finally to give what seems a definitive “yes” to his knowledge of the murder of the Jews, “Why did you say this so directly now, after denying it for so long?” (708), his answer may be the most important answer for future representation and for the cause of humanism. According to Sereny, Speer shrugged and stated “for this purpose, and with these people.... I didn’t wish to-I couldn’t-hedge (*Wollte ich nicht-komte ich nicht-handeln*)” (708). What Sereny sees in his answer is the admission that, thirty some years after Nuremberg, Speer did “know” about the Final Solution, and “if Speer had said as much in Nuremberg, he would have been hanged” (708).

IV. SURVIVOR LITERATURE: ELIE WIESEL AND FILIP MULLER

INTRODUCTION

“Unreal City, Under the brown fog of a winter dawn.... I had not thought death had undone so many. Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled, and each man fixed his eyes before his feet ... you who were with me in the ships at Mylae! That corpse you planted last year in your garden, has it begun to sprout?” (T. S. Eliot, *The Wasteland* 60-61, 64-66, 70-72)

“But the guilty person is only one of the targets of punishment. For punishment is directed above all at *others*, [emphasis mine] at all the potentially guilty.” (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* 108)

“Despite all these years of *progressive forgetting* [my emphasis], no one among us can cure the stigmata of so many burns, nor pardon nor absolve in the place of those who have died.... [this] does not consist in enjoying the role of victim, nor in allowing oneself to be seduced by compassion.” (*Alterity and Transcendence* 81)

“I don’t remember because ... it was inconceivable to me that somehow I would survive. If I had to do it all over again, I would try ... because I am convinced that it can happen again.” (*The Holocaust Odyssey of Daniel Bennis, Sonderkommando* 114)

No other event in human history can capture the essence of what Elie Wiesel terms “the unimaginable” as the Holocaust. Theorists Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida and Emmanuel Levinas do not give entire treatise on the event but much of their themes, I would argue, can be used to represent the idea of silence that pervaded many of the post-Auschwitz memoirs of survivors, most notably the two I have chosen for this project—Elie Wiesel’s *Night* and Filip Muller’s *Eyewitness Auschwitz*. For Foucault, the

ideas that survivors must keep the dialogue open in terms of the idea of punishment for both the victim, during the event, and for survivors to remember as witnesses after the event. For survivors like Wiesel and Muller, the Foucaultian idea that their punishment was because they—the Jews—were *despised others*, would make them potentially guilty if they remain silent about the atrocity and the perpetrators.

Foucault writes in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, that an understanding of the condemned and the accuser is attributed to signifiers that become engraved representations of the condemned prisoner. I would argue that if one uses Foucault's theory and applies it to Holocaust survivors, that their signification as condemned for they were Jews must now be turned on their persecutors. In essence, the victim becomes the judge and the prosecutor with the Nazi in the medieval scaffold, or in the case of modern history, the "glass booth," vis-à-vis the aforementioned Adolph Eichmann trial in Jerusalem. As Foucault writes, [if] "all the potentially guilty [recognize]...these obstacle-signs that are gradually engraved in the representation of the condemned man [in this case the perpetrators] must therefore circulate rapidly and widely; they must be accepted and redistributed by all; they must shape the discourse that each individual has with others and by which crime is forbidden to all by all" (*Discipline and Punish* 108). A case can be made that by consistently listening to the dialogue of the Nazi SS executioners and their collaborators funneled through the memory of the people they persecuted, the Jews, this imprint of condemnation on the genocidal act of the Nazis will remain constantly as a warning that this "crime"—the Holocaust—"is forbidden all by all" to the future if we keep alive the atrocity of what the Nazis did in representative discourse.

Derrida's sense of the survivor of the "without response" and Levinas' "progressive forgetting of the victims of so many burns," I feel, also have relevant theoretical and historiographical parallels to the incomprehensible Holocaust. For Derrida, it has more to do with, I would argue, the problem of silence that comes from witnessing, where for Levinas, the relevance would surround the memory and trauma that is forever carried by the victims of the Holocaust. The "unreal city" was Eliot's metaphor for modern industrialized London, and I use Eliot's term to describe the metaphor for madness, the "unreal city of Auschwitz," which houses so many "corpses planted in Hitler's garden"—the many dead and undead [*musulman*]. This notion of the unreal city amidst unreal atrocity is never more evident than in Filip Muller's description of his early visions of the man-made hell of Auschwitz:

It was almost dawn when we returned to camp.... Only the clip-clop of our Wooden clogs echoed in the ghostly silence. Surrounding us were endless parallel rows of barbed wire with their warning notices 'Caution-Danger' underneath a skull and cross-bones; pointing at us were the mouths of machine guns mounted on the watch towers,... It was enough to plunge anyone into a state of utter hopelessness and boundless despair ... many ... once they realized their situation, chose to put an end to their misery... [to have] "gone to the wire."³⁵ (*Eyewitness Auschwitz* 22)

³⁵ The camp jargon for prisoners who chose suicide over survival possibility were known to fellow inmates as having "gone to the wire." This form of suicide was a pervading image in most Jewish survivor memoirs of the Holocaust, and I feel, Muller's description of this ethos fits as a point of important discourse for representative art, in the sense Muller paints the picture of the type of "without response" Derrida talks about in the annihilation of death for so many of these prisoners. As Muller writes, "We saw several dead bodies lying in the 'forbidden zone,' or 'death strip,' as the area along the high-tension

Muller adds that for those who decided to end their misery by going to the wire there was one added indignity that I feel echoes both Levinas and Derrida's ideas of "annihilation and nothingness" of this type of death as well as the "stigmata" of so much horror. The indignity being that for those that made the "choiceless choice" to die were not even permitted their final act of rebellion against their tormentors. Those who did not make it to the wire suffered the last indignity of not being able to die by their own hand, but by the machine gun of the executioners.

The prisoners who died this way faced the *without response* that accompanies the lost *other* in their own last struggle with taking control of their own deaths. The horror that pervades this loss of agency, even in death, I feel, is a most important area of discourse that maintains itself in the trauma of survivor memoirs, for they who survived also share the *without response* of being able to do anything to help. What both philosophers do in relation to the Holocaust is take the ideas of the gift, the hostage, the face, deconstruction, and the responsibility to an *other* and forge a synthesis of understanding—not only life and death absurdity in the concentration camps of Hitler—but also a better understanding of being under the weight of the immanence³⁶ of violence and death in Auschwitz, for example, can be keys to understanding how survivors can

wire fences was called in concentration camp slang. 'He has gone to the wire,' was camp slang for a prisoner who had been released from his sufferings either by electric shock or by a burst from a machine-gun before he could reach the fence" (*Eyewitness Auschwitz* 22).

³⁶ Emmanuel Levinas, in *Time and the Other*, discusses that we should not think of time in terms of degradation or erosion of eternity, but as "the relationship to *that* which—of itself [is] unassimilable, absolutely *other*—would not allow itself to be assimilated by experience; or to *that* which—of itself infinite—would not allow itself to be com-prehended"(32). In relation to time and the idea of a relationship to an *other*, Levinas discusses the idea of the mastery of the ego with the idea of the *there is*, which for those in the camps brought them to a place, a *there is*, that forged a "reversal of the Self over the Ego, the encumbrance of the Ego by the self-same and, thus, a materialist materiality and a solitude of *immanence*, [my emphasis] the irremissible weight of being in work, pain, and suffering" (*Time and the Other* 35).

possibly live life after that horror. As Derrida writes, “to learn it *from oneself and by oneself*, all alone, to teach *oneself* to live ... to live ... is not learned from life, taught by life. Only from the other and by death ... from the other at the edge of life” (*Specters of Marx* xviii).

Both Levinas and Derrida trace all the *possibilities* of life—not revisionism of an unimaginable event—but recognition of the awesome hypostasis [underlying reality] that comes with a consciousness that has the power to know—[and to bear witness] which confers itself into presence of being. Both Wiesel and Muller not only recognize the impossibilities of understanding the ethics, as well as the cause of such an event, but most of all, the underlying need, and the reality of that need, to *bear witness*. The presence of being for survivors becomes a sacred task that is echoed by a member of the Auschwitz Sonderkommando of Filip Muller, the Greek Jewish survivor Daniel Bennahmias. He speaks the words of Muller and Wiesel when he warns that without due vigilance to the survivor memory of the camps, humanity runs the risk “that it can happen again” (*The Holocaust Odyssey of Daniel Bennahmias, Sonderkommando* 114).

Wiesel is correct when he states that now and during the Holocaust “civilization was on trial” and his questions are never ending; “Who was to blame for Hitler? God? Who was to blame for Eichmann and Mengele and Hoess? They emerged from specific surroundings. They went to high school, to college. They went to church, visited museums, attended concerts. Are not the teachers to blame as well?” (*Against Silence* 177). Wiesel’s questioning discourse is a feature of holocaust representation that allows for the event to be forever queried, and for all to recognize that evil is not an abstract concept when totalitarian machinery takes over where the human voice is silenced. The

discourse of constant questioning is a feature of all the texts chosen for this project, and the paradox of this discourse lies in the fact that in the camps the moral system of prisoners was lopsided. Life in the camps became a struggle for power that knew neither victim nor executioner, only the exercise of power, as Todorov explains when he cites survivor Primo Levi's explanation for this paradox of the power of evil in Auschwitz: "We had the potential to construct an infinite enormity of pain. It is enough not to see, not to listen, not to act. For evil to come into being, the actions of a few are not sufficient; it is also necessary that the vast majority stand aside, indifferent; of such behavior, as we all know well, *we are all of us capable*" [italics mine] (*Facing the Extreme* 139).

The idea that we are all capable is the ethos, I would argue, of the post-Auschwitz experience, and it is evident in all the texts in this project. The warning is not only that we are capable, but what is substantially more frightening is the warning, as Bennahmias writes, that "everyone is capable of committing the most appalling crimes, and that it is useless to think someone *else is the monster* [emphasis mine]. We have this capacity, too" (*The Holocaust Odyssey of Daniel Bennahmias: Sonderkommando* 114). Holocaust representation should have the effect of putting us all in the "witness box or the glass booth," and for the point of my project, the perpetrators must understand the survivors' need to bear witness against them and for the perpetrator to accept being "witnessed against."

Holocaust survivor literature is a perfect vehicle for future dialogues in institutional ethics, optimism, the problems with totalitarian and democratic *systems*, and the plurality of language which Wiesel sums up best, "the Holocaust is a sacred realm. One cannot enter this realm without realizing that only those who were there can know.

But the outsider can come close to the gates. One can never know and yet one must try. This is the new dialectic” (*Against Silence* 190). What is an overriding tenet for Holocaust representation lies in Wiesel’s dictate [the new dialectic] that to enter a sacred realm like Auschwitz, “only those who were there can know,” but if we who were not there attempt representation, I agree with Wiesel that we can “come close to the gates” if attention is always directed at survivor memory, and I would add, even more so, at the voice of perpetrator memory. The voice of the survivor is the siphon through which we can understand the perpetrator, somewhat, and if this is a new dialectic it is, according to Warsaw ghetto survivor Alexander Donat, the complete essence of his present identity as a survivor: “I was now an old-timer, resistant to pain and cold; inured to beating, opprobrium and heavy labor; insensitive to pain and unhappiness. All I retained was the newspaperman’s greedy curiosity, the desire to see and find out everything, to engrave in my memory this Dantesque world” (*The Holocaust Kingdom* 253). What makes Donat’s statement important is not only his need to show us everything in that Dantesque hell, but to show what Terence Des Pres recognizes as an otherness that had no precedent. As Des Pres writes in *The Survivor*, “the otherness of the camps, their horror and apparent chaos, was not real by past standards; unable to root itself in familiar ground, the old self fell apart” (78).

In *Deconstruction in a Nutshell*, Jacques Derrida states that “traditions are just monsters to be slain or escaped from” (38). I read Derrida as warning scholars and people not to be confused and misled by a singular historical dialectic written by those who wrote history as they saw it—with a chosen ideological base—usually from the place of victory; in essence, history written by the winners. How history and traditions are

recorded is integral for Holocaust representation in the sense that the idea of Jewish tradition and Jewish nationalism will always be tied up with the history of the Holocaust, in essence, the history of German culture and national identity will also be tied into the Holocaust. In other words, German retro-history or retro-public history culture is always a doppelganger of Germany and the ghost of the Holocaust; they are forever intertwined in the same way the holocaust is forever intertwined with the Jewish experience.

Jurgen Habermas, in an essay “On the Public Use of History,” asks important questions that I feel adheres to my argument for Holocaust representation in this idea of German/Jewish history and their being forever tied together. For Habermas, there are problems when Germans forget that without a collective identity in relation to the Holocaust an appropriation of national history is faulty and can lead to faulty revisionism that could render the past harmless, and this is a problem area for representation. Habermas asks the two important questions that need to be addressed if one attempts to enter the history of the Holocaust and be accurate; 1] “Can one become the legal successor to the German Reich and continue the traditions of German culture without taking the historical liability for the form of life in which Auschwitz was possible?” (66), and 2] “Is there any way to bear the liability for the context in which such crimes originated, a context with which one’s own existence is historically interwoven, other than through remembrance ... of what cannot be made good, other than through a reflexive, scrutinizing attitude toward one’s own identity-forming traditions?” (*The Holocaust: Theoretical Readings* 66). For Habermas, “the appropriation of national history for purposes of facilitating identification requires that the status of the negatively cathected Nazi period be relativized” (63), and this I would argue would allow for a

“concentration-camp discourse” between victim and perpetrator that can be a national language of mourning and responsibility that has been lacking since Auschwitz in Germany. I agree with Karl Jaspers “The Question of Guilt” that this period cannot be shunted aside and to realize that Hitler was not an aberration, but a figure of national will, and recognition and acceptance of this will allow for a contemporary use of public history. As Jasper writes, “subsequent generations also grew up within a form of life in which *that* [Auschwitz] was possible.[and]Our own life is linked to the life context in which Auschwitz was possible not by contingent circumstances but intrinsically”(Cited in *The Holocaust: Theoretical Readings* 63-64). This sameness of history before and after Auschwitz is also relevant in *Alterity and Transcendence*, where Emmanuel Levinas stated that “there is the life in the camps.... It was the same thing under Hitler and Stalin. Life seems regulated on the basis of total contempt for the human person” (106), and what Levinas has called “the prototype of all genocides” (the Nazi *Endlosung der Jude* [Final Solution]), the scholar must first recognize the mentality and notion of choice in the camps from both sides—victim and executioner/prisoner and jailer—and then be wary of the dependence one idea has on the other for Holocaust representation.

Understanding the immensity of the human struggle in the camps, as well as the theoretical parallels to some of Levinas’ philosophy, makes this horrible event in history powerful and an important instructive tool for future generations. What more appropriate place to discuss the face, hospitality, hostage and responsibility to the *other* than this “hell on earth”—what Elie Wiesel called the “asshole of the world”—*anus mundi*.³⁷

³⁷ There are many Holocaust survivors who picked up this term in Auschwitz, but ironically, according to Robert J. Lifton, in *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide* (New York: Basic Books, 1986), the term *anus mundi* was given to Auschwitz by a

Because this is a project discussing the use of history and form for representation, I will discuss aspects of selected victim texts—*Night*, *Eyewitness Auschwitz*, and, in a minor sense, Thomas Keneally’s *Schindler’s List*—and show their relevance in accordance with Levinas categories of philosophy. Tzvetan Todorov, in his study of moral life in the concentration camps, *Facing the Extreme*, underlines the duality of prisoner life in the camps as being an exercise of will that took everything except one’s ability to choose or not to choose. As Todorov writes, everything can be taken from a man but one thing,” Victor Frankl declares, “the last of the human freedoms—to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way” (61), or to give up and let the executioner take it from you. This idea leads into Levinas’ notion of the face to face with the *other* and the violence and death by the indoctrination and choice one inherently made in the camps: As Levinas writes, In the camps, however, where it is sometimes necessary to choose between holding on to one’s bread and holding onto one’s dignity, between starving physically and morally, everything is out in the open. “Camps”... are extreme situations in which the cleavage between “the men” and “the others” is more pronounced. The deprivation of some is hastened and is there for all to see; but the betterment of others is also intensified. “Camp either cleanses your conscience or destroys it forever. (*Time and the Other* 44)

Nazi doctor Heinz Thilo. The term “*anus mundi*, “anus of the world”—a term meant to characterize what another Nazi doctor, Johann Paul Kremer, described as “the most horrible of all horrors”: “the particularly unpleasant...action of gassing emaciated women” (Lifton 147). There are other accounts from SS men that the term *anus mundi* had to do with the cleansing of Europe of the diseased Jewish infection [which included cripples, psychologically immoral people who were all supposedly contaminated by Jewish blood] that was infecting the Aryan bloodlines. In essence, the Nazi superman would cleanse the Jewish *anus mundi*, and make Europe sanitized and Aryanized in Hitler and Himmler’s Nordic supra image.

The theoretical framework I will employ for this section on survivor literature will focus on Levinas' notion of paternity, the hostage/gift, the absurdity of life/death existence in the camps, immanence of violence and death, the face of the *other*, and the responsibility to the *other*. The idea that "life regulated on the basis of total contempt," may be an interesting way to reconcile oneself with oneself, but also one's most direct way to an understanding of the *other* in the most extreme form, the concentration camp in occupied Eastern Europe. Because totalitarianism excludes any notion of the *other*, the institution that was Nazi Germany and the camp system can be contrasted in Levinas through the writings of the Holocaust narrative. An excellent example of the hospitable to the inhuman is the Auschwitz memoirs of Wiesel's *Night* and Muller's *Eyewitness Auschwitz* as well as the Plazcow ghetto memoir of Keneally's *Schindler's List*.

One of the more accurate representations of a Holocaust narrative that emphasizes the notion of fecundity/paternity—Levinas' the "renewal of the father in the son"—is Wiesel's *Night*. In Auschwitz, young Eliezer and his father are separated from the rest of the family and must go it alone in Auschwitz. The father will eventually die but not before young Eliezer must sacrifice him so he can survive; "Bending over him, I stayed gazing at him for over an hour, engraving into myself the picture of his blood-stained face, his shattered skull.... His last word was my name. A summons, to which I did not respond" (*Night* 106). What happens to both father and son in this instant is for Eliezer's father a true freedom, what Levinas would see as the freedom "to have time to forestall one's own abdication under the threat of violence" (*Totality and Infinity* 237), as well as the knowledge that violence does not stop discourse and the supreme ordeal of freedom is suffering, not death: "In patience, at the limit of its abdication, the will does not sink into

absurdity ... the violence the will endures comes from the other as a tyranny ... thus alone does violence remain endurable in patience. It is produced only in a world where I can die *as a result of someone and for someone*" (239). There is no better example than Eliezer's father and his death in *Night*.

Levinas states "paternity is the relationship with a stranger who, entirely while being Other, is myself, the relationship of the ego with a myself who is nonetheless a stranger to me" (*Time and the Other* 91). In the camp Eliezer's father reaches a point where he no longer is the respected rabbinical mentor for young Eliezer, and he must relinquish his failure to his son, "leave me ... I can't go on ... have mercy on me ... I'll wait here until we can get into the baths" (*Night* 100), thereby raising a parallel to Levinas' idea of existence and transcendence in Wiesel's fathers' loss of self as a father; "I do not *have* my child; I *am* in some way my child" (*Time and the Other* 91). Eliezer's father realizes that the son must let the father die so the son can live. In this case, his ordeal with typhus and his eventual beating to death by another inmate is a transcendent moment-his recognition of the *other*. At this juncture in *Night*, it could be postulated that Eliezer's father reaches a sense of self that overreaches death, and thereby gives him a consciousness that has a power to know and the initiative to a presence of being. All Eliezer's father's Talmudic studies and supposed knowledge—his sense of "not being able to be able"—change in his death. Though Eliezer must deny the father to live "I did not weep. But I had no more tears. And in the depths of my being, in the recesses of my weakened conscience, could I have searched it, I might perhaps have found something like--free at last!" (*Night* 106), he also develops "the relationship with the Other [in] the absence of the other....not the absence of pure nothingness, but absence in a horizon of

the future” (*Time and the Other* 90). Though there is no longer a tangential relationship between father and son, the son lives on and the father lives through him—a “victory over death.”

Levinas discusses the notion of responsibility to the hostage in *Alterity and Transcendence* as being “what distinguishes the face in its status from all known objects comes from its contradictory nature. It is all weakness and all authority” (104). This duality of the face can be seen in Thomas Keneally’s *Schindler’s List* in the character of Oskar Schindler. I use Keneally’s text as minor example, in relation to Wiesel and Muller, of survivor literature for it is a story of the Jew as victim, but, in essence, their survival story is told by a “good German,” Oskar Schindler, whose bravery and sacrifice enabled certain Jews to survive to write their own story. Schindler, a Nazi slave labor profiteer and exploiter of Jews, is also their savior, their *other*. When Schindler tells SS *Untersturmfuhrer* Amon Goeth that “real power lies in mercy” not in the power to kill, the essence of Levinas “proximity to the other” is reticent. Though Goeth can never fully understand Schindler’s duality in terms of the responsibility to the hostage—in this case the “Schindler Jews”—Oskar Schindler does exactly what Levinas states is a requirement of true responsibility because “when I say I am doing my duty I lie, because I am never discharged with respect to the other ... and this never released ... the impossibility of saying no” (105).

Schindler tells his accountant, Itzhak Stern, “you ran my business” he acknowledges the gratitude to the hostage. When he tells the Jews in his factory “don’t thank me for your survival. Thank your people who worked day and night to save you from extermination. Thank your fearless Stern and Pemper ... [who] have faced death

every moment” (*Schindler’s List* 371). Though Schindler gives all the credit to his Jews for their survival one cannot deny his hospitable responsibility in their rescue. The responsibility to the hostage is Schindler’s, and at the end when he and his wife exchange the trappings of wealth for the striped garb of the concentration camp hostage, they become conscious of the other and their face to face with it. For Levinas, this would be “when [Schindler] encountered a human being, you cannot drop him. Most often we do so, saying, ‘I have done all I could!’ We haven’t done anything! It is this feeling, this consciousness, of having done nothing that gives us the status of hostage with the responsibility of one who is not guilty, who is innocent” (*Alterity and Transcendence* 106).

Levinas notion of “the gift” also finds relevance in Keneally’s novel. An instance of the “gift” is when Schindler takes hoses and sprays water on the Jews waiting in the suffocating cattle cars bound for Auschwitz. This scene may not seem as important as Schindler’s paying money to save the people on his “list,” but the idea of Schindler giving simple sustenance—life-giving water—to those sweltering multitudes, I feel is a perfect example of Levinas’s idea of “the gift.” The SS were trained to see the Jews as *untermenschen*³⁸ or subhuman so their suffering, as well as their actuality as living

³⁸ The term *untermenschen* is the German for subhuman. In much of the Nazi racial propaganda that accompanied the pogroms and ant-Semitic laws against Jews in Nazi Germany, one of the most virulent stereotypes was the depiction of the Jew as vermin and subhuman. In films like *Jud Suss*, the Jewish hordes were portrayed as rats leaping from a sewer, while images of deformed, mentally ill caricatures of Jews and Jewish rabbis are parodied alongside the images of sewer rats running through the streets of Germany. The ideological tract of depersonalization, taken by Nazis racial theorists in the most extreme type of science. For example, Julius Streicher’s *Der Sturmer* parodied the idea of the subhuman Jewish parasite in the form of the Jewish rapist, and the Jew as the incarnation of the pornographic subculture that had polluted the degenerate Weimar republic, and had attributed to the downfall of Aryan Germanic culture so important to Nazi propaganda. The idea that the Jews were not human, and actually a bacillus that need be destroyed, was cleverly parlayed into a national campaign that allowed for the image of the Jew as despised subhuman *other*. This image made it somewhat acceptable to turn the other way when Jews were taken away. The idea that Jews had been relegated to terms of vermin, and objectified to be no

beings, was not possible in their eyes. The fact they were Jewish made them invisible. Schindler sees the Jews in cattle cars going East to their deaths and does one last hospitable act—one last gift for the unfortunate—he waters down the burning cars and their parched inhabitants. Where Goeth sees Oskar act as cruel, “you’re giving them hope,” Schindler is the definition of goodness in the simple gift of water; “the good is not in nature, and it is not in the preaching of the prophets ... or in the letters of philosophers. But simple people bear in their hearts the love of all living things; they love life naturally” (*Alterity and Transcendence* 108). Where Goeth sees the act as “anything for the sake of the comedy of life” (*Schindler’s List* 266), Oskar understands that true hospitality is a “mad goodness,” which Levinas describes as “the most human thing there is in man. It defines man” (*Alterity and Transcendence* 108).

Filip Muller: Eyewitness Auschwitz

“In This place the lame, the blind and the weak would look in vain for pity. The Ten Commandments, those principles of human conduct, did not prevail here: Auschwitz had its own laws and macabre values ... Auschwitz ... was also a place where people died, not only from starvation, sickness and epidemics, but from being battered to death, killed by having phenol injected into their heart, or driven into the gas chamber.” (*Eyewitness Auschwitz: Three Years in the Gas Chambers* 2)

“The world to which survivors speak is very much a part of their condition as witnesses. They speak *for* someone, but also *to* someone, and the response they evoke is integral to the act they perform.” (Des Pres, *The Survivor* 41)

“The rest of the world, so I believed, could not remain silent in the face of what was happening here.” (*Eyewitness Auschwitz* 122)

more than trash with eyes, made it became easier to kill them by the large numbers the SS envisioned. Franz Stangl, the commandant of Chelmno death camp, states what was the ethos for all death camps in relation to Jewish subhumans, that being “the dead were blocks of wood, shit, with absolutely no importance....[and] I rarely saw them as individuals.... It was always just a huge mass” (Todorov, *Facing the Extreme* 161).

Levinas notion of the absurdity of death can parallel the totally abject nature of life and death in Auschwitz. As Muller states in the opening epigram there was no “commandment” that was of “this world” [mine] that would allow the prisoners any idea that survival was possible. But the fact that some did survive the horror allows for a type of witnessing in literature that is integral to Holocaust representation. As Terence Des Pres states, the need for survivors to speak *for* the dead [someone-possibly an *other* who died in the camps], as well as to speak *to* those who need to listen [someone who was not there], are crucial elements of the Holocaust experience as recorded today. Tzvetan Todorov describes the “otherness” of the camps’ specific inhumanity and their parallels to the whole world which “is really like the concentration camp.... The world is ruled by neither justice nor morality.... The world is ruled by power” (*Facing the Extreme* 38). This absurdity against the institutionalized power in the camps Levinas discusses as “the impossibility of having a project. This approach of death indicates that we are in relation with something that is absolutely other ... my solitude is thus not confirmed by death but broken by it” (*Time and the Other* 74). In the camps just the notion of solitude, prayer or contact with another is absurd, broken, what Filip Muller attests to in *Eyewitness Auschwitz*: “The wretched piece of land in Eastern Europe was under the sway of the SS ... the elite of the German nation, a nation which had given the world not only great writers and composers, but also men like Adolf Hitler. The little Polish town of Oswiecim ... had been turned into an inferno, and anyone there by an unkind fate might regard himself truly forsaken by God” (2).

Muller was a survivor of the *Sonderkommando*. The *Sonderkommando* were the Jewish prisoners who burned and buried their slaughtered compatriots and were, according to Elie Wiesel, “the maddest of all, the unhappiest of all, the victims among victims.... They burned 10,000 men, women, and children a day. Once you do that you do not write anymore. You *spit on mankind*” [mine] (*Against Silence* 211). Muller, like Levinas’ example of *Hamlet*, is beyond tragedy; “It’s prayer which makes you a human being [but] it seemed sheer madness to pray in Auschwitz, and absurd to believe in God in this place” (*Eyewitness Auschwitz* 28-29). Muller attempts suicide by placing himself in the gas chamber with a group of the condemned only to be pushed out by two young beautiful girls who tell him he must stay alive to bear witness. For Muller, he must face the young girls knowing that they will “no longer be,” but in being pushed out of the gas chamber by the doomed girls, his mission for the future is certain. Muller must live to keep their memory alive so they “can be” remembered: “*We* must die, but you still have a chance to save your life. You have to return to the camp and tell everybody about our last hours,’ she commanded. ‘You have to explain to them that they must free themselves from any illusions. They ought to fight, that’s better than dying here helplessly” (*Eyewitness Auschwitz* 113). This idea of the impossibility of “not to be,” I feel, directly parallels description of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* because both the character of Hamlet and Muller “understand that the ‘not to be’ is perhaps impossible and he can no longer master the absurd, [for Muller the systematic-mechanized mass murder of his people] even by suicide” (*Time and the Other* 50).

Beside the horror of camp life was an absurdity of death that was a constant companion of all in the dehumanized environment of Auschwitz. The sheer

powerlessness and realization that the world was not concerned about their fate only lends to the prisoners sense of abandonment and solitude/alienation from the *other*, but also made the idea of death absurd. Muller attests to the impossibility of the Jews situation in Auschwitz:

Soaked to the skin, barefoot and covered from head to toe in mud and blood we climbed into the ambulance. The emblem of the International Red Cross seemed a symbol of grotesque mockery: we were convinced that there was no power on earth which could put an end to this diabolical nightmare. After what we had gone through that day the spark of life which still glimmered within us had dimmed.

(Eyewitness Auschwitz 26)

This surreal mockery of the Red Cross is much like Levinas' theory on the absurdity of death. In the camps there was always the threat of death from beyond and the most frightening essence of the unknown, which for Levinas, "frightens, the silence of the infinite spaces that terrify, comes from the other, and this alterity, precisely as absolute, strikes me in an evil design or in a judgment of justice" (*Totality and Infinity* 234).

The idea of judge and jury or evil design in Auschwitz is interesting in the impossibility of any type of justice in the death camps for Jews. Auschwitz did not lend itself to the positive nature of judgement or justice; only a sentence of death and destruction. Muller alludes to the impossibility of any type of appeal, in the legal sense, when he writes that "there was no power on earth which could have saved these poor innocent wretches. They had been condemned to death by a megalomaniac dictator [Hitler] who set himself up to be judge and jury.... The whole world knew it, and knowing it remained silent" (*Eyewitness Auschwitz* 36). Though many of the inmates at

Auschwitz felt in complete solitude and at the greatest distance from the other the specter of death was liberating for many—a solitude that brought back the vanishing *other*. The camps were such an unreal, nightmarish landscape, that the loss of an *other* could find much relevance in the constant group brutality that left the inmate little solitude or possibility of private time, in a very intrusive and brutal world. Only in the solitude of death did some inmates, not those who gave up on life, [the camp *musulmans*] face death with silent solitude. For example, the rabbi in Muller's narrative tells the SS that he "knows you are murderers and that there will be retribution." He then leads the throngs of victims in singing as they descend to their deaths—"the crowd of 2,000 ... almost everyone was weeping. There were heart-rending scenes among members of families. But their tears were not tears of despair. These people were in a state of deep religious emotion. They had put themselves in God's hands" (*Eyewitness Auschwitz* 70). This instance is important for many of the *sonderkommando*, who watched their brothers die daily, had lost any belief in God, much like Elie Wiesel shows us in *Night*. As Muller writes in *Eyewitness Auschwitz*, for the men of the Auschwitz Sonderkommando, men who burned and disposed of thousands daily, the idea of a higher power was horrendous, and in their eyes, abjectly ridiculous, almost carnivalesque:

They [the *Sonderkommando*] stuck to their opinion that such an infernal happening could not take place before their eyes if there really was something like a God and a divine justice. 'Listen, Dajan,' said one, 'not once have I felt even a breath of divine justice here. Absolutely everything that you stuffed into my head in school was just nonsense. There is no God, and if there...he is an ox and a bastard!'" (66)

What Muller relates here is the helplessness of prisoners to help their brethren, and this recurring nightmare of witnessing death day after day. The loss of religion and the loss of hope gave these sonderkommandoes a nihilistic view of humanity that was fueled by a resentment at what they perceived was their forgotten status on earth. The prisoners in Auschwitz were first forgotten by god, and second, forgotten by humanity. Survivor Eugene Kogon, in *The Theory and Practice of Hell*, comments on this notion of being forsaken so common to prisoners in the camps:

The prisoner was full of resentment toward the outside world. He had a sense of having been abandoned. Did anyone pay attention to him on the outside? Ah, they went on living without giving him a thought! What did they know about the bitter reality that faced him every moment? To hell with them and their knuckling under to the regime, their profit-sharing compact! They sang and drank, went on Sunday picnics, to the movies, the theater, the concert. They laughed and made merry, while here ... yes here. Such thoughts often rankled with the outcasts. (321)

The Jews may have been isolated in death, but in their solitude they can appeal to the *other* because for these victims “the solitude of death does not make the Other vanish but remains in unconsciousness of hostility, and consequently still renders possible an appeal to the Other, to his friendship and medication” (*Totality and Infinity* 234). The denial of the world to aid the Jews and to isolate them in their misery is not only absurd, but the very absolute madness of a world gone mad, which Levinas sees as “the things that bring death ... obstacles rather than menaces, refer to a malevolence, are a residue of a bad will which surprises and stalks” (*Totality and Infinity* 234). This residue of bad will is not only pointed at the perpetrators but in terms of holocaust representation an

interesting notation here can be made for the survivors as well. When Primo Levi was told that maybe he survived Auschwitz because God wanted him to tell the story of the camps, the answer is not what one would expect. As Levi writes, “such an opinion seemed *monstrous* [my emphasis] to me. I might be alive in the place of another, at the expense of another; I might have usurped, that is, in fact, killed” (Cited in Todorov, *Facing the Extreme* 106-107). The fact that God was not an answer to their prayers for survival is not lost on many of the survivors. This is a feature of Holocaust survival literature that focuses on a discourse of silence in relation to God, and, I would argue, is an important theme for representation. This silence is echoed best by Muller when he states that the guiding principle in the camps was “if you want to live, you are condemned to hope” (Cited in Todorov, *Facing the Extreme* 245).

It would be too simple to just blame the Holocaust on rabid anti-Semitism and fanatical SS killing squads [*Einsatzgruppen*] but nothing could be farther from the truth. In *Eyewitness Auschwitz*, Muller attests to many of his SS overseers as having two personalities, one normal and one monstrous. This duality of the death’s head was a “catch-22” obstacle for prisoners and only heightened their anxiety for they never could predict what was in store for them. As Muller writes, “Voss [an SS Oberscharfuhrer] had two personalities. He could be high-spirited, laughing and joking ... [but] on the other hand, he never batted an eyelid when it came to shooting men, women and children one after the other” (128). The obstacles that faced prisoners could play into Levinas's idea about the “everydayness” of the Nazi killers and their wretched prisoners, and what makes the event so unimaginable—that being the “normalcy” of the killers, and the banality of their business—like approach to mass murder. Primo Levi attests to the

normalcy of these men; “Monsters exist, but they are too few in numbers to be truly dangerous. More dangerous are the *common* men” (Cited in Todorov, *Facing the Extreme* 123). If anything, what the Nazi state produced more than mass killers was a terrifying new breed of clerks—automatons of a large bureaucracy—the most notable being Adolph Eichmann, and the trouble with him and those like him was “precisely that so many were like him, and that many were neither perverted nor sadistic, that they were, and still are, terribly and terrifyingly normal” (Todorov 124). These are the “clerks” that Levinas would recognize as the dangerous fruits of normalcy that came to deadly fruition in the camps. This system produced ordinary men, as well as sadists and brutal torturers. This was the residue of an evil—the Hitler Cult—that sparked such methodical mass killing in a seemingly well-adjusted technocracy of bureaucratized death.

This absurdity in death which “maintains an interpersonal order, in which it tends to take on a signification ... it is never natural, but requires a magical explanation” (*Totality and Infinity* 234), can explain how many normal men in Hitler’s occupied territories could become methodical killers. The magical explanation in this case being the incomprehensibility of their dedication to a task that the normal world would see as impossible, but for a world propagandized by the supposed threat of the Jews could develop, according to Levinas, “the presence of persons who, for once, do not fade away into words, get lost in technical questions, freeze up into institutions or structures” (*Alterity and Transcendence* 87). Levinas was not talking directly about the Nazis or mechanized institutionalized murder in this quote, but the technocratic nature of the Nazi power structure lends credence to Levinas’ theory of institutional monoliths. In the case of the Holocaust, this monolith of madness produced the inhuman conditions that could

spawn such inhuman actions. Tzvetan Todorov concurs: “I became convinced that a man can be human only under human conditions and I believe that it is fantastic nonsense to judge him by actions which he commits under inhuman conditions” (*Facing the Extreme* 39).

When Filip Muller states that it is nonsense to judge him I agree that for representation one may want to take Muller’s tact in terms of survivor literature. For whatever they did survivors were forced to do it. Camp survivors cannot be judged by anyone who was not there. This entitles survivors to the role of traditional hero, but in a different fashion. As Terence Des Pres writes, “because the traditional hero chooses to find consummation in death, he controls the condition of his fulfillment. [but] The survivor’s choice is not absolute in the same way. To stay alive is of course the whole point, but unlike those who die deliberately, the survivor never can be sure of success.... [and] in extremity, the bare possibility of survival is not enough” (*The Survivor: An Anatomy of Life in the Death Camps* 7).

The idea that inhuman condition can produce inhuman acts can also be affected by Levinas allusion to Martin Buber’s I-Thou relationship. In the camps most of the I-Thou relationships were I-That relationships, which in their reciprocity for a deed done, the “relation no longer invokes generosity but the commercial relation, the exchange of good behavior” (*Alterity and Transcendence* 103). I mention this because Wiesel and Muller mention that the true acts of generosity in the camps were indeed the acts in the face of the *other*—in their total sense of generosity with no call for reciprocity. Unfortunately, for Wiesel, he must allow his father to perform the supreme act of generosity so his son can live. Wiesel may not understand why “[he] didn’t throw

[himself] on the Kapo who was beating my father before my very eyes” (*The Holocaust Years* 198), but he does eventually realize that the I-Thou generosity of his father was an act of true generosity as he says, “Eliezer ... I must tell you where to find the gold and the money I buried” (*Night* 102). For Muller, it is more a result of watching so many die with dignity that leaves him, unfortunately, with no joy at his liberation in 1945. As Muller writes when he hears prisoners shouting, “We are free! Comrades!... [For me] It was, incredibly, a complete anti-climax. This moment, on which all my thought and secret wishes had been concentrated for three years, evoked neither gladness nor, for the matter, any other feelings inside me” (*Eyewitness Auschwitz: Three Years in the Gas Chambers* 171). The concept of generosity and the I-Thou relationship may seem rather impossible in a place [Auschwitz] where prisoners “were really no longer human beings in the accepted sense. Not even animals, but putrefying corpses moving on two legs” (*Holocaust: Religious and Philosophical Implications* 207), but I feel the most extreme case [Auschwitz] is what Levinas would deem the most worthy of relation to the other, the most worthy of true knowledge in the face of the other; “we hold to the image we have experienced, and make ourselves memories. Enjoyment and suffering are experience. To live in a meaningful way is *to know* life in living it” (*Alterity and Transcendence* 92). For Filip Muller, the only way he can live anything that would approach “meaningful,” is in testifying and bearing witness for history. Muller is the ethos for “witnessing” in the sense that he has seen that “as a witness the survivor is both sought and shunned; [yet] the desire to hear his truth is countered by the need to ignore him. Insofar as we feel compelled to defend a comforting view of life. We tend to deny the survivor’s voice. [and if we deny a voice like Muller’s] We join in a “conspiracy of

silence,” and undermine the survivor’s authority” (Des Pres 41). This is an important warning for representation, for when we deny the survivor voice for our own comforting distance, we push the survivor farther away from the dialogue and, in essence, run the risk of putting survivors on the outside again.

Elie Wiesel—Night

“All questions pertaining to Auschwitz lead to anguish. Whether or not the death of one million children has meaning, either way man is negated and condemned. But if faith in humanity is no longer possible ... What is the point of bearing witness?” (*One Generation After* 56)

“In truth it [*Night*] is much less a deposition dealing with historical facts than the inner adventure of a soul who believed for a time that God, too, had been massacred-God, the eternally innocent.” (*Social Theory after the Holocaust* 11)

“That night the soup tasted of corpses.” (*Night* 62)

Elie Wiesel’s *Night* uses the form of autobiography in Holocaust representation to bear witness to an event, the Holocaust, which is truly beyond description. By documenting with intellectual rigor and exactitude, we can, perhaps, do justice to what was humanity’s great injustice. *Night* is unique for it offers the reader a father-son representation that is different from most survivor narratives. Most holocaust survivor narratives tend to be written from a single lone entity, for example, Filip Muller in *Eyewitness Auschwitz*. For Wiesel, the only adequate response to the Holocaust is silence, but according to Terence Des Pres, Wiesel writes like a man that succumbs to the weight of being a survivor and cannot keep silent: “the pressure of the scream persists [and] this is the obsessive center of Wiesel’s writing: his protagonists desire a silence they cannot keep” (*The Survivor* 36). Wiesel comments that, “to write about history while those who

were its protagonists, or those who lived through it, are still alive—I think that I would expect a writer to have more honesty, more intellectual honesty, and above all more sensitivity” (*Contemporary Literature* 294).

What Wiesel does artistically is to show us that it is impossible to expect him, or any other Holocaust survivor, to concretize the mystery of that most horrible time in history: “There is no such thing as literature of the Holocaust, nor can there be.... Those who have not lived through the experience will never know; those who have will never tell; not really, completely ... The very attempt to write it is blasphemy” (*World Literature Today* 228). The reason I feel the study of history of one’s time in Holocaust representation should include Wiesel’s *Night* lies a great deal in Wiesel’s quest for self amidst the earth-shattering horror of Auschwitz-Buna. As Wiesel writes, “the moment had come. I was face to face with the Angel of Death [Dr. Mengele]” (31), and his message to the world that he, and we, must remain witnesses to what can never again be repeated, and why we should never stop asking questions, “a Jew defines himself more by what troubles him than by what reassures him... To me, the Jew and his questioning are one” (Greenberg & Rosenfeld 59-60).

Night is not only survivor’s affirmation of self and father-son humanism, but an intense exercise in Holocaust witnessing and memory that reminds the reader that Wiesel’s time in Auschwitz was truly hell on earth, and which he shows in *Night*: “I have seen a lot in my lifetime, but Satan himself could not possibly have devised a worse hell. Can you imagine 3,000 corpses recently alive, burning all at once in such an immense fire” (15-16). Frederick Garber, in his article “The Art of Elie Wiesel,” explains how the art of autobiography aids a writer like Wiesel in re-establishing a Jewish identity for

history: “the artists struggle for a mode of speech is the man’s struggle for [first] a location in which to endure and [then] the continuation of a life ... the awareness of history, of the time leading up to the moment in which one stands, is tied deeply into the perception of values, how other Jews before them have lived with God and with each other” (*Judaism* 301). Wiesel’s problems with God, or any form of religion after Auschwitz, is always in the background of his need to affirm his Jewishness, but this need does not equate Jewish identity with religion. For Wiesel, “death negates miracles, the death of one million children negates more than miracles” (*Judaism* 230), and without bitterness he adds, “the reward of being Jewish lies in defining oneself, not in being defined. The gift is to possess one’s heritage and in affirming one’s existence on one’s own ground” (*Studies in Twentieth Century Literature* 274). Wiesel’s anger is shown in his condemnation of the perpetrators, “how does one describe the deportation of entire towns by cattle-car to the final selection and solution? How does one verbalize the worship of that daily soup or the horror of one public hanging? How much more so the liquidation of six million people?” (*Judaism* 366). By keeping these questions in the discourse of Holocaust representation, Wiesel has given voice to the need for constant re-examination of the perpetrator voice, as well as a constant warning that we should never deny the survivor voice’s overwhelming horror. Wiesel’s world is forever “Hitler-Haunted,” [mine] and I would argue, that Wiesel’s world is also our world, and if we are honest with the event, than we will write from the perspective that Holocaust representation is always “Hitler and Horror-Haunted.”

By telling his story Wiesel attains some sense, autobiographically, of finally winning back some semblance of what he has lost, as well as a sense of personal

justification, even a revenge on history. I agree with Georges Gusdorf that the historian, whether in memoir or autobiography, always attains a certain degree of personal and public retribution from history. Wiesel comments on this at Northwestern, “forgive me-I am going to say something harsh; I do not mean to use it in order to divide us ... but a truth must be said. If the victims are my problem the killers are not. The killers are someone else’s problem, not mine” (Wiesel 17). Wiesel’s “anatomy of melancholy” (Holocaust skin) shows that all Holocaust testimony is universal to the survivor, and, as readers, we should never forget that psychologically the survivor is always a prisoner, even after they have assimilated or not assimilated back into post-war society. They only have to roll up their sleeves to see their autobiographies that are contained in their prisoner number, “resisting the reassurance of people who pretend or seem to be marveling at the fact that I seem so normal...it’s my skin. This is not a coat. You can’t take it off. And it’s there, and it will be there until I die” (*Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 416).

If this idea of survivors and their “holocaust skin” is to be heeded for future generations in Holocaust literature and film, then, I feel, artists need to be cautious of over popularization. Adolph Hitler and Nazi Germany are probably the most widely documented and viewed phenomenon in history. Names like Hitler, Mengele, Himmler, Goebbels etc. have been studied in documentaries and parodied in television (*Saturday Night Live, Monty Python*), and film (*The Producers*), to name a few. I am not saying that autobiography is the last bastion of pure holocaust representation, but an event as important as the Holocaust must never run the risk of being trivialized. It is important recognize that aesthetically, culturally, and spiritually, Wiesel’s *Night*, much like the

Diary of Anne Frank, should be preserved and understood or history may repeat itself. The message in Wiesel's autobiography is to remember, bear witness, and never forget but not always to "think of the Jew as suffering. I prefer thinking of him as someone who can defeat suffering—his own and others" (*Renascence* 175). I would add that the suffering Jew Wiesel describes is also the heroic Jew, in the sense that not only is the survivor heroic for bravery in the face of Nazi horror, but also heroic in speaking out against the perpetrators. The term heroic for survivors of Auschwitz takes on a different meaning, and in many ways, is greater than traditional heroism. The traditional hero is one, who encounters great danger and expects martyrdom or heroic death, but for the Jewish hero of Auschwitz, this was not the case, as Zev Garber writes, the "terms "hero/heroic" in this manner ... implied that the Jews and others who endured sufferings at the hands of the Nazis were not heroic on a much more basic *human* level; for certainly it is correct to view their endurance as being of heroic proportions" (*Shoah: The Paradigmatic Genocide Notes* 66).

Elie Wiesel's loss of innocence (youth) is quite different from what most people would understand the meaning of that term (loss of innocence) to be. Unless a person has been imprisoned in a concentration camp at a young age, it is impossible to imagine how a young boy (Eliezer) could lose his family, home and religion, and not end up in a mental asylum. For young Eliezer, the enthusiastic young student of the Talmud, to move from the "night" (solemn worship) of the synagogue to the "night" (hell) of the death camp is important as autobiography because we know it is true. Wiesel's Hasidic images of Sighet, Transylvania, and his use of language in questioning Moshe the Beadle are so powerfully simple, "Why did I pray? A strange question. Why did I live? Why did I

breathe?" (2). Young Eliezer's early devotion to religion in *Night* is an important theme for it chronicles the passage of history for Wiesel and how he lost what made him Jewish, his faith. I feel this is why autobiography is such an important genre for Holocaust representation. It allows the writer the freedom to wonder about the cyclical nature of history and then use his imagination to depict it in autobiography. By young Eliezer's losing his very reason for existence (religion), and his need to question why he lost it, Wiesel incorporates not only the specter of incoming historical doom (Nazis), but also Jewish tradition and history (murder, pogroms and exile). By using autobiography Wiesel not only shows us how he lost his God in the camps, "Where is God? Where is He? Here he is—He has been hanged here, on these gallows" (*Night*, Foreword), but only through writing and reflection could he regain his religious identity, "whoever does not accept Jewish history in its entirety is not Jewish.... To accept Judaism means to accept oneself within the totality of Judaism" (*Studies in Twentieth Century Literature* 268). The biblical theme of "denying the messenger" is an important reflection in the pre-Auschwitz section of *Night*. Wiesel is not afraid to show that he, his family, and the people of Sighet did not heed the advice of Moshe the Beadle, "Jews, listen to me ... I wanted to come back to warn you. And see how it is, no one will listen to me" (5), and Madame Schachter in the harrowing transport to the death camp, "Jews, listen to me! I can see a fire! There are huge flames! It is a furnace!" (*Night* 23)

Wiesel's accurate rendering of history in *Night* is never more exacting than in the prophetic Madame Schachter's pin-point description of the crematoriums at Auschwitz, as well as the people of Sighet's dismissal of the SS as being the architects of genocide. So many Jews believed that the "Final Solution" was just too massive to be possible and

that the Germans they encountered early on in the occupation were not nearly as bad as they were made out to be. Wiesel captures the essence of the deception fostered by the SS, *Arbeit macht frei*, and [“work makes you free”] until they got their victims inside the barbed wire. By undertaking the gripping gothic realism of Himmler’s *Totenkopfverbände* [Death’s Head Units], and Auschwitz, Wiesel paints a picture of the closed, hellish universe of Auschwitz; a landscape of death and torture to raise our modern consciousness to better understand this horrific atrocity in history. In our present era of Holocaust denial, and with the passing on of much of the Holocaust generation, the accuracy of historical memory in relation to Auschwitz has never been more necessary. We must listen because, as Wiesel constantly preaches, “The Holocaust demands interrogation and calls everything into question. Traditional ideas and acquired values, philosophical systems and social theories- all must be revised in the shadow of Auschwitz-Birkenau” (*Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 418).

James Olney, in his essay “Autobiography and the Cultural Moment,” discusses the affirmation of “I” in autobiography. Even though Wiesel uses many voices/ personages in *Night* to depict the history of Sighet and Auschwitz, it is Wiesel’s representational voice as a survivor of Auschwitz that affirms his sense of “I.” The other voices in *Night*, attest to Wiesel’s universal collective (the concentration camp cohort) of Jews that affirm themselves as either victims, or survivors, of the dreaded death camps. The horror of separation/selection that took place upon arrival at Auschwitz-Birkenau, “Men to the left! Women to the right!” (*Night* 27), only strengthens Wiesel’s ever growing alienation from family and the life he had once known. In Wiesel’s case, he must totally lose himself, as well as his father (in death), to tragically find his affirmation

of self. Wiesel continues this nightmarish affirmation of “I” amidst the Holocaust, in everything he writes and every speech he makes according to Michael Luckens: “as Wiesel explained, he will no longer write books dealing directly with the Holocaust but it is inevitable that all topics will lead toward it. Even if one draws a picture, he draws in the memory” (*Judaism* 366). Wiesel uses a Thomas Dequincey-esque “opium withdrawal” nightmare theme to describe the human cesspool that was Auschwitz. Unlike Dequincey, Wiesel’s reflective voice depicts the realities of hell, not opium withdrawal. This is not a dream; the crocodiles in Wiesel’s nightmare (the SS) are real. Wiesel’s reflective voice also show us the necessities of hell; bread/soup and the concentration camp ethos that to survive one must have no family, no friends: “here every man has to fight for himself and not think of anyone else. Even of his father. Here, there are no fathers, no brothers, no friends. Everyone lives and dies for himself alone” (*Night* 105).

At the conclusion of *Night* Wiesel will have to deny his father so he can live. A major reason I feel *Night* is important to Holocaust representation, lies in Wiesel’s “need” for forgiveness in the pages of his testament. Young Eliezer must bear witness to his own physical cowardice and emotional relief in relation to his father’s plight and eventual death when, “the officer dealt him a violent blow on the head with his truncheon. I did not move. I was afraid. My body was afraid of also receiving a blow. I did not weep, and it pained me that I could not weep. But I had no more tears. And in the depths of my being, in the recesses of my weakened conscience, could I have searched it, I might have found something like—free at last!” (*Night* 106). The Nazis counted on a certain amount of suicides to accompany their unwilling murder victims and brutally encouraged the sense of overwhelming fatalistic attrition that infected the death camps. The loss of self,

the *musulman*, was the camp slang for an inmate who had lost the will to live, and Wiesel captures it in his simple description of a bureaucracy of death in *Night*: “an SS man would examine us. Whenever he found a weak one, a *musulman* as we called them, he would write his number down: good for the crematory” (66). Because there were no mirrors at Auschwitz, prisoners looked at each other to form visions of themselves and what they had become physically. This visual horror is another representational tool Wiesel uses to show how fresh the memory of his physical deterioration and degradation remains: “the night was gone. The morning star was shining in the sky. I too had become a completely different person. The student of the Talmud, the child that I was, had been consumed in the flames. There remained only a shape that looked like me. A dark flame had entered into my soul and devoured it” (*Night* 34).

Wiesel, in his description of the young boys hanging (crucifixion), “for more than half an hour he stayed there, struggling between life and death, dying in slow agony under our eyes” (62), and the murder of a father and a son, not only paints a visual picture of a boy's martyrdom and familial patricide, but with his reflective autobiographical voice he indites the perpetrators. Wiesel recognizes the importance of remembering every word of the hangman's decree, “In the name of Himmler ... prisoner Number ... stole during the alert.... According to the law ... paragraph ... prisoner Number ... is condemned to death” (59). In the “asshole of the world” (*anus mundi*), that was Auschwitz and Buna it is perfectly clear to see in Wiesel's book who were the demons and how Eliezer lost his faith in God and eventually saw him (God) rendered useless by the Nazis as well. Simon Sibelman, in “Phylacteries as Metaphor in Elie Wiesel's *Le Testament d'un poete Juif assassine*,” I feel, concurs with this idea of religious artifacts [phylacteries], and their lost

significance, for a young rabbinical devotee like Elie Wiesel in *Night*: “with time and creative language silenced, the spirit of *anus mundi* proceeds to invade Eliezer’s soul and crushes his spiritual identity...Man would supplicate; God would respond. To those faced with the reality of Auschwitz, God reveals himself as an impotent entity who has been robbed of His attributes of justice and mercy by the Angel of Death” (*Studies in Twentieth Century Literature* 38).

The Wiesel’s (father and son) final destination in *Night* was the I.G. Farben slave labor factory in Buna. In this camp, Eliezer will not only lose his father, but an irretrievable part of himself. Upon autobiographical reflection he comes to the horrible realization that he had possibly sacrificed his father for his own sake, “if only I could get rid of this dead weight [his father], so that I could use all my strength to struggle for my own survival” (*Night* 101). This realization and reflection for Wiesel of his father’s death and his place in it in *Night* is a key facet of Wiesel’s reflective voice so important to Holocaust representation. In his quest for consciousness of self through lamentation and guilt, he finds the birthplace of truth. For Wiesel, his need to testify follows a type of “angst of responsibility,³⁹” that according to psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton, is a theory “of survivor guilt, which deals with a survivors’ mission to make the historical record accurate and to show the deaths they witnessed as significant” (*History and Human Survival* 204).

³⁹ Psychiatrist Robert J. Lifton, in his discussion “Questions of Guilt” (*Partisan Review*, Winter 1972, 36: 514-530), states that “although as a psychiatrist I was brought up to look upon guilt as a profound problem within neurosis, as indeed it can be, one comes in certain situations to value it as a process. This, in turn, leads to the formulation of an “energizing or animating guilt,” and ultimately to a redefinition of survival guilt as “the anxiety of responsibility” (517-519).

In Wiesel's description of the proud death of the violinist Juliek, the autobiographical theme of winning back one's sense of lost (stolen) self through an act of defiance against the enemy comes powerfully to the forefront. The archetypal view of the Jew as helpless lamb-like victim is changed by Wiesel to show a representative Jew fighting back with dignity, and that his memory of the event is of the utmost importance to this day: "I shall never forget Juliek. How could I forget that concert, given to an audience of dying and dead men! To this day, whenever I hear Beethoven played my eyes close and out of the dark rises the sad, pale face of my Polish friend, as he said farewell on his violin to an audience of dying men" (*Night* 90). Why autobiography is so uniquely personal lies in Wiesel's description of his vivid and everlasting memory of Juliek. What Wiesel shows in *Night* is how memory imprints the important events of our lives by leaving certain irrevocable images that can never be taken away. These imprints can be triggered by a sound (Beethoven) or image forever in our reflective subconscious. This remembrance/imprint of Juliek's playing Beethoven can be viewed as Wiesel's representational parallel to the theme of survivor guilt. This theme of having survived, while witnessing others [Juliek] dying in *Night*, keeps the memory of Juliek's death historically intact, and may enable a survivor, possibly Wiesel, to satisfy a "need to justify his own survival in the face of others' deaths" (Lifton, *Death in Life: Survivors of Hiroshima* 35).

In conclusion, I will reflect on Wiesel's ability to witness and to record history accurately through specific historical images of past (Hitler and Holocaust), and present (his reflection in the mirror at liberation), which attest to the importance of *Night* as representative of one's time in history. Wiesel not only indites the Germans and the

whole World War II-generation, but humanity, “the time has always been right in the heart of man. The storyteller was wrong to have thrown open the doors of the sanctuary in flames; people did not look. Worse: many looked and did not see” (*Judaism* 366). Autobiography, I feel, is unlike any other form for Holocaust representation, because it brings the world of language and the world outside language into an uncomfortable position somewhat like “two adjacent notes on a piano keyboard that are simultaneously pressed and held. The sounds they produce jar the ear. In a work of historical horror [*Night*], language and life, expression and experience are perceived as separate opaque structures, each of which is inadequate [the unimaginable Holocaust] to encompass the abyss that separates them” (Rittner 125). I feel that Wiesel proves that autobiography, unlike any other form of discourse, can shape mankind for the better (*Night*), or the absolute worse (*Mein Kampf*).

Wiesel is not only universal in his condemnation of the “absurd universe” that was Auschwitz, “our first act as free men was to throw ourselves onto the provisions. We thought only of that. Not of revenge, not of our families. Nothing but bread” (*Night* 109), but he is very much like Albert Camus, when he takes the utter absurdity of the event (Holocaust), and through existentialist theodicy, more than Camusian philosophy, shows the post-Holocaust survivor that life after the camp is not meaningless, “the look in his eyes, [Wiesel’s reflection] as they stared into mine, has never left me” (*Night* 109).

Anne Landau comments on the Camusian influence in Wiesel’s *Night*, which I agree is the ethos for the survivor: “Auschwitz signifies the absurdity of human and divine behavior and the breakdown of the Covenant and the Jewish spirit.... At the core of each is a survivor-protagonist whose biography is similar: he is the absurd man whose

post-concentration camp life is meaningless...if the Jew is to continue to “choose life,” he must find ways which allow him to exist in a world which historically negates his being” (*DAI* 2512-A). Wiesel’s importance lies in his knowledge that “today’s post-Holocaust witness of the Holocaust is also the madman who will dare to see the present as a pre-Holocaust time too, like a harbinger” (*World Literature Today* 230). By never forgetting that human nature is inherently evil, Wiesel and Muller leave the door open for hope while advising caution. The autobiographies *Night* and *Eyewitness Auschwitz* show that history is cyclical and that alone should be warning enough. The crux of what Wiesel and Muller bring to the reader for representation will always be important for the Jews were the reason for the Holocaust as the perpetrators would have us believe. I would argue that though I see the perpetrator voice the more necessary discourse for a postmodern representational paradigm, I do implore those who deal with the Holocaust to never forget the voice of the survivors-those who were under the jackboot, when dealing with the perpetrators. This ideal for representative art is not simply a warning about totalitarianisms and dictators but the horrid ideal that atrocities are always with us.

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IV. HOLOCAUST DRAMA—INTRODUCTION

*What secret cravings of the blood, Dreams of madness and earth
A thousand times murdered, Brought into being the terrible puppeteer?
(Plays of the Holocaust XI)*

“It would be difficult to say in which way the order given by a policeman is different from that given by a gunman.” (*Stages of Terror* 44)

“Talk is a charade, not a challenge to his moral resources, when man’s fate is the gas chamber.” (*Art from the Ashes* 473)

The three epigraphs for this section of my project I feel form a distinctive outline for Holocaust representation in the area of drama. I will mention other requirements that Holocaust critics of drama put forth, but for my project I feel that an attention to the dictates I allude to in the epigraphs are a good starting point. What all three plays I have chosen have as a main theme is no direct character representation of Hitler. This takes away a problem any artist will have with Holocaust drama; that being “how does one cast Adolph Hitler?” I would argue that the specter of Hitler is more intuitive and possibly more effective. Effective because this allows the playwright to use Hitler’s minions-under the control and leadership of the grand puppeteer Hitler-to perform this type of drama. What is important is to be able to recognize in Holocaust drama the viewer’s ability to understand, not only that Hitler is the driving force always behind the horror, but like James Schevill has done in his play *Cathedral of Ice*, this idea of Hitler as metaphysical puppeteer behind the scenes. Schevill’s play is “not of the survivor of the Holocaust, but

of its inheritor. Schevill traces the “cathedral” of modern power directly to the building blocks assembled by Hitler: pornography, drugs, a fantasy Wild West, a love affair with death, the kitsch that could assimilate Wagner to Lehar” (*Plays of the Holocaust XX*). Schevill has done what Saul Friedlander has advocated in much of his literature about Holocaust representation and in terms of drama Friedlander [and Schevill] instructs artists to be careful with “a morbid yet sentimental fascination with Hitler. Schevill warns that this fascination could once again plunge the world into destruction, perhaps for the last time” (Fuchs XXI).

What Friedlander and Schevill show here is what Lawrence Langer warns about when he discusses the idea of Holocaust drama, that being that “we need to clear our minds of certain theatrical expectations” [and] “since protagonists of evil do not exist in these works, they cannot reveal their intent with the candor of a Shakespearean villain” (*Art from the Ashes* 474). I am in total agreement that the Shakespearean villain gives us a direct representation of evil, but unlike Hitler or the Nazis, the Shakespearean villain is the concrete nature of evil whereas the Hitler character and the Nazi perpetrator fits a more abstract evil. Abstract evil is very intricate and very difficult to portray on stage. Whereas a villain like Shakespeare’s Richard III is the personification of evil, he knows it, and his asides to the audience show this. Unlike a character like Hitler or Eichmann in the guise of the Nazi executioner in the plays in this project, in Shakespeare, Richard knows he is evil and can bring us into his evil: “O coward conscience, how dost thou afflict me! The light burns blue. It is now dead midnight. Cold fearful drops stand on my trembling flesh. What do I fear? Myself? There’s none else by. Richard loves Richard Is there a murderer here? No. Yes, I am” (*Richard III* 5:3 179-183, 184). Though the

character of Richard III was a vehicle for Ian McKlellan's depiction of Richard as a sort of modern day Nazi in the film version of *Richard III*, the difference between evil as something the audience can have a dialogue with like Richard III, and the abstract evil of a Holocaust drama should restrict the dialogue to a sort of trope of atrocity language that remains in the realm of the metaphysical and the surreal. Abstract evil must terrorize the mind and what stage performance can do is use the metaphor of theater to allow us to try to open a dialogue with abstract evil. It has to be a mental process that allows the audience a cognitive discourse that cannot be voiced but must be felt. Like Langer says, "What, then, is the playwright to do? Victims and killers certainly existed, but do not fit traditional parts. They do not pit their wit or will against each other in a contest of triumph for survival" (*Art from the Ashes* 474). Langer's argument is one of the most difficult tasks facing any artist when dealing with the Holocaust; that being how to portray tragedy beyond tragedy, or atrocity beyond atrocity.

This idea of atrocity beyond atrocity is according to Langer, "one sad consequence of the Holocaust," because it [the Holocaust] "exiled everything it touched (including ourselves and the victims who survived, as well as those who did not) *beyond* the margins of tragedy, leaving us with the charge of finding new and more modest forms to express it" (*Art from the Ashes* 474). This notion of exile in the Holocaust is an exile of thought and understanding. Most genres allow the audience an entry into the horror, even if from a distance, but the Holocaust does not allow this and like the questions victims asked themselves in the camps like "How can I best be myself in this hostile place" and "what role must I play in order to survive?" (Langer 475) this discourse will not translate into the usual role for the dramatist in relation to crafting a play. What I mean by this is

that if “the transformation of self into role [is not what it] ... has always been,” a “*formal* challenge to the dramatist” (475), then the “play raises the question of whether art is a distraction from or an entry into, reality” (Langer 475).

This crucial element of transformation of self into role is a crucial element for Holocaust representation and is paramount for the artist to recognize. It is not as easy to find a “Richard III” character to portray a kind of abstract evil that escapes any form of reality no matter how horrible. Much of the horror in the plays I have chosen is somewhat in this vein of metaphysical torture that inscribes itself on the body politic of its victims, both the persecuted and the persecutor. Many Holocaust survivors believed that no one would believe that the Holocaust was possible. This idea fits a trauma that is also a function of the plays I have chosen and fits this idea of difficulty for dramatists in trying to fit the notion of the role of silence into any formal theatrical guideline. Dori Laub and Shoshanna Felman state in their study of Holocaust survivors that the biggest problem is breaking a silence that is so unspeakable: “the burdensome secret belief in the Nazi-propagated “truth” of Jewish subhumanity” (67) and the survivors feeling “they have no right to speak up or protest” (68) is “the essential that the inarticulate [must] be transmitted, be heard” (*Testimony: Cries of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis* 69).

This trauma that Laub and Felman discuss is interesting for it belies the message about terror and the theater that Anthony Kubiak discusses in *Stages of Terror*. Kubiak cites Hannah Arendt in her understanding that terror-whether state sponsored or individually desired-is exactly like “an order given by a policeman” being the same as an “order given by a gunman”(44). For the dramatist, especially the ones I have chosen for my project—Shaw, Sherman and Hochhuth—the important tenet they apply to their plays

is giving us the notion of orders under a system that makes policeman and gunman the same. All three playwrights in this study give the audience the important equation Kubiak sees as an essential for plays about terror that I feel fit the Holocaust paradigm most effectively. From *Stages of Terror*: “Violence can always destroy power; out of the barrel of a gun grows the most effective command, but what never grows out of it is power. In this equation the equilibrium becomes a crucial and delicate thing. *Real terror* [mine] terror that cannot be *signified* [mine], the terror that is thought-seeks to upset the equilibrium” (44).

The staging of any play about the Holocaust is somewhat like staring down the barrel of the gun for its power to either work covertly to deliver an abject message of warning and a recognition of this delicate balance of “the relationship between power and violence is delimited by extremity” and the “character if each is defined by its manifestation *in extremis*” (Kubiak 43), with Arendt’s warning that “where the one rules absolutely, the other is absent” (Kubiak 43). The plays chosen for this project all evince this problem of dealing with an absolute rule designed to crush the characters and how the dramatist gets this across to an audience is a most difficult, yet integral, task for Holocaust representation in drama. All the plays must deal with “the threat of collapse in terms of radical uncertainty in perception” (Kubiak 44), and the questions Arendt puts forth in relation to this notion would seem to lend a most important literary anecdote for a representative drama of the Holocaust. The characters must be portrayed as asking the questions “What am I seeing?” “How can I *know* what I am seeing?”, “What am I hearing?”, “Is the enemy here?” (Kubiak 44). These questions seem to reach across the stage in the plays of this study and I do not think any of them answer the questions, but

how does one “answer the unanswerable” except by staging the dilemma and allowing the cognitive questioning to work its way through the trauma and uncomfortability that drama should give an audience willing to be entertained but also willing to listen and ask questions.

In *Art from the Ashes*, Lawrence Langer states that “talk is a charade, not a challenge ... when man’s fate is the gas chambers” (473), and what this means for my project and for representation of the Holocaust in drama is exactly the notion that Holocaust drama should make the audience not only uncomfortable and nauseated but must also mentally arrest and make us all culpable psychically in the atrocity. Whether dramatist or audience, we must understand that our uncomfortability or nausea is intended and our culpability is part of understanding that, like the victims did not *choose* to be annihilated, we must also choose to accept our role as witness and to attempt to understand the culpability of both victim and executioner. This acceptance of atrocity in theory lends itself to the idea that I feel perpetrates Holocaust drama, and that is possibly “mankind is overrated.” Langer makes the point very importantly that “Nietzsche believed, we gain human stature from our willingness to risk our lives through *choice*, [but] few Holocaust victims were allowed by their oppressors to be candidates for this role. Who, indeed, could be expected to maintain dignity and avoid moral shame by marching undaunted to the gas chamber? Annihilation of the Nazi sort was not a test of character” (*Art from the Ashes* 471). It is important for an artist to understand and then decide how to show that no one, whether victim or executioner, can see the act of being led to the gas chamber or leading one to the gas chamber could ever be portrayed as any type of character-enhancing trait, but only as one of “choiceless choice” that renders

humanity and the idea of humanity as morose and more simply, something “that just does not work.”

According to Elinor Fuchs, playwright, scholar and critic of the Holocaust, “of all the literature about the devastation of the Jewish people under the Third Reich, the plays are the least familiar. Even in major studies of Holocaust writing, theatre is scarcely mentioned” (*Plays of the Holocaust* XI). Fuchs is correct when she mentions the scarcity of plays relating to a Holocaust theme and I believe that this should inform the idea of representation in the field of drama to exercise more caution than with entities like fiction or non-fiction. Theater has immediacy and closeness to an audience that would require much more care and a needed understanding to the power of performance art. The questions that arise for representation when one chooses to put the Holocaust on stage follow a more stringent design than other art forms. The adherence to the stringency of the demands of Holocaust drama I feel is representative of the plays I have chosen for this project. I am not saying conclusively that Robert Shaw’s *The Man in the Glass Booth*, Martin Sherman’s *Bent*, and Rolf Hochhuth’s *The Deputy*, are the perfect vehicles for holocaust drama, but I do feel all three are good models for performance art that allows the audience to recognize possibly “the ability of theater to translate terror of thought into flesh, as well as its seeming capacity to translate the unrepresentability of physical terror into thought through representation, define its unique political and cultural power to reform actions and behaviors”(Kubiak 157).

This idea of “terror of thought that that has the capacity to translate unrepresentable terror into thought representation” that Anthony Kubiak discusses in *Stages of Terror* fits one of the important tenets I feel is integral for drama of the

holocaust. All three of the plays chosen for this project evince a terror of thought that put the Holocaust and the specter of Hitler in a mode of silence that according to Elinor Fuchs “may be a form of art not envisioned [but] an anti-representation occupying a negative space, A Holocaust theatre that eerily gives voice to silence” (*Plays of the Holocaust XVIII*).

The silence Fuchs talks about and the terror of thought Kubiak discusses are all elements of the plays chosen for my study. In Sherman’s *Bent* thought becomes a paralyzing defect attributed to the “homosexuals as intellectual” propaganda of the Nazis and the terror of the idea of thinking for Sherman’s characters, “fluffs can’t afford that kind of responsibility” (*Bent* I.III 60-61), becomes a reality. For Shaw’s *The Man in the Glass Booth*, the silence that is evinced by the doppelganger of Jewish camp survivor and Nazi commandant functions under a silence that parodies the notion of anyone “surviving” those camps, whether Jew or German: “Why did you pretend to be Jewish” (*The Man in the Glass Booth* 47). Hochhuth’s *The Deputy* is more a combination of the terror of thought, “Heil Hitler, Herr Professor—when will you get around to publishing a paper—for professionals only, of course—on your collection of skulls” (*The Deputy* I.II 826-829), that haunts SS spy Obersturmführer Kurt Gerstein, and the silence of the Vatican in its inability to do anything in relation to the persecution of the Jews and the martyrdom of one of their hero-priests Father Riccardo Fontana. It is this characterization of the hero-figure in Fontana that recognizes the horror being pervaded by the Vatican is in its unholy silence: “The facts are there: the Pope chooses to look the other way when his own brother is slain in Germany. Priests there who sacrifice themselves do not do so on orders from the Vatican-rather, they violate its principle of

non-intervention. And since Rome has abandoned them, their deaths cannot be counted as atonement for Rome's guilt" (*The Deputy* II.I 201-209).

What Fuchs sees as "a nauseous universe that makes one "earth-sick" (*Plays of the Holocaust* XV), I would agree is a common aspect of the three plays I choose for this study. All three plays are driven by a type of abject history in the sense that whereas history tends to relate themes, times and ideas of what has transpired before-whether good or evil-the Holocaust does not allow this type of historical referendum. When one enters a realm of abject non-understanding that would make one "earth sick," then the notion of history and how one represents history in drama changes. I would argue that none of the plays I have chosen, or any play dealing with the Holocaust, can create, according to Fuchs, a "realistic representation of the concentration camps. That may not be possible or even desirable on the stage" (*Plays of the Holocaust* XV). What the plays I have chosen accomplish in a certain sense is what I feel any play about the holocaust needs to maintain; that being "they do bring to the horror of the camps theater's' two proper gifts: the one for concrete moral engagement, the other for sensible metaphysics" (*Plays of the Holocaust* XV).

What the viewer absorbs through the senses and emotions is an important need for representative art and may allow the artist attempting to represent the Holocaust on stage the notion for the viewer that "the Holocaust shows the operation of abstract evil" (*Plays of the Holocaust* XV). Kubiak also recognizes this idea that not only does the viewer absorb the horror of the event through the metaphysical, but also in this metaphysical recognition the viewer needs to understand that "what is crucial in any study of theater and its violence is to clarify the links between the violence and the theater it appears in"

(*Stages of Terror* 145). What Kubiak references and what I agree is crucial to the three plays I have chosen for this study are the need to recognize that real entities are imprinted on any performance one chooses to design for the stage in Holocaust drama. Whether Shaw's self-hating Jewish doppelgänger survivor-executioner Arthur Goldman/Adolf Dorff, Sherman's Max and the persecuted "pink triangle," or the dual spies Obersturmführer Kurt Gerstein and Reverend Riccardo Fontana working covertly in the SS and the Vatican, all the entities are imprinted with the signifying horror that escapes any true historical reference point, [to quote the film *JFK* the quiet real historical conspiracy theme of *The Deputy* is and always will be "a riddle wrapped in an enigma."] but allows for the important recognition that all of these characters fit a matrix of representative art that must show the audience whether visually or psychically the "all of these forms of performance point back to *real* bodies that are suffering the *real* pain of history and acculturation" (Kubiak 145). What the plays in this study attempt to do is make the viewer aware that the repetition of horror and atrocity bring about an extremely difficult paradox that would cross any form of Holocaust art and representation. That paradox is "on the one hand, that what we are seeing is real, and yet we are brought to a meditated disbelief simple because the image seems so exquisitely reproducible or detached that it loses the impact of *real* violence" (Kubiak 145). My point in this section of drama is to show that when Holocaust drama lends itself to losing the sense of real violence from that horrible time in history, the Holocaust, and the imprint of horror then the problem can arise that leads to commoditization, fetishization and faulty, dangerous revisionism that damages the memory of those bodies that were buried in the ashes of the camps.

Robert Shaw: The Man in the Glass Booth

“A Hebrew, your Highnesses, can’t get converted because how can he bring himself to believe in the divinity of another Hebrew ... no villains and no heroes ... Just an old wound opening up ... I’ll close it when I work it out” (*The Man in the Glass Booth* 27).

“All I had to do was convince old American sentimental-isolationist-blind-bespectacled-deaf-as-a-post-in-one-ear-not-doing-too good-at-the-time-capital-afterward-by-me-trebled-old-Uncle-Manhattan-guilt-ridden-Jewish-Hymie” (*The Man in the Glass Booth* Shaw 55).

“Are you therefore, Adolf Karl Dorff-one-time Colonel in the Einsatzgruppen-are you, Colonel, Jewish?” (*The Man in the Glass Booth* 55).

Robert Shaw’s *The Man in the Glass Booth* is the only play in this project that does allow for some black humor. Though this would seem to contradict the seriousness of my argument for Holocaust representation, I will show why the part of the play that falls into this genre can be understood as significant for this type of representation in the sense that this play deals with doubling, and this sense of doubling, allows for a portion of the play to espouse a sort of dark humor. The reason for the dark humor is to allow the viewer a distance from the horror that will come toward the end of the play that for representation in this project will be a most integral aspect of Shaw’s play. That aspect is the image of the self-hating Jewish survivor of the camps. The question that the Israeli prosecutor puts to Arthur Goldman at the end of the play [in the American Film Theatre film presentation of *The Man in the Glass Booth*] is “Why did you do it?” and “Why are you punishing yourself?” The silence that is given by Arthur Goldman as he locks himself in the glass booth to die in the play and film is a “rhetorical silence—what comes to be called in the postmodern period “theoretical terrorism”—is represented in the theater by the relation between those figures who function in absence [Goldman’s self-

hating Jewish survivor self] as an empty screen for the phobic projections of terrorists [SS Colonel Dorff], and the terrorists who carry out the bloody deeds” (Kubiak 12).

The silence that is evinced by Arthur Goldman in the glass booth is not what many see as a parallel to the Eichmann trial when the face of the final solution in Adolph Eichmann was seen in Himmler’s former “expert on Jewish affairs” total silence and inability to accept guilt. In Shaw’s play the silence of Goldman in taking the role of an Eichmannesque figure in fictional SS Colonel Dorff is more an issue of trauma; the trauma that so many survivors felt that traps both victim and executioner in one guise. This impossible trauma that faces many survivors I would argue is an intentional, though covert; nuance of Shaw’s play and for representation of the Holocaust a most important feature for future drama. The trauma that puts victim-Goldman-with Executioner-Dorff parallels Dori Laub’s conjecture that “survivors often claim that they experience the feeling of belonging to a “secret order” that is sworn to silence” (*Truth and Testimony* 67), is exactly the same “secret order” Arthur Goldman states when he tells Charlie Cohn that “a man who has no shoes is a fool” (*The Man in the Glass Booth* 31). This parallels the real life horror of the camps that a prisoner who lost a shoe or his cap was dead; shot on the spot, and only victims of the camps are a part of that “secret order.”

The silence that Laub discusses and the silence that is such an integral part of any form of Holocaust representation is only allowed to a select group, and that group has the ignominious characteristic of having in some ways aided the executioners in their own demise. Goldman states many times he survived because he was a sort of paradoxical Jewish superman; the super resilient camp survivor that is presently the super millionaire of Wall Street, but in the metropolis of hell [Auschwitz] he honed his immeasurable skill

and present success. For Goldman, the horror he is trying to define with sardonic black humor is extremely relevant in this notion that not only does Goldman bear the responsibility for surviving while others died due to his youth and strength, but also the fact that he can only see that now as an excuse for survival and not a reward for surviving. Goldman parallels the wide expanses of his real estate empire from a penthouse in Manhattan in a “work makes you rich” ethos to parallel an “Arbeit macht frei”⁴⁰ [work makes you free] epoch of what actually transpired in the impossible empire of Auschwitz:

From the arbeit-macht-frei gray stone edifices ... the innumerable three-floor-high-identical-edifices. Charlie, you call this a metropolis ... that place ... that place ... was boundless. Being an athlete stood me in good stead. Sing me the “Internationale.” Charlie, move me, render me, rape my senses. From the dead, Doc, from the dead. It’s my birthday, you see.... It’s the living who are in neglect. It’s not ended, you know. (*The Man in the Glass Booth* 21-22)

When Goldman tells Cohn “that place ... was boundless” the connection between his metropolises of New York real estate megalomania is, in some ways, exactly like Himmler’s metropolis of death inside the Nazi death camp bureaucracy. The notion that complicity in their own deaths comes very importantly to the forefront for Shaw’s “Man in the Glass Booth” because the healthy young man he was at one time in the hell of Auschwitz can now be compared in retrospect to the supposed youthful dialectic he has

⁴⁰ The term “arbeit macht frei” was the slogan that was greeted all the prisoners who survived selections at the death camps. The horror of the message was its dubious euphemism that work would make one free for in essence the Nazi plan for Jewish slave labor was to work the prisoners to they died. In essence work only “makes you live a little longer” was the realistic linguistic metaphor that “arbeit mach frei” really meant in the camps of Hitler’s Third Reich.

with Charlie Cohen with one possible exception; Goldman's youth was anything but innocent: "This guy Poussin needed beauty—he wanted to return to innocence. Calm and sunny, beautiful young men ... dignified young women ... shepherds. death reigns ... but has not terror" (*The Man in the Glass Booth* 10).

For Goldman the reign of death and terror are more valid than any type of youthful sardonic remembrance, as well as the notion that his "participation in the Holocaust [though in his own need for survival] ... [Makes him and others who survived] "bearers of a secret [*Geheimnisstraeger*]" never to be divulged" (Laub 67). Though Goldman and many who survived suffer this diabolic trauma of ironically having done what most anyone would have done, that is tried to survive, the repressed horror of seeing so many die while they lived is a frequent and important theme of this play for "the implications of this imaginary complicity and of this conviction of their having been chosen for a secret mission are that they believe, out of loyalty, that their persecution and execution by the Nazis was actually warranted" (Laub 67). What Shaw does in his play is allow for the viewer to understand that though the notion that a Jewish survivor can feel *responsible* for his own persecution may seem preposterous to us, but for those who lived the horror the allusion is all too real.

Elie Wiesel states in his autobiographical *Night* that he had more faith in Hitler than anyone else for "Hitler was the only one to keep his promise to the Jewish people."⁴¹ The same rhetoric of malaise and self abnegation to the horror the Jews became complicit

⁴¹ In Elie Wiesel's autobiography of his time in Auschwitz, *Night*, he states that when he hears prophetic rumors of the Red Army advancing toward Auschwitz and the Red Cross negotiating for their release his bunk-mate, who he terms the "faceless one," sates that Hitler is the only prophet now for the Jewish people: "I've got more faith in Hitler than in anyone else. He's the only one who's kept his promises, all his promises, to the Jewish people" (*Night* 77).

in, though not by choice, is stated sardonically by Arthur Goldman: “As I recall, the Fuehrer said: In the Jewish people the will to self-sacrifice does not go beyond the individual’s naked instinct for self-preservation. Not a bad writer. The Fuehrer said: Is there any form of filth, any form of profligacy, particularly in cultural life, without at least one Jew involved in it?” (*The Man in the Glass Booth* 17). The fact that Goldman, and many Jewish survivors, remember so well the dictates of Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* [especially in Hitler’s dictates and propaganda against the Jews], belies an important historical testimony that I feel is important to any type of representation. The fact that though the Jews knew they were scapegoats much like Shakespeare’s Shylock,⁴² this notion of having been *chosen* for this selected horror does still come forth in Goldman’s rhetoric after the fact that the Jew is in some cognitive form not totally blameless: “Cut even cautiously into such an abscess, you find a maggot in a rotting body, often, dazzled by the sudden light-ein Judlein” (*The Man in the Glass Booth* 17-18). Though the idea that a Jewish survivor could blame oneself for the horror pervaded on them seems ridiculous the real problem that Laub sees and I feel is important for any type of future representation in drama is this “delusion, fostered by the Holocaust, is actually lived as an unconscious alternate truth, by executioners, victims and bystanders alike” (67) and most importantly “how can such a deadlock be broken?” (Laub 67).

⁴² In Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice*, the character of Shylock was a very important stereotype over centuries that also pervade much of the Nazi rhetoric against the Jews. The notion that “I am Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew, hands organs, dimensions, senses, affections....If you tickle us do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die?” (*The Merchant of Venice* III.I 58-60, 65-66). The Jew as the historical money-lender and outsider not only was useful in much anti-Semitic propaganda against the Jews by the Nazis but also vis-à-vis an Arthur Goldman in his “belief” that he must suffer for the success he has had after the fact in New York in the notion of money being the key to a Jew’s successes: “In Israel they can’t even define it. J....E....W” (*The Man in the Glass Booth* 24).

Laub views this trauma suffered by so many victims as the “delusional quality of the Holocaust” (67), and I feel Shaw’s character of Arthur Goldman is a perfect vehicle for this type of characterization on stage. The notion that was fostered by the Nazis that the Jews were subhuman is relevant in Goldman’s silence at the end of the play. He dies in his own glassed-in silence that his fellow Jews cannot seem to penetrate. The Israeli judge sees Goldman’s point in taking the form of Dorff as being the need for *someone to take responsibility* for the horror in the form of the executioner, and in the doppelganger of Goldman/Dorff, it is up to a Jew to do what the Eichmann's of the world cannot do—admit their guilt. The Israeli judge finally understands the catastrophe and trauma that is the man in the glass booth: “I understand his [Goldman] need to put a case. I understand a concern for justice ... a concern for law. I understand his need to put a German in the dock—a German who would say what *no German has said in the dock*. I understand that. I understand his guilt.... Even so, I would not have done this—would never have done this” (*The Man in the Glass Booth* 80-81).

This question of taking responsibility is always at the forefront of art dealing with the Holocaust in the specter of the perpetrator, but because so many perpetrators refuse to take responsibility, it is interesting that Shaw’s play uses the victim as the voice of responsibility for the executioner. The question then arises; “If this is fair to victim, after the fact, to use one of their own to take responsibility for the executioner?” Elie Wiesel once said that he can only speak for victims and “the executioners will have to find someone else to speak for them.” I do not know if this was Shaw’s purpose, but possibly what Shaw’s play does is allow for the viewer to see in the doppelganger of “victim” Goldman/”SS executioner” Dorff “the very circumstance of *being inside the event* that

made unthinkable the very notion that a witness could exist, that is, someone who could step outside of the coercively totalitarian and dehumanizing frame of reference in which the event was taking place, and provide an independent frame of reference which the event could be observed” (*Truth and Testimony* 66).

I would argue that drama is the representative form that allows for this type of “being inside the event,” and though it uses fictitious character references, the parallels to a victim like Wiesel, or an executioner like Eichmann, can come to the viewers cognition. The discourse that comes from the Goldman and Dorff parallel universe does not allow for any type of imagination of an *Other*, and because this type of “history from the outside” in theater can allow for a certain reference point even though it does allow a reference point, it also does justice to this type of Holocaust representative art. Even with this knowledge of a type of reference point to the Holocaust, presenting the atrocity on stage still begs the question, according to Laub, that “one might say that there was, thus, historically no witness to the Holocaust, either from the outside or inside of the event” (*Truth and Testimony* 66). My argument here would be that only in fiction on stage can we even try to perpetuate any form of art that allows even metaphorically a look inside or outside the Holocaust. The character of Goldman/Dorff has to be fictitious and must be played with the “loss of the capacity to be a witness to oneself and thus to witness from the inside is perhaps the true meaning of annihilation, for when ones’ history is abolished, one’s identity cease to exist as well” (Laub 66-67). Goldman attempts to be witness to himself as victim and as executioner in the sense that in his survival he has executed any sense he ever would have again to identify himself as a Jew and as a human being. Goldman’s annihilation not only follows Laub’s dictate that as a Jew Goldman’s history

was abolished like an abscess after the war, but much like Hitler stated in *Mein Kampf*, it was realistically removed during the war. For Hitler, the Jew must be removed from history much like a cancer on the body politic: “If you cut even cautiously into such an abscess, you found, like a maggot in a rotting body, often dazzling with sudden light—a kike!” (Cited in Rash, *The Language of Violence* 155).

The play uses the perfect vehicle for Goldman/Dorff’s annihilation, a sealed cylinder that in many ways is no more than a sanitized, more streamlined, version of a crematory oven, just right side up. He is “choked off” from life in much the same way his brethren were in Auschwitz. Goldman cannot answer the Israeli judge or Miriam Rosen when they appeal to him to allow them to help because he is beyond the reaches of help. For Goldman, Shaw’s “Man in the Glass Booth,” “the historical reality of the Holocaust [though 25 years after the liberation of the death camps] is a reality that extinguished philosophically the very possibility of address, and [for Goldman] the possibility of appealing, or of turning to, another. But when one [Goldman] cannot turn to a ‘you’ one cannot say ‘thou’ even to oneself. The Holocaust created in this way a world in which one *could not bear witness to oneself*” (Laub 66). Goldman is convinced “what was affirmed about their “otherness” [as Jews] and their inhumanity was correct and that their experiences were no longer communicable even to themselves” (Laub 66-67). This is why Goldman can only answer as Dorff. For to face himself, Arthur Goldman, is impossible. For Goldman it was easier to kill the memory of Arthur Goldman. Israeli prosecutor Miriam Rosen asks Goldman/Dorff Who killed Arthur Goldman? When Goldman/Dorff answers “Between you and me the question is who didn’t kill Arthur Goldman” (*The Man in the Glass Booth* 51-52), the metaphysically important question

indicts not only Dorff: “This monster has only murdered Jews!” (*The Man in the Glass Booth* 65), but humanity as well: “How could it happen? Why did it happen? What of the Allies? Why the Germans? And [most importantly] why the Jews?” (*The Man in the Glass Booth* 65).

The question of who killed Arthur Goldman is a euphemism in a sense for “who killed humanity?” Goldman is adept at reiterating the Nazi propaganda of the anti-Semite that for much of Hitler’s reign was the cement which held the Third Reich together. What Shaw’s play does in relation to Goldman’s discourse in the glass booth is to echo how reason and the notion of “hate as faith”⁴³ are not only the platform of the executioner after the fact, but for the self-hating victim before, during and after surviving the Holocaust. What the Goldman/Dorff character does in this discourse of anti-Semite/self-hating survivor is allow for the clarity in discourse of atrocity that for representation may bring the viewer closer to the unthinkable; that is, make the viewer wonder what would they have done in this hell. Dorf’s use of the “GOLD-MAN” as representative of the Jew is not simply a relation to history’s old stereotype, but in terms of Hitlerspeak, Dorff allows the viewer the overbearing weight of “Hitlerionic” [mine] history that forever hangs above humanity from the unimaginable Holocaust:

⁴³ In Jean-Paul Sartre’s *Anti-Semite and Jew*, the author not only gives the reasoning and discourse that pervaded Hitler’s Europe in reference to anti-Semitic thought but also indicts both victim and executioner. Sartre does not simply show that what “can chose to reason falsely” (18), and that the “anti-Semite has chosen hate because hate is a faith” (19), and that when that form of hate is “massive and impenetrable” (18) then “what frightens them is not the content of truth, of which they have no conception, but the form itself of truth” (19). Goldman’s diatribe about the worship of Hitler supports this notion that pervaded Germany and was not lost on the victims as well as the executioners: “Deutschland Erwache. Heil Hitler. Sieg Heil.... At the end we loved him. In *Gotterdammerung* we loved him” (*The Man in the Glass Booth* 76).

People of the world, let me speak to you of my Fuehrer with love. He who answered our German need. He who rescued us from the depths. His family background was not distinguished, his education negligible.... To whom did he appeal? To the people.... A great wide sweep of the right arm and so to the tremendous cry, the vast overwhelming cry, the call of love from the people.... Do I see you begin to raise your hands? Do I hear you stamp your feet? *He gave us our history* [mine]. He gave us our news, he gave us our art ... and he gave our newly marrieds a copy of *Mein Kampf*.... His subordinates were unworthy. There was no successor. There was only *him*. [mine] Hess was mad. Goring reviled, Himmler rejected. He? He was loved. (*The Man in the Glass Booth* 75-76)

The importance of these lines from Shaw's play point not simply to the ravings of a victim suffering from the trauma of surviving, but also by bringing in the propaganda of hero-worship and *Hitlerspeak* that accompanies the fuehrer cult, past and present, that surrounded Hitler brings what Dorff calls "the history *He* [Hitler] gave us." In Eli Landau's American Film Theatre film version of the *Man in the Glass Booth*, Dorff, when discussing the pogroms and Einsatzgruppen⁴⁴ actions against the Jews behind enemy lines, makes a comparison to the Vietnam War, President Lyndon Baines Johnson

⁴⁴ During the SS actions behind enemy lines in Hitler's Europe, special "action commandoes" [Einsatzgruppen] of Himmler and Heydrich's SS were responsible to follow Wehrmacht units to dispose of any Jews, intellectuals and political commissars. These units became the most infamous of all Himmler's black legions after the war. Their actions were predicated purely on the notion that the SS killers had "Orders! Orders!... What are the demands of justice" (*The Man in the Glass Booth* 46). There are many excellent treatises on Himmler's action commandoes but Heinz Hohne *The Order of the Death's Head* and Richard Rhodes *Soldiers of Destruction* are most adept at these special units.

and most importantly, the My Lai Massacre.⁴⁵ It is an illusion to the history “we the SS” gave to the future machinations of atrocity in war that Goldman ironically alludes to here. The techniques of atrocity and the subjugation of terrorized populations as at the crux of Dorff’s military-style lecture to the court at this juncture of Shaw’s play. From the film *The Man in the Glass Booth*, directed by Arthur Hiller:

Colonel Dorff: “The films were a warning to obey the German occupation or this will happen in your town. It was played first run in every theatre in Poland.”

Prosecutor Rosen: “So you staged executions for the camera?”

Colonel Dorff: “Joseph [Goebbels] needed a propaganda film to make himself look useful to keep his office in business. Counter-insurgency keeps you in business. By assuming an insurgency keeps you looting and pillaging and raping behind enemy lines. *I understand the Americans developed it a fine point in Vietnam. The My Lai Massacre was a classic*” [italics mine].

Israeli Judge: “Irrelevant, Colonel.”

Colonel Dorff: “I doubt it. [pause] But I subside.”(The Man in the Glass Booth, AFT, 1974).

⁴⁵ In March 1968 a platoon of Charley Company under the command of Lt. William Calley massacred a hamlet of suspected Vietcong in Vietnam. The atrocity of murdered men, women and children caused a sensation and was used in Shaw’s play as an example of the notion of massacre, according to Dorff, as “classic.” What Shaw’s play does is indict all wars and all nationalisms, whether communist or democratic, under an umbrella of atrocity. In essence, according to Stanley Karnow, in *Vietnam: a History*, all atrocities are part of the horror of despotism: “angry citizens of Hue had liquidated local despots in the same way that they would get rid of poisonous snakes who, if allowed to live, would commit further crimes”(530).

This idea of the history “he gave us” I would argue is a most important part of the theme of this play and would be important for future representative art. By showing the audience that the My Lai massacre is very much the same as an SS-style atrocity film the warning remains that the history “Hitler gave us” is still relevant and very troubling. By troubling I mean that the divide between victims wanting to be remembered and, in essence, for all to bear witness to Nazi horrors, and the persecutors want to forget, remains the foundation for any type of art that attempts to address the duality of victim and executioner in the Holocaust. In the preface to Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich’s study of the collective behavior of Germans after the war historian Robert Jay Lifton discusses that with the present “current “Hitler boom” in Germany, with its mixture of nostalgia, financial exploitation, identity hunger” the importance Lifton sees for the intellectual is the same thing I see for any type of representation; that being a recognition “about post-Hitler Germany, about the universal potential of evil, and, perhaps, most important of all, about the psychological sources of our own painful moral contradictions” (*The Inability to Mourn* xiii). What Lifton is saying would refute Dorff’s claim in the play that “People of Israel, if he [Hitler] had chosen *you* ... *you* would have followed where he led” (Shaw 77), but the answer Dorff receives from the old Jewish woman in Haifa is what the audience must accept; that being “I do not think we would have followed where the Fuehrer led” (Shaw 80). The irony in her statement is true of the present, but during the Holocaust the Jews, paradoxically, were led by the Fuehrer to death. I would argue that Dorff is using this sardonic trickster mode of question and answer to bring the Jews to answer as well for their going to death so easily in some stages of the Holocaust: “take him.... This is the King of the Jews.... He wants to be

crucified” (*The Man in the Glass Booth* 81). The "catch-22" here is the double meaning that indicts both victim and executioner in Shaw’s play. This matters for representation for it gives the audience the important double meaning that both victim and executioner were *led* by Hitler and Hitlerionic history to the mass grave that was Europe during WWII. The play successfully encapsulates this idea amidst the tonality of black humor and the dramatic pauses and intonations relevant in the Goldman/Dorff character. The film performance of Maximilian Schell and the stage performance of Donald Pleasence echo this dramatic power that I would argue only theater can bring. The actors can produce the paradox that so many victims and executioners felt after the war without directly citing them and without playing too much with history and memory.

This paradox of performance echoes the Mitscherlich’s discussion of the cathexis between the survivor and the mass of Germans trying to forget, or more properly, dealing with their inability to mourn. The irony and problem here is that in the German’s need to forget the victims suffer again and I would argue the character of Goldman/Dorff can be seen as a model of this cathexis paradox in his dual voice of victim and executioner. For a character like Dorff in the “pyramid of responsibility, the Fuhrer then appears as having been forced into his decisions ... and this started a chain of orders from which no one could exclude himself ... so it appears in retrospective self-justification—there were emergency orders that had to be obeyed and which excused everything. In these attempts to shake off guilt, it is remarkable how little attention is paid to the victims” (*The Inability to Mourn* 25), but for Goldman there need to justify and not accept guilt is “the cathexis of one’s own person, hardly for any kind of sympathy with others. If somehow, somewhere, one finds an object deserving of sympathy, it usually turns out to no none

other than oneself” (*The Inability to Mourn* 25). When Goldman/Dorff states that “I’m not fit to live” (69), and “it’s nobody’s suffering that should be on trial here. It’s what I done. It’s what I did. It’s what I did that’s the point” (68) he also adds that “the prosecutor conclude[s] his opening speech by the whole tragedy of Jewry is to be my central concern?”(68) to which Dorff queries, “Your honor, *I* am your central concern” (68). In this diatribe, the duality of what the Mitscherlich’s espouse in their psychoanalysis of survivors and persecutors rings true; that being that for those like the character of Dorff, “those who had lost their “ideal leader”, the representative of a commonly shared ego-ideal, managed to avoid self-devaluation by breaking all bridges to the immediate past” (*The Inability to Mourn* 26). What the character Dorff/Goldman does is not allow for that bridge to be taken down and that the play is the link to keeping that bridge intact so the immediate past is not forgotten or repeated.

A play like Shaw’s *The Man in the Glass Booth* does not allow for the bridge between past and present, no matter how horrible, to be forgotten. If the bridge is a metaphor for the gulf of language that pervades between silence and what needs to be spoken, then we must understand that “the world of Auschwitz lies outside speech as it lies outside reason” and “to speak of the unspeakable is to risk the survival of language as creator and bearer of human rational truth” (Schlant 9). What a play like *The Man in the Glass Booth* can offer as possible is the notion that “a language that serves only as the creator and bearer of human, rational truth and expurgates the frightening, inhuman, and unspeakable aspects is a censored language, and is on the road to becoming as barbaric as any of the manipulated languages of totalitarian regimes (Schlant 9). For Shaw’s audience and, I would argue for any form of representation in drama, the language must

“retain the memory that is perhaps the only meaningful association we can have with Auschwitz; [that being] never to forget the abyss of inhumanity to which man is capable” (*The Language of Silence* 9).

In conclusion, by understanding as viewers the “Hitlerionic” history given us in the form of Goldman/Dorff in Shaw’s *The Man in the Glass Booth*, the importance for representation lies in the voice of executioner as muse and survivor as refrain for the horror that the muse constantly re-iterates in the lines of the play. With so many victims of the Holocaust generation dying off the voice of the perpetrator should be at the forefront of representation. The voice of atrocity needs to be the loudest for history to hear. In a sense, Shaw’s *Man in the Glass Booth* is a metaphor for what happens to nations and to people when the language of despotism and totalitarianism put all of us in a “glass booth” of the mind where our actions no longer bear any semblance of humanity and “the horror of the historical experience is maintained in the testimony only as an elusive memory that feels it no longer resembles any reality. The horror is, indeed, compelling not only in its reality, but even more so, in its flagrant distortion and subversion of reality” (*Truth and Testimony* 62). What Shaw’s play does is use the doppelganger character of Goldman/Dorff to not allow for a distortion of history that we as human beings can not allow to happen again, or more simply, as Dori Laub states in citing the voice of one survivor, “we wanted to survive so as to live one day after Hitler, in order to be able to tell our story” (*Truth and Testimony* 63).

Rolf Hochhuth: *The Deputy*

“Forgiveness, no matter how transcendent remains infected with the burden of atrocity, with an irreparable harm. Compassion cannot leave outrage behind but must somehow honor its urgency even as it is seized by the perpetrator.... Forgiveness in the aftermath of the *Shoah* is as impossible and yet as necessary as its witness.” (*Suffering Witness: The Quandary of Responsibility after the Irreparable* 9)

“Doing nothing is as bad as taking part. It is—I don’t know—perhaps it is still less forgivable. (*Screams*) We are *priests!* God can forgive a hangman for such work, but not a priest, not the Pope!” (*The Deputy* 3:2 155)

“I am thinking of the Pope; you talk of Hitler. Surely there is no parallel between them.” (*The Deputy* 3:2 159)

“The fire is a good physician. It will burn out the Jew *and* the Christian in him.” (*The Deputy* 5:3 285)

I begin with an epigraph that is an important feature of all the plays I have chosen for Holocaust representation; the impossibility for forgiveness but the importance to witness. In the case of *The Deputy*, this theme of impossible forgiveness and needed witnessing resonates in the fictive voice of SS Lieutenant Kurt Gerstein, “Oh God—my God! Here I contend with Him as I did in my student days... Did He, I wonder, not become a Christian to ease His conscience with the thought that—just like his Deputy today—Jews do not fall within his competence” (*The Deputy* I: II 85), and also in Gerstein’s non-fictive voice while in captivity, “I knew from the very beginning ... the thankless and impossible nature of my mission, and of my testimony. But I am certain that History as seen by honest men will be just towards me” (*Doctors of Death* 221). What Gerstein, as well as the fictive voice of Father Fontana, say in the epigraphs from *The Deputy* about thinking of the pope and also what priests should be doing, echo the responsibility to witness that I feel Hochhuth’s play engenders for the audience. The

indictment of the Pope XII and his depiction as prelate of Rome, even in an abstract fashion, with Hitler, Himmler and the “Angel of Death”⁴⁶ Joseph Mengele, may seem like a fascination with historical evil that would be of fetish quality in a Holocaust play, but when one reads further the historical treatise Hochhuth brings forward in *The Deputy*, then the idea of fetish-monster Nazis and collaborating Vatican prelates is disputed with accurate historical detail and the oral history recordings of historical personages working under totalitarian monoliths.

What Hochhuth shows is the epoch of totalitarianism from two fronts—the Nazi state and the Vatican state. When Ricardo Fontana asks the Cardinal how they can understand a Hitler-type, his answer encompasses the Vatican-type diplomacy that pervades the play and is Hochhuth’s lesson for history: “The people love rulers whom they can fear. Nero—I am not joking, you know—Nero was also highly popular with the mob. But the people of Rome *adored* him!... I would really like to see a people who did *not* adore a ruler who offers it so many scapegoats.... And Hitler, you know, also gave them bread” (*The Deputy* II:I 118). What Hochhuth’s play does in its bringing forth the terror and horror of atrocity amidst the cover of the Vatican, is what Anthony Kubiak recognizes as the important ontological place of theater. For Kubiak “theater ... has

⁴⁶ The term “Angel of Death” was given to the infamous Auschwitz Doctor Joseph Mengele. Mengele was infamous for his sterilization experiments on twins and on his aristocratic manner on the selection platform. He was also infamous for evading capture after the war and for his very pervasive image to this day as the face of Nazi horrors in terms of medicine and the horrible camp experiments. According to Gerald Astor in his autobiography of Mengele *The Last Nazi* (New York: Fine, 1985), “Mengele is not a case study in abnormal psychology, or an aberration ... to the contrary, Mengele, whatever his extreme characterological predispositions, was part of the mainstream of his nation and its prevailing moods, attitudes and scientific philosophies.... He was never a pariah in his own land, and is not even that among many there today” (Foreword cover to *The Last Nazi*). Also see Philippe Aziz *Doctors of Death* (Geneva: Ferni, 1976) for more on Joseph Mengele, the Auschwitz “Angel of Death.”

always been the precise ontological location in which terror and its violence *becomes thought* and ejaculates its reforming isms and more deeply into the interpersonal lives of all of us” (*Stages of Terror* 160).

I have chosen to put Hochhuth’s *The Deputy* between Shaw’s *The Man in the Glass Booth* and Sherman’s *Bent* because where the latter two plays use history in performance to portray character-types and historical personages, *The Deputy* takes the actual historical players and attempts with drama to “explain” somewhat the overwhelming problem that Hochhuth’s play brought to the forefront of Holocaust discourse in 1962. In *The Man in the Glass Booth* Shaw dramatizes the figure of guilt-ridden Jewish camp survivor and the trauma many of the real survivors like Primo Levi and Elie Wiesel suffered years after the event, [many, like the Arthur Goldman figure in *The Man in the Glass Booth*, and Primo Levi in real life, committed suicide] and parallels the survivor figure with a doppelganger of the persecutor figure in a guise that would parallel a real executioner in the guise of an Adolph Eichmann. In *Bent*, Sherman takes the figure of the homosexual as an *asocial group* and their persecutors as nameless executioners to dramatize the fate of one of the forgotten and most tormented of all Nazi victims. Sherman also brings forth the covert horror of self-hating homosexual/Jewish stereotyping that many historians argue drove Hitler to his vehement persecution of homosexuals and Jews.

What *The Deputy* does that makes it different from the other two plays in my study is address history as personage and without using character “sketches” of the SS, the Holy See and Pius XII. By using the historical figures of SS Obersturmfuhrer Kurt Gerstein, Pope Pius XII [nee former papal nuncio of Berlin Eugenio Pacelli] and other

Nazi and Vatican dignitaries, Hochhuth deals with the burden of Holocaust representation and historical accuracy by giving the reader an historical appendix, what he calls “sidelights on history.” Except for the portrayal of the real martyred priest in Gerstein’s account, Father Maximilian Kolbe [in the play Father Ricardo Fontana] Hochhuth’s play in terms of style is much like the historiographer-as-dramatist presentation of the Holocaust.

According to Hochhuth “as a stage play the work requires no commentary. But the action does not follow the historical course of events in a step-by-step manner, like a journalist’s account. Condensation has been necessary in the interests of drama” (287), but “consequently, the historical persons mentioned in the play, and those of their relations who are still living, are entitled to know what sources-often obscure ones- have led the author to view a given person or episode in this or that light” (*The Deputy* 287). Granted, the tone of Hochhuth’s play is angry, but for Holocaust representation the tone of a play should border on anger and a sort of enlightened vision of history that shows the movements of historical forces that cannot always be simply explained by stating the Vatican did nothing to help save Jews during the Final Solution. I feel any scholar or person attempting to deal with Hochhuth’s play must first address the history of the Vatican and the Nazis before, during and after the Concordat of 1933.⁴⁷ The importance

⁴⁷ On July 20 1933 German Vice-Chancellor and future German ambassador to Austria Franz Von Papen, concluded the Concordat with the Vatican. An interesting account of the Concordat and the machinations of Hitler and Pope Pius XII can be seen in Ian Kershaw’s *Hitler: 1889-1936 Hubris* (New York: Norton, 1998), which shows that “despite the continuing molestation of Catholic clergy and other outrages committed by Nazi radicals against the Church and its organizations, the Vatican had been keen to reach agreement with the new government” (487). Another account of the Concordat among the many that are available is the *Memoirs* (New York: Dutton, 1953) by Franz Von Papen, which gives the first-person account of the signing of the Concordat and the theological diplomacy fostered between the catholic

of knowing history and understanding hidden history is not something always taking into consideration by the modern playwright. The hidden history is the history written as truth without attention to the said that “won the war.” The point of historical method alluded to here is that “if the Nazis had won the war” the history written by Himmler and Rosenberg, as well as the history written by the Vatican, may have been more of the Nazis and Vatican’s stance against the “bulwark of Bolshevik horror” [International Jewry and Communism], than any sort of horrible atrocity like a Holocaust. Their message amidst the tid-bits of historical record, or the attempt to use Holocaust metaphors in relation to a modern drama like Harold Pinter’s *Ashes to Ashes*,⁴⁸ I would argue do not hold up to historical or dramatic scrutiny. I would argue that a playwright like Hochhuth does not allow for a type of scrutiny that would accuse him of playing with holocaust metaphor. For Hochhuth:

Anyone who retraces the roads to historical events, littered as these are with ruins and corpses; anyone who reviews the contradictory, complacent or wildly distracted statements of the victors and victims; anyone who makes even the most modest effort to pick his way through the rubble and incidental circumstances of so-called historical events in order to reach the truth, the symbolic meaning—will

Pope and the catholic nobleman Von Papen. Von Papen recalls that “the Pope told [him] how pleased he was that the German Government now had at its head a man uncompromisingly opposed to Communism and Russian nihilism in all forms” (279), and “Mussolini, who at the time had no very good opinion of Hitler and in particular mocked all race theories, advised Herr Von Papen to proceed with all possible speed. The signing of this agreement with the Vatican will establish the credit of your Government abroad for the first time” (280).

⁴⁸ *Ashes to Ashes* (New York: Grove, 1996), a play by Harold Pinter alludes to the Holocaust as a metaphor for a couple locked in a battle of wits that though it borders on psychosexual tension uses the images of the Holocaust to make comments about abusive relationships. Though not listed in most literary canons as a Holocaust play, it has drawn attention to the genre of Holocaust drama by certain critics. (See Katherine Burkman, “Harold Pinter’s *Ashes to Ashes*: Rebecca and Devlin and Albert Speer.” *The Pinter Review: Annual Essays 1997 and 1998*. Tampa: Univ. of Tampa Press, 1998).

find that the *dramatist cannot use a single element reality as he finds it; his work must be idealized in **all** its parts if he is to comprehend reality as a whole,*"

[Italics mine] [and reality must] "present the raw stuff of the world." (*The Deputy* 287-88)

In the preceding paragraph I mentioned Harold Pinter's *Ashes to Ashes* as a contemporary play that uses Holocaust metaphors as well as images of Nazis like Albert Speer. I think that plays that allude to remnants of the Holocaust and Nazi regime without a direct link to history, in terms of accuracy to historical literature mentioned earlier in reference to Shaw and Sherman's method, can bring about a problem area. Though *Ashes to Ashes* is about testimony and the ability to listen to history, the images of Holocaust ghetto mothers and children are a problematic muse for a character like Pinter's Rebecca to work out her relationship trauma. In "Talking about Some Kind of Atrocity" critic Marc Silverstein discusses Pinter's play and the notion of Rebecca and the Holocaust as working on certain levels of Holocaust drama. I would question partly Silverstein's argument that Pinter's Rebecca can "describe events [she was not part of-the Holocaust] from her point of view as a witness, transforming narrative into a kind of testimony" (Cited in *The Pinter Review: Annual Essays 1997 and 1998* 82).

If Hochhuth dismisses his own use of documentary naturalism after the fact: "No matter how closely we adhere to historical facts, the speech, scene, and events on the stage will be altogether surrealistic" (Cited in Langer, *Art from the Ashes* 472), then I would argue that without a directed use of Holocaust character, language and signifiers alluding to a true witness to events then Pinter's play would not work for representation. I would argue that Pinter's "kind of testimony" does not work in relation to the Holocaust,

for if Rebecca is not a witness to the holocaust—she *was not there*—then any form of appropriation in drama, no matter how theatrical or symbiotically-driven can work. Conventional theatrical techniques, like many other stylistic and theoretical techniques of drama, I would argue fail when the subject of the Holocaust is attempted as a play's theme; whether overt or covert.

Critic Lawrence Langer dismisses Hochhuth's play as being too conventional and that Hochhuth's "conventional figures ... forfeit any surrealistic benefit gained by the vague movements of the doomed toward the gas chambers ... [and] the final dialogue between the disenchanted doctor [Mengele] and the sympathetic priest [Kolbe/Fontana] turns into a familiar despoite between cynical nihilism and Catholic compassion" (*Art from the Ashes* 472). Langer misses the theological point that the link between nihilism and Catholic compassion are a microcosm of the larger issue in *The Deputy*; that being the link between Christ's "deputy" on earth as a link between him and the people, and all the religious, historical, social manifestations that this encompasses. Langer states that Hochhuth's discussion of religion and anti-religion amidst the death camp and Hitler's SS "do not carry us very far into the defamiliarized zone of Auschwitz" (*Art from the Ashes* 472), but I would argue this defamiliarized/unimaginable universe is exactly where Hochhuth leads the viewer and for representation this is the reason *The Deputy* is such an integral dramatic piece. Hochhuth takes the audience from church realism [the pew] to Holocaust realism/surrealism [the cattle car].

I would also argue that Hochhuth's *The Deputy* gives us the surreal and the real in a form that may be possible for Holocaust representation. That form being the ability to see a truth in ideals that come about from dealing with all the parts of the history of an

event—the Holocaust—that that have to be realized in the mind, but do pertain to the actuality of the voice of those who took part in the horror, in the case of Hochhuth's *The Deputy* that would mostly be in the characters of Gerstein, Fontana, the doctor [Mengele] and Pope Pius XII and his representatives in the Vatican. The gist of Hochhuth's play as an angry interpretation of historical events, as well as his defense of it, is not, I would argue, a total condemnation of the Vatican as many see it. What Hochhuth attempts to do is "pick his way through the ruins and corpses" and in doing so is careful to tread lightly on the remains of the dead. Hochhuth's play encourages viewers to revisit mentally the predetermined notions of Holocaust survivors and the atrocious reality of Nazi horrors to deal with the dramatic use of history and the message that is possible from the stage, what Cathy Caruth sees as the "belatedness of historical experience—in the sense that the event is only experienced in connection with another place in another time ... history can be grasped only in the very *inaccessibility* [italics mine] of its occurrence" (*Trauma: Explorations in Memory* 8).

The Holocaust is always an event that is more than a connection with another place and time; it is of another world and time does not pertain to the idea of place and time during the Holocaust. What Hochhuth's play can bring to an audience is the death of time, or more precisely for the victims of the Holocaust, both victim and perpetrator, genocide of aeons, or generations. For Saul Friedlander, this murdering of generations, becomes "aenocide," a murdering of generations" which for many would echo Hochhuth's *The Deputy* in the dramatists' desire to keep the memory of the Holocaust alive through the use of much larger historical icons as the Nazis and the Vatican. What a Holocaust play should do is show the viewer that "to mourn the dead of Auschwitz is

impossibility. For if what is meant by mourning is the carrying on of life from generation to generation, from *aeon* to *aeon*, then mourning was already made impossible by the slaughter of generations at Auschwitz” (Cited in Hatley, *Suffering Witness* 31), and that the “generation one has mothered and fathered treat one’s death as the opening into its own birth, are undone in Auschwitz” (Hatley 31). What Hochhuth’s characterizations of Father Fontana and Kurt Gerstein give the audience is, not only this annihilation of church and state at the time of the Holocaust, but the microcosm “that one is annihilated precisely because the very possibility for mourning [or for any type of humanity] has been annihilated” (Hatley 31). The important overlying theme of *The Deputy* is that the small minions of the church, the priest, and the small minions of Himmler’s SS, a functionary like Gerstein, were helpless in trying to explain the individual catastrophes and the larger atrocities and murders committed by totalitarian regimes to the deaf ears of the monoliths of Vatican and Nazi power.

By looking at the characters of Fontana and Gerstein in *The Deputy*, a most important question arises that pervades the play and for representation, and it is a most important theme for this discourse on history and discourse on the destruction of generational mourning so needed for the Holocaust. The question is according to Hochhuth is “Why is the Vatican so important to us?” (*The Deputy* 301) and “Why the Nazis and Hitler, most importantly, kept a distance from the Vatican throughout the war?” This is not just Hochhuth’s manipulation of historical fact but also he gives us a historical truth: “The Vatican, the bishops in Germany, and the Papal Legations were in fact the only authorities Hitler continued to respect following the unwelcome entry into the war of the United States. In 1940 Hitler, after a talk with Mussolini, expressly forbade

[Nazi party theorist Alfred] Rosenberg to commit provocations against the Vatican” (Hochhuth 301). It is no secret that the Nazi T4 program of euthanasia of the mentally ill was halted by Hitler when the churches protested. What Hochhuth’s play does is open the question for eternity. If the church protested the T4 program and succeeded, why was it so quiet in relation to the Jewish genocide?

The major question asked by Hochhuth in the play is “why did the Vatican not do more?” This may explain Hochhuth’s choice of the Vatican as his theater of anger. I would argue, as does Hochhuth, that though the Hitler's and Stalin's of the world are people of enormous power at a certain epoch in history, the Vatican is eternal and in this eternal nature their failure to act indicted generations. As many who view history during the Nazi occupation and after stated, “Why make so much fuss over that ridiculous little corner of the earth in the capital of the one-time Roman Empire?” (Hochhuth 301), when the men of power at the time—FDR, Mussolini, Chamberlain etc.—are the ones that world politics depend, and not “these Roman prelates, these sneaky nuncios and incense-wreathed cardinals” (301). The mistake here is that these men [politicians and dictators] come and go but the church prelates are timeless, and according to Hochhuth, “this view [that politicians are timeless] is based on a mistaken notion. Chamberlain and Herriot, Roosevelt and Dimitroff are very influential persons. Today they are important. Tomorrow no one will give a damn about them. But the men around the Pope, those close-mouthed prelates of the Roman Curia with their bejeweled crucifixes, do not change” (301), and “they remain for decades; when they are replaced, they are replaced by others from the same school; and they all follow the same policies, century after century” (301-02). Hochhuth is stating that for the minute events in history that pervade

the history of the Catholic church, the Hitler's etc., come and go but the church is eternal and that is why the churches power was recognized by Hitler. The architect of mass murder [Hitler] still understood that "we National socialists know better than anyone that the faith that moves mountains makes history—not money, economic laws, and not weapons alone. Therefore we can recognize a power which has different faith from ours" (302).

Hochhuth's sidelights of history in the appendix to *The Deputy* show that not only was this play well researched, but when the playwright attempts to use history to make the audience reach across the temporal to the cognitive level of discourse, he/she must be careful with the technicalities of power and historical evidence. This is a play that does require a historical appendix and I would argue that is probably appropriate with any play that uses the history of the Holocaust in its dramatic personae. *The Deputy* also presents solid evidence that Hitler knew the Vatican would not help the Jews, much like he knew most of the world would not either. The irony that anti-Semitism was the "faith" that allowed Hitler to power is possibly the most troubling feature of Hochhuth's play, and in the characterization of Kurt Gerstein, Hochhuth gives the audience a figure of the "good German," but Hochhuth also gives the audience the image of the inability of the world's most powerful allied nations to recognize that their silence inadvertently allowed Hitler's dictates to become a horrendous reality. For Gerstein, his hope for humanity was in vain: "I can only wait and hope ... that the rest of the world, which expresses such deep sympathy for these criminals, will finally be generous enough to transform this sympathy into real aid" (*Doctors of Death* 194). Ironically, what Gerstein found out, according to

Philippe Aziz, was “the outside world on which Gerstein was counting to save the Jews was simply not quite generous enough” (*Doctors of Death* 194).

In conclusion, Hochhuth’s *The Deputy* shows the audience “the terror of nothingness, of *thought*, in the theater is a “ghosted” terror. It is a terror that is real, but only becomes perceptible, paradoxically, in disappearance, in the fading residue of a presence in the returning memory” (*Stages of Terror* 161). Hochhuth’s *The Deputy* urges us to remember that the terror was real and that the silent majority in the guise of the Vatican indicts us all. If Elie Wiesel and other survivors are to be understood then we must follow their dictates that Auschwitz, Treblinka and the other death camps in Hitler’s Reich were of a world that *defiled* [my italics] time and place. The “otherworld” of the “underworld” that was the camps asks the viewer to look outside what we commonly would view as art, and by attempting to make a connection with the world outside the world then maybe we can grasp something of the event. What Hochhuth’s play does is allow us into the netherworld of Auschwitz through temporal forms that are possible to grasp; that being the Vatican, the Holocaust and the hierarchy of Nazi SS executioners, doctors and specialists. The figure of Doctor Mengele, the “angel of death” as he was termed by prisoners and guards alike, lends a certain surreal/real entrance into the unimaginable universe of the camps. The Mengele-figure is not a euphemism for the Nazi doctor, but it is a logical form for drama that attempts to bring the language of positivist science and the ravings of the eugenics movement to the stage. Hochhuth’s play allows history to be manipulated from real and from unreal to make a certain dramatic presence that may allow the audience a certain perceptible space into what was and is unperceivable—The Holocaust.

Martin Sherman-*Bent*

“Underneath all the tolerance is intense, passionate, hatred ... the Jews of Europe were never Europeans, just a small problem” (Kushner, *Angels in America: Part I* 90)

“This disease will be the end of many of us, but not early all, and the dead will be commemorated and will struggle on with the living, and we are not going away. We won’t die *secret deaths* anymore. The world only spins forward.” (Kushner, *Angels in America: Part II* 146)

“There are Queer Nazis. And Queer Saints. And Queer Geniuses. And Queer Mediocrities. No better, no worse. Just People. I really believe that.” (*Bent II: V* 111-14)

I will conclude with the most contemporary play of my chosen three for this section of Holocaust representation in drama, Martin Sherman’s *Bent*. Until Tony Kushner’s *Angels in America*, Sherman’s *Bent* was probably the most notable play about gay history, but unlike Kushner’s *Angels in America*, which focuses on the AIDS crisis and the history of post-Stonewall gays in America, Sherman’s play deals with the most forgotten of Hitler’s victims in the death camps, the homosexuals. *Bent* shows that though much of the Nazi terror against the Jews had a “rational” form of hate-mongering and prejudice, the irrationality of the Nazi attack on the homosexuals truly follows the most horrible atrocity theme in the sense that the horror was so intrinsically psychosexual. In many ways, Sherman’s main character Max states that everyone is somewhat “queer” in a sense, but in essence we are all “Just people.”

What is most disturbing about the high number of negative reviews in the late 1970s and early 1980s for Sherman’s *Bent* is that so many reviewers did to the play exactly what the Nazis did to homosexuals during the Holocaust; they stereotyped it/them. In the case of *Bent*, the critics seemed to hope the play and possibly homosexuals

would just go away if one read between the lines their critiques of *Bent*. The well-known critic of the *New Yorker* John Simon stated that “*Bent* dealt with something too deep and difficult to be entrusted to hack writing” (*The New Yorker* 111). I do not disagree that the persecution of the homosexuals in the death camps of Hitler is a subject very difficult for representation, but I feel the rush to judgment Simon and many critics have done, because a great deal of *Bent* focuses on sexual mores of gays, is a mistake. The problem may not be Sherman’s hack writing, but a hack understanding of the gay subculture that was prevalent in Weimar Germany before Hitler, and the gay hidden-horror that took place after the Nazi takeover. It is too easy for many critics to equate the modern Nazi paraphernalia that surrounds much of the “rough trade” sadomasochistic gay culture in Greenwich Village and San Francisco with Sherman’s play as a theatrical brand of slick gay commercialism. If one selectively chooses a line or two from the play that focuses on the sadomasochistic element alone like “I know pain is very chic now, but I don’t like it, cause pain hurts” (*Bent* I: I 173-74), then I can see how that kind of tunnel criticism can see Sherman’s play as slick, but this is not slick commercialism or sexual faddism but an accurate depiction of art imitating life in underground 1930s Berlin.

Even the contemporary gay community’s lack of historical perspective in the time of *Bent*’s initial showing [1979] on Broadway hurt its initial power as a play. According to Nicholas De Jongh, “People had begun appearing on the streets of the [Greenwich] Village in Nazi uniforms, which was then considered sexually titillating... For the playwright it was a sign of the gay community’s lack of historical perspective ... of its lack of concern for other minorities” (*Not in Front of the Audience: Homosexuality on Stage* 147). What I found most problematic with many of the initial reviews of *Bent* was

the partial ignorance of the duality of history and aesthetics that Sherman captures in *Bent*. For Holocaust drama *Bent* is an intrinsic play that captures covertly the heterosexual argument that the phallogentric positional logic of being gay from 1930s Dachau to 1979-80s Greenwich Village lies in the “metaphorics of ‘in’ and ‘out’ to measure an aspect of lesbian and gay political identity ... non-productive foreplay and gay male sexual relations as a form of extended, non-productive behind play” (Fuss 104). Fuss makes the point that for representational ethics the heterosexual audience must look beyond simple sexual logic and view *Bent* for its overall message of the catastrophe that envelops the outsider of, in the case of *Bent*, the sexual Other.

I feel that an explication of the play using the specter of socio-cultural history, psychology and literature will lend much to a deeper appreciation of Sherman’s message for Holocaust representation in *Bent*. That message being that “the homosexual was no longer to be regarded as sick, no longer to be automatically classified as a criminal or outcast” (De Jongh 140). What critics miss in their hasty charges of sensationalism and commercialism is that *Bent*, as well as Noel Greig and Drew Griffith’s *Gay Sweatshop* play *As Time Goes By*, are political statements in the post-Stonewall liberation movement. John M. Clum comments on this: “*As Time Goes By* and *Bent* dramatize the adversarial position of the man who chooses to live through his homosexual desire. As martyr and exile, he is at odds with authority, which is depicted as brutally repressive. Resistance in *Bent* is a symbolic, but fatal display of pride, a taking charge of one’s inevitable death” (Clum 180). These statements of resistance by the homosexual characters are not cheap gay theatrical rallying cries, but honest appeals for better understanding of the actual horrific atrocities inflicted, physically and mentally, upon

homosexuals in the Nazi camps (*Bent*), and other periods in history. This is why a better understanding of Sherman's *Bent*, and the voice of resistance in the guise of the homosexual prisoner in the death camps, is so important for my stance on Holocaust representation in drama. The signifying event for homosexuals in Nazi Germany during the Nazi takeover was their relegation to lower than the Jew on the outsider scale. The contemporary signification of outsider with the modern AIDS epidemic and gay theory form a very interesting discourse for the Holocaust imagination in the homosexual imagination. An understanding that the Holocaust and AIDS defy our mainstream imagination and any perfectly accurate description would be inadequate. Thomas Yingling comments on this fact so prevalent in gay and lesbian theory: "As in evidentiary encounters with the Holocaust, AIDS in this concrete memorial induces a contemplation in which all systems of signification seem inadequate" (Fuss 307).

Sherman effectively uses the triangular story of Max, Rudy, and Horst as a microcosm of Hitler's "Final Solution." He reminds us that before the Wannsee Conference and the implementation of the extermination of the Jews (the yellow star), the homosexuals (the pink triangle), were indeed the lowest rung on the concentration camp ladder. Historical documentation bears Sherman out, "the position of homosexual inmates as whipping boys finally improved in the beginning of the 1940s, when they no longer occupied the lowest level of the internal camp hierarchy. At that time they were relieved from their former position by the Jewish and Eastern European prisoners" (*Journal of Homosexuality* 154). This hierarchy of hate is an important tenet for Holocaust representation and is necessary for critics of drama to see as cautionary when making dark humor comparisons with a play like *Bent*.

Alvin Goldfarb, in his review of *Bent*, misinterprets the overwhelming specter of Nazi Germany in Sherman's play; to him it is *Springtime for Hitler* and *The Boys in the Band*, Third Reich-Style: "History [inaccuracies] are bad but worse [problems] are the cliches that Sherman dramatizes. His Nazis are constantly psychopathic, which is too simplistic an explanation of the Holocaust and a trap into which many theatrical artists have fallen" (*Theatre Journal* 398-99). Goldfarb should read some survivor testimonies or perhaps view *The Shoah*, or better yet tell a survivor of the camps, someone like Elie Wiesel, that the SS were not psychopathic. It is Goldfarb's somewhat "bent" understanding of history, not Sherman's that I will argue against in my explication of *Bent*. Each act and scene in *Bent* is filled with historical accuracies that show Sherman's somewhat "closet" coming out with gay history in *Bent*. According to historian Richard Plant, this confirms that as a dramatist Sherman has achieved what historians have not:

Bent opened the forbidden closet a crack, and put the world on notice that indeed the Nazis had hounded all contragenics; that gays had been classified criminals, asocials, the Jews, as deviant subhumans, the cosmic lice that Hitler and Himmler had vowed to exterminate. Almost all histories of the Third Reich ignore this aspect of Nazi activity. One can only conclude that for most historians, there was and still is a taboo in effect. (DeJongh 151)

Goldfarb, Simon and others dismiss the specter of Hitler and Nazi Germany in *Bent* as just black and brown-shirted caricatures of evil that they perceive as being somewhat overdone. Or as Simon remarks, "We are supposedly in the Berlin of 1934, though the characters and dialogue might as well be out of today's Holly—or Isherwood.

You might have to substitute ‘Hell’s Angels’ for the SS” (*The New Yorker* 110). I would simply substitute “Plain Hell” instead of allusions to a “biker ethos” with Hitler’s SS.

Because the Nazi hierarchy (Hitler, Goebbels, Goering, Hess, Himmler, Rohm and Streicher), were quite morally, physically, psychologically and sexually “bent,” it is precisely by focusing on their sexology as a microcosm of Max’s dual problem (being a fake-Jew and a self-denied homosexual), that the historical structure of Sherman’s play becomes evidentially accurate for the time [1930s Nazi Germany] presented. Some critics call Sherman’s use of Nazi and homosexual stereotypes in *Bent* as cheap commercialism, instead of realizing that he presents the audience with artistic homo-eroticism that expounds on the sadomasochistic to hammer home the horror that was Dachau for homosexuals. It is not shock theatre or blood theatre, but theatrical atrocity realism depicting a time in history that should never be forgotten. *Bent* is a transcendent and important representational dramatic work; a “theatre of cruelty” and a “staging of atrocity” Sherman gives the audience.

“Cruelty as traumatic history” as a theme/trope of the language in *Bent* is never better understood than in focusing on its creator, Adolph Hitler. To understand the plight of Max, Rudy, and Horst, is to understand the repressed sexual/racial mind of Hitler. There is a great abundance of historical and psychological documentation that attests to Hitler’s fear of his own latent homosexuality, his tainted Jewish ancestry, as well as his perverse sadomasochistic tendencies. Knowledge of Hitler’s internal self-loathing and denial goes a long way in explaining his ruthless destruction of the Jews and the homosexuals: “A different kind of evidence indicates that Hitler was personally concerned about latent homosexuality and struggled against it” (Waite 235). There is a

remarkable similarity between Hitler's attempts to deny any suggestion of homosexuality and his efforts to prove that he could not possibly be tainted by Jewish blood. The horror that was the Holocaust, as well as the persecution of homosexuals in Nazi Germany, goes a long way in proving Waite and the psychosexual theory that, "in both cases he [Hitler] used the same defense: he denied that he was Jewish by persecuting the Jews; he denied that he was homosexual by attacking homosexuals [like Max does when he kills Rudy]. Indeed he made a special point of doing so" (Waite 235). The infamous SA/Rohm purge of 1934 ("The Night of the Long Knives"⁴⁹), which is the first real historical event in Sherman's play, shows that Rohm, who was one of Hitler's closest confidants, was not a traitor, but a patsy for Hitler and Himmler. Rohm did pursue an overtly homosexual lifestyle, as did Hitler's deputy Rudolph Hess, but he was not a traitor: "It was true that Hitler was closely associated with Ernst Rohm and Rudolph Hess, two practicing homosexuals who were among the very few people with whom he [Hitler] used the familiar *du*...Hess-who was known in homosexual circles as *Fraulein Anna*" (Waite 235). To use the specter of Hitler's hiding possibly a partial Jewish ancestry or a homosexual side, as well as perverse sexual machinations with women, is not a cheap theatrical "skin trick," but an important debate that is still part of the historical and psychological discourse on Hitler and this form of drama and discourse of the outside in *Bent* is important for the debate inside and outside the theater realm.

⁴⁹ In 1934, Hitler and his minions made the decision that Ernst Rohm and his SA were becoming an army unto themselves. Hitler needed the allegiance of the regular army [Wehrmacht] to secure his dictatorship so he had to do away with Rohm and other conspirators to his power. Rohm and his SA minions were many of the most well-known homosexual gangsters of the period and ironically their murder can be seen as one of many political and personal machinations of Hitler.

The fact that of the seven women Hitler had intimate relations with, six committed suicide and one, his niece Geli Raubal (another suicide), attested to Hitler's perverse need for coprophilic gratification: "Hitler made her undress ... she would have to squat over his face ... and this made him very excited ... when the excitement reached its peak, he demanded that she urinate on him and that gave him his sexual pleasure" (Waite 238). Hitler's fear of Jewish blood from his grandfather also played an important role in his subliminal need to destroy the Jews, which prompts the important question: "Did Hitler think he might have Jewish blood?" There is much documentation showing that Hitler thought he did: "Throughout his life Hitler lived with the awful suspicion that his own father's father was a Jew and that he himself was 'poisoned' by Jewish blood. That suspicion constituted psychic reality for Hitler. It helped to shape his personality and determine public policy" (Waite 127-28). I cannot emphasize enough how Hitler's personal and perverse psychological problems and inadequacies form the framework for Sherman's *Bent*, and fits this paradigmatic discourse of atrocity that is integral to Holocaust representation.

When the audience of Sherman's play realizes that the two most important building blocks of Nazi ideology were racial purity (*blut und boden*), and male domination (the Nazis were strictly a male phenomenon), it is not hard to understand why homosexual (effeminate, non-breeders), suffered a tripartite of terror. They were seen as subhuman, race-defiling sexual degenerates who belonged in the concentration [KZ] cohort:

The fascist's deadly hostility to homosexual deviations from the norm had two sources. One was their dominant image of the strict soldierly man, obliged to

repel with brute force all temptations to soften [fluff] the identity and sexual role indoctrinated into him and seeing homosexuality as a target for his projected aggression. The other was their racialist programme, which has as its goal the strengthening of the 'healthy body of the nation,' and which sought to eradicate homosexuality because it deflected sexual energies that were needed in the battle for the birthrate. (Peukert 219)

Sherman reminds us that homosexuals (the pink triangle) must be included in the concentration camp cohort of the Holocaust and Peter Lowenberg comments on this: "Those who have survived a Nazi concentration camp, regardless of age, [or sexual preference] have been through a traumatic experience that marks them for life. They will never be the same; they are the concentration-camp cohort" (*American Historical Review* 1466). What is ironic and eventually tragic for Max is the sexual rogue's gallery that made up the Nazi hierarchy. Besides the aforementioned Hitler, Rohm, and Hesse there was Himmler (necrophiliac/voyeur), Streicher (pornographer/sadomasochist), Goering (drug addict and cross-dresser), and Goebbels, the most "normal," because he was only a club-footed, dwarf-like womanizer. The knowledge of what the leading policy-making Nazis were with their clothes off (excepts jackboots and riding crop) only supports Sherman's portrayal of the despised homosexual alter egos in the concentration camps. It is a reversal of the "rough trade" that Max practices with Wolf at the beginning of the play. Rudy comments to Max on the dual 1930/1980-type hustler that Wolf represents: "He got you going. All that leather, all those chains. You called him your own little storm trooper" (I.I.160-162). It is horrible how Max will find out that the Nazi-kind of pain really hurts, and it also kills. John Clum again comments on the duality and differences of

time periods that affect a better understanding of Sherman's message to history and to the present in *Bent*:

Bent not only affirms homosexual love in the most hostile circumstances, it also affirms a loving, ongoing relationship in opposition to some of the most common elements of the gay world, circa 1979. Fashionable S&M is interpreted as cruelty, a result of one's own self-hatred! Promiscuity is presented as an evasion of intimacy; sex is seen as a stage in the progress toward emotional intimacy. *Bent* affirms "traditional" family values with only one minor difference: it validates homosexual love within the framework of heterosexual marriage. (Clum 178)

Sherman shows, on a small scale, what certain sadistic SS and Kapos in Dachau did in relation to what Hitler and his cronies did on a mass scale, that is destroying the darker sides of their diseased personalities by crushing people like Max, Rudy, and Horst. I would like to point to two positive reviews of *Bent*, one pre-AIDS, and one post-AIDS. Both reviews admit *Bent* has flaws, but both reviews focus on the idea that *Bent* engenders the impossible. By impossible I mean they make a good point that there is no enlightenment in *Bent* for any form of enlightenment is useless, but the collision of gender roles and sexual attitudes and stereotyping in *Bent* during Hitler's Reich makes for an important representational play. If *Bent* confuses I would argue that is the intent. For the Holocaust must remain confusing to future generations and in that confusing lies its importance at the cutting edge of atrocity discourse. In 1979 Brendan Gill commends Sherman's daring "to be overly ambitious is a good failing in a young and gifted playwright, and I am quick to forgive Martin Sherman for most of the flaws in *Bent*, a play that is well worth our serious attention" (*New Yorker* 100), and his play's fascinating

and sometimes confusing structure, “he [Sherman] has tried to tell three stories at once and sometimes the working out of their plots leads not to enlightenment but to collision, and yet what passionate, blood drenched theater he offers along the way” (*New Yorker* 101).

Nicholas De Jongh attests to Max and Horst’s self-affirmation at the end of *Bent* as being “simply the thing I am shall make me live” (DeJongh 145), as well as the importance of *Bent* as a play. “*Bent* is the most remarkable for the way in which it enabled the theater to fulfill a rare function. It illuminated what had been carefully obscured. It is also one of the most significant and important plays produced in the post-Second World War theatre” (DeJongh 145). DeJongh is absolutely correct in his assessment of the importance of Sherman’s *Bent* in post-World War II Theatre but it is also intrinsically important to post-Second World War history and postmodern literary criticism as well. Without the interdisciplinary cooperation of all the disciplines, the arts, history and literature, a play like *Bent* can, and was, misinterpreted by so many of the critics, as well as much of its audience.

Bent opens with some interesting dialogue that incorporates a great deal of racial and homosexual stereotypes, but it is not what Goldfarb calls the aforementioned Third Reich *Boys in the Band*. If anything the Nazi stereotype of the money grubbing-Jew Abraham Rosen, “slimy Jew, that’s what he is, only cares about money—just what everyone always says about them” (I.I. 22-24), and homosexual promiscuity, “not a threesome, a twelvesome” (I.I. 122), show how both despised groups (Jews and Homosexuals) would be propagandized right into the death camps. The propaganda dept. of Dr. Goebbels and UFA films was already making hate propaganda films that would

include visions of exactly what Max attests to in his dialogue with Wolf. It could be taken from UFA's 1940 anti-Semitic propaganda film *Der Eternal Jude* (The Eternal Jew) in its Nazi propagandizing of the Jew and the homosexual as subhuman (*untermenschen*), "and he's [Rosen] going to throw us out. Because we can't pay our rent. Out into the streets, Wolf, the Streets. Filled with filth, vermin. And Lice. And ... urine. Urine!" (I.I. 312-316)

Instead of the audience getting lost in "fluff" stereotypes, Sherman sets the tone for the psychosexual tension that will begin to envelop Max and Rudy with Greta's warning, "You fucking queers, don't you have any brains at all? No, it's not safe... Stay. Be *dead* queers. Who cares? I don't" (I. II. 42-43, 56-57). Sherman introduces historical accuracy at this moment with the murder of Wolf and the specter of the Rohm purge that will also include the radical ideologue of the Nazi extreme right, Gregor Strasser, as one of its victims. What Sherman does is show that the Rohm purge of 1934 was aimed morally and legally at homosexuals (they no longer had the protection of Rohm's elite homosexual power base to save them), but politically at eradicating the radical paramilitary leadership of the SA thereby splintering the SA into less threatening units that would fall under the jurisdiction of Himmler's SS and the Wehrmacht.

Sherman's Greta effectively evokes the specter of the homosexual purge of Rohm and his minions as a microcosm of the eventual Nazi supreme takeover of power in Germany in 1935. "You're bloody lucky, that's all. The talk is that Rohm and his storm troopers—Von Helldorf, Ernst, your blond friend—the lot—were planning a coup" (I.II. 84-91). History has proved that Rohm was not planning a coup, but Himmler and Goering were. Rohm's mistake was underestimating Hitler's friendship (maybe Rohm

knew something about Hitler's latent side), and Himmler's treachery, "You don't play games with the SS" (I.II. 126). The character of Greta functions, not as a comic drag parallel to Marlene Dietrich (*The Blue Angel*), but as a specter of "denial for survival," as well as a sort of red-light diva: "Explain it all to the SS. You don't explain. Not any more. You know, you queers are not very popular anyhow. It was just Rohm keeping you all safe. Now you're like Jews. Unloved, darling, unloved" (I.II. 103-107). Greta gives Max and Rudy money and advice, "Told them darling! I showed them [SS] your building... I'll do you a favor. Take some more... I've made a lot off your kind, so I'm giving a little back" (I.II. 123-125, 126-130), but also makes it a little too clear that he is not gay: "Me? Everyone knows I'm not queer. I've got a wife and kids. Of course that doesn't mean much these days, does it?" (I.II. 109-113), and that they should watch what they say in front of him/her, the Nazi collaborator, "Don't! Don't say anything in front of me. Get out" (I.II. 174-75).

Granted Greta "dost protest too much" but unlike the comic stereotype of the gay drag queen, she/he is a deadly serious caricature of the times; a friend one day and an enemy (denouncer-collaborator) the next. Money not people, are all that matters. If Sherman does anything in *Bent*, he shows how cheap human life was in Nazi Germany. Sherman effectively captures the "cloak and dagger" realism of the time and its perils and trade-offs. In scene III Sherman uses the straight acting "fluff" Uncle Freddie to explain the changing criminal legislation against homosexuals in Germany: "I have to be careful. They've passed a law you know. We're not allowed to be fluffs any more. We're not even allowed to kiss or embrace or fantasize. They can arrest you if you have fluff thoughts... Why couldn't you have been quiet about it? Settled down, got married, paid

for a few boys on the side. No one would have known” (I.III. 23-26, 32-35). The legal justification of “Paragraph 175” of the Penal Code now enabled the local police and Gestapo to arrest anyone even suspected of having homosexual tendencies-“fluff” thoughts”: “In 1935 the infamous Paragraph 175, which had criminalized anal intercourse between males, was expanded to include all forms of male homosexual contact, and the courts subsequently broadened the application to a point where even a kiss of purely visual contact became punishable” (Duberman 370). Max and his uncle discuss this harrowing mind-screw of a situation that they are in at this time in history:

Max: Don’t be stupid. What’s Love! I’m a grown-up now. I just feel responsible.

Freddie: Fluffs can’t afford that kind of responsibility.

Max: Remember that marriage father wanted to arrange? Make The arrangements again. I’ll marry her. Our button factories can sleep with her button factories. And eventually, when all this blows over, you can get me back to Germany. If I want a boy, I’ll rent him, like you. I’ll be a discreet, quiet ... fluff.

Freddie: He’s looking this way. He might be the police. No. He’s a fluff. He has fluff eyes. Still. You can’t tell. (I.IV. 60-62, 81-90, 97-99)

Sherman parallels the sense of living in the closet that male homosexuals have lived with throughout history. Max’s trade-off is his pseudo-acceptance of the “real world” closet mores that he must now come to grips with as a gay man (fluff) with a wife and a secret. Unfortunately, Max will never get the chance to either marry or continue his priveleged existence. Sherman shows us that the mind-fuck is something that all gay men live with. Sherman cleverly shows that a society’s attitude towards homosexual behavior

(especially in Nazi Germany) often provides a reliable clue to the rigidity of all other sexual mores in that society. *Bent* clearly evinces the Nazi attitude/policy towards homosexuals; that being to degrade, torture, and murder them. I agree with some critics that the scene in the forest is somewhat comedic because it shows the child-like naivete of Rudy as he sardonically alludes to the homoerotic specter of the *Hitler Jugend*:

Max: What are you doing?

Rudy: Singing. This must be the way the Hitler Youth does it. They sing old favorites. I'm sure they're not allowed to touch either.

Max: Don't be so sure.

Rudy: Well, it's unfair if they can and we can't. (I.IV. 197-99)

If the Holocaust was anything but the most serious of subjects, I might find the scene a bit of comic relief, "find me a bar on the cobblestoned streets. Where the boys are pretty" (I.IV. 206-08), but any chance of relief from Max and Rudy's hell is quickly silenced when they are denounced to the authorities: "There! That's them! Maximilian Berber. Rudolph Hennings. Hands high in the air. You are under arrest" (I.V. 213-16). Ironically, Hitler's Nazi Germany had a distinctly homosexually-tinged ethos because of its function as a supremely all-male collective. According to historian Richard Grunberger, "it [Nazi Germany] seems superficially paradoxical that a regime inflicting savage punishment on homosexuals should sponsor such evocations of their ethos; but the Nazi movement itself was of course an all-male collective, and the cult of comradeship fostered in its formations represented a pervasive, though, naturally unacknowledged, form of homosexuality" (Grunberger 384). The act of denunciation was widespread in Nazi Germany and Sherman does not miss its importance to history as well

as drama. Children turned on parents, friends turned on friends and husbands turned on wives and vice-versa. Homosexuals were always a well-rewarded prize for denouncers. Greta proved this earlier in the play when she denounced Wolf to the SS. Collaboration was a way of life in occupied Nazi territories and homosexuals were under constant threat from within.

I feel Sherman's next scene is the most comprehensive in relation to history and how it is accurately portrayed on the stage. Alvin Goldfarb again misses the importance of the scene as well as Sherman's stage depiction of the transport: "The cattle car scene is staged by Robert Allen Ackerman as if the prisoners were traveling on the New York City Subway System" (*Theatre Journal* 398). The claustrophobic and hellish nature of the scene is anything like the New York MTA system. I grew up riding on the New York Subways. It was tense and crowded at times, but Auschwitz-bound it was not. If anything Sherman uses the circle of light to show the audience the surreal-like aura and atmosphere of the banality of evil that was Hitler's Death's Head Units. The entire ethos of the cattle-car transport train and the death camp are presented in all their harrowing detail by Sherman's stage directions: "*A guard walks through a circle of light. He carries a rifle. Silence. An SS officer enters. The circle slightly expands. The officer looks at the prisoners one by one. He stops at Rudy*" (Act II. V. Stage Directions).

This is the turning point in the play because Max will not only deny Rudy, but himself as a homosexual. Sherman again recognizes history because the simplest thing, in Rudy's case, his glasses, could and would mean his death. This is not a theatrical device but the reality of living under a system that interpreted simple things (glasses) as meaning only one thing (the intelligentsia) and that was a death sentence. Documented historical

evidence shows that when SS *Einsatzgruppen* units entered occupied territory they quickly rounded up and executed all members of the local intelligentsia without trial. The indoctrination the SS received in relation to the intelligentsia was no different than the indoctrination they received regarding Jews and other *untermenschen* (subhuman); they were to be destroyed. The Nazis always equated the intelligentsia with the radical left, the communists, and most damaging the Jews. The visual sense of sadism in the supposed Nazi discovery of an “intellectual” is presented to the dumbfounded and frightened Rudy. It is at this juncture in the play that Max begins to deny himself as a gay man and becomes concerned only with his survival.

Officer: Glasses. Give me your glasses. Horn-rimmed. Intelligentsia.

Rudy: What?

Officer: Stand up. Step on your glasses. *Step* on them. Take him.

Rudy: Max!

Officer: Glasses. (I. V. 4-11)

Rudy was not part of the Berlin intelligentsia but Sherman shows Rudy’s “Catch-22” situation in Horst’s dialogue with Max regarding Rudy’s dilemma; that prisoners under the Nazis were under the whim and wanton of sadistic murderers. This is where Max’s re-education begins. He must first deny Rudy and then murder him thereby coming to a full realization of the ethos of the concentration camp system in Nazi Germany.

Max: It isn’t happening.

Horst: He hasn’t a chance. He wore glasses.

If you want to stay alive, he cannot exist. It *is* happening.

Max: It isn't happening ... it isn't happening. (I.V. 36-40)

Max's denial and assistance in murdering Rudy is one of the most powerful and sad I have ever witnessed in the Theatre. The incredible emptiness of the scene fits somewhere between Kafka and Camus in the sense of realism and sadness this gut-wrenching portrayal of murder and betrayal produce. In the stage production Richard Gere plays Max much like a spoiled bully-child thereby heightening the horror for Rudy because Max seems to be enjoying the murder and torture of his lover the way a cruel child beats an animal or crushes an insect.

Officer: Open your eyes. Again. Again! (*Max hits Rudy again and again*)

Officer: Enough. Your Friend?

Max: No.

Officer: (*The Officer smiles*) No.

Max: One. Two. Three. Four. Five. Six. Seven. Eight. Nine. Ten. (I.V. 56-65)

Horst then explains the whole concentration camp color-coding system that Sherman focuses on to show the nightmarish categorization of human beings in the camp hierarchy, especially the worst category, pink, for the homosexual.

Max: Where are they taking us?

Horst: Dachau.

Max: How do you know?

Horst: I've been through transport before. They took me to Cologne for a propaganda film. Pink triangle in good health. Now it's back to Dachau.

Max: Pink Triangle? What's that for?

Horst: Queer. If you're queer, that's what you wear. If you're a Jew, a yellow star.

Political-a red triangle. Criminal-green. Pink's the lowest. (I.V. 14-25)

Sherman shows in *Bent* that the effects of centuries of anti-homosexual prejudice in Western Civilization manifested itself most brutally and horribly in the man-made hell of Dachau and the other death camps: "Of the various prisoner categories, only two were clearly based on sexual considerations: the homosexuals and the 'race defilers,' they bore the stigmata of degeneration, and they were usually despised by their fellow inmates" (Haeberle 377). This homophobic hell influenced not only the SS but the other prisoners as well. Max and Horst are not only prisoners of the Nazis but they are prisoners of the other camp inmates who detest their homosexual degeneracy. Rudiger Lautmann concurs: "Slang preserved in various memoirs shows that categorization of homosexual inmates also occurred on the verbal levels, both in articles about the concentration camp and in official papers, where they [homosexuals] were referred to as "Homos," "175-ers," "warmer Bruder" [queer], "Sittenstrolch" [faggot], "schwules Arschloch" [queer asshole], or "Arschficker" [ass-fucker]. (*Journal of Homosexuality* 148).

Many critics have argued that *Bent* had no right to depict homosexuals as being lower on the concentration camp ladder than Jews. Up until the *Kristallnacht* pogrom in 1938 the homosexuals were the most despised group in Nazi Germany. Of course after the Wannsee Conference and the implementation of the "Final Solution," the Jews were the most despised, but before this the homosexuals were the worst group to be considered a member of in Germany. Sherman was not wrong in his depiction of history and again I tell the critics to check the history books. It is well documented that in the 1930s homosexuals were the lowest creatures in the hierarchy, Erwin Haeberle explains: "the

homosexuals were usually near the bottom of the prison hierarchy; they were often singled out for special tortures and dangerous work, and their mortality rate was very high” (Haeberle 376-77).

In the last scene of Act I Sherman presents one of the scenes that critics also had a great deal of trouble with. Most critics had problems with Max’s wanting a yellow star instead of a pink triangle, but the importance of this scene is somewhat concentration camp Marxist in my interpretation. Max’s “Dachau Determinism” has but one goal, survival at any and all costs. This enabled him to perform necrophilia on a dead Jewish girl that historically is not as rare an occurrence as one might think in the hellish Nazi death camps. If the SS could throw infants into ovens alive and bury children alive, why should necrophilia be so impossible to imagine? Again I return to the Nazi leadership, it was a cohort of sexual degenerates and psychopathic murderers. The dead Jewish girl and Max’s dead act of fornication are portrayed with all the ghoulish accoutrements of hell:

Max: Only...maybe...maybe only thirteen...she was maybe...she was dead.

Max: Just. Just dead, minutes...bullet...in her...they said...prove that you’re...

lots of them, watching...drinking...“He’s a bit bent,” they said, “he can’t...”

But I did.

Horst: Oh God.

Max: I hit him, you know. I kissed her. Dead lips. I killed him [Rudy]. Sweet lips.

Angel. (I.VI. 145-51, 158-60)

The critics [in this case Jack Richardson] have a great deal of trouble with the descriptions of the Nazis as being much too harsh, “now there are many things wrong with *Bent* as a play. It is simplistic. The Nazis, [SS] for example, are all depicted as

sadistic robots, a device that makes them seem of no greater human significance than any other collection of melodrama villains” (*Commentary* 72-73). They are quick to point out that the SS was not made up of psychopaths but in their naivete they fail to notice that its leadership were sociopath and psychopaths. The not only followed orders; they obviously did not mind their dark duty. After the war the Nuremberg tribunal indicted the whole SS as a criminal organization, and they were correct. Sadism, inflexible harshness and brutality were the SS motto given to them by the founder of the SS Theodore “Papa” Eike. I would like the critics to read this excerpt from one of Himmler’s speeches to SS Generals at Poznan in 1943 and then tell me that the SS were not criminals and capable of the unspeakable act described in *Bent*: “I mean ... the extermination of the Jewish race ... most of you must know what it means when 100 corpses are lying side by side, or 500, or 1,000. To have stuck it out and at the same time-apart from exceptions caused by human weakness-to have remained *decent fellows*, [mine] that is what has made us hard” (Shirer 966).

In *Bent* by depicting the SS as the ghouls that some of them were, I do not feel Sherman is stretching the historical or theatrical envelope at all. Just as the Nazi racial propagandists lumped all enemies of the state together as subhuman and not fit to live, it would not be inaccurate to label all the SS as criminals and psychotics. If the Jews and homosexuals were guilty by association with their race or sexual preference, than why can’t the whole SS be guilty by their association with murder, perversion and death? If anything *Bent* indites the SS for what they were, murderers and in some cases, sadistic ghouls.

Max: She was ... like an angel ... to save my life ... her breasts ... just beginning ... they said he can't ... he's a bit bent ... but I did ... and I proved that I wasn't... And they enjoyed it.

Horst: Yes. Hirschfield.

Max: And I said, "I'm not queer." And they laughed. And I said, "Give me a yellow star." And they said, "Sure, make him a Jew. He's not queer." And they laughed, having fun. But...I...got...my...star.

Horst: Yes. (*He reaches out and touches Max's face*)

Max: For your own sake. You mustn't touch me. I'm a rotten person. (I.VI. 177-79)

Horst mentions famous pre-Nazi sexologist Magnus Hirschfield in his dialogue with Max and by evoking memories of Hirschfield Sherman gives us the kind of triply dangerous character that Hirschfield represented to the burgeoning Nazi party, as well as a positive parallel to Horst's character. Hirschfield was a Jew, a leftist, and an advocate for homosexual rights. By producing the historical personage of Hirschfield, who died in exile before the Nazis could murder him, Sherman again shows how the deck was stacked not only against homosexuals but against anyone who supported them.

Max: How'd you get that? (*Pointing to Horst's Pink Triangle*)

Horst: I signed a petition.

Max: What kind of petition?

Horst: For Magnus Hirschfield.

Max: Oh yes. I remember him. Berlin.

Horst: Berlin.

Max: He wanted to...

Horst: Make queers legal. (I.VI. 31-40)

Act II opens with the positive specter of Horst and his determined efforts to bring Max back to reaffirming himself as a homosexual man. Horst, the young proud political gay activist is not a new figure in gay/straight drama or film but in *Bent* he becomes almost “god-like” in his transcendence from Max’s lover, teacher and foil to martyr. John Simon says that all the gay characters are perceived as angelic while the Nazis are the devil incarnate: “Now I am perfectly willing to believe in diabolic Nazis and homosexuals only a little lower than angels, but a play made up of only these forfeits all claims to serious art and aspires at best to slick commercialism” (*New Yorker* 111). In *Bent* art does imitate life, even in ghostly, macabre Auschwitz. Simon seems to forget that early in the play Max is depicted as anything but angelic, and Wolf is no better than a jackbooted hustler while Greta is a self-hating/denying transvestite/collaborationist closet homosexual. Angels they are not. I do not feel the play drifts toward Hollywood or Broadway-type melodrama but into an artistic portrayal of self-actualization in death. *Bent* would have been problematic had Max and Horst survived and lived happily ever after in red-light Berlin, but Sherman makes sure that does not happen. History did not allow it.

Act II begins with the monotony of tasks that the Nazis employed to drive their prisoners crazy, hopefully inducing them to a little sport, to the “fence.” The monotonous task of moving heavy rocks from place to place and back again was designed to turn the living human beings in Dachau to a living dead, a *musulman* state. It was designed not only to break the spirit of the prisoner but also to push him even quicker towards the gas

chambers or in *Bent's* case, to the fence.

Max: It's supposed to drive us mad.

Horst: These are heavy!

Max: You get used to it.

Horst: What do you mean, drive us mad?

Max: Just that. It makes no sense. It serves no purpose. Don't stop. Keep moving.

A couple more things. That fence.

Horst: Yes.

Max: It's electric. Don't touch it. You fry. (II.I. 85-89, 94-97)

Sherman captures the "Catch-22" essence of the "fence" in *Bent*. Historically because the Nazis used the double negative of hat and fence to catch prisoners in a deadly game of "Russian (Nazi) Roulette," Sherman again clearly documents historical fact to show the horror that the prisoners faced daily. The camp slogan "*Arbeit Macht Frei*" (Work makes you free), had no relevance in Dachau or any other Nazi death camp. They were just Nazi delusions used to give their slave laborers a sense of hope that maybe if they worked hard they would survive. In reality the Nazis only encouraged hope so they could get an extra month or two of work out of their slaves. The "hat trick" was a game of cat and mouse that in *Bent* Sherman uses cleverly to depict not only the ethos of the concentration camp but to depict Horst's death as an act of defiance and not submission. Max explains this historical "hat trick" employed so effectively and tragically by the Nazis:

Max: The fence. The hat trick.

Horst: Oh. What's that?

Max: Sometimes a guard throws a prisoner's hat against the fence. He orders him to get the hat. If he doesn't get the hat, the guard will shoot him. If he does get the hat, he'll be electrocuted. (II.II. 177-182)

History has shown us that homosexuals were also subject to many other horrors that paralleled Sherman's use of the "hat trick." Rudiger Lautmann gives another example of pink triangle persecution at Sachsenhausen to show how the camps rivaled each other in brutality and sadism towards homosexuals: "In the Sachsenhausen work squads, the pink-triangle prisoners were for years the objects of scarcely checked aggression from the SS. It's indisputable that many of them were tortured, shot, and beaten to death on their work commandos. At Sachsenhausen the homosexuals were used as living targets on a firing range they had just built" (*Journal Of Homosexuality* 153).

This is why I can not imagine a thorough criticism of this play without an intricate knowledge of Holocaust history. This is why a new historicist/Marxist approach to *Bent* might be the best way to evaluate and criticize it. Even the traditional historical-biographical approach would be adequate, but to just go in blind and focus on gay stereotypes and our homophobic past is a mistake. The frequency of unending abuse that will follow Max and Horst to the conclusion of *Bent* is neither melodramatic nor stylized. It is portrayed exactly as it was; cold, callous and brutal: "Moving rocks back and forth for no reason. Next to a pit with dead bodies and a fence that can burn you to dust. The best job to have?" (II.II. 232-34)

The intensely erotic scene that concludes Scene II was revolutionary when it was first performed on Broadway in 1979, but most critics said it was just sensationalist gay

porn, Nazi-style. *Bent* shows that all the pent-up desires and horrendous cruelty that is inflicted on Max and Horst cannot defeat their need to love one another. Sherman shows that love, whether it is homosexual, bisexual, or heterosexual, is the underground universal ethos, even in the death camp: “We did it—fucking guards, fucking camp—we did it! They’re not going to kill us. We made love. We were real. We were human. We made love. They’re not going to kill us” (II.III. 252-55).

The act of defiance is more important than the sexual act here and I feel this is where Max begins his reaffirmation of gay self. It is too easy to focus on the homoeroticism of the scene and miss the importance of the act of love, courage and defiance that is taking place. It is a way of fighting back, denying the stereotype that homosexuals were all weak and vice-ridden. By having no physical contact they dispel the notion that the Nazis had of homosexuals as being compulsive sex maniacs. Rudolf Hoess, the notorious commandant of Auschwitz, shows us the Nazi propagandistic condemnation of homosexual’s supposed moral degeneracy:

They [part-time homosexuals] were comparable to the genuine homosexuals, of whom there were only a few examples. Neither the hardest work nor the strictest supervision was of any help in these cases. Whenever they found an opportunity they would fall into one another’s arms. Even when physically in a very bad way, they would continue to indulge in their vice. Because they could not or would not give up their vice, they knew that they would never be free. (Hoess 104)

John Simon said that the love scene was ridiculous because to him prisoners in the camps were too busy trying to survive than to think about love or sex: “It may be one way of getting your rocks off, but beyond its incredibility in Dachau you worried about

survival not sex. This is almost distasteful” (*New Yorker* 111). A common occurrence in the gas chambers, especially amongst the young and married couples, was to copulate as the Zyklon-B gas was murdering them. This last act of free will and defiance against the enemy is exactly what Sherman is bringing to us, and it is an elitist-homophobic critic that cannot accept this. What Simon misses is that love (no matter how or where it was received) was a human emotion that could carry a person to survival and help them temporarily forget their misery. An important theme in survivor testimonies is that by acting defiant one instilled in himself the will to endure and retain his sense of being a human and not a thing. Horst attests to the exact nature of this, “Of course not. It doesn’t mean anything if a Moslem [*musulman*] kills himself, but if a person who’s still a person commits suicide, well...it’s a kind of defiance, isn’t it? They [SS] hate that. It’s an act of free will” (II.III. 19-23).

By making love under the eyes of the SS Max and Horst perform an act of defiant suicide because if they were caught it would have been instantaneous death. They realize this, but their denial of the consequences is what makes their rebellion even more effective on stage. The theme of love amidst the horror is well presented by Sherman at the end of Scene III. Max echoes what Western society had denied gay men publicly throughout history, the right to freely choose whom they want to love. “Queers aren’t meant to love. I know. I thought I loved someone once...But I killed him. See-queers aren’t meant to love. I’ll kill you too. Hate me. That’s better. Hate me. Don’t love me” (II.III. 96-103).

It is interesting in the age before AIDS that Sherman produced a play where a major symptom of AIDS, the cough, is portrayed in Horst’s weakening condition towards

the conclusion of *Bent*. The AIDS cough is so much a part of the gay landscape that surrounds AIDS that Max's pleas to Horst parallel the fear many gay men experience when the interminable cough begins. It is sad but again art really does imitate life. In our popular culture the cough can mean a death sentence for a gay man and in *Bent*, a sick prisoner was also fodder for the crematoriums.

Max: You must stop coughing. If you're nice to the Kapo.

Horst: It doesn't matter. It doesn't matter. (II.IV. 6-9)

Towards the end of Scene IV the beginning of a change begins to surface in Max when he tries to make Max warm by again having non-physical sex. The only problem is that Max is now the orchestrator of the sex and he plays rough. Max wants to be tender and help his friend but he can't help reverting to the "rough trade" type of sex that was "chic" at the opening of the play. Instead of his "little stormtrooper" Wolf, Max is now performing painful sex which can be seen as a direct correlation to the harsh treatment of the SS. After Horst reminds Max that he is acting as harsh as their captors, "You're like them. You're like the guards. You're like the Gestapo. We stopped being gentle. I watched it, when we were on the outside. People made pain and called it love. I don't want to be like that. You don't make love to hurt" (II.IV. 45-49), he becomes tender and this is where his character begins to shift toward a reconciliation with his gay self.

The climactic scene V in *Bent* has been criticized as being too melodramatic, too Hollywood by Simon and Goldfarb, to name a few. Again Max begins to care more about Horst than himself and affirms his loyalty to his friend by performing fellatio on an SS captain. I remember when my college drama society put on our production of *Bent* in 1982; we did not play this scene, or the play for that matter, for melodrama but to show

the homoerotic sadism and savagery of the Nazis amidst the denial/reaffirmation of Max and Horst. I played the SS captain, in both the rain scene and the conclusive last scene and the emotion and tension between the actors was of the highest theatrical intensity. I particularly love this scene because it shows Max and Horst reversing the disgust that has been heaped on them for their behavior to indite the SS captain.

Horst: You touched him?

Max: No. I just went down on him. That's what he wanted. And I needed the medicine.

Horst: Is he queer?

Max: Who knows? Just felt like it maybe. Of course, he could be a queer. You don't like to think about that, do you? You don't want *them* to be queer.

(II.V. 98-100, 105-08)

Sherman accurately shows the absurdity of Dachau in Max's description of the homophobic SS, especially the captain. His detestation at the act that he has committed to get Max his medicine is better justified by knowing that he has possibly gone down on a self-hating homosexual/sadist, not a gay lover like Horst who wears his pink triangle as a badge of persona as well as pride. There is vicarious rebellion against and punishment of the captain in this act of fellatio. There was no affection, no touching, only the bartering sexual sucking of the captain's "bent" prong. Max explains:

Max: Do you think that captain would let a queer go down on him? Of course not.

Somebody straight, yes. Even a Jew. But not a queer. That would mean maybe he was a queer. And even though maybe he *is*, he hates them more than...

Horst: Jews.

Max: Yes. He'd kill me if he knew I was queer. My yellow star got your
medicine. (II.V. 118-122)

The end of the play is powerful because it gives the audience the double vision of two proud gay men who, in death, choose affirmation as human beings. As much as this play focuses on the persecution of homosexuals, Sherman has also shown that the entire prisoner population of World War II suffered the same universality of the damned that pervaded the Nazi State. This is not a gay separatist version of the Holocaust. This is why *Bent* functions effectively as a microcosm of the larger specter of the Holocaust in history and drama. There were many Holocausts in Nazi occupied territories, catholic, gypsies, Russian POWs as well as American, British and other allied prisoners. Sherman just uses *Bent* to bring our focus to one element the history books seem to have ignored, the homosexuals. The beautiful portrayals of Horst's and Max's courageous deaths are anything but melodramatic. They may be a little Hollywood but under the circumstances I feel that their heroism was all that was left for their characters to do. Any other act would have been trivial and somewhat anticlimactic. The fact that Horst knows that he is the pawn in the "hat trick" game and instead of going to his death calmly, he attacks the Captain and by rubbing his eyebrow at Max (I love you), he goes to his death as a gay man who fought back and as a lover who chose to love. Max affirms this when he takes Horst to the burial pit of the dead and after taking his pink star (Horst's jacket); he takes Horst's place at the fence, joining him in defiance and death.

I noticed a great similarity between the death scene of Horst and the death scene of Diana Reiter in Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List*. Both characters go to their deaths

in defiance and take a little something away from their Nazi persecutors. From Spielberg's *Schindler's List*:

Unterscharfuhrer: I told her it's a barracks, not the fucking *Hotel Europa*. Fucking Jew bitch engineer. You fucking bitch!

Amon Goeth: And you are an engineer.

Diana: Yes, my name is Diana Reiter and I am a graduate of Civil Engineering from The University of Milan.

Amon Goeth: Ah, an educated Jew, like Karl Marx himself.

Unterscharfuhrer. Shoot her!

SS Guard: Sir, she's foreman of construction?

Amon Goeth: We're not going to have arguments with *these* people.

Diana: Herr Commandant, I was only doing my job.

Amon Goeth: Yes and I'm doing mine. (*The Sargent begins to lead her away*) No here! Shoot her here on my authority.

Diana: *It will take more than that.*

Amon Goeth: (*Diana is shot dead*) I'm sure your right. Now take it down, re-pour it; rebuild it, like *she* said.

The difference between Diana and Horst lies in the fact that Horst knew the Nazis hated them and any show of defiance or pride would and will mean his death. Diana mistakenly thought that she was on somewhat equal footing with Goeth which Thomas Keneally's book *Schindler's List* explains: "She [Diana] did not know that he [Goeth] hated her the worst—the type who thought, even against the evidence of his SS uniform, of those rising structures, that their Jewishness was not visible" (Keneally 168). What

Diana does though is affirm her existence in the face of death. It is almost as she is saying you can kill me, but you won't kill us all the same way Horst affirms that you can't make us (gay men) stop loving by killing some of us. The scene of Horst's death is a direct parallel to Diana's and I feel this passage will bear me out.

Horst: My hat, sir.

Captain: Your hat.

Horst: Yes sir: *(Horst removes his hat. Max's hand moves. Horst shoots a warning stare)*

Captain: On the fence. Now.

Horst: On the fence. Yes Sir. *(Horst glances at Max-another warning stare. Throws his hat on the fence. The fence sparks)*

Captain: *(To Max)* Are you watching?

Max: Yes Sir.

Captain: Good. *(To Horst)* You. Get your hat.

Horst: Now, Sir. Could I do without my hat, Sir?

Captain: No.

Horst: Yes Sir. (II.V. 240-256) *(Horst looks at Max. He takes his hand and rubs his left eyebrow. [I love You] He turns and rushes at the Captain. He screams in fury. The Corporal shoots Horst. Horst continues to lunge at the Captain. He scratches the Captain's face. The Corporal shoots Horst in the Back. He falls, dead. Silence. The Captain holds his face. (II.V.)*

Both Horst and Diana affirm their existence in denying their captors an easy lamb-like ritual victim. When Diana says "It will take more than that," and Horst screams

and scratches the Captain's face, they leave their mark, literally and physically on their tormentors. Max's act is also an affirmation of self, though his act is more for himself and Horst than just for himself, which is why he puts on Horst's pink triangle coat before he leaps into the fence.

Besides the importance of *Bent* to holocaust representation, history, art and culture, one should never forget its social message and its appeal to us as "straight" people to recognize the plight of homosexuals. John Clum sums up best what I am saying here, "Because Max and Horst are forbidden to touch each other, or even look at each other, their relationship must progress totally through language, thus presenting an interesting ironic reversal; usually it is not sex gay men are denied by a homophobic society-it is the right to speak openly of their desire" (*Theatre Journal* 178). If anything *Bent* affirms that even in the most horrible of circumstances the love of two people is not only necessary but should have no sex, no gender and most importantly, no phobias.

I am not saying that there are not things wrong with *Bent*, but the essence of the Other that pervades victim literature of the Holocaust in reference to the Jews is also at the same reference point for representation in the figure of the homosexual prisoner of that period of horror. Because so much of the early reviews were negative I would hope that the postmodern critics will rethink Sherman's play and give it the important place it deserves in Drama, literature and history. The cruelty that man is capable of inflicting on his fellow man because of race, gender or sexual preference is a subject that has always fascinated me, and this fascination I feel should be a major point of view when one chooses this theme for Holocaust drama. I am sure that Martin Sherman, as a gay man, must have had some sense of gay agenda when he wrote *Bent* but I just cannot accept his

brilliant play as just slick gay commercialism or a Third Reich *Cruisin* or *Boys in the Band*. For Holocaust representation this play has the history of Hochhuth's *The Deputy* and the mirrored characterizations of Shaw's *The Man in the Glass Booth*, but in *Bent's* depiction of the sexual outsider in the form of the persecuted homosexual the silence that pervaded the victimization of the Jews is brought to the theatrical forefront in the guise of the homosexual victims of those insane death camps.

The irony that will end my discussion on Holocaust representation in drama lies mostly in the notion that the Holocaust was even impossible for heroes. In the case of Shaw's Arthur Goldman, Sherman's Max and Horst and especially Hochhuth's Gerstein and Fontana, the notion that there can be anything heroic about the vent gets lost in the overwhelming horror. The best example that encapsulates all of these characters of heroism is Gerstein. After the war, he expected to be lauded as a hero for his mission and in an ironic twisting of the dark history of the Nazi horror the hero became the executioner for when Gerstein attempted to tell his story to the French court he found that all his work had fallen on deaf ears. The horror that no one believes Gerstein's' fantastic story is much the same lament many Holocaust victims stated after the war; that being "it is too horrible to imagine, no one will believe us." In *Doctors of Death* Gerstein found:

Judge Matte was an honest man.....Gerstein talked from 9 o'clock to 2:15, and then from 3 to 6:30! But Judge Matte did not believe him either. The story was *just too incredible!* [italics mine] A mystical resister with the S.S.! These old Nazis were really coming up with fantastic reasons for having acted as they did! Every-one was so obsessed with the idea of this man being a Nazi—a Kraut—that

anything else to do with him was unimportant, and literally fell on deaf ears.

(Aziz 220)

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V—CONCLUSION

FILM

“Deal with the reality of the Jew and the world will applaud us. Treat them as imaginary phantoms, evil inhuman fantasies, and the world will have justified contempt for us.”(*Conspiracy*, HBO Films 2001)

“This is more than war.”(*Conspiracy*, HBO Films 2001)

“Dead men don’t hump. Dead women don’t get pregnant. Death is the most reliable form of sterilization. Put it that way.” (*Conspiracy*, HBO Films 2001)

“I have found my little girl.”(*The Night Porter*, Janus Films 1973)

“How many thousands of hours have we spent on these magnificent models?” (*Downfall*, Newmarket Films 2005)

“Our magnificent idea has died. The world after the Fuhrer’s death and after National Socialism is no longer worth living in.”(*Downfall*, Newmarket Films 2005)

Of all the mediums discussed in this project I have moved from literature, both fictive and non-fictive, to drama and film, film may possibly be the most widely received by a mass audience. The goal of Holocaust representation for the written word allows for a more sensory remembrance of the event and for drama there is a tangential element of immediacy to live performance that allows for a certain understanding of the Holocaust as an art form. Literature can give readers and the essence of the story of the Holocaust and the atrocity it engendered. Drama gives the viewers a performance medium that allows for a momentary glimpse into what has been an atrocity of incomprehensible

proportions that is impossible to recover. What film can do is engender the most visual of mediums. I would argue film is one medium that can remain imprinted, not only on our consciousnesses, but on our ability to attempt to discourse with the Holocaust and possibly be more precise at representing the un-representable.

I have chosen *five* films to balance with the most noted and famous Holocaust film of modern time, Stephen Spielberg's *Schindler's List*. I am not debating the merit and cinematic brilliance of Spielberg's film, but to offer possibly a form of film that adheres more to history on film and less to what Hollywood would deem successful. Granted, Spielberg's film presents a good deal of accurate and visually stunning accounts of an episode of the Holocaust; an episode of bravery and survival, but where the film runs into difficulty is in its reinforcement of Jew as passive victim. Spielberg gives us a type of history that psychologist Bruno Bettelheim "continually reinforced ... this image of the Jew as a weak, passive victim" (*The Holocaust in American Film* 203). Judith Doneson concurs that Spielberg's film has certain problem areas but he "Spielberg does add an additional dimension to the genre of Holocaust film ... from slave labor to arbitrary beatings and murders, to the liquidation of the Krakow Ghetto, to the "selections" at Auschwitz, to the cremation of Jewish bodies at the Plaszow concentration camp, Spielberg attempts to transform his camera into a recorder of history" (*The Holocaust in American Film* 203).

When Spielberg does this recording of history in *Schindler's List* the film follows a sort of document-in-cinema technique that his vast experience with the use of modern camera angles and techniques would engender and is a very important for Holocaust representation, but where the film runs into problems is in Spielberg's rediscovering

himself as a director, according to Yosefa Loshitzky: “Whereas Lanzmann [Claude] is a professional journalist who uses film as a means to render rich and complex testimony on the Holocaust, Spielberg is a professional filmmaker ... *Schindler’s List* was for Spielberg a vehicle through which he received recognition both as a great filmmaker and as a reborn Jew. For Spielberg, as for other American Jews, the Holocaust has become central to the self-understanding of their Jewish identity” (*Spielberg’s Holocaust* 106). For Lanzmann, and I would argue the directors of the films I have chosen for this study, the pursuit of the Other or the Otherness of the victims and executioner is what is at the crux of Holocaust representation, and not Spielberg’s revisiting his heritage as a Jew.

There have been no shortage of films made about the Holocaust in America, but the build up to a Holocaust film done by Steven Spielberg captured the imagination of audiences that would most likely not view a film like Claude Lanzmann’s *Shoah*, Alain Resnais’ *Night and Fog*, Liliana Cavani’s *The Night Porter*, Frank Pierson’s *Conspiracy* or Oliver Hirschbiegel’s *Downfall*. This is not to say that Spielberg’s film lacks the technical merit and filmmaking discourse of the aforementioned art films that many critics equate with more than average Holocaust representation. The difference lies in Spielberg’s use of matinee-idol type actors and actresses to give his film and himself some modern Hollywood cache, whereas filmmakers like Lanzmann and Resnais, give the audience “a film in which men of today speak of the past. With Jewish survivors expressing themselves in a space that was once that of death, while trains no longer leaving to the gas chambers roll on” (*Spielberg’s Holocaust* 106).

Lanzmann and Resnais give us proof that a historian is also an artist. This is a main point of my project in the notion that those attempting the art form in the subject

form of the Holocaust may need to view himself as filmmaker first and historian a close second. What Lanzmann and Resnais do, and which Spielberg does not, is “press Jews, Germans, and Poles to describe their Holocaust experiences before the camera, the film has been celebrated as the product of a vigorous and systematic historical method which transcends art and its consistent search for historical truth and transcends history through its melancholic beauty, rhythmic pace, and poetic images” (*Spielberg’s Holocaust* 106). Spielberg was exhaustive in his historical research for *Schindler’s List*, but in his bringing forth this history to the screen the film may not transcend the boundaries of art and history that this form of Holocaust representation demands. In *Schindler’s List*, instead of giving us characters that transcend art and history, we get the idea that “Spielberg has to show that they [“Schindler Jews”] are, beneath it all, *obviously* just like us. Inside every non-Christian is a Christian waiting to get out” (*A Cinema of Loneliness* 318), and Spielberg’s films “whether about sharks, dinosaurs, aliens, slaves, or Jews headed to the gas chamber are all based on certain givens of cinematic form and content, which are themselves guided by unshakable beliefs about what an audience wants or needs to see ... to always “get them”, he must no matter how intractable the material may be to such a treatment, calm us with a promise of security with a fatherly embrace” (Kolker 318).

In the case of *Schindler’s List* we get the great white western patriarchal figure of the righteous gentile Oskar Schindler. Spielberg runs into problems in terms of recording history and “whereas Lanzmann depicts a collective hero composed of a variety of Jewish victims, Spielberg, following the Hollywood model of the historical epic, chose an individual (and a non-victim) to function as the protagonist of history ... reaffirm[ing] Hollywood’s narrative’s psychohistorical approach to history in which the private story is

accorded more weight than public history (*Spielberg's Holocaust* 107). Spielberg seems to focus too much on the selective hero figure of Oskar Schindler and the monster-figure of Amon Goeth, but also Spielberg's signature technique in the film—"Good German-Bad Nazi"—takes away from the films overall message. That message of atrocity and witnessing at times get lost in the formula Spielberg has made for himself as auteur. Yosefa Loshitzky concurs that *Schindler's List* may be more "*Spielberg's List*" [Mine] than a film about the Holocaust of European Jewry:

Spielberg's road back to Judaism involved a cinematic voyage to the Holocaust, the new locus of Jewish identity in American public discourse. *Schindler's List* thus merges Spielberg's much publicized rediscovery of his Jewish identity with the public's and critics' rediscovery of Spielberg as reborn director.... [and for Spielberg] consequently *Schindler's List* functions as a redemptive rite of passage.

It is a narrative of personal and collective redemption.... [and] Spielberg made it, not that it is a powerful depiction of the Holocaust in and of itself. It is as if in and through *Schindler's List* Spielberg is positioned against himself, directing against the grain, in order for Spielberg to transcend Spielberg.

(*Spielberg's Holocaust* 107)

At the time Spielberg made *Schindler's List* it is possible that he was attempting to use his commercial viability in films as a Cecil Demille-like "maker of spectacles" to reinvent himself in the form of the auteur, which Robert Kolker defines as "an important and still valid premise of the auteur theory that the director absorbs or, better, re-creates

the script into something else—the film itself, which is more than the script” (*A Cinema of Loneliness* 222).

This idea of “filmmaker as auteur” is not a negative criticism of Spielberg. His innovations in terms of special effects in blockbuster films like *Jaws*, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, and *Jurassic Park*, are state of the art and, as Robert Kolker recognizes, in “*Schindler’s List*, Spielberg [does] ... concentrate on the larger events of the Nazis extermination in Poland, and for the most part he does this well” (*Cinema Of Loneliness* 319), and by “filming in a richly textured, carefully composed black-and-white that recalls the films of the Italian neorealist movement ... and even the imagery of Welles, he achieves proximity and distance at the same time” (*A Cinema of Loneliness* 319). The problems begin when Spielberg attempts to give *Schindler’s List* a cinematic code of an extraordinary figure who can resolve the epic—in this case the Jews of Plaszow—very neatly and with closure. The problem, according to Berel Lang, is that “though Spielberg’s *Schindler List* is about morality, it is not a moral film ... [and when] the epic ... resolves tidily ... its neat closure tells the viewer not to look beyond the film, beyond the borders on the screen” (Cited in *Spielberg’s Holocaust* 136).

The films chosen for this study do what Spielberg’s film does not; that is engender any type of sentimentality, epiphany or lesson. The language in *Conspiracy* and *Downfall*, for example, is historically accurate, and when a director or actor takes liberties in terms of playing to a scene it is done with an eye to history more than performance. The star of *Downfall*, the German actor Bruno Ganz, may argue for my premise here about the performer, especially one playing Adolph Hitler: “It is the task of

a lifetime to play something so weird *like a Hitler*. Mostly they want you to do a parody. But here they wanted to do it *very realistic*” (*Downfall* Newmarket Films 2005). What Ganz recognizes is that throughout much of the history of films about Hitler and Nazism actors who play Hitler seem to focus on the more cinematically driven interpretations of “winner’s history” as cinematic truth. By “winner’s history” in cinema I mean playing Hitler the way the victors, who write history, want to portray him. Most prefer to portray Hitler as a drooling, drug-addicted maniac who was always, and only, a bloodthirsty Jew-hating mass murdering madman I am not defending playing Hitler as a saint, but what *Downfall* does is show how many-faceted the man; especially the side that Ganz states was the hardest to portray for an actor. For Ganz, the difficulty was not “can you play a mass murderer, [but] because even he [Hitler] was a human being?” (*Downfall* Newmarket Films 2005), the challenge was to show all the sides of a very complicated historical figure.

It is interesting that not until 2005 did a German actor play Hitler. Another reason *Downfall* is an important film for the future of Holocaust representation lies in the fact that it is performed by German actors, directed by a German director, and the language spoken is German. Many of the best depictions of Hitler in film—Sir Anthony Hopkins in the HBO film *The Bunker*, Steven Berkoff in *War and Remembrance* and *The Winds of War*, Sir Derek Jacobi in *Inside the Third Reich* and Sir Alec Guinness in *Hitler: The Last Ten Days*—all portray Hitler with the flare of the British stage actor; part Shakespearean (part *Othello*, *Hamlet*, *Richard III* and *Macbeth*) and part modern villain. Another problem with their portrayals of Hitler is the language. They perform Hitler in the English language and cannot help the intonations that accompany the non-German

speaking actor. Hitler, though brilliantly performed at times by all the English actors in certain mannerisms and functions, still seems to have a distinctly anglophile persona of the British aristocrat that does not seem to work. German actor Bruno Ganz, in his stupefying performance, gives viewers a figure of Hitler that in just his command of the German language allows audiences to hear the gruff intonation that a somewhat more brutal German linguistic mode would give a performer. The director of *Downfall*, Oliver Hirschbiegel, put the idea forth that Germans should speak for the Third Reich in performance, and though many of the actors in *Downfall* were hesitant at first with this film, they came to realize the importance for Germans to play the roles: “I thought I have the responsibility to do it, because I am *a German* [italics mine], and it is a kind of historical task. A task as a German and a task as a director to make it real” (*Downfall* Newmarket Films 2005).

What Hirschbiegel’s *Downfall*, Resnais’ *Night and Fog*, Pierson’s *Conspiracy*, Cavani’s *The Night Porter* and Lanzmann’s *Shoah* give the audience and to Holocaust representation three aspects that are important for film representation of the Holocaust: 1] The film must not be a *Hitlerpic*—something that uses Hitler as a mannequin of the monster we want him to be. 2] the film does not attempt a feel-good theme or attempt to paint any form of direct understanding of an event that defies understanding, and 3] we do not try to have a great white savior figure or any type of hero-figure who saves the poor Jews from extermination and denies the specter of Jewish resistance and heroism during the Holocaust. What all five films focus on in this study is simply the atrocity and the gaze of the victim and executioner from the medium of the filmmaker’s lens, and how to go about understanding that gaze. What film can do is give audiences the language and

image words of Hitler, and the executioners and victims, but while they speak we can also view the images of death, destruction and unbelievable atrocity in footage that can be documentary (*Night and Fog*), psychosexual (*The Night Porter*) or in the case of *Downfall*, *Shoah* and *Conspiracy*, historical realism of an abject nature. There are certain sub-strata to each of the three elements of film representation presented in this project. I will address them as they come about, but I feel that for a Holocaust film to stay within these artistic boundaries the chance of revisionism or what Leslie Fiedler terms “horror pornography,” may be lessened.

All the films selected for this project have a theoretical base that recognizes Slavoj Zizek’s stance in *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture*. By this I mean that “in each film, there is a certain barrier at work that can in no way be trespassed. The presence of this barrier is felt the whole time and thus creates an almost unbearable tension throughout the film” (42). Zizek talks of a “claustrophobic closure” that leaves us in a universe devoid of symbolic openness, and this notion of claustrophobia in the form of Hitler in his bunker (*Downfall*), or the young girl peeking out of a cattle car (*Night and Fog*), show the unbelievable tension that surrounded Hitler and his minions in *Downfall* and the agony of unknowingness in Jewish victims going to the death camps in *Night and Fog*. Many characters in *Downfall*, *Conspiracy*, and *The Night Porter*, find themselves in a psychotic universe empty of any type of openness, but their fierce addiction to Hitler, national socialism, and for Cavani’s Max and Lucia, Nazi perverse sexual horror, puts them up against impregnable barriers they can not trespass. In one of the epigraphs for this chapter I give a scene from *Downfall* centering on Magda Goebbels. Magda, the wife of propaganda minister Joseph

Goebbels, is writing her son from her first marriage, Harold Quandt, to inform him that she is going to poison all her children and then commit suicide “with Papa” because “our magnificent idea had died” and for the true believers like them a world without “the Fuhrer....and National Socialism is no longer worth living in” (*Downfall* Newmarket Films 2005).

This depiction of the “true believer” fits a tenet desirable for holocaust representation in the form that it does not follow the standard *Hilterpic* caricature of the Nazi. In *Conspiracy*, though I would have preferred German actors speaking the German language, the actors do such a credible job with the linguistic debate that the film takes on a dramatic persona; that of a “15 Angry Men” type of word battle. When SS General Reinhard Heydrich states that “dead men don’t hump” and “dead women don’t get pregnant,” the prose of bureaucratic atrocity emerges from the intense word game being parlayed about at the Wannsee Conference. Heydrich is letting the bureaucrats, soldiers and administrators know that not only does Hitler know about the destruction of the Jews, but that it is only on his order it can take place, and that the term “sterilization” is only one of the many euphemisms for what is really taking place—genocide. The answer to Heydrich from the chancellery in the form of Dr. Kritzinger is adeptly, “this is more than war.”(*Conspiracy* HBO Films 2001).

The idea that the Holocaust was “more than war” I would add seems an important notion to keep in mind when representing the Holocaust in film. The task then is not only historical (“more than war”) but “more than just cinema.” There is a greater responsibility to dealing with the holocaust as an art form and that would be to treat all of the inhabitants of that unimaginable universe with an attention to Zizek’s idea of

claustrophobic closure. In *Conspiracy*, what the voices are attempting to put forth is what Dr. Wilhelm Stuckart, one of the co-authors of the Nuremberg Laws, stated when he attempts to put a legalized spin on the final solution, that being to “deal with the reality of the Jew and the world will applaud us” (*Conspiracy* HBO Films 2001), “but to not treat them as inhuman phantoms is a mistake.” The irony of what Stuckart’s statement and what Hitler says to Albert Speer in one of the many vignettes in *Downfall* is telling: “How many thousands of hours have we spent on these magnificent models” (*Downfall*, Newmarket Films 2005). This attention to the voice of history shows the minutiae of Nazi conversations while “Rome was burning” so to speak in the images behind the actors of Speer and Hitler and their beautiful architectural models of Berlin and Linz that are never to be completed.

The image of Hitler in *Downfall* in his final days gazing adoringly over the huge, detailed model of his new Berlin with Albert Speer is brilliant for its preciseness to detail and the notion that when Hitler puts his hand on the great dome of Nazi power, his other hand is shown shaking with the disbelief that all in the room are feeling. This may have been the director Hirschbiegel taking liberties with a portrayal of Hitler, but the physical manifestation of Hitler’s shaking hand and his delusion over models at the end of the war is historically plausible, and has been alluded to by the doctors and attendants that were at his side at the end. Ganz is not the only actor to play Hitler as broken physically at the end, but is more convincing for film representation in his mannerisms and language. There is a burlesque-quality to many non-German actors who attempted to play Hitler and this could make for more of a caricature—an aesthetically flawed facsimile of history—and not a character of real history. Only cinema can give the audience the

immediacy of the visual medium and I feel that the five films I have chosen do fulfill this mode of Holocaust representative form of Holocaust otherness on screen.

Conspiracy

“Heydrich stands out as far more than ‘leader’ in the style of Goring, Himmler or Rosenberg. He was, as any close investigation of his life demonstrates, a technocrat *par excellence*. A role common in our own day was developed by him to an unusual degree of perfection; he personified the competitive spirit.”

(*Reinhard Heydrich: A Biography* 11)

“How does it happen that people become things?”(*Lessons and Legacies* 156)

“It was the rational modern civilization that made the Holocaust thinkable.”
(*Lessons and Legacies* 155)

“Politics is a nasty game. I think soldiering requires the discipline to do the *unthinkable* [italics mine] and Politics requires the skill to get someone else to do the *unthinkable* for you.” (*Conspiracy*, HBO Films, 2001)

To understand the idea behind Hitler’s “Final Solution of the Jewish Question,” one must understand the nature of the men that perpetrated the most monstrous, all-encompassing crime of all time and their “CEO,” in a warped sense of the word, SS Gruppenfuhrer Reinhard Heydrich. The director of *Conspiracy* Frank Pierson and the actor that plays Heydrich, Kenneth Branagh, both approached the making of this film with trepidation, but also with great expectation. In one of the featurettes that accompany *Conspiracy*, Branagh discusses the allure of playing Heydrich because it was a challenge for an actor to portray evil in such a banal form: “Even amongst a group of men who committed the most heinous crime in history he [Heydrich] was unique for the ferocity and cruelty and intensity of what he did” (*Conspiracy*, HBO Films, 2001). Pierson, when discussing how Branagh would play Gruppenfuhrer Heydrich, stated that Heydrich “had

no moral dimension [and] there was nothing inside the man” (*Conspiracy* HBO Films, 2001). I chose this film because the actors and the historical personages portrayed do not evince or attempt to evince any “star quality” or emotional/ sentimental appeal. Like Branagh’s Heydrich, the actors and their historical facsimiles show the cold and ruthless manipulation of words and euphemism that gave history a chilling portrait of evil at the Wannsee conference. Representation of the perpetrator in holocaust film may view this portrayal of the linguistic face of evil and let the language do the talking while the images of the Nazis pervades their own visual gaze of atrocity. The gaze of the executioner is never more relevant than in this semiotic fencing of these fifteen men who changed history forever in *Conspiracy*.

Conspiracy is not a *Hitlerpic*, nor does it focus on Jewish “otherness,” other than to show how inconsequential their “otherness” was to the bureaucracy of industrialized murder. What Branagh does in this film would go against one of the earlier suggestions that a British actor speaking English is not an effective mode of representation that does the Holocaust justice on film, but because of *Conspiracy*’s stage-like quality in the form of the “15 Angry Men” and their linguistic courtroom/boardroom discourse, the mode that Pierson takes in directing *Conspiracy* would seem a good theme for Holocaust representation. Preferably a film in German with German actors may be more in tune to my argument for representation, but *Conspiracy* is such an accurate rendering of the Wannsee Conference⁵⁰ that the choice of language and actors does not suffer from a lack

⁵⁰ The Wannsee Conference took place on January 20, 1942 at the Interpol Villa at Grosser Wannsee in the suburbs of Berlin. It is here that Reinhard Heydrich chaired the meeting that decided on the “method” for solving the Jewish question, as it was called, in the Nazi-occupied territories. It was at this meeting that Heydrich was acting on the direct authorization of Reichmarschal Herman Goring to “make all necessary preparations ... for carrying out the

of German language authenticity. In the initial scene in *Conspiracy*, Pierson has Heydrich elicit the order that Reichmarschal Goring gave the SS Gruppenfuhrer which basically laid the foundation for SS control of the Final Solution and Heydrich's role as its architect. What this use of Goring's order also does is give the film the historical accuracy of the top-level board meeting that took place at Wannsee and how the power shifted from Hitler's chancellery to the SS. *Conspiracy* shows that all the major governmental and military administrations were a part of the horror that took place during the Holocaust and most importantly, the film shows that all the participants at Wannsee came to agree on the genocide of the Jews as a "business-type" decision:

I charge you [Heydrich] to make all necessary preparations in organizational, practical and material respects for a general solution to the Jewish question in the German sphere of influence in Europe. As far as the competences of other central authorities are concerned, these are to be shared. I further charge you [Heydrich] to present me promptly with a general draft of the organizational, practical and material provisions for carrying out the *hoped-for* [mine] Final Solution (*Reinhard Heydrich: A Biography* 176).

Heydrich's reading of this mandate in *Conspiracy* gives viewers not only these banal murderers in the guise of Nazi functionaries, but also shows the pure cold technocrats that this modernist Nazi machine had produced. Pierson does not attempt to humanize or demonize his characters, and like most of the biographies of these men, *Conspiracy* remains true to the historical accounts of the Nazi bureaucracy.

hoped-for Final Solution to the Jewish question" (Deschner 176-77), and this is the exact transcript that Pierson used in *Conspiracy*. An excellent source for Heydrich and the Wannsee Conference can be found in Deschner, Gunter. *Reinhard Heydrich: A Biography*. New York: Stein and Day (1977), and Richard Rhodes. *Masters Of Death*. New York: Knopf (2002).

When Heydrich reads to his minions that Goring's *hoped for* solution to the Jewish question is the euphemism "evacuation," the other members of the meeting are still not informed of the "method" that is being discussed. By the end of the film the chronologically-driven debate of the conference follows a very distinct linguistic trail that goes from euphemism to euphemism to Heydrich finally stating: "Now the method is defined." By "method defined" Heydrich calmly gives the euphemism that perpetrated mass murder, and the end of any more euphemism for medical sterilization: "We will not sterilize every Jew and wait for them to die, we will not sterilize every Jew and then exterminate the race, that's farcical ... death is the most reliable form of sterilization. Put it that way" (*Conspiracy* HBO Films, 2001). *Conspiracy* is as ruthless in its language of perverse philosophy, "x-rays, injections. Why are we discussing theoretical solutions. Goethe said that theories are grey but real life is green. Stop chattering and let's be realists. Purge them. [the Jews] Totally off our land, ideally off our planet" (*Conspiracy* HBO Films 2001), as is Heydrich in his cold-blooded rationale. For Pierson, the drama is about remembering the banal horror of this meeting of mad logisticians, where for Steven Spielberg in *Schindler's List* the audience receives "Spielberg's obsession with the creation of the white, male savior" (Kolker 321), but "this obsession is not appropriate in the historical moment he is representing" (Kolker 321). I agree with Robert Kolker that this portrayal in *Schindler's List* of a white Christian savior is purely a Spielberg creation and the problem that this cause for a holocaust film lies in the misuse of a historical moment that Spielberg manipulates for his aesthetic ideology. Kolker states that Spielberg's film "only serve[s] the purpose of a kind of drama of forgetting, while the images around them force historical remembrance" (*Cinema of Loneliness* 321). The

forgetting comes because Spielberg's hero ideal allows the real horror of the Holocaust to be pushed behind the morality play of Oskar Schindler.

In *Schindler's List*, Spielberg's main characters Schindler and the Jewish Itzhak Stern, display single-minded "clever humility [Stern] and capitalist largesse" [Schindler] that shows Stern as "bartering with his fellow Nazis to supply them with goods if they allow him [Schindler] cheap Jewish labor" (321). This can also be seen as problematic for not only does the audience get a white savior figure in Schindler but his double is a weak, passive Jewish victim Stern. The film almost becomes a classic Hollywood "buddy film," that almost makes Schindler and Stern a Holocaust "Odd Couple." The problem here is that any form of carnival zing that one can get from this faulty characterization hurts the victim again for history and representation. I would argue that the doubling of character in *Conspiracy* in the form of Heydrich and Eichmann may be a more accurate form for holocaust representation than the doubling we see in the Schindler/Stern characterization in *Schindler's List*. In *Conspiracy*, this coupling gives the disquieting, yet historically cognitive assurance, that these were evil men incarnate but not monsters:

He had nothing but scorn for the dogmas and fantasies of the despised chicken-farmer Himmler. The craniometric proportions of the different races, the care of a deteriorating homeland or the Teutonic excavation of the ancestral heritage on the Crimea were of no concern to him. His [Heydrich] interests lay purely in power and in perfection.... He dedicated himself to his *task* [mine] with the same remarkable talent for organization, the same devotion, attention to detail and impartiality as did his colleague Albert Speer. Seen in this light, Heydrich [and Eichmann] emerges as one of those *technocratic geniuses* [mine] whose appraisal depends on the nature of their task. They

themselves do not care whether it is *good or bad*, and it is this attitude which is the seed of their guilt. (Deschner 12)

This idea of the savior German during the Holocaust is where Pierson's film differs from Spielberg. Though Oskar Schindler was as careerist and as driven as Heydrich, in *Schindler's List* he becomes a repentant gentile savior, but *Conspiracy* does not fall victim to convention and shows Heydrich as the vacuous monster he became. For Pierson, the character of Heydrich is a cold-blooded opportunist of the most deadly kind with no hint of humanism even though "he was the model of the successful careerist, a moral upstanding German ... a loving husband and father. In addition, he was a discerning and enthusiastic amateur musician, an ambitious athlete, and a courageous fighter pilot" (*Heydrich: A Biography* 8). For Spielberg, Oskar Schindler was a "bad man who became good." This convention in *Schindler's List* makes the horror of the Holocaust a secondary theme at times in *Schindler's List* and the film almost become more a story or biopic of "Oskar Schindler: the Righteous Gentile." Pierson's film is not a biopic and is not myopic in the depiction of evil in the film. *Conspiracy* is a type of "history as atrocity" on film that, unlike *Schindler's List*, which attempts to make the Holocaust a human interest story focusing on one man's [Oskar Schindler] salvation, *Conspiracy* deals with an *inhuman interest* story. Pierson's Heydrich, Adolph Eichmann and the Nazi "board of directors" at Wannsee give the viewer this "inhuman interest" theme that is an interesting theme for Holocaust representation that takes the perpetrator, and in showing their "normalcy" and careerism, how contemporary-thinking they were in their "mass murder as task" ethos.

The chillingly normal traits *Conspiracy* shows in the characters is what actor Stanley Tucci states in discussing his portrayal of Heydrich's deputy, Adolph Eichmann: "*Conspiracy* is more about power logistics and efficiency" and its banality had more to do with "the Nazis really trying to figure it out [how to murder the Jews] dispassionately like you would in your business" (*Conspiracy*, HBO Films, 2001). For Heydrich and his minions in *Conspiracy*, the specter of Hitler hangs above the proceedings like the harbinger of death that the Hitler cult encouraged in Nazi recorded history. The Wannsee conference can be seen as a "petit histoire" of the "Grande histoire" design that Hitler had for his world. In other words, killing the Jews was one of the categorical imperatives of his regime, but only one history in a larger history of Hitler's "thousand year Reich." This aura of Hitler may be more frightening than the visuals of a madman frothing at the mouth. *Conspiracy* shows that "Hitler's role....cannot be described as that of an inexorable giver of orders, but as that of a politician who gave his people free rein, encouraged them to develop the imagination to make the apparently impossible possible" (*'Final Solution': Nazi Population Policy and the Murder of the European Jews* 257). Instead of a direct portrayal of Hitler in *Conspiracy* we get the important ideal that these men at Wannsee not only wanted to do their job [murdering on a mass scale] to please Hitler and establish what Heydrich calls "a triumphant German vision," but to put their mark on the ages: "A thousand years from now, no matter who holds the power, *history* [italics mine] will be written in these words.... That we have advanced the human race to racial purity in so short a time Charles Darwin would be astonished" (*Conspiracy* HBO Films, 2001). Not only does Pierson's film show that history can be written on film in the

words of Heydrich, but the racial possibility that the Nazis envisioned for the world was a eugenic ideal that was the basis for much of Hitler's racist propaganda in *Mein Kampf*.

For the presentation on film of the Wannsee Conference, Pierson understands that in the larger picture this meeting represents a manipulation of language as much as it involved the manipulation of the defined/stereotyped people—in this case the Jews. Heydrich addresses this when he has to answer SS General Hoffman's queries about the possibility for "good Jews." To Hoffman, everyone "knows his good Jew even if he regards all the rest as vermin." Heydrich answers, "if they are decent Jews, then before they are decent, then indeed after, they are Jews, they go!" (*Conspiracy* HBO Films, 2001). *Conspiracy* shows that words can be manipulated and bureaucratic hegemonies can be shared, but when policy originates with Heydrich's SS, "Germany can [not] afford philosophy." This was Heydrich's answer to Kritzinger's noble flawed philosophy which means "hound, imprison and exploit Jews but don't kill them and that makes you God's noblest of men" (*Conspiracy* HBO Films, 2001). The soldier telling the bureaucrat the real story, or what the film shows is the "iron behind the glove" discourse that the SS used to show their all-encompassing power at Wannsee. Gotz Aly discusses the idea of the soldier/government functionary and their "initiative" in following the dictates of Hitler, not directly from the Fuhrer's mouth, but implied in the rhetoric:

Early on, a resettlement official in Posen [Poland] explained the challenge posed him by tasks that he had 'not known so far' in his life. No Fuhrer's orders helped him to 'master even the most difficult situations'; there was only a type of general authorization with which he was to prove himself a ruthless man of action, [and to be] undisturbed by even the most objectionable reality—that is, 'the Fuhrer's'

words [were] to strike from the dictionary of the German people the word ‘impossible.’”

[This meant] the ‘flow of administrative measures’, which at the ‘threshold of the killing phase was unchecked ... [which] for one, coordinated the demands made of it for mass deportations ... [and] in some cases murderous proposals from [the] subordinate and lateral offices, passed them on to superiors, and ensured [as well as absolved] permission to carry out the proposed measures. (*Final Solution* 257)

What Aly shows here is that the chain of command that soldiers, and bureaucrats alike in the Third Reich, followed was much like the Mafia/CIA type hierarchy/conspiratorial ethos that allows for the most murderous atrocities to take place, but for no one to really take the blame for “pulling the trigger.” Heydrich tells Major Lange that “we are soldiers and we do what the politicians will not.” By this he means the unthinkable, but as Lange states when he responds to Dr. Kritzinger's statement that “this is more than war,” with “try chaos,” the real answer comes when Kritzinger asks how a lawyer like Lange can apply his law education to mass killings. Lange states that the Nazi law “has made me distrustful of language, [but] a gun means what it says” (*Conspiracy* HBO Films, 2001).

In *Conspiracy*, the meeting has only two dissenters, but there is no Spielberg-like hero who will take a stand against ultimate evil. Though they raise objections they eventually fall into line. What Pierson’s actors Colin Firth [Wilhelm Stuckart] and David Threlfall [Dr. Kritzinger] give in their defense of the law, for a brief historical moment, the impression that though they are the makers of the law (both are ministers in the

chancellery and foreign ministry), it is a fanatic Nazi like Judge Roland Freisler (justice department) who can take the laws Stuckart and Kritzinger propose and “revise” them to fit Hitler’s law. In essence, Stuckart as co-author of the Nuremberg Laws is the “lawmaker,” but Judge Freisler is in effect, the “law taker.” This is the crux of the legal ethics discourse in *Conspiracy*, they couch their murder in a debate on the legality of “law.” Not only is law somewhat ubiquitous, but when Stuckart tells the men “there are some things you just cannot do,” Heydrich’s answer is emotionless and pure evil, “as you say Doctor.”(*Conspiracy* HBO Films, 2001). When Kritzinger defends his colleague’s “belief in the supremacy of law” the real Nazi “justice” system speaks in all its vitriolic hatred and stereotype in the form of Freisler. For “Judge” Freisler it is “supremacy of hate and ideology” that is being discussed, not any legal matter:

“A communist by definition has a defect of reason.... The Russian is not [but the Jew is] a Communist.... The Russian does not give a damn who runs things. The Russian only cares he has a bottle of vodka to suck and some form of animal life to fuck. Then he will happily sit in shit his whole life. That is his *politics*. I *absolve the Jews* [mine] of that” (*Conspiracy* HBO Films, 2001).

Roland Freisler, who was the insane judge that tormented the June 1944 conspirators that attempted to assassinate Hitler at the Wolf’s Lair in East Prussia, is an ironic foil for “the law” in *Conspiracy*. Pierson directs the performance to show that though Freisler is just one inhuman interest story in a room of inhuman interest stories, his propaganda is true to the historiographical method that asks the audience to understand that the Jew, not the Russian peasant, was first, foremost, and to the end, the real Bolshevik “Red” menace. This petit histoire underneath the cover of vitriolic

stereotypes of drunken Russians and Slavic hordes is never forgotten, but the eternal enemy of the Nazis and the whole essence of geopolitical hatred of Hitler, is once and forever shown in *Conspiracy*; that being anti-Semitism.

Pierson's *Conspiracy* shows that all the men at Wannsee saw their "work" in three separate officialdoms. The first officialdom is political, and is pure *realpolitik* by Martin Bormann's deputy, Dr. Gerhard Klopfer: "The ruling principle of our party is to make Germany Jew-Free." The second officialdom is legal, and is pure *fuhrerspeak* by one of the few non-lawyers at the meeting, SS General Heydrich: "All our actions must be predicated on the Nuremberg laws" and if the Nuremberg laws are not enough "evoking *Fuehrerprinzip*⁵¹, 'his [Hitler] word absolves all written law.'" The third officialdom is the most troubling, the military-industrial-racial complex, and it is pure *murderspeak* by SS Major Rudolph Lange: "I have the real feeling I *evacuated* [mine] 30,000 Jews already by *shooting* them at Riga. Is what I did evacuation? When they fell were they evacuated? There are another 20,000 at least waiting for similar evacuation. I just think it is helpful to know what words mean" (*Conspiracy* HBO Films, 2001). What all this discourse of atrocity in "official-ese" represents for film theory and Holocaust representation is the important notion that, according to Robert Reimer, is a telling feature of Nazi retro-film which *Conspiracy* and all films selected for this project

⁵¹ *Fuehrerprinzip* was the leadership principle that allowed Hitler as dictator to overrule all written law when he saw fit to do so. According to Allan Bullock in *Hitler and Stalin: Parallel Lives*. (New York: Knopf, 1991), "in reality Hitler's power as Fuhrer exceeded that of any monarch. The notion of "divine right" was replaced by the claim [*Fuehrerprinzip*] that the Fuhrer was the savior appointed by Providence and...the embodiment and medium of the unarticulated will of the people" (344). For William Shirer in *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, the *Fuehrerprinzip* meant that "surely every man will have advisers by his side, but *the decision will be made by one man*. Only he possesses the authority and the right to command... This principle—absolute authority—will gradually breed an elite of leaders" (89-90).

represent. For Reimer, the filmmaker needs to push the audience to understand that “film provides a vehicle for understanding the appeal of *systems* [mine] that viewers would otherwise find abhorrent, for they make viewers a part of the system and then bring them to judge it” (*Nazi-Retro Film: How German Narrative Cinema Remembers the Past*. 8).

The discourse and debate in *Conspiracy* is much like a seminar or debating society meeting and for representation the viewer may recognize that the gaze of the executioner in *Conspiracy* is a “reflection [that] makes viewers aware that they are identifying with the characters, who act in support of a regime whose actions have been universally judged as immoral. On the one hand, spectators identify with the characters, see themselves in the characters, and come to understand why the characters act as they do” (Reimer 9), [and] “spectators are free to judge—as they may judge themselves in a mirror—the actions of the characters in light of what they know about the Third Reich” (Reimer 9). Films like *Conspiracy* not only viewers to recognize the gaze of the victim through the eyes of the executioner or vice-versa, but to view the executioner through the gaze of a victim, and after processing that gaze, “at the end of the film [answer] an important question: would they have acted differently?” (*Nazi-Retro Film* 8). The most horrendous irony of this query by Reimer would seem to find fruition at the end of *Conspiracy*. Heydrich tells a story of a man who hated his father all his life, but when the father died the son was overcome with fits of tears and sadness. The story was meant to show that when the Jews were finally erased from the planet would the Nazis still have purpose. This question is at the crux of *Conspiracy* and theoretically may parallel the idea of Žižek about the libidinal impact of the unreal in Lacan. For Žižek: “Consider the way the figure of the Jews functioned in Nazi discourse; the more they were exterminated,

eliminated, the fewer their numbers, the more dangerous their remainder became.... This is again an exemplary case of the subject's relation to the horrifying object that embodies its surplus enjoyment: the more we fight against it, the more its power over us grows" (*Looking Awry* 6). What makes this so troubling in *Conspiracy* is not only are the characters a vision of a doubling that has nothing to do with redemption, only banality and ruthless careerism, but that after the fact that they [the SS] did not actually destroy the enemy they sought to destroy. Many Nazis like Eichmann, at the end of the film, simply state "I will not miss the Israelites" (*Conspiracy* HBO Films, 2001), but ironically, the Nazis, by attempting to destroy world Jewry and the Bolshevik menace, only succeeded in making Stalin and communism stronger in territories lost in the aftermath of Hitler, most notably East Germany and Hitler's beloved Berlin.

Unlike Spielberg in his portrayal of Oskar Schindler, Pierson does not allow for a possibility of nobility in his portrayal of a murderous, technical drone like Heydrich. In "Spielberg's Oskar: Hollywood Tries Evil" Omar Bartov explores the character sentimentality and need for renewal that is a tenet of all Spielberg films and why possibly this does not work for a Holocaust film: "In *Schindler's List* we find ourselves in the cautious position of watching [Oskar] Schindler (crook turned saint) and [Amon] Goeth (the embodiment of evil) towering both physically (as tall, handsome Aryans) and personally (as clearly etched, strong characters) over a mass of physically small, emotionally confused, frantic, almost featureless Jews"(Cited in Loshitzky, *Spielberg's Holocaust* 48), which ironically is very problematic for Holocaust representation because it can "evoke the kind of stereotypes Nazism thrived on"(Cited in Loshitzky *Spielberg's Holocaust* 48-49).

What *Conspiracy* does and *Schindler's List* misses at times is the images on film and the discourse in the film that evince the notion that the victims did become things literally, physically and mentally, and the rationale of a modern, technical civilization gave us the Wannsee bureaucrats, but also gave us the slave marketeer Schindler and the Plaszow ghetto bureaucracy of Goeth, Schindler and, in a sad sense, Stern. *Conspiracy*, like *Downfall* and *The Night Porter* give us characters that “are clearly somebody other than heroes and heroines. They are either peripheral characters [in relation to the specter of Hitler, Himmler, Goring and Goebbels or other larger than life Nazi figures] who do not engage the sympathy of viewers, or monstrous villains whom the viewers and protagonists oppose together” (Reimer 4), but for viewers these characters also function “as a signpost in which the certain articles of the cinematic codes or sub-codes are made responsible for suggesting to the spectator the vector along which permanent identification with his own look [gaze] should be extended temporarily inside the film” (*Nazi-Retro Film 4*).

The Night Porter

“The repeated representation of brutality acted out on the bodies of women evokes a common trope of Holocaust films. The eroticized woman victim.” (Loshitzky 127)

“Horror is the brush with the *there is*.”(Levinas, *Existence and Existents* 1)

The idea of a film that focuses on rape, torture, kidnapping and disturbing mental and physical cruelty would seem to be just cheap cinematic Nazi pornography. Many critics' view Liliana Cavani's *The Night Porter* as soft pornography with a Nazi theme, but when viewers revisit this film, the images of kidnapping and sexual slavery echo the prisoner ethos that pervaded the camps in Nazi Germany. *The Night Porter* is about the

death camp experience that lingers into the present and the brush with horror has no escape even after the Holocaust was over. Emmanuel Levinas' theory of horror fits Cavani's two main characters very succinctly. Both Max and Lucia face a "brush with the horror of the [il'y a] *there is*" as well as what I would term the "brush with the [il n'y'etait] *there wasn't*." In *The Night Porter*, the "there is" was the death camp experience as a macrocosm of horror and the "there wasn't" was the microcosm of the master/slave relationship that neither former SS sadist Max nor Jewish sex slave Lucia can escape.

An important ideal for Holocaust representation is to show the image of the "there is" in terms of what the characters project to viewers as a visual vector to pain and torture, but also to show the hidden horrors that a film like *The Night Porter* gives. It is too easy to dismiss this film as horror pornography, or the biography of ghoulish Nazi "sado-monsters." There are scenes of sexual and murderous depravity that might cross an artistic line, but in terms of Holocaust realism, these sexually depraved cinematic stills make a case that abject horror knows no bounds and the surprises, like Lucia's surprise when Max presents her with the severed head of a prisoner that was bothering her. This scene only goes to show the abject nature sadistic sexual trauma that is a feature of the torturer-victim sexual relationship. Max thinks she will be thankful he has taken this burden from her, and in this type of bizarre universe the crux of a certain death camp dystopia comes to the forefront in *The Night Porter*. Cavani does not use cheap cinematic pornography, cinematic discourse of Nazi totalitarianism under the guise of sadomasochism, yet the most important ethos in *The Night Porter* is the same ethos of the death camp; that being the all encompassing power the Nazis had over their helpless

victims; in this case not only physical torture, but sexual torture that in the post-war period became the diverse pleasure of a sadomasochistic tryst that allows no survivor, whether SS sadist or his now-willing victim to escape..

The Night Porter is different from the mainstream/documentary type films chosen for this project. Cavani's films' focus is psychosexual. This film is important for representation for its fascination with the *sadosex* [mine] universe of sadistic sexual voyeurism, necrophilia and pain. Many survivors of the camps talked of their experience as being in the anus mundi [ass-hole] of the world. In Cavani's *The Night Porter* we get the aftermath of that anus mundi, in essence we get the "jackboot in the rear," or the "universe" of the signifying body as deposit area for filth and defilement in a most perverse state. I agree with Yosefa Loshitzky that women are objectified in many Holocaust films and narratives, but I will argue that Cavani's film does not entirely do this. *The Night Porter* is a film that objectifies women on one hand as sexual medusa, but also shows how disenfranchised and eroticized the Jewess became in some of the death camp experiences for women. I would argue that Spielberg's *Schindler's List* objectifies women in a more problematic form than does Cavani in *The Night Porter*. I agree with Loshitzky that the shower scene at Auschwitz and Spielberg's "ride to the rescue"⁵² motif

⁵² Mark Winchell in *Leslie Fiedler* (Boston; Twayne, 1985), discusses the literary influence of Sir Walter Scott on the reconstruction South and the power of the "ride to the rescue" motif in filmmaker D.W. Griffith's history-pic film *The Birth of a Nation*. Ironically in *Schindler's List* the white male is going to save the disenfranchised Jewish slave laborer. For Winchell "rather than diminishing Scott's influence on the South, the confederate defeat simply enhanced the desire for romantic self-delusion. Dixon quite explicitly equates the Ku Klux Klan with the heroic highlanders of the *Waverly* novels" (*Leslie Fiedler* 66). Spielberg's use of the rescue motif is problematic for its attempt to make the white hero seem like a white "German" knight saving the defenseless Jews. For Winchell "the image of these white knights on horseback [*Schindler* speeding up to Auschwitz in his limousine] has provided the model for a million B-movie rides to the rescue, in which no matter how stereotyped, it never loses its primordial

are problematic and further objectify women's bodies on film as more sexual object in the camps than as prisoner.

Both *The Night Porter* and *Schindler's List* eroticize the Jewish female prisoner. In Cavani's film Lucia is a separate entity, a caricature of the Jewish sex slave that was a feature of certain Nazi sadism, whereas in *Schindler's List*, viewers get a collective of female objectification that unlike the *Night Porter* still allows for their objectification to be silenced by a great male savior figure. In *The Night Porter*, the SS sadist becomes the sexual savior for Lucia as she becomes the sexual medusa for him. There is no happy ending and the perverse choice of Max and Lucia only prolongs the post-traumatic impossibility many survivors, both victim and executioner, faced after the horror. I would argue that the sexual prison is an effective theme for representation in its depiction of another type of prison for the unfortunate victims during the Holocaust. Where *Schindler* must rescue the helpless Jewish collective from the showers to enforce the white male rescue motif, Max and Lucia are forever victims of their degraded history.

One of the problems that occur from Spielberg's use of female objectification in the shower scene is a question that many Holocaust deniers, in this case Robert Faurisson, cite when dealing with the Holocaust. Faurisson's question could come from a reading of a character speech in *Schindler's List* where a prisoner, Mila Pfefferberg, states when hearing about gas chambers that "the rumors could not be true. Any Jew who could possibly know about such killings—anyone who had been inside the gas chambers, wouldn't be around to tell about it" (*Spielberg's Holocaust* 128). For a determined

power" (*Leslie Fiedler* 66). The question is for Spielberg, "does this power diminish the Jew as victim instead of rescuing them in the sense of their victimhood. For more on Griffith and the chivalric white knight motif, see Michael Rogin. "The Sword Became a Flashing Vision: D. W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation*," in *Representations* 9 (Winter 1985).

Holocaust revisionist like Faurisson, the question he then asks would follow this line:” to have really seen with his own eyes a gas chamber would be the condition which gives one the authority to say it exists ... the only acceptable proof is that one died from it. But if one is dead, one cannot testify ... there is no victim that is not dead; otherwise this gas chamber would not be what he or she claims it to be. There is, therefore, no gas chamber” (*Spielberg’s Holocaust* 129). The problem for future generations, for victims and representative art, is the problem that the deniers can bring up when aesthetics take too many liberties with the Holocaust, for example, Spielberg’s shower scene or the discourse of Mila Pfefferberg. I agree with Loshitzky that “by representing the claims of the Holocaust deniers within what purports to be historically accurate and a master-narrative of sorts, Spielberg sets up the expectation that *Schindler’s List* will strongly refute these claims. Nothing of the sort occurs. Instead, the film ends up affirming the arguments of the deniers” (Loshitzky 129), and even more problematic is that “in light of the debate in the Plaszow barracks [Mila Pfefferberg], the spray of shower water which finally allays both the women’s fear that they will perish and the audience’s fear that they will witness this murder, also seemingly refute the reality of the gas chamber” (*Spielberg’s Holocaust* 129).

The technique Spielberg uses in *Schindler’s List* is more of a sexually-charged visual eroticism as signifier of Jewess’s in the camps, which besides refuting the possibility of the gas chambers, also may marginalize the Jewess more than their male Jewish brethren. Whereas Spielberg’s shower scene adds to this problem of objectification, there is also the scene between Goeth and Helen Hirsch, which adds a dual horror to the projection of women in *Schindler’s List*, and it is not a vision of

women that is instructive for Holocaust representation. For Loshitzky, “the ambivalence of Goeth’s attraction to Helen, and the vulgar comment of Schindler’s cell mate about intercourse with Jewish women (“Did your prick fall off?”), reveal the film’s awareness of the complicated trope of the eroticized Jewess in the popular imagination.... The association of sexuality with atrocity implicates not only the Jewish women but the Aryan women as well” (129). Granted, Cavani’s Lucia in *The Night Porter* is also a problematic objectification of the female body on film, but in *The Night Porter*, the pornographic images are different in their signification. The objectification of both Lucia and her torturer Max are not a stylized vehicle for negative female erotica, instead *The Night Porter* is a case study in the objectification of pornography, in this case Nazi sadomasochism. Max, the Nazi photographer, is fascinated by the gaze of his objectified victim, and in her fear and also her excitement, Max sees in the gaze of his victim the total sense of depraved tunnel vision of a master over a slave. The scene that evinces this “brush with the there can’t be” is when Max follows Lucia in a half-naked sexual mis-en-scene that follows Nazi Max through the lens of ever-present video camera, while another Nazi sodomizes a motionless male inmate in almost a “*muselmanner* snuff film”⁵³ type sadomasochism The empty gaze of the skeletal prisoners watching Max and Lucia’s “dance of degradation” [mine] follows a sight line that denies sight and

⁵³ The term *Muselmanner* [mussulman] was concentration camp jargon for the type of camp inmate that had lost their will to live. In Michael Marrus’ *The Holocaust in History* (New York: Penguin, 1987), Marrus describes this prisoner-type in Hitler’s Death camps as being an aim of the Nazis in destroying their victims’ will to live. For psychologist Bruno Bettelheim, the SS “set out deliberately to dehumanize their victims, to break down their autonomy and turn them into docile masses from which no individual or group act of resistance could arise... When they succeeded, the result was the often-observed ... *Muselmanner* ... taken from and alleged Muslim belief in fatalism-people who were so deprived of affect, self-esteem, and every form of stimulation ... the environment [had] total power over them”(Cited in Marrus, 130).

encourages a type of “blindness while seeing” [mine] that would echo this horror of the “brush with the there can’t be.”

The degradation of the Other-Lucia-and the other camp inmates while they are raped and sexually mutilated, mirrors what Zizek’s discussion of Lacan and the relation of gaze and the scopic field [eye] in pornography, in the sense that pornography reduces the point of the object gaze in the small *other*: “In pornography, the other [the person shown on screen] is degraded to an object of voyeuristic pleasure, we must [then] stress that it is the spectator [Max] himself who effectively occupies the position of the object” (*Looking Awry* 110). In *The Night Porter* Lucia is the real subject. She is the actress on the stage and the camera screen, and the SS [Max] the objectified spectator paralyzed in their object gaze. The scene in which Lucia dances in the guise of a seductive androgynous cabaret Nazi-mannequin while sexually-stupefied SS watch, parallels this notion of fixed gaze to this role of objectified spectator. The objectification of the SS in this scene is not a clever cinematic device employed by Cavani, but a reversal of roles of victim to torturer in the objectification of the gaze of the performer. In this scene the Nazis become imprisoned, in a sense, by their gaze and this redirects the viewer to a sense of their [SS] objectified erectile numbness in a aura of a throbbing sexual silence where, in essence, the throbbing penis becomes a metaphor for a brush with the “there can’t be” Male power is reduced in this scene and all the power shifts to Lucia.

Cavani’s depiction of the Jewess Lucia is twofold; a slave, but also the *idée fixe* of Max. The woman as *idée fixe* theme comes from the genre of film noir and this may be a suggestive tenet for future Holocaust representation, which for *The Night Porter*, fits the general theme of objectification; in this case, the woman as slave and also as the

“fatal attraction-type femme fatale for the Nazi tormentor. In *Schindler’s List* the female is also a twofold creation, but the “Schindler Jewesses” [mine] are twofold in an idea that can be argued is ineffective for it keeps them as victims without choice, which in the *Night Porter* is choice [after the war] to having no choice during the war. The two areas Spielberg’s film enforces are that the Jewish women of Schindler are 1] powerless as Jews and as women but 2] they are threatened and powerless for their supposed dark, Jewish sexuality. I view the figure of Helen Hirsch and the shower scene in *Schindler’s List* as problematic for Holocaust representation. The *Night Porter’s* overtly sexual theme and the enigma of sadomasochism amidst the Nazi environs may be more relevant for Holocaust representation in its sexual marginalization of the female as well as the male protagonist. Cavani’s treatment of the concentration camp victim as “sexual slave/survivor” is not cheap pornography, but a visceral, psychological journey into the sexual and state-sponsored terrorism that allowed the Nazis to rule not only the minds of their victims, but their bodies as well. All the characters in this film seem to function with an imprint of death on them, and when the tormentor Max, and his former SS colleagues become trapped in a brush with horror, like their victims [Lucia], they all enter an area between what Lacan terms as being between “two deaths.”

Max is caught between what Žižek terms the “distinction and domain between two deaths”- between the Lacanian distinction of existence and ex-istence. Max comes to the realization that in Lacanian would understand that “there is no conservation of jouissance, no proportionate relationship between jouissance sacrificed and jouissance gained, no sense in which the Other jouissance makes up for or makes good the inadequacy or paucity of phallic jouissance-in a word, no *complementarity* or

commensuration (*The Lacanian Subject* 122). Max is also caught between “two deaths,” the unconditional connection between drive and demand, which Lacan sees as a “standing outside of” or a “standing apart from”—in this case the waif-like Lucia— and his drive to possess her amidst the Nazi cover-up [his murder of an ex-group member]. Though the Lacanian paradox of “woman does not exist” and “the Other jouissance does not exist” may seem lost in a film where the sexual relationship between Max and Lucia is all encompassing, in its emptiness lies the Lacanian notion that “there’s no such thing as a sexual relationship, ‘*Il y a de l’Un, Il n’y a pas d’Autre de l’Autre*’” (*The Lacanian Subject* 122). Max and Lucia’s incarnate drive for each other returns them to a state of innocence—cannibals fighting over a last drop of jam—animals sexually fondling and fornicating like animals—until they are shot—he in his SS uniform, she in her “little girl’s” outfit. Both characters affirm their existence in their sexual relationship, but in reality they affirm Lacan’s idea of existence and existence—in the sense that jouissance for Max and Lucia “is beyond the symbolic, standing apart from symbolic castration. It exists. We can discern a place for it within our symbolic order, and even name it, but it nevertheless remains ineffable, unspeakable ... sexual relationships, however are distinct in this respect: they cannot be written, and thus neither exist nor ex-ist (*The Lacanian Subject* 122). Max does have a symbolic “settling of accounts.” Žižek’s allusion to Lacan and Antigone is reticent here in the sense that Antigone “irradiates a sublime beauty from the moment she enters the domain between two deaths, between her symbolic and actual death (*Looking Awry* 22). For Max “settling accounts” brings him and Lucia to a symbolic death amidst their sublime state of abject hunger and sexual deprivation.

The aforementioned notion of woman as *idée fixe* is another important parallel Zizek mentions in his allusion to Lacan. I feel the character of Lucia- in relation to the film's hero/anti-hero Max- in *The Night Porter* is the best example of "the non-existence of this woman [who] is rendered manifest to the hero by the absence of her inscription in the sociosymbolic network: the intersubjective community of the hero acts as if she does not exist, as if she were only his *idée fixe*" (*Looking Awry* 80). For Max his "little girl" is just that an "*idée fixe*" because when he photographed her in the concentration camps she was objectified—a tool for sadomasochistic pleasure and an object of voyeurism. She is not part of the intersubjective network, nor is she considered anything except objectified animal in the mind of the SS guards. For Max, on seeing his "little girl" again this notion of *idée fixe* takes on a type of realized hallucination. Max knows she will be his death and Lucia also cannot resist the torturer in their total giving over to an *other*. Max's problem is in his fatal attraction to Lucia and vice-versa but in this fatal attraction lies in the "truth [that] is on the side of his *idée fixe*, even though his insistence on it threatened to exclude him from the symbolic community" (80). What Max may see as trickery by his former SS mates and the people in the hotel is, in reality, their attempt to bring him back to reality- though it is their reality.

Granted, *The Night Porter* is supposed to bring about Max's end at the hands of his former victim Lucia, but there can be no real answer to their end, except possibly their release from their own paranoia, which for Max "does not consist in his radical disbelief, in his conviction that there is universal deception-but rather, in his belief in a hidden agent who manipulates this deception, who tries to dupe him into accepting that the woman does not exist" (*Looking Awry* 81). In their paranoid state in the closed up

apartment, hungry and animalistic in their sexuality, both Max and Lucia realize that “she certainly does exist; the impression of her nonexistence is nothing but an effect of the deception staged by the conspiratory Other ... who try to dupe the heroine [and the hero] into accepting that the lady ... never existed” (*Looking Awry* 81).

Two more important parallels to Žižek’s study of Lacan in *The Night Porter* are the sublimation and fall of the object especially in the sense of the power of fascination—and the Hitchcockian sense of “double scansion—the change in modality between the first and second part. The obvious relation to Alfred Hitchcock’s *Vertigo* is relevant here in 1) Scotty’s duping and fascination with finding and remaking Madeline in his own sublime image—which for Madeline is lethal—and 2) the double scansion evidenced in *Vertigo* by the two different sections of the film—the false suicide of part I and the real necessary death of Madeline in part II. This same sublimation is wrought upon Max, in the sense “that sublimation, while having nothing to do with ‘desexualization’ has all the more to do with death: the power of fascination exerted by a sublime image always announces a lethal dimension” (*Looking Awry* 83). For Max the encountering of Lucia, now a successful woman of the world married to a famous conductor, is sublime in the sense that neither can resist the “pull” of the other—Max in his need to possess her again like in the camps, and Lucia, like the “white slave” addicted to Max’s voyeuristic perversions. Both are reticent in their sadomasochistic sublimity—both know that in their recognition and fascination with each other is the lethal dimension that can only end in death.

The double scansion effect is also prevalent in *The Night Porter* because like *Vertigo* the first part of the film has to do with Max’s obsessional lure back into his

voyeuristic past as an SS photographer in the camps. There is an illusion to Lucia dancing in a most seductive way dressed in Nazi regalia and in her waif-like inmate state is abjectly sexual yet impossible for Max to forget. Max's obsession becomes impossible when against his friends advice he can only proclaim his fascination and his impossible fascination; "I have found my little girl again, I have found her" (*The Night Porter*, Janus Films, 1973). For Lucia her death functions as a Hegelian second death—a "loss of loss." Her initial death is in the camps where her dehumanization and degradation are the albatross she cannot conquer. Max, though the purveyor of her hell is, like Scotty, fascinated with recreating his "little girl"—so much that her death is as necessary as his. Unfortunately, Max and Lucia's master/slave adherence resonate in this Hitchcockian "loss of loss" that Žižek relates back to a Hegelian "second death" in the psychoanalytic process:

By obtaining the object, we lose the fascinating dimension of loss as that which captivates our desire. True, Judy [Lucia] finally gives herself to Scotty [Max], but—to paraphrase Lacan—this gift of her person is "changed inexplicably into a gift of *shit*: [my emphasis] she becomes a common woman, repulsive even. [Lucia then becomes an animal as well].... The abyss Scottie [Max and Lucia] is finally able to look into is the very abyss of the hole in the Other [the symbolic order], concealed by the fascinating presence of the fantasy object. (*Looking Awry* 86)

The Night Porter typifies the classic master/slave relationship that is an integral feature of the erotic nature of sadomasochism. *The Night Porter* evinces an aura of castrated sensuality that pervades the depictions of Cavani's Max and Lucia and their dual castration serves as a microcosm in the film for the larger emptiness of the

concentration camp victim cohort, as well as the sadistic temperaments of their SS tormentors. Because the Holocaust was a castration of the humanness of civilized man, *The Night Porter's* symbolic use of the castrated sexuality of its victims serves the genre of Holocaust film in a visceral vector that allows the gaze of the tormented to be viewed from a distance, but its signification of the evil that pervades the Holocaust is visible. *The Night Porter* exhibits an underlying subscript of signified “horror without terror” in the sense that Max and Lucia build their horror with smiles on their faces and enjoy their pain. For critics Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen this subscript of castrated personalities echoes Lacan’s scenario of castration, which is “an essentially symbolic drama in which castration takes over in a decisive metaphor all the losses, both real and imaginary that the child already suffered” (*Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings* 812).

In *The Night Porter* Lucia remains in this child-like state [Max’s “little girl”], sexually and emotionally, thereby visually imprinting her torture by the sadistic camera-bearing Nazi Max on her being forever. Cavani’s camera angles give the viewer this sense of surreal photo images of sexuality and torture from this castrated view of the photographer Max. Max ironically becomes the “doomed man to the femme fatale” in his being chained to “his little-girl” Lucia and she being chained to him in their castrated desires for each other. This trope of perverse abjection in the guise of castrated humanity in *The Night Porter* can be evidenced in Julia Kristeva’s discussion of the abjection of self and its delight in a masochistic abasement of self. This idea would seem to fit a victim paradigm of Holocaust representation that would depict many death camp survivors as being in a type of masochistic state of impossible unbelief, which can parallel Kristeva’s depiction of a masochistic state:

The question remains as to the ordeal, a secular one this time, that abjection can constitute for someone, who, in what is termed knowledge of castration, turning away from perverse dodges, presents himself with his own body and ego as the most precious non-objects; they are no longer seen in their own right but forfeited, abject. The termination of analysis can lead us there.... Such are the pang and delights of masochism. (*Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* 5)

This idea that a film can function as a type of psychoanalytic session can make an interesting suggestion to the field of Holocaust representation. The importance to bear witness and the influence of trauma on victim and perpetrator has formed a great deal of this project in the covert silences that accompany great trauma and abuse. At certain junctures in *The Night Porter* the techniques displayed by Cavani's mise-en-scene functions like a voyeur watching from behind the psychoanalyst couch. The way the scenes are set up by Cavani lends the audience a clinical sense of being behind the gaze of the psychologist while they attempt to see inside the emptiness of the gaze of both Max and Lucia. Their gaze evinces an animal sexuality and bestial masochistic is meant to confuse, disturb and elicit discourse about the film's intent.

At the end of Cavani's *The Night Porter* this termination of the psychological analysis that is at the crux of Max and Lucia's doomed tryst follows Kristeva's idea that the termination of analysis [or suicide in the case of Max and Lucia] leads to a non-objective stance. In the case of Max and Lucia the end of analysis leads to a "knowledge" of their own castrated release from the trauma of the past. For Lucia, it is in a "child needing her father" abusive reaching out to her Nazi tormentor. For Max, it is his need to possess his "little girl," his dystopian mistress/slave daughter of Auschwitz. The trope of

femme-fatale fatal attraction and sadomasochist master and slave do not function as horror pornography in *The Night Porter*, but evince the only type of release many victims had from the Holocaust; that being a release in death from anxiety and despair. Max and Lucia's deaths are a type of return to Auschwitz for neither is able to move past the Holocaust horrors and atrocities that signify Max as executioner and signify Lucia as doomed slave. This is why Max goes to his death in his black SS uniform, and Lucia goes to her death dressed in her little girl clothing reminiscent of the sexual slave fantasy. The Holocaust can always be portrayed, even in death, in a perverse fashion. An event that defies even death would seem to call for an unexplainable vision even of the end of Max and Lucia. Cavani's *The Night Porter* is deliberately confusing, but also intended to provoke continual thought. There is no closure, only that claustrophobic mania of the sexual deprivation many prisoners faced in Auschwitz.

In the beginning of this discussion of *The Night Porter*, I stated that the "brush with the there is," is an important theme in Cavani's film, but an even more important theme in *The Night Porter* is the "brush with the there wasn't." Both Max and Lucia find themselves entwined in a sadistic psychosexual imprisonment of a historical epoch that still "was not," theoretically or in terms of the human experience. Auschwitz *was* [italics mine] but also *was not*. The horror for Max and Lucia is "in a certain way, a movement which will strip consciousness of its very 'subjectivity,' not in pacifying it within unconsciousness, but in precipitating it into an *impersonal vigilance*, into a *participation*" (*Existence without Existing* 3). The vigilance that Max and Lucia evince in their nightmare is at first a sexually explosive "reunion" of their Auschwitz experiences, but as the film progresses and the couple falls into a state of abject lust and horror their "idyllic

sexual hell” is broken by the intrusion Max’s old SS comrades coming to destroy them. Every area of space becomes a prison and even the safety of the nocturnal death nuptial of their sexual fantasy life is invaded: “the nocturnal space [which] is no longer empty space; transparency, which, at once distinguishes us from things and gives us access to them” is denied to Max and Lucia and their lack of food and sleep “make things appear ... through the night, as a monstrous presence which suffocates us in insomnia” (*Existence without Existing* 3). *The Night Porter* shows that when Max and Lucia reach their final animal state they encounter an impossibility that becomes an invasion of the senses that a victim or perpetrator of the Holocaust cannot get past; in essence they can never sleep again and life is impossible. For Levinas, “the impossibility of rending the invading, inevitable, and anonymous rustling of existence manifests itself particularly in certain times when sleep evades our appeal. One watches on when there is *nothing to watch* ... despite the absence of any reason for remaining watchful” (*Existence Without Existing* 8). Max and Lucia finally get past this and death is the only cognitive exercise left for them. They are victims of the gaze of the “impossible Holocaust” and it takes no prisoners.

Cavani’s *The Night Porter* is the most psychosexual and theoretical film chosen for this project. What I find fascinating about this film for representative art is that it may not be fit into any neat film genre or sub-genre. To simply state *The Night Porter* fits a sexual-psychological-historical matrix would be to ignore the technical implications that this films' treatment of the Holocaust gives audiences. Aside from the surreal performances of Dirk Bogarde as Max and Charlotte Rampling as Lucia, the gaze of Max as the voyeuristic sadistic monster-Nazi, doubled with Rampling’s child-like cadaver

adherence to her master, allows the abject to function on screen in a most effective discourse of atrocity. Lucia's cadaver-like appearance has a dual nature in *The Night Porter*. Her torment mirrors first the erotic camp slave and secondly is a ghostly reminder of what the SS in camps attempted did to their victims; they turned them into phantom beings, or as Levinas states "the cadaver is the horrible. It causes already in its own phantom; it announces the phantoms' [Max] return. The *revenant*, the phantom, constitutes the very element of horror" (*Existence Without Existing* 4). Lucia, as cadaver-like ghoulish medusa, and Max, as an equally cadaverous "Roderick Usher" in Nazi uniform, become a figure for representation. In *The Night Porter*, Max and Lucia become a signifying specter of so many of the victims of the holocaust, perpetrators and victims alike, they become "its [The Holocausts'] fascinated victims," (9) as well as the Holocausts' "submissive and willing ones"(Kristeva, *Powers of Horror* 9).

Downfall

“Hitler is depicted through examining *our* relation to Hitler (the theme is “our Hitler” and “Hitler within us”), as the rightly unassimilable horrors of the Nazi era are represented ... as images or signs.” (*Hitler: A Film From Germany X*)

“What I am proud of is that *after all* I openly confronted the Jews and I have cleansed the German lands of Jewish Poison” (*Downfall*, Newmarket Films, 2005)

“It’s every man for himself—get a lawyer and blame everyone else.... We’ve had our Cambodias before.” (*All The President’s Men* 302)

“In those three decades, all my thoughts, actions and my life were dictated by my love and loyalty to the German people. Centuries will pass but from the ruins of our cities and cultural monuments, *our hatred* will be renewed for those who are responsible, the people to whom we owe all this ... International Jewry.” (*Downfall*, Newmarket Films 2005)

Susan Sonntag, in the preface to Hans-Jurgen Syberberg’s *Hitler: A Film From Germany*, states that the power of Syberberg’s film lies in the “Hitler within us” theme of this film. I would argue that *Downfall*, *Night and Fog*, and *Shoah* also evince this type of “Hitler within us” discourse that makes Syberberg’s film, like the films chosen for this study, are not *Hitlerpics* and are good suggestive forms for Holocaust representation. By using Sonntag’s critical analysis of Syberberg’s film as a blueprint representative art about the Holocaust the viewer may understand a film with the specter of Hitler may be a better choice than any type of direct understanding of the Holocaust or what Hitler was to history. Sonntag and Syberberg instruct viewers to see Hitler [and I would add the Holocaust] as a collage of images and signs that should allow us to evince the possibility that there is “Hitler in all of us.” When she talks of “our Hitler,” Sonntag is asking us to recognize how evil functions in our lives and how we understand first, the impossibility to understand Hitler, then second, the recognition of pure evil, may help us understand

the impossibility of the Holocaust. As Syberberg says though “*Hitler: A Film From Germany*, is only in a film—the art of our time—a film that is precisely about the Hitler within us, from Germany, that hope may come at all. In the name of our future, we have to overcome and conquer him and thereby ourselves” (*Hitler: A Film From Germany* 3). What Syberberg is stating applies directly to the suggestions about holocaust representation and the need for those working with the Holocaust theme to allow for the signification of evil that was Hitler to be the signifier of impossible atrocity, the Holocaust, to remain as key elements when one attempts representation. Syberberg, the brilliant German filmmaker, discusses his film and the use of Hitler in film and aesthetics. His discourse is important for this collage of Holocaust representation; especially Syberberg’s question about the effects a film about Hitler for future generations, “Can and should a film about Hitler and his Germany explain anything” and can a film “rediscover identities, heal and save?” (3).

The answer to Syberberg’s question would seem to be a good guideline to follow when one attempts film of the Holocaust. When attempting to deal with this impossible event by the goal should not be finding any universal truth an understanding of “Hitler as Hitler,” but to attempt to show the system Hitler produced and how Germans and their victims faired at that time of Hitler in Nazi Germany, and their coming to terms with Nazism after Hitler in post-war Germany. It is always problematic to deal with the period of Nazi Germany without the monolith of Hitler and Nazi atrocity, but like the films chosen for this study, possibly looking at the central figures of the Nazi megalith, not just from other minor monster “players” in the atrocities, (Cavani’s *Max and Lucia*, Pierson’s

Heydrich and Eichmann) but also the “ordinary” Germans like Hirschbiegel's Traudl Junge, SS General Hermann Fegelein and Professor/Doctor Ernst-Gunther Schenck.

My idea for film representation tends to employ a thematic of “Hitler as muse,” in the sense that *Conspiracy* and *The Night Porter* have the aura of Hitler’s rhetoric and fuehrer cult as a repetitive cinematic chorus in the background of the films images. In Resnais’ *Night and Fog* and Lanzmann’s *Shoah*, the muse tends to be a “muse of Horror,” with the name Hitler being more a nefarious refrain of atrocity that re-directs the viewer to bear witness to the secrecy of a regime and its horrid ideological imperatives. For Lanzmann and Resnais, the whisperings of history from the mouths of victims and executioners, and images of the death camps then and now, resonate in a paradigm of suffering that needs no Hollywoodization or fetishization. *Downfall* is different in the sense that though the matrix of the machinery of murderousness lends itself to a somewhat Watergate-type Nixonian “All Hitler’s Men” ethos, the muse would be Syberberg’s “our Hitler” (like “our Nixon”), which could mean that there is the possibility of Hitler, or a Nixon, in all of us.

In *Downfall*, the obedience and delusion of the masses to a father-figure, a fuehrer, when the Nazis came to power in 1936, is parlayed with the atrocious machinations that were still being pervaded in the bunker in the last days of the Third Reich in 1945. *Downfall* shows that the minor functionaries of Hitler’s staff, in this case his secretaries, still believed in their leader and were not about to give up on success as Traudl Junge states “everyone’s deserting *him* [Hitler]. We can’t just get up and leave” (*Downfall*, Newmarket Films 2005). As Nixon said to his press Chief Ronald Ziegler that “we've had our Cambodias,” this parallel to Hitler’s “Stalingrad’s” may be effective for a

knowledgeable film audience. Whether Watergate or the last days in the Bunker, power that corrupts is history's great lesson, and the muse/voice of the bunker is one of "our Hitler" becoming "our country is being overrun by the Bolshevik hordes.

Dealing with the matrix of murder may allow for what Syberberg's film shows in espousing that we should not only listen to what Hitler "the historical monster" claimed to be but to recognize that the "Hitler of possibility" [mine] is more complex than the dead tyrant from that Bunker in Berlin:

By Hitler Syberberg does not mean only the real historical monster.... [but the Hitler that] evokes a kind of Hitler-substance that outlives Hitler, a phantom presence in modern culture, a protean principle of evil that saturates the present and remakes the past. Syberberg's film alludes to familiar genealogies, real and symbolic: From Romanticism to Hitler, from Wagner to Hitler, from Caligari to Hitler, from kitsch to Hitler. And in the hyperbole of woe....from Hitler to pornography, from Hitler to the soulless consumer society of the Federal Republic. (*Hitler: A Film From Germany* xii)

A film like *Downfall* and a film like Syberberg's *Hitler: A Film From Germany*, may bring some ordinary Germans may to a point where their "inability to mourn" may no longer be the national hidden trauma it has been by showing that the phantom substance of a Hitler can be understood in popular culture. By looking back at a Hitler-substance through the cinematic gaze of atrocity as well as the substantive systems and subjugation of nationalism gone awry, possibly a form of closure, or an ability to take responsibility for history and not atrocity, may be the result for some ordinary Germans. Traudl Junge, one of Hitler's secretaries and a main figure in *Downfall*, is one of the

ordinary Germans that is discussed in this project and her words, fifty years after the war in the film *Blind Spot: Hitler's Secretary*, are telling and instructive in relation to the idea of closure for many Germans unable to come to grips with that period in history. Junge states that “today I can say he was an absolute criminal” and “I should be angry with the child I was, that juvenile girl...or that I can't forgive her for failing to recognize in time ... what horrors that monster caused, [but] after all, apart from me there were millions who didn't see it” (*Blind Spot: Hitler's Secretary*, DorFilm 2002).

Film that deals with the Holocaust is always problematic for the Germans that lived in that horror, but there has to be some realization of “sense” for the victims, but for the ordinary Germans that became victims by association with Nazi Germany. This is why I do not think *Downfall* paints a sentimental picture of Hitler or his inner circle. The sentiment that *Downfall* evinces is for ordinary Germans, those, who like Junge, Professor Dr. Schenck and SS General Mohnke, tried to preserve life while all around their world was crumbling. Amidst all this horrible insanity the viewer encounters in *Downfall*, there are also simple-life situations. *Downfall* shows the normalcy of regular Germans under the all-pervasive suffocation of Hitler's last days in the bunker. This is day to day history, the petit histoire that can be more telling than the grand histoire that usually records Hitler's final days. Dr. Goebbels informs Traudl Junge his family [Magda Goebbels and their six doomed children] are coming and though catastrophe is all over Berlin, Goebbels asks Traudl to “please take care *der kinder*” by informing her that the children are allowed “one toy per child” (*Downfall*, Newmarket Films 2005). This is not cinematic sentimentality, but a picture of the abject folly of human nature with a scintilla of humanness. Even a monster like Goebbels worried about his children. *Downfall* is

effective because it is not about war, but what happens to the losing side after the insanity of war.

Much criticism of *Downfall* tends to find the film just another hysterical *Hitlerpic*. *Downfall* depicts Hitler as a paradigmatic figure that represents the horrors that were inflicted on Germany at the end of the war. Hitler signifies Germany's defeat. Hitler is presented as the grand puppeteer—one hand pulling the strings—the other hand being tugged at by his wanted the fuehrer to pull the strings for a miracle. The question then can be asked “why another film about Hitler?” *Downfall* is not about Hitler, but about Hitler as the paradigm for the question “can we learn from the *Hitlerhorror* [mine] what totalitarianism and insane power and corruption can be do and can the atrocity of a Hitler be repeated?” As far as the *Downfall* being a sympathetic portrait of Hitler I would argue the film depicts Hitler's many personalities, for example the dangerous doppelganger of a monster that could send children to the gas chambers while treating his pet Alsatian Blondi, better than some in his entourage. By showing Hitler and his faithful Alsatian, as well as his patriarchal relations with his secretaries like Junge, “first time I met him he probably had a kind of paternal, protective attitude towards me... Something I longed for...I envied those I grew up with who said ‘my father so and so’ and “I thought having a father must be very important” (*Blind Spot*, DorFilm 2002).

The idea that Hitler became a father/messiah figure for distinct numbers of the population of Germany and the conquered territories becomes historical reality on film. The sentimental portrait of Hitler is pushed aside in *Downfall* and viewers get not a pastiche of historical facsimiles, but a cinematic portrait of true believers and the power of Hitler-substance in oratory, fascism and the machinations of power propaganda and

industrialized militarism in the Nazis reach for world hegemony. In *Downfall*, viewers get the image of a very complex, yet monstrous psyche on a large-scale in the Hitler character, but also the film shows the small scale defeated psyche of ordinary Germans. A film like *Downfall* gives a human portrayal of an inhuman human being to show the audience that is too facile to simply paint monster Hitlerian-Nazis and lamb-like victims.

Downfall can be argued as a representative film that does not fall victim to faulty character development, what film theorist Robert Kolker calls a “repetition of the old-horror-film technique of building tension only to have it relieved when nothing horrible happens” (*Cinema of Loneliness* 323). Unlike Spielberg’s *Schindler’s List*, the representative form in *Downfall* is one of unrelieved tension in the face of tyranny and this may be another suggestive point for holocaust representation in its effort to be fair to history and the victims. The problem with Spielberg’s film lies in character and plot story lines that revert to conventional horror films, which could lead to trivialization of the horror of the death camps. *Downfall*’s director Oliver Hirschbiegel gives us very little of the victim-hero struggle ethos that we see in *Schindler’s List*. *Downfall* shows that no one won or lost World War II, and saviors are not needed. When man can create mechanized death and concentration camps, or atomic bombs for that matter, the “downfall’ is more than the end Hitler and Nazi Germany, but the end of enlightened reason and possibly an apocalypse of humanity. *Schindler’s List*, for Spielberg, “is a struggle between victims—whom Spielberg tends to infantilize—and white saviors ... that define their relationships to one another” (*Cinema of Loneliness* 323), but for representation this is where the commoditization on film of the trope of white savior and infantile Jew runs into a problem area. Kolker recognizes this trope as the problematic Hollywood notion that

“both victims and savior are visible and in an unequal state of dependence ... and triumph is always guaranteed, no matter how proscribed, no matter how it *defaults to our ideology of victimization* [italics mine] that demands that we all desire to be saved even when saviors are nowhere to be found, a situation almost guaranteed to create stasis” (*Cinema of Loneliness* 323). The Holocaust as an instructive horror should be one of constant movement in discourse and constant awareness that for most Holocaust victims there were no saviors then and there are no saviors now. This is where Spielberg’s film as the meta-instructional tool for the Holocaust has problems.

Downfall does not allow for any type of Hollywood ending in terms of closure or victim-savior formula. If anything the viewer gets the notion that there truly were no saviors and the film paints all the characters, whether German, Russian etc. as victims. I do not mean victims in terms of the death and destruction of World War II, but victims in terms of the Yeatsian gyre, and the “Beast that slouches toward Bethlehem,”⁵⁴ is what industrialized man has created. Whether Tiger Tank, Sherman Tank or Russian T-34 Tank, the metaphor of the modern death machines, the iron-treaded beasts, is what we see in *Downfall* and there are no winners except possibly death’s designers and technicians.

⁵⁴ The line is taken from William Butler Yeats’s “The Second Coming.” M.L. Rosenthal, in *William Butler Yeats: Selected Poems and Four Plays* (New York: Scribner, 1996), states that the poem “grew directly out of ‘the Troubles’ in Ireland following upon the 1916 Rebellion and preceding the establishment of the new Irish state then coming to birth. Irish history aside.... [the poem is] more [a] bitter statement of the problem of contemporary man face to face with the rebirth of naked violence.... [and] murderous fanaticism overruling skeptical intelligence” (XX). Not only are the “slouching beasts” the metaphor for the mechanization of tanks and biological warfare [mustard gas] but also a metaphor for the notion that the madman like a Hitler are “full of passionate intensity” while those that know best [Neville Chamberlain etc. “lack conviction.” Yeats may not have foreseen the Nazi onslaught but he did see World War I and its modern horror possibility. For Yeats prophesized the reversal of the worlds gyre was enabling modern civilization to destroy the 2,000 year Christian cycle and evince the birth of a new, violent bestial anti-civilization., see an anti-Christ.

Downfall shows that the widening gyre of Hitlerian fascism swallowed all and that all war does is allow the winners to make policy temporarily until the next madman comes along.

Downfall is a film in the genre of spectacle, and in a “history through spectacle” form, fits into the 3 areas for film representation of the Holocaust set forth in this project. This idea of spectacle on film is discussed by Dana Polan in *Cinema Of Loneliness*. Polan states that “spectacle demands our attention, [because] it is a command to ‘look here’ that needs no cognitive assent other than the initial fact of looking. The specific content of spectacle is only a very small part of its attraction. Spectacle offers an imagistic surface of the world as a strategy of containment against any depth of involvement with that world” (Cited in Kolker, 324). Spielberg gives us spectacle in a savior ethos in *Schindler’s List*, but this theme can lead to a sense of comfort for viewers in the sense that there is emotional relief at the rescue motif of Jews by Schindler, whereas *Downfall* uses spectacle as a construct for the destruction of Nazi Germany and asks viewers to look beyond Hitler, and to refrain from forgetting the atrocity. Spielberg asks viewers to remember the atrocity but to hope for rescue. This is impossible with the Holocaust.

For Spielberg, the projection of savior-victim as image is the spectacle of *Schindler’s List*. This may be problematic for, on one hand, Spielberg does project correctly in terms of history a segment of Nazi brutality (Plaszow Labor Camp and Auschwitz) that is a historical given, but unlike *Downfall*, he still must give the viewers the static image of something to hope for—a savior. For Kolker, this stasis produces a Spielberg frame narrative that engenders “in his audience a desire to be actor and acted upon, savior and saved, [and in this stasis] Spielberg creates passivity: the longing gaze at

the spectacle on the screen” (324). What Kolker alludes to here is a facet for Holocaust representation that would suggest that any form of redemptive closure or stasis for something like the Holocaust, is impossible. For Kolker, Spielberg’s attempt at closure and character redemption in *Schindler’s List* is problematic:

The redemptive event that so obsesses Spielberg and American Cinema in general achieves a number of results: it provides narrative closure without having to reach any definitive conclusions; it totally evades politics and history: it gives men an excuse for their behavior; and, most obviously, it hails the redeemed character (and presumably the spectator) into the ideologies of testing, heroism, love, marriage, and family—without the audience having to act on anything but their ability to look at the screen. (*Cinema of Loneliness* 324).

As a parallel to the cinematic idea of narrative closure in the American Cinema, the German cinema, as a genre, has also encountered the problem that arises from dealing with the Third Reich after World War II. I am not indicting Spielberg or Hollywood as the only film entities to use problematic images to portray this troubled time in history, but unlike Spielberg and Hollywood, the German cinema, especially Nazi-retro film, defines the genre as not being the kind of aesthetic that, unlike its predecessors, did some of the film techniques that many find troubling with Spielberg and the Hollywood film discourse on Hitler and the Holocaust.

Robert Reimer, in his study of German film, states that “Nazi-retro carries a faintly negative connotation: these films have a morbid fascination for a time and a place that scarred a nation’s psyche and from which Europe has not yet fully recovered” (*Nazi-Retro Film* 1). I would argue *Downfall* takes this form of Nazi-retro or better yet, *Death*

Camp-Retro, [mine] and “constructed the term Nazi-retro rather than use mode retro because we want a word that also carries positive meaning. If the term suggests retrograde on the one hand, [but] on the other it refers to retrospection, the act of thoughtfully surveying the past” (1), then I would argue for representation a director like Hirschbiegel [and Cavani and Pierson], fit a mode that may suggest a more thorough, retrospective glance at the holocaust. In essence, a director like Hirschbiegel is not attempting to use spectacle to portray the battle of good versus evil or monster Nazi versus helpless Jew, but attempts to engage viewers in a discourse that may allow us to come to grips with the past by giving us a film that is “a vehicle for understanding the appeal of systems that viewers would otherwise find abhorrent, for they make viewers a part of the system and then bring them to judge it” (*Nazi-Retro Film* 8). Most importantly, *Downfall* may ask the viewer challenge himself in the guise of perpetrator or victim in the question, “Would they have acted differently?”

Spielberg’s *Schindler’s List* abounds with images and abhorrent themes of the persecution of the Jews and the excesses of the SS, but when the films’ chronology moves from abhorrence towards sentimentality with Spielberg’s savior-like depiction of the character of Oskar Schindler, the theme the problem for representation begins. In *Downfall*, even the “heroine” figure of Traudl Junge, “everyone’s deserting him. We can’t just get up and leave.” (*Downfall*, Newmarket Films 2005), is not really viewed sentimentally, but purely in actuality. Junge and her bunker cohorts are simply trying to survive. Viewers of *Downfall* tend to remain inside the event enough to understand Junge’s machinations, but I would argue she does not come out of the film as heroic but exceptionally lucky: “My parents and friends back home warned me. They told me not to

get involved with the Nazis” (*Downfall*, Newmarket Films 2005), and like most ordinary Germans, Junge’s story went from upwardly mobile secretary for a head of state, “When I came to Berlin I could have said no, I don’t want that job ... but I didn’t do that, because I simply was too curious” (*Blind Spot: Hitler’s Secretary*, DorFilm 2002) to an understanding that this was her movement through history and there is no right or wrong, simply the silence of atrocity unknowable under the phantasm of Hitler.

Shoah & Night and Fog

“Then who is responsible?” (*Night and Fog*, Janus Films 1956)

“The inmates look on without understanding. Are they being freed?” (*Night and Fog*, Janus Films 1956)

“”And a crematorium, too, can be a set—a work of art that is a lie ... tourists have themselves photographed in them.” (*Documentary Film Classics* 51)

“At first it was unbearable. Then you got used to it.” (*Shoah*, Historia Films 1985)

“I began drinking after the war. It was very difficult, Claude. You asked for my impression. If you could lick my heart, it would poison you.” (*Shoah*, Historia Films 1985)

“We had so much *work*, [mine] I never left my desk. We worked day and night.” (*Shoah*, Historia Films 1985)

I conclude this project with the two films most critics hail as possibly the most effective film depiction of the Holocaust; *Shoah* by Claude Lanzmann and *Night and Fog* by Alain Resnais. Both films fit a representational matrix that elicits thought, fairness and open discourse of the Holocaust without any extensive Hollywood technique or formula. This project is not stating that any form—whether literature, drama or film—can fully access the Holocaust, but when audiences have to deal with this event, there are modes of

instruction that may allow for a possible level of understanding that may keep us forever warned of the unspeakable horror that man is, was, and still capable of. Because I have balanced my discussion of film against the meta-narrative of holocaust film, Spielberg's *Schindler's List*, I also want to evince a few elements of Spielberg's master narrative that are important as well for Holocaust representation, in relation to *Shoah* and *Night and Fog*.

What I will argue in this concluding section in relation to Lanzmann, Resnais and Spielberg, is the fact that whether intellectuals like it or not, a film like *Schindler's List* and a text like Daniel Jonah Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners*,⁵⁵ are not only viewed as meta-narratives, but are more commercially successful and more viewed and read by average people than simply by elites. I include myself in the academic discussion, but my point in this chapter is to balance what 1] intellectuals see as important in the need for proper representative form in relation to the Holocaust, with 2] what audiences and readers retain in memory. More media attention and critical acclaim have been given to Spielberg and Goldhagen than any of the canonical representative forms about the Holocaust, (whether theoretical or not) because they have a broader appeal, and a more readily available understanding for those who are not scholars of the Holocaust. Granted,

⁵⁵ Because Goldhagen's best-selling book was so well received by reviewers in the mainstream media, it was attacked [some of the criticism was justified] but when noted Holocaust lecturer and author Lawrence Langer compared Goldhagen going over his allotted time at a symposium in Washington to a student he would like to strangle the "pointed strangling fantasy ... pointed at Goldhagen ... seemed rather disproportionate to the nature of the offense. But in fact, the image of strangling an impertinent, overzealous student might have inadvertently figured forth the true agenda of the evening: the attempt by some of his more senior colleagues to strangle Goldhagen's impertinent student's pretensions" (Cited in Rosenbaum, *Explaining Hitler: The Search For The Origins Of His Evil*, New York: Random House, 1998). For more on the Goldhagen controversy see Istvan Deak's *Essays on Hitler's Europe* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001). I agree with both Deak and Rosenbaum who cite one of the major problems with Goldhagen's text is his argument of collective guilt and the eliminationist anti-Semitism of ordinary Germans that indicted the whole nation as "willing executioners."

Goldhagen's text is a highly theoretical/historiographical text and is not completely accessible to all, but it is the most debated and highly selling academic text about the Holocaust to date. Even the Holocaust is victim to commercialization and fetishization, and Goldhagen and Spielberg have reached a financial windfall using the Holocaust as their subject. The problem of monetary gain and fame in the guise of the aesthetics of horrendous atrocity is a difficult paradox and will forever beg the question; "how does one create art and make financial gain when the source of the financial gain is horror, pain and suffering for those no longer here?" The point being we need to keep the event as accessible to all as time passes and the generation of that horror dies away and we cannot funnel it only to what is aesthetically and theatrically acceptable to scholars of academic genres.

The reason I bring up Goldhagen in this discussion of film dealing with the Holocaust is in the irony that a film like *Schindler's List* has in relation to a text like Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners*. Both were heavily criticized by the meta-authorities of the Holocaust, for example Claude Lanzmann stated that "Spielberg made a cartoon version of the Holocaust, filling in the blanks intentionally left empty in *Shoah*, whereas his own film is dry and pure, avoiding personal stories, and concerned not with survival but with destruction ... as a generalization of the Jewish people" (Loshitzky, *Spielberg's Holocaust* 54-55). I agree with Lanzmann that Spielberg used the destruction of European Jewry as a background for a savior-narrative of Oskar Schindler, makes "Spielberg's film ... a melodrama, a work of kitsch" (*Spielberg's Holocaust* 55). In parallel, Goldhagen's work was seen as being too general in its condemnation of all

Germans as being “willing” to murder the Jews en masse. According to Istvan Deak, Goldhagen’s text has three flaws:

First, It provided no convincing evidence for its basic premise ... that “ordinary Germans” willingly took part in the Holocaust; this, because they had developed a unique, specifically German, “eliminationist anti-Semitic mind-set. Second, the unwarrantedly extrapolated data on the genocidal behavior of one police unit of ordinary Germans to German society as a whole. And third, Goldhagen made selective use of both primary and secondary source and ignored evidence that did not fit into his thesis ... [but] some historians undoubtedly went overboard in their criticisms by resorting to ad hominem attacks and by belittling Goldhagen in public. (*Essays on Hitler’s Europe* 101)

Though I do not agree with all three exceptions Deak and other fellow historians raise against Goldhagen, I do agree that the idea of eliminationist anti-Semitism does not fit the complete German nation as a whole. But on the other hand the SS and many of the bureaucrats and administrators in the Nazi regime were very much eliminationist anti-Semites and did all they could to destroy European Jewry using historical and cultural antecedents from German history. I agree with many historians against Goldhagen’s using Police Battalion 101⁵⁶ as the paradigm for indicting all Germans as a willing

⁵⁶ In Christopher Browning’s “One Day in Jozefow: Initiation to Mass Murder,” Browning cites the same Reserve Police Battalion 101 that Goldhagen selectively uses to equate the whole of ordinary Germans into one genocidal cohort. Browning’s essay would dispute Goldhagen’s claims in a few instances, but most importantly, in the sense that many “among those who either chose not to shoot at Jozefow or proved “too weak” to carry on ...were for the most part left alone”(Cited in *Lessons and Legacies* 206). Granted, the majority of Police Battalion 101 was, according to Browning, “untypical, but rather...like any other unit, Reserve Police Battalion 101 killed the Jews they had been told to kill” (209). For more on Jozefow and

genocidal cohort. Much like Spielberg's problem in *Schindler's List* with misuse of scene and synecdoche, Goldhagen, at times, is guilty of this selective form of recording history.

The important tenet here is that though there are ideological and representational problems with *Schindler's List*, and *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, these forms are the modern meta-narratives for the Holocaust and the history and aesthetics of Nazi totalitarian terror. The important fact is that these art forms (*Schindler's List* and *Hitler's Willing Executioners*) dealing with the Holocaust are widely accepted and widely read is what matters; art, even flawed art, keeps the Holocaust in the mainstream of popular thought. Keeping the subject of the Holocaust always at the forefront of the discourse on atrocity is what matters. A film like *Schindler's List* and a text like *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, though both have flaws, drive the interest of popular thought and discourse into the future, then art forms like *Shoah* and *Night and Fog*, may also be revisited and find more voice in future discourse.

It is important to understand the problems that filmmakers, Lanzmann in particular, had with *Schindler's List*. Though Lanzmann's film fits a certain representational matrix I would argue is a positive for future holocaust art, the viewer must also recognize that Lanzmann's dictatorial artistic stance (he views himself as the only true voice of the Holocaust) is problematic. *Shoah* raised Lanzmann to an extremely visible face of holocaust representation, but in some senses, Lanzmann has become almost elitist and unforgiving in his reading and viewings of anyone who attempts to film what he terms his art of the holocaust. For Lanzmann, according to Ron Rosenbaum in

Browning's Reserve Police Battalion 101, see (Peter Hayes, Ed. *Lessons and Legacies*, Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1991).

Explaining Hitler: The Search For The Origins His Evil, his strict form in *Shoah* has become for him a type of cinematic commandment:

Lanzmann and *Shoah* in the aftermath of its 1985 release how the film raised him to the vatic, prophetic heights from which he now hurls thunderbolts at those who violate his commandments. It is not an exaggeration to call them commandments. Lanzmann uses explicitly Sinai-like rhetoric to articulate the rules for all those who dare to discuss *his* subject. [According to Lanzmann] In his published attack on Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List*: "After *Shoah*, certain things can no longer be done." (252-253)

The problem here is in Lanzmann's declared ownership of the event. His debating that the Holocaust is *his* subject would seem to be decidedly dictatorial and highly troubling. This is not Lanzmann quoting Adorno's dictate that "to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric," but as Rosenbaum shows, it is more Lanzmann's folly grandeur at making himself the face of the Holocaust because his film was so well-received. For Lanzmann the warning to Spielberg that after *Shoah* "certain things can no longer be done," is not the rhetoric of Adorno but what Rosenbaum views as Lanzmann's artistic elitism in relation to his film: "You mean he's [Lanzmann] saying, after the *Shoah*, certain things are forbidden ... thinking Lanzmann might have been echoing Theodor Adorno ... [but] No, my researcher insisted, Lanzmann is saying that after *Shoah*, after *his film*, certain things are forbidden" (*Explaining Hitler* 253).

Shoah is an essential film for Holocaust representation in the same vein as *Night and Fog*, but though much of the criticism of Spielberg as an auteur and a creator of meta-narratives are accurate, Spielberg does not present himself like Lanzmann, a mega-

holocaust auteur. Lanzmann is almost totalitarian in his response to any form of criticism of his film or anyone attempting to deal with the Holocaust period. It is important for representation of this event to achieving a level of responsibility in art in relation to the Holocaust, but artists like Lanzmann that separate themselves and shut down other views, is troubling and somewhat a paradox to the event he is an experts on, the Holocaust. Rosenbaum states that this problem of Lanzmann started when “Lanzmann ... turned on a Holocaust survivor—a man who had endured two years at Auschwitz—because the survivor dared violate one of Lanzmann’s commandments about how one should, and should not, speak about the death camps” (*Explaining Hitler* 249). The survivor “Dr. Louis Michaels, still sounded shaken when he spoke about it to me. He called the filmmaker’s behavior totalitarian. Because his [Lanzmann’s] central commandment ... his imperious “Thou Shalt Not Ask Why” ... is one Lanzmann proudly adapted from a Primo Levi story about an SS guard at Auschwitz ... who told Levi “there is no why here” (*Explaining Hitler* 252).

The irony of Lanzmann’s behavior is troubling for his extreme attitude toward criticism and ownership of an event that may be owned by the dead and those that survived the horror. As a director, Lanzmann is also guilty somewhat of an overzealous nature that would play into many of the tenets that he [Lanzmann] found so wrong with Spielberg’s *Schindler’s List*. Though Lanzmann's interview style is penetrating, it is also brutal, and I agree with Loshitzky that it can be noticed in *Shoah* that Lanzmann turns his subjects, unwillingly I presume, into documents, and in a sense, historical “things:

Lanzmann is indeed a brutal interviewer, and though his technique is very effective and has made possible the production of an extraordinary film, it is also

highly disturbing. For Lanzmann seems so obsessed with *Shoah*, that the actual survivors serve him only as “documents,” as living records, verbalized memories, not as human beings ... the uncanny lack of empathy in a man who devoted much of his life to making a film of the destruction, and the mutilated lives of the saved, the last carriers of that memory. (*Spielberg’s Holocaust* 55)

Lanzmann is a brilliant filmmaker and *Shoah*, in terms of representation, fits a theoretical stratum that anyone attempting to deal with the holocaust may find instructive. Lanzmann’s film does embody important discursive apparatus’s for academic and film theorists in the sense that his film recognizes “poststructuralist, theoretical fetishes such as open signs and mimesis of representation in his footage of death-camp witnesses” (*Explaining Hitler* 252); both victim and perpetrator. The film is more than simply a cinematic event and a collection of historical facsimiles, but also a “revolutionary artistic and cultural event” (*Explaining Hitler* 252). *Shoah* has as its most powerful presence, not a matinee-idol star or cast of characters, but the impact of clinical interrogation, in the “amazing psychoanalytic presence of Claude Lanzmann on the screen. A presence tangible both in the depth of the silence and in the efficacy of his speech, in the success of his interventions in bringing forth the truth” (*Explaining Hitler* 252). Spielberg attempts to make the holocaust into a thematic encapsulation that would put the idea of the holocaust as a redemptive event at the center of the film. But in putting forth the ideology of the savior-victim in historical facsimile as a representational theme for the event may put the Jew—the real center of the event—outside of an event that was totally about their destruction. *Schindler’s List* is one on many holocaust films, but Spielberg’s film tends to put forth his film aesthetic representational form of the Holocaust; in

essence, “*Schindler’s List* does not just represent one story from the Shoah but that it does so in a representative manner-that it encapsulates the totality of the Holocaust experience ... [and] the film’s focus on the heroic exception, the Gentile rescuer and the miracle of survival, would indeed distort the proportions and thus end up falsifying the record” (Loshitzky 81).

In “Beyond life and death: On Foucault’s post-Auschwitz ethic,” James Bernauer discusses theorist Michel Foucault’s visit to the death camp at Auschwitz in 1982, and his remembrance of the pictures of Foucault “walking between two rows of electrified barbed wire, a watchtower in the background. A visit to another prison?” (260). I would argue that Resnais’ *Night and Fog* does exactly what Bernauer discusses here; Resnais’ film leaves an imprint on memory more than films that give the viewer Nazi and Concentration camp rhetoric that has become too stylized and too Hollywood. *Night and Fog* imprints on the viewers spectral gaze a vector to atrocity and unspeakable horror that needs to remain at the forefront of discourse dealing with the Holocaust. When the narrator of Resnais’ *Night and Fog* queries the viewer to remain fixated to the images that come forth from history in black and white [the documentary film clips from Nazi history and the Concentration Camps] with the colorized footage of Auschwitz today, the importance of Resnais film is compared with Lanzmann’s *Shoah* for its questioning and unflinching denial of any form of positive answer. The effect of the dual gaze of executioner in the form of Nazis and their collaborators, and the gaze of the decimated *other*, the Jews, elicits a power in its silence that needs no special effects, no glamorization. Bernauer mentions the power of *Shoah* lies in its power to evince the voices of a horrendous history, which parallels the images that are part of this same retro-

horror in Resnais' *Night and Fog*. Bernauer recognizes that the atrocious power of witnessing Auschwitz, for Foucault, can be important for anyone who attempts to revisit those camp system horror-houses of Nazi totalitarianism horror; whether physically or mentally:

It was only to be expected that he [Foucault] would have wanted to see Auschwitz with his own eyes, the eyes which stare sternly out at the photographer. If Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* has permitted us to *hear* [italics mine] the voices of that distant hell, I believe Foucault has enabled us to see its *nearness*, [italics mine] to feel its intimacy, and to challenge its logic. (Bernauer 260)

This constant questioning of the audience, this challenge of logic in the face of the meta-illogical—the Holocaust—is why *Night and Fog* and *Shoah* are at the aesthetic forefront for Holocaust representation in film. Bernauer alludes to the idea that *Shoah* has permitted us to hear the voices from the oral history of the holocaust from both sides—victim and executioner—and this permits the audience into the event in a different vein than a Hollywood-type film.

Where *Shoah* is the voice of the Holocaust and the voice of Nazi power over its victims, *Night and Fog* is the visual image of the Holocaust and its purveyors of death—the Nazis and their collaborators. *Night and Fog* is a cinematic form that recognizes the corroded-horror images that humanity and history are capable which the silence of films' narrator (silence in the powerless voice) is more a linguistic code than any recognizable human entity. The voice of the narrator in *Night and Fog* comparable to the voice of the

figure of death as a chess-playing grim reaper in Ingmar Bergman's *The Seventh Seal*."⁵⁷ In Bergman's film, much like *Night and Fog*, the bargain between the medieval knight Antonius Bloch and the figure of death is depicted as a game of chess, more in tune with the medieval trope of "the wheel of fortune." Death as faceless grand master of the "game" of life and death in *The Seventh Seal* I would argue can be paralleled to the narration in *Night and Fog*. The endgame the narrator plays in *Night and Fog* is like a chess master in the sense that every "move" of the images of Nazis and collaborators, and their unfortunate victims, is questioned and encourages viewers to ponder what he or she would have done, or in essence, what "move" they may have made during the Holocaust. The figure of death in *The Seventh Seal* and the nameless voice of the narrator in *Night and Fog*, evince the theme of nothingness in physical presence, as well as the voice and aura of horror. The idea of the eternal questioning that surrounds the Holocaust and its aura of a paranoia of "not knowing" may lie in viewers overcoming the barriers of his/her own distance from the *Other*. This sense of questioning and need to know from "not knowing" that viewers come to grips with in the images and narration of *Night and Fog* and the interrogating-type questioning of *Shoah*. This internal interrogation that is a underlying them in both *Shoah* and *Night and Fog* may parallel the sense the viewer gets from Bergman's Antonius Bloch, that being "I doubt, I think, therefore I exist. But I must keep asking why?" [Mine].

⁵⁷ In Ingmar Bergman's *The Seventh Seal* (Janus Films, 1957), a medieval knight Antonius Bloch [Max Von Sydow] returns from the Crusades in a search for God as well as answers to the inhumanity of a world thrown into chaos by war and the black plague. The figure of "death," a black-robed chalk-faced figure only speaks the words "I have been a long time at your side," and when the knight states to death that it should "wait a moment," death answers, [much like the narrator, in Resnais' *Night and Fog*] "You all say that, but I give no respite" (*The Seventh Seal*, Janus Films 1957).

In *Night and Fog* when the image of a young girl peering out the window of a cattle car arriving at Auschwitz is presented by Resnais, the viewer is automatically drawn to the gaze of the young victim and the question will be “what is she thinking?, and what is the point of Resnais camera angle in giving this image to the viewer. William Rothman, in *Documentary Film Classics*, the catechetic effect of the shot is not simply a girl peering out of a boxcar but “a more effective compilation, that is, to create a more compelling sense that this child is looking on this scene, looking on the camera that is filming, without understanding what is happening” (42). What makes this shot fit this discourse of questioning under the silence of the gaze of the victim is that this “shot does not reveal what the child is thinking or feeling, only that the child *is* [italics mine] thinking and feeling something, has private thoughts, and feelings about this disturbing situation” (*Documentary Film Classics* 42). This disturbing situation of the girl in *Night and Fog* may lie in her “not knowing” what is in store when she steps off that train, and without using a colorized red image of a little girl wandering the streets while people are being murdered in *Schindler's List*. Resnais does not implore viewers to attempt to hope for a rescue for this little girl but Spielberg’s convention is almost a Holocaust “little red-riding hood/little Jewish girl running from the wolf/Nazis.” Audiences of *Schindler's List* are finally shown the little girl's colorized body amongst a heap of corpses, where in *Night and Fog* the little girl in the cattle car leaves audiences forever not knowing what happens to her on a physical plane, but on a mental plane, with our pre-knowledge of the Holocaust in history we can figure she was murdered. Her eyes give the audience the gaze of a nameless victim possibly staring back at the gaze of her nameless executioner. The line of sight between audience and victim, (the vector of vacuous atrocity) is a silent

cognitive space that the nameless victim and executioner occupy as signifiers of a larger horror that the holocaust occupies in history as a nameless monolith of horror.

For Lanzmann, this same type of questioning discourse, without the image of the girl peeking from the train, is done by a simple question posed to a functionary of the Final Solution. Lanzmann queries Holocaust historian Raul Hilberg about this Nazi functionary. Lanzmann asks Hilberg, “*What did they get from the past, the Nazis?*” (*Shoah: An Oral History of The Holocaust* 71). Hilberg answers that because the Nazis have taken the final solution on as a task and a situation for careerism and national power, that “they had become inventive with the final solution. That was their great invention.... And the “final solution,” you see, is really final, because people who are converted can yet be Jews in secret, people who are expelled can yet return. But people who are dead will not reappear” (*Shoah: An Oral History of the Holocaust* 71-72). When Hilberg states that the dead will not reappear he is alluding to the stages of the Nazis plan for the Jews; that being confinement, deportation and then extermination. After Wannsee, the idea of Jew, half-Jew and converted Jew became meaningless semiotics. In essence, when Heydrich stated in *Conspiracy* that “dead men don’t hump and dead women don’t get pregnant” the final stage of the Nazis “invention” for the modernized destruction of the Jews became policy. Lanzmann’s interrogations show viewers the nature of policy and all its cold, ruthless efficiency.

This policy that was finalized at Wannsee follows the line Lanzmann uses when he continues his questioning of Hilberg. He asks “*How can one give some idea about this complete newness, because it was new for them too?*” (*Shoah: An Oral History* 72). Hilberg’s answer gives readers the overwhelming nature of the language of

totalitarianism, but also the ingenious “state of the art” fruition the Nazis thought they “accomplished” at Wannsee. For Hilberg, the final solution for the Nazis “was new ... one cannot find a specific document, specific planned outline or blueprint which stated: “Now the Jews will be killed.” Everything is left to *inference* [italics mine] from general words. General words—the very wording “final solution” or “total solution” or “territorial solution” leaves something to the bureaucrat that he must infer” and “it was an authorization to invent” (*Shoah: An Oral History Of The Holocaust* 72).

The idea that is presented in *Night and Fog* and *Shoah*, unlike many films dealing with the Holocaust and Nazi Germany, is much like what is a feature already mentioned in this project in relation to New German Cinema and future Holocaust representation. The idea of universal responsibility, then and now, that is put forth in films of the New German Cinema like Werner Fassbinders’ *The Marriage of Maria Braun*, (*Die Ehe der Maria Braun*) Istvan Szabos’ *Mephisto* and *Hanussen*, Wim Wenders’ *The Goalie’s Anxiety at the Penalty Kick* (*Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter*) as well as Syberbergs’ aforementioned *Hitler: A Film from Germany*.” Resnais and Lanzmann’s films evince this universal answering and remaining diligent in the sense that responsibility is for everyone, not just those who were there, and they [the directors] “ask viewers to determine who was responsible for what happened, and how *universal* [italics mine] the *responsibility* is” (*Nazi-Retro Film* 13). The larger question all the films in this project put forth is 1] whether Nazism was only a short-lived horror, and is not still part of a national German consciousness, and 2] the idea of Hitler and Nazism is still present, not only in German institutions, but in fascist and totalitarian institutions globally as well. The films in this study ask important questions for all; not just perpetrators and victims.

The Holocaust on film is an ever-present discourse and not an event that can be left only to history. Viewers must recognize a Holocaust could happen again and that films made after the Nazis were defeated tend to follow political machinations and aesthetic agendas that put fascist leanings on a level of political “other” at the behest of whatever political dictate the director or regime is espousing. In essence, the victors make the films and therefore give the viewer their political message and aesthetic ideologies. For the New German Cinema, (and for this study *Night and Fog*, *Shoah*, as well as *Conspiracy*, *The Night Porter* and *Downfall*) “the question of guilt and responsibility has been brought into the present,” (Reimer 12) and all the films mentioned here as well as those in my study do “focus on the *normalcy* [italics mine] of the Third Reich, to show that life went on as usual under the Nazis and that most people were too busy trying to cope with daily existence to worry about the government and politics” (*Nazi-Retro Film* 12). This normalcy of day-to-day living and the industry of Auschwitz should keep this discourse of atrocity and the Holocaust ever-present for representative art.

The warning that the Holocaust, as an event, should remain forever in the discourse of atrocity lends itself to an awareness of systems of power, and how a regime like Hitler and the Nazis required respectability. This project, in its depictions in literature, drama and film of “respectable” people like Albert Speer, Reinhard Heydrich, Traudl Junge, as well as the nameless functionaries and bureaucrats, like Rudolf Hoess who had a family life while bodies burned a hundred yards away, all evince the devilish face of ruthless careerist in their Mephistophelesian bargain with fame and careerism. Istvan Szabo’s film *Mephisto* is the best example of careerism gone awry, and this warning that the devil comes in many masks should always be at the forefront of

Holocaust discourse, for as Robert Reimer states about totalitarianism and how it seduces those who should not be able to be seduced, the warning remains to be diligent in the face of power gone awry:

Fascism did not always appear in a devilish form. Therefore we have to depict and investigate those manifestations of fascism in which it won people over and bound them to itself through various means and ingenious and well thought-out methods. We have to expose these methods with which it ... perverted human thinking and feeling in order to make it serve its goals.... But ... film suggests, by forging a close bond between viewers and [characters], that the viewers might not have acted any differently. (*Nazi-Retro Film* 34-35)

Notes to Chapter 5

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