



Reflections

2015

AUSCHWITZ JEWISH CENTER
ANNUAL ALUMNI JOURNAL





Reflections

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Overview

ABOUT THE AUSCHWITZ JEWISH CENTER

Established in 2000, the Auschwitz Jewish Center (AJC), a partner of the Museum of Jewish Heritage—A Living Memorial to the Holocaust, is a cultural and educational institution located in Oświęcim, Poland. Located less than two miles from Auschwitz-Birkenau, the AJC strives to juxtapose the enormity of the destruction of human life with the vibrant lives of the Jewish people who once lived in the adjacent town and throughout Poland. The AJC's mission is also to provide all visitors with an opportunity to memorialize victims of the Holocaust through the study of the life and culture of a formerly Jewish town and to offer educational programs that allow new generations to explore the meaning and contemporary implications of the Holocaust. The AJC—including a museum, education center, synagogue, and café—is a place of understanding, education, memory, and prayer for all people. In addition to on-site educational offerings, the AJC offers international academic opportunities including the American Service Academies Program, AJC Fellows Program, AJC Program for Students Abroad, and Customized Programs throughout the year.

ABOUT REFLECTIONS

Reflections is an annual academic journal of selected pieces by AJC program alumni. Its aim is to capture each year's program participants' perspectives, experiences, and interests. The AJC Newsletter, published three times per year, provides snapshots of the Center's work; *Reflections* is an in-depth supplement that will be published at the end of each year.

The pieces in *Reflections* are authored by alumni of the following programs:

The American Service Academies Program (ASAP) is a two-week educational initiative for a select group of cadets and midshipmen from the U.S. Military, Naval Academy, Coast Guard, and Air Force academies. Launched in June 2004 with six students, the program has more than doubled in size to fourteen participants. Focusing on the Holocaust and related contemporary moral and ethical dilemmas, this in situ program not only educates students about the past, but also stimulates dialogue about its relationship to the present and the future. Throughout the program, the group works to gain a better understanding of pre-war Jewish life and its subsequent devastation. Within this framework the Academy students are challenged to understand what can happen in the absence of open and democratic governing institutions — when evil is given free reign, when fear overpowers ethics, and when democratic ideals are not defended.

The Auschwitz Jewish Center Fellows Program is a three-week study trip for graduate students studying the Holocaust in a variety of fields. The AJC Fellows Program provides a unique educational opportunity to learn about the Holocaust in situ in the context of Poland's history and Jewish heritage. It is the goal of the Auschwitz Jewish Center Fellows Program that Fellows gain not only knowledge of the Holocaust sites they visit, but also an understanding of the legacy of the Holocaust in Poland, its effects on collective memory, and complexities surrounding such categories as victim, bystander, and perpetrator. After a brief orientation in New York City, the Fellows travel in Poland for three weeks, during which time they visit Kraków, Warsaw, Łódź, Treblinka, and Oświęcim (Auschwitz). The Fellows travel to small towns in the regions surrounding Warsaw and Kraków, as well as through south-eastern Poland, to explore the area's rich Jewish heritage and meet with local leaders to learn about pre-war Jewish life, life under the Nazi occupation and Communism, and the state of Jewish communities and memory in Poland today.

Excerpt of
**Youth and Tragedy:
The Connection between Young-Driven and
Youth-Focused Movements and Genocide**

BY CHRISTOPHER DYLEWSKI

By modern account, the Hitler Youth did not participate directly in the Final Solution. The fact remains, though, that the National Socialist movement clearly exhibited a tendency for young and passionate leadership, and focused its efforts on the youth once in power. These two traits help to explain the unexplainable: how can a nation participate in the extermination of an entire people? The fact that the rise of the Nazi party was led by young people like Hitler (who was some four decades younger than his predecessor Hindenburg) suggests that youth, when combined with other factors like the availability of arms and regional instability, may form a dangerous mixture as leaders lack experience – experience that might temper radical notions at societal engineering. The youth-focused approach reflects a fundamental facet of both the Nazi regime and goals: it sought to remake the world according to its own fanatical vision. The impossibly tragic record of the Holocaust reveals how far they were willing to go to realize their vision.

The youth-focused approach reflects a fundamental facet of both the Nazi regime and goals: it sought to remake the world according to its own fanatical vision. The impossibly tragic record of the Holocaust reveals how far they were willing to go to realize their vision. Without a doubt, the tendency for movements that culminate in genocide to be youth-driven and often youth-focused is evident in other scenarios. The record of genocide in Rwanda provides an enlightening perspective on the phenomenon of relatively young leaders translating their fervor into organized violence against an ethnic group, and targeting their efforts at instructing the young of their own people in the ways of hate. Rwanda serves as a stark example of both this trend and its consequences.

In Rwanda, friction between the Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups has been a fact of life for generations, but only recently have those tensions boiled forth in an explosion of violence so potent that it can clearly be categorized as genocide. Between the cessation of Belgian imperial control (during which Tutsis had been elevated above Hutus due to the Belgian notion of their ethnic superiority) and the outbreak of genocide in 1994, Rwanda has been ruled by its Hutu majority.¹ It was, in 1994, a very young population.² Rwandan authorities under a moderate Hutu regime prior to the genocide often relied upon a young and energetic population to drive internal campaigns to solve societal issues like illiteracy, deficient childhood vaccinations, or unequal women's rights.³ In an example of tragic irony, the same administrative and political networks whose energy the Rwandan government relied upon in these efforts served as the organizational network that allowed Hutu extremists to carry out genocide in 1994.

¹ "Genocide in Rwanda."

² CIA, "Rwanda," The World Factbook (Central Intelligence Agency), accessed June 28, 2015, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rw.html>.

³ Human Rights Watch, "Rwanda" (Human Rights Watch), accessed June 28, 2015, <http://www.hrw.org/reports/1999/rwanda/Geno4-7-03.htm>.

International NGO Human Rights Watch, in its endeavor to chronicle the Rwandan genocide, cites numerous examples of just how young the radical Hutu movement, which perpetrated the 1994 extermination of Tutsi, was. Radical new Hutu leaders warped the government system toward a new goal by allowing flexibility within the otherwise strictly hierarchal ranks of civil and military institutions. They rewarded those who demonstrated their passion and fervor (traits most often associated with youth) about the mission of exterminating Hutu with positions of primacy within government.⁴ Human Rights Watch calls specific attention to the fact that this flexibility allowed for radical youths to ignore direction from more prudent supervisors: “within the administrative system, sub-prefects could eclipse prefects, as they did in Gikongoro and Gitarama, and in the military domain, lieutenants could ignore colonels, as happened in Butare.”⁵ This breakdown in previously rigidly defined national institutions paved the path to anarchy in the hands of radical young people.

The people of Rwanda also saw, in another clear parallel with Nazi Germany, the elevation of the military above civilian authorities. Another portent of the driving power of the young and ideological, soldiers drove the violence at every stage. Military leaders, many of whom were significantly younger than their civilian counterparts, assumed control of government. The participation of Rwandan military units was nearly universal, with some even forcing Hutu to kill their Tutsi neighbors.⁶

Again reflective of the Nazi rise, many of the most senior military men now in command of the ongoing genocide were themselves relatively young. Promoted from Lieutenant Colonel in the Rwandan Armed Forces to Major-General and Army Chief of Staff during the genocide, Augustin Bizimungu was only 41 when violence broke out.⁷ Augustin Bizimana, appointed Minister of Defence in the interim government that carried out the violence, was 40 at the time of his assumption of that role.⁸ Majors Protais Mpiranya, François-Xavier Nzuwonemeye, and Aloys Ntabakuze, and Captain Gaspard Hategekimana, officers in charge of some of the most infamous “elite units” that executed killings of civilians, had all yet to reach their 40th birthday in 1994.⁹ For comparison, President Habyarimana was 57 at the time of his assassination. A somewhat more subtle difference than the huge age discrepancy between Hitler and Hindenburg, the trend is nonetheless clear: youth and fervor are inextricably linked in instances where society devolves into systematic killings. Such violence is obviously also correlated with a void where the wisdom of more experienced leaders might have tempered radical action.

One of the well-chronicled roles that military units played during the violence was as facilitator to the re-education of young civilians. Mirroring similar efforts by SA “brownshirts” several

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ David Smith in Johannesburg, “Rwanda Genocide: Former Army Head Augustin Bizimungu Jailed,” *The Guardian*, accessed June 28, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/may/17/bizimungu-jailed-for-rwanda-genocide>.

⁸ “BIZIMANA, AUGUSTIN: WANTED BY THE JUDICIAL AUTHORITIES OF ICTR (INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL TRIBUNAL FOR RWANDA) FOR PROSECUTION / TO SERVE A SENTENCE,” Red Notice (General Secretariat of INTERPOL, n.d.).

⁹ The Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, “International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda: Indictment” (United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda), accessed June 28, 2015, <http://www.unict.org/sites/unict.org/files/case-documents/ict-00-56/indictments/en/indictment.pdf>; “Aloys Ntabakuze v. The Prosecutor” (International Crimes Database: International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (Appeals Chamber), Tanzania, May 8, 2012), <http://www.internationalcrimesdatabase.org/Case/124/Ntabakuze/>; Angelique Chrisafis and agencies in Brussels, “Former Rwandan Major Gets 20 Years in Genocide Trial,” *The Guardian*, accessed June 28, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/jul/05/rwanda.angeliquechrisafis>.

decades previously, Rwandan troopers would routinely engage in the instruction of violence, with young civilians as their primary pupils.¹⁰ This new wave of ideologues was sometimes even more ruthless in their methods of indoctrination, encouraging the young to participate directly in the cleansing of the Tutsi. According to BBC, “Boys were among those recruited into militia groups”¹¹ As the Human Rights Watch report describes the gruesome scene: “When the young people balked at striking Tutsi soldiers stoned the victims until the novices were ready to attack.”¹²

The assassination of President Juvenal Habyarimana and subsequent spark of violence also facilitated a change within the ranks of political leaders. Moderates, many of them older and more experienced, found themselves crowded out of influence by young firebrands like the 30 year-old Deputy Laurent Baravuga, who reportedly “patrolled with his own band of killers.”¹³ Human Rights Watch cites cases where “politicians organized ‘security’ measures in accord with the local administrators.”¹⁴ Administrators would sometimes demonstrate deficient “commitment to the genocide,” in which case “political leaders effectively took over the extermination campaign in their communities.”¹⁵ The politicians in Rwanda, led by men like the relatively young son of the first President of the first Rwandan Republic, Shingiro Mbonyumutwa, stoked the fires of fear and mistrust.¹⁶ In a cruelly ironic twist of the truth, Mbonyumutwa told listeners of Radio Rwanda that Tutsi intended to carry out genocide against the Hutu: “They are going to exterminate, exterminate, exterminate, exterminate (*ugutsembatsemba-tsembatsemba*)...They are going to exterminate you until they are the only ones left in this country, so that the power which their fathers kept for four hundred years, they can keep for a thousand years!”¹⁷

¹⁰ Fergal Keane, *Season of Blood: A Rwandan Journey*, Reprint edition (London: Penguin Books, 1997), 134–35; Human Rights Watch, “Rwanda.”

¹¹ “Rwanda: How the Genocide Happened,” *BBC News*, accessed June 28, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13431486>.

¹² Human Rights Watch, “Rwanda”; Keane, *Season of Blood*, 134–35.

¹³ Human Rights Watch/FIDH interviews, Butare, December 19, 1995.

¹⁴ Human Rights Watch, “Rwanda.”

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Shingiro Mbonyumutwa, *Rwanda : À quand la démocratie ?*, HARMATTAN edition (Paris: L’harmattan, 2009).

¹⁷ Human Rights Watch/FIDH interviews, Butare.

Confronting the Flags

BY BRIDGET KENNEDY

American journalist Michael Specter observed: “One morning every spring, for exactly two minutes, Israel comes to a stop. Pedestrians stand in place, drivers pull over to the side of the road, and nobody speaks, sings, eats, or drinks as the nation pays respect to the victims of the Nazi genocide. From the Mediterranean to the Dead Sea, the only sounds one hears are sirens.”

Following World War II, the nations that stood idly by while millions of Jews were being massacred felt an obligation to help the Jewish refugees. Israel was created on May 14, 1948, as the first Jewish state in over 2,000 years.

One symbol of Israel that is widely known is that of its flag. The Israeli flag was originally the face of the Zionist movement: the movement to allow Jews to have their own homeland. It is a blue and white striped flag with a Star of David at its center. The blue stripes represent the stripes on the *tallit*, or prayer shawl, used in the Jewish religion. The Star of David was chosen to be a universal symbol of Judaism—much like the cross in Christianity. The meaning was even more symbolic for the Jewish people after its abuse by the Nazis during World War II. Most people view the flag of Israel to be not only a remembrance for those who died being persecuted but also as a symbol of triumph. This flag played a significant role in my trip to the concentration camps.

Having toured Auschwitz I the previous day, after the conclusion of our emotional tour of Auschwitz-Birkenau, we were given some time to reflect on the various things that we had just seen. As I wandered down the dirt paths of Birkenau, trying to grasp the horror of what I had just witnessed, I came across a tour group of people I assumed to be Israelis. Each member of the group had an Israeli flag draped around their shoulders. The group stopped and one of the men in the group took the flag off from around his shoulders and started to hang it from the barbed wire fence that ran through the camp—the same fence that his ancestors were most likely trapped behind, and stared through every day, wondering when their hell would end. After the flag was hung from the barbed wire, the group gathered around it and started smiling and taking pictures and selfies with it. Everyone looked so happy and was laughing, although I could not understand exactly what they were saying. The group then proceeded to walk away and leave the flag hanging there. Clearly, they did not mean for the flag to be simply a photo opportunity.

For some reason, this entire scene was upsetting to me. My visceral reaction was that their behavior was inappropriate, and it made me extremely uncomfortable. I felt as though these people were disrespecting those who had died on the grounds of Birkenau. The group seemed triumphant and rejoicing at a place I felt was meant for remembrance and mourning. As I was walking away from this scene, I saw another man, presumably from the same group, holding an Israeli flag in front of one of the boxcars that were used to transport Jews to Birkenau. Again, smiling photographs were being taken. I could not fathom at that moment how one could be celebrating their Judaism on the grounds of mass murder of their ancestors and pure evil.

I continued to feel upset by this situation until our day trip to Zbylitowska Góra. This site of mass graves was just as disturbing as those we witnessed at Auschwitz. The one grave that really struck me was the mass grave of the children. These children were all brutally murdered. Surrounding this gruesome site, however, was another Israeli flag. This flag, though, made me feel completely

different than the ones I saw paraded throughout Birkenau. This flag was surrounded by and covered with butterflies. After some research, I came to discover that these butterflies represented the lives of the 1.5 million children who perished in the Holocaust. This stems from the poem “The Butterfly” written by Pavel Freidman in 1942, who eventually died in Auschwitz. His poem described how butterflies do not live in the ghetto and how they only exist outside of it. Once Freidman was placed in the ghetto, he never saw another butterfly. In various concentration camps, liberators discovered butterflies covered the walls of the children’s barracks. These butterflies symbolized hope to the children. The children knew that they were going to perish, their fate was inevitable, but their death was simply like them breaking out of their cocoon. Death represented a metamorphosis of sorts. Once they passed on, they would become a butterfly, able to escape all of the torture and tragedy surrounding them. In this situation I felt as though the Israeli flag was not there to make a political statement or out of triumph; rather, it was there to let the children know that the butterflies now had a home, and that their hope was not in vain. The children murdered in the Holocaust had a place where they could be safe and flourish, and where one day, they could see another butterfly.

Struggling to come to grips with why the activities I witnessed relating to the Israeli flag at Auschwitz-Birkenau bothered me so much, while those I witnessed at Zbylitowska Góra did not, I began to reflect on the role that nationalism had in the Holocaust. In Germany from 1933 to 1945, the Nazi regime sought to create as a nationalistic imperative: Ein Volk, Ein Reich, Ein Fuehrer (One People, One State, One Leader). The Nazi pursuit of the Final Solution was based in the nationalist imperative to create a single people, a single nation, and a single ruler exemplified in Hitler’s slogan, (One People, One State, One leader) based on race. This newfound nationalism was, however, through Nazi propaganda, built around a common enemy—the Jewish people. In thinking about this, I realized that Nazi Germany itself served as a perfect example highlighting the dangers that follow when extreme nationalism is exhibited by a citizenry who does not bother to reflect on the actual values being promoted. Indeed, had more German citizens actually reflected on the underlying values being promoted by the nationalistic Nazi movement, it is possible that such citizens might not have acceded to the atrocities they committed.

I started to gain some sense of what may have been at play in the very different visceral reactions I felt regarding the demonstration of the Israeli flag at Auschwitz-Birkenau compared with the flag I saw at Zbylitowska Góra. That is, while I know that the celebratory and triumphant spirit exhibited by those at Auschwitz-Birkenau was intended to convey the triumph of the Jewish faith over Nazi persecution, the giddy behavior exhibited by those carrying the flag seemed contrary to the somber remembrance also symbolized by that flag. In other words, those carrying the flag seemed to me to be unreflective and perhaps unaware of the respect due to those who suffered and died at the site. At Zbylitowska Góra, on the other hand, the simple and silent demonstration of the Israeli flag—a flag adorned with the butterflies that provided a whole new depth of meaning considering its presence at the site of a children’s mass grave—seemed particularly powerful and appropriate. To me those, exhibiting the Israeli flag at Zbylitowska Góra demonstrated a nationalistic allegiance, which revealed a thoughtful and reflective appreciation for not only that which the flag celebrates but also for that which it remembers.

In my view, this lesson serves as an important reminder of the importance of citizens of every nation and supporters of every cause taking time to reflect on the values underlying the symbols to which they pledge their allegiance and support as well as the need to exercise care in the manner in which they chose to display those symbols. Unreflective and unwavering adherence to any principle or ideal by any individual or group can lead to disastrous consequences. In Nazi Germany, unreflective nationalistic groupthink contributed to the genocide of millions. At Auschwitz-Birkenau this past June, this unreflective nationalistic behavior simply made one

American student feel uncomfortable. These experiences informed my impressions of the flag, its connection to nationalism, and the power of silent reflection, which can be the most powerful antidote for the collective ills, which afflict us.

The Humanity of Auschwitz

BY CHRISTOPHER KUENNEN

There is something about humanity one can only learn at Auschwitz. Immersed in its subtleties, the Holocaust's immense body of academic discourse at once becomes pedantic; it has turned men into numbers and lives into ghost stories. However, the value of reflection at Auschwitz is not found solely in an emotional reminder of the murders, which occurred there. Such reminders will not change the fates of the innocent lost in the Holocaust and, unfortunately, have proven unlikely to change the fates of modern genocide victims. What Auschwitz offers to today's global citizens, and military officers, is a setting for intense introspection and unparalleled insight into what it means to be human.

Primo Levi once asked readers of his *Survival in Auschwitz (If This Is a Man)* whether he "who works in the mud, who does not know peace, who fights for a scrap of bread, who dies because of a yes or a no" is really a man. A similar question should be asked about the perpetrator who enslaves another, denies him nourishment, and kills him on a whim. The simple answer is, of course, yes; both victim and perpetrator were men, and Auschwitz was a human institution. That the victims, perpetrators, and Auschwitz itself must be viewed through a human lens is an inevitable reality, and a reality that remains apparent to today's visitors.

Even a cursory academic analysis of the Holocaust suggests hope must have driven survival in the camps and in the ghettos. What becomes obvious at Auschwitz, however, is a more nuanced picture of the role of hope in victims' lives. Hope loosely defined may not be considered a uniquely human experience. Arguably, what in fact makes it human is its scope and susceptibility to rationalization. Despite the circumstances, humans rationalize their desire for a holistically better life, however defined and delivered. Proof of this phenomenon becomes evident to those reflecting on the perseverance of Auschwitz's prisoners as they slept crowded in the mud or as they walked a long path from the train platform to the gas chambers. The mud and the path remain, as does a disturbing room filled with household items brought along to Auschwitz. The Nazis used these pots and pans to synthesize hope where it was in short supply and as a weapon against those who relied on it most.

Proof of the perpetrators' humanity may be even more tangible at Auschwitz today than that of their victims. The bestial brutality of Auschwitz's guards and administrators is evident to any student of the Holocaust. What is perhaps less obvious in the historical literature, but indeed obvious at Auschwitz, is how markedly human the Nazi prosecution of genocide really was. The Holocaust was methodically planned and executed, driven by regulation and a strategic vision. Auschwitz was not a place of purely passionate violence, but rather of dispassionate, calculated, *human* violence. One grim product of the innumerable human atrocities committed at Auschwitz I's execution site was an artificial drainage system used to remove the excess blood, which pooled from prisoners killed by firing squad. Such a small detail indicates human considerations for cleanliness and convenience, contradicting any stereotype of mindless killing.

While some signs of individual victims and perpetrators remain, it is the physical plant of Auschwitz-Birkenau, which delivers to its visitors the most potent awareness of the Holocaust's implications. Beyond the victims' vain hopes and the Nazi's calculated crimes, a sprawling testament to human nature remains outside Oświęcim, Poland. In many ways, Auschwitz-

Birkenau impresses beyond its mere specifications. It is undeniably expansive and ordered, with modern infrastructure for its time. The capabilities of the institution aligned effectually with its purpose, reflecting in many ways humanity's potential for progress. The crux of a visitor's experience at Auschwitz is the realization of not only the depth of this potential, but the depth of this potential for ends antithetical to humanity itself.

From the modern liberal perspective, the comprehensive human implications of Auschwitz and the Holocaust as a body of victims, perpetrators, and institutions are not positive. Moral relativism, which by its very nature undervalues universal human dignity, seems to become perceptibly obsolete. One certainly realizes that the ethics practiced at Auschwitz by both victim and perpetrator, personal and institutionalized, could not be sustained by mankind. Yet relativism may be rapidly replaced in a visitor's mind with despair for man's apparent wont to act along abstract pseudo-Darwinian lines of a fittest race, religion, or culture. At Auschwitz, one realizes that there is no basis for human dependence on human solutions for human progress. At Auschwitz, one realizes that humanity is self-destructive, if not in an evolutionarily biological sense, then in a moral one.

This despair, this lesson of Auschwitz, does not imply that humanity should remain apathetic in the face of evil. Rather, because of the impotence of relativism and the presence of despair, Auschwitz lends credence to an *a priori* morality which, violated so blatantly seventy-five years ago, now obliges man to continue fighting an unwinnable war for human dignity. The examples of Auschwitz, the Holocaust, and today's modern genocides make it clear that despite mankind's ever expanding potential for knowledge, there will be those who selfishly use innovation against their innocent fellow man.

That universal human dignity remains impossible to maintain in an imperfect world does not preclude the moral obligation for its defense. Such an extensive obligation logically involves the occasional use of force to win that war's battles, thus offering moral vindication for the military profession. It is in this sense that the lessons gleaned from Auschwitz for humanity are especially applicable for the education of future military leaders. Death and destruction on a massive scale remain largely in the realm of military power, as they did in World War II. Application of military might is therefore an enormous responsibility.

Auschwitz remains a solemn place, and rightfully so; the true magnitude of the crimes committed there can only be understood by those who lived through them. Nevertheless, for the rest of mankind, being present at Auschwitz makes it possible to understand the human condition in a simultaneously hopeless and purposeful light, simultaneously inspiring despair and comprehension.

Auschwitz was a human institution, populated by human victims and human perpetrators. Today it remains a human institution, populated by students of human history. The fate of the modern world's victims and perpetrators depends on these students, especially those entrusted with the power of armed coercion. It is its connection with this vital responsibility that makes Auschwitz a distinctive and important setting.

Contextualizing *Never Again*

BY EVA SANDRI

It is easy to ask “How did humankind allow the Holocaust to happen?” However, genocide did not end with the Holocaust. From Cambodia, to Bosnia-Herzegovina, to Rwanda, to Darfur, we as a human race have allowed groups of innocent people to be murdered. Repeatedly, we see the Holocaust on a global level.

As I sit at my desk in Chase Hall at the United States Coast Guard Academy, ready to tackle the next day of the seven-week initiation called Swab Summer, I keep thinking about how there are much bigger problems in the world than whatever the swabs and my group of cadre (officers for the freshmen, called swabs) will have to encounter tomorrow. Even in the twenty-first century, there are situations in which people are threatened and attacked because of their nationality, ethnicity, race, or religion, and their fates are almost certainly worse than having to hold the “down” position of a pushup or or run wind sprints.

This false sense of security is one of the biggest impediments to stopping genocide, as well as other prominent world issues, including starvation and global warming. We who are lucky enough to call a first-world country home are able to push aside these issues that do not have a direct impact on our own survival. Currently, we as humans do not see each other’s wellbeing as a priority, which is how atrocities such as the Holocaust can come about.

What can we do about this? This problem has plagued all of humankind through the ages and I recognize that we are all fallible to self-interest and self-preservation. I believe in the inherent good of people, in that we do want the best for others as well as ourselves. Furthermore, this may be a reason why genocide is such a difficult issue to confront. I presume that most people feel guilty when they think about the murders taking place in other countries, so it is easier on their conscience to not think about it. The pretense “Ignorance is bliss” is at play. As a whole, we are not educated enough about human rights atrocities and fail to take responsibility for our ignorance. I too fall into this boat.

My original question posed to the ASAP group was: “What can we do about modern day atrocities and empower others to make a change?” I never received a straight answer to this question, because one does not exist yet. Here is my attempt at contributing to the solution. The remainder of this reflection will focus on what an “ordinary” person can do to not remain a silent witness.

Four major recognized genocides have occurred since the Holocaust, even though the world said “Never Again.” In Cambodia from 1975-1979, the Communist group Khmer Rouge and its leader Pol Pot exterminated roughly 1.7 million Cambodians. They targeted political enemies and ethnic minorities, just as the Nazis did during World War II. Cambodians were sent to work on farms and labor camps.¹⁸ In 1994 Rwanda, clashes between ethnic groups culminated when 800,000

¹⁸ London Jewish Cultural Centre. “Cambodia.” *The Holocaust Explained*. London Jewish Cultural Centre, 2011. Web. 30 July 2015.

people of Tutsi descent perished at the hands of the state-sponsored Hutus.¹⁹ Bosnia-Herzegovina bears witness to yet another genocide: from 1992-1995, Bosnian Serbs aimed to eradicate Bosnian Muslims and succeeded in placing them in concentration camps, where many succumbed to starvation and rape.²⁰ Yet again and in frighteningly recent years, Darfur witnessed another inhumane tragedy. From 2003-2010, the Sudanese government sponsored raids that drove out and led to the murder of black Africans, who faced ethnically based tensions with the nomadic Arabs.²¹ Currently, the children of the United States graduate primary, middle, high school and even college knowing the Pythagorean Theorem, but lacking in knowledge about these atrocities. This demonstrates a flagrant deficiency in the education system.

If people did not possess such great animosity or indifference towards each other, genocide would not exist. However, this type of cultural change must come from inside people's hearts. In addition to a culture change amongst the people, a political change is also crucial. Currently, although extermination of genocide is not at the forefront of political discussions, it is possible for a country's people to change that by advocating for those in need. In democratic countries such as America, we can appeal to politicians and participate in rallies. Involvement in decisions to send peacekeeping troops or disaster relief is very feasible, and is our responsibility.

Professor Gregory H. Stanton has identified and published the '8 Stages of Genocide', which serve as warning signs. These 8 stages (classification, symbolism, dehumanization, organization, polarization, preparation, extermination and denial) categorize the actions of the criminal party as it carries out a genocide, and can be applied to each post-Holocaust genocide the world has seen.²² The more people are knowledgeable and diligently watchful in regard to these warning signs, the less likely a genocide would be.

Dehumanization is a technique that allows the inflictor to deceive themselves of the joining connections between fellow human beings. Its purpose is to relieve the natural torment on one's conscience. Examples of dehumanization that were used during the Holocaust include starving inmates to destroy their previously-healthy bodies, confiscating civilian clothes and dressing inmates in a similar androgynous pinstripe uniform, tattooing a number on their arms, hacking their hair away, preventing proper hygiene among inmates, and taking away basic human rights such as free speech. Learning about the dehumanization technique as a stepping-stone to genocide disturbed and resonated with me, because it is also utilized at basic training, on a lesser scale.

There, I hit rock bottom and did not feel like a human being or myself anymore. This summer, following the ASAP and my week in Italy, I had the opportunity to be a boot camp cadre for the Class of 2019, and this was a great opportunity to put into action what we had discussed during the ASAP. Although command staff has control over the Swab Summer Training Program, cadres have great influence over the atmosphere in which the swabs are trained. Following discussion, my shipmates and I decided to do away with mandatory "gelnets" (when females plaster their hair down in an alien-like bun, using cups of gel), provide the swabs with more than a couple minutes to brush their teeth and shower, and give them an opportunity to write down their thoughts without fear of punishment at the end of the day. It felt right to challenge them in new

¹⁹ London Jewish Cultural Centre. "Rwanda." *The Holocaust Explained*. London Jewish Cultural Centre, 2011. Web. 30 July 2015.

²⁰ London Jewish Cultural Centre. "Bosnia-Herzegovina." *The Holocaust Explained*. London Jewish Cultural Centre, 2011. Web. 30 July 2015.

²¹ London Jewish Cultural Centre. "Darfur." *The Holocaust Explained*. London Jewish Cultural Centre, 2011. Web. 30 July 2015.

²² Totten, Samuel. "Addressing the Null Curriculum: Teaching about Genocides Other than the Holocaust." National Council for the Social Studies, 2001. Web. 15 Dec 2015.

and different ways, while treating them with basic respect. These individuals are going to be part of America's Armed Forces, so it is important for them to be treated with deserved human dignity so that they might treat their future subordinates in a similar way.

I have only begun examining the issues contemplated during the ASAP. The program and its lessons have been a call to action that I cannot ignore. It will serve as a continuing reminder to advocate for peace as I perform duties within the Coast Guard and pass down the training and knowledge I received to others.

To Bear Witness

BY SHAWNA T. MOORE

On January 30, 1933 Adolf Hitler, leader of the Nazi Party, was appointed chancellor of Germany. By May 8, 1945, the Nazi regime executed approximately six million European Jews by means of systematic state-sponsored murder. This was the Holocaust. Between these dates lies a progression of events about which scholars could produce thousands of pages to include testimony, pictures, memorandums, speech transcripts, battle plans, and countless hypothesized explanations to further define this mass atrocity. The information would be historically accurate; it would be important and impactful. It would never fully encompass the tragedy though.

Somewhere between the mind, the hand, the pen, and the paper, intricacies of interaction are unwittingly lost, and with them, the power of human connection fades. Victims are reduced to figures and statistics, while survivors become tales of horror and hardship. A reader cannot see the gentle and inexplicable kindness in the eyes of Sol Rosenkranz as he carries the listener along on his horrific journey through three countries and six concentration camps. A historical recount of the Holocaust wouldn't be able to convey Celia Kener's earnest pride as she proclaims her birthday to be August 27th, the day she arrived in America, because that's the day her life began.

Without Celia, the story is only a story. Without her, you miss the passionate courage in her voice as she races down the path of her life journey and abruptly seems to reach the edge of a towering cliff. Bracing there in that moment of her story, you catch a glimpse of the terror in her eyes and fear-stricken hesitation because if she says one more word, the stones might start crumbling down and her fierce impenetrable shield may no longer protect her from the unimaginable pain she experienced. Her thoughts in that pause, the moments she's reliving, will likely never be known beyond the constructs of her own mind. The quiet in the room, though, is filled with the strength of human connection words simply can't create.

Regardless of how powerful the content, simply running your fingers across the words on a page will never feel the same as running your fingers across the etched engravings on the wall of an SS prison chamber. Hidden below the asphalt of a nondescript apartment building, in a matter of minutes you begin to feel as though the world might carry on without you, forgotten in a closet-sized dungeon of history. The words on the wall are a painful distraction from your pulsing unease and the heavy stagnant air. With each name you read and each inscription you acknowledge, you validate a victim as more than just a prisoner hidden in the depths of the Nazi cells. You recognize that they, too, were human. The foreign phrasing does little to detract from your understanding because, even though you may not know the meaning of each word, you fully comprehend the sentiment expressed. Desperation and longing to be remembered are not bound by language or nationality; they are a facet of humanity.

Looking upon a vast sea of human hair sheered from the heads of prisoners, moments before guards herded them into gas chambers, words escape you. The details become your only point of focus because the scene, as a whole, is incomprehensible. You hone in on the meticulously styled buns still intact because when that mom, sister, or daughter woke up that morning she was unknowing of her fate. She had no reason to believe she would not survive another day, let alone have her head shaved because her hair was deemed more valuable than her person. With time, your perspective begins to widen. You peer out and realize that out this window, hundreds of

unconscious bodies were thrown because after they were mutilated by brutal “scientific” experiments, they were worthless. Humanity was not sacred enough for them to be granted the privilege to die in peace. With another step back, you acknowledge the handsome red brick buildings that surround you, seeming to resemble a quaint New England college campus. You wanted Auschwitz to be crumbling, miserable, and desolate to reflect the horrors that took place there. Instead, though, the structures are sturdy and intentional. The atrocities that happened here were not a mistake or an isolated escalation of force; they were deliberate.

With the sun shining on your face, the birds of a calm summer morning chirping in the distance, and the dust of human ash below your feet, you’re ashamed to be a person. When you read that textbook, watched that movie, or even visited that museum to learn about the Holocaust you believed in “us” and “them.” You found solace in convincing yourself that we are among the good. We would never commit such atrocities. They were monsters. Standing here, though, you can barely look the person next to you in the eyes because they might see that you, too, are human and you, too, are capable. Suddenly, there is no longer a divisive distinction between “us” and “them.” Your ability to distance yourself from the events of the Holocaust is marginalized by the power of place, and your mind delves into another consideration of “us” and “them.” The discussion no longer characterizes those that were part of the Nazi regime and everyone else, but, instead, focuses on those who resisted and those who did not. It is both a haunting and humbling admittance that you may no longer definitively fall into the category granting innocence.

No single citizen, soldier, or unit murdered six million European Jews, but under the leadership on one man, six million European Jews were systematically murdered. Some were executioners, and did wield weapons and herd prisoners into gas chambers. They acted under the orders of their military leaders, though, and were not the decision-makers. Some were decision-makers and disseminated orders to discriminate against, harass, deport, and eventually exterminate citizens simply based on their religion as defined by the government. The direction of the decision-makers, though, would have no tangible impact without soldiers and citizens willing to carry out and abide by their directives as many did, with little evidence of opposition. Some were merely passively compliant and continued to do their jobs as directed. The tax collector continued collecting taxes, even though the rates were much higher for Jews. The business owner continued conducting business as usual, quietly benefitting from the influx of customers after the mandated closure of all Jewish-owned industry. The mailman continued delivering mail; he turned a blind eye to the suddenly empty Jewish residences and kept his head down as he passed the walls of the ghettos. The actions of each of these collaborators were morally ambiguous. The weight of responsibility each bears is up for interpretation. At the core, though, none resisted. They allowed this atrocity to happen. We allowed this atrocity to happen.

As your interpretation of “they” becomes an internalization of “we,” it is inevitable you begin to consider what your role may have been, had you been there. In a moment of brutal silence and painfully honest introspection, you admit, if only to yourself, that you are not morally infallible and, had you been present, you are unsure of what your role might have been. Much like you recognized the humanity of the victims when standing in the SS prison chambers, you now recognize the humanity of the perpetrators of the Holocaust. They were not monsters; they, too, were human beings. The most incomprehensible tragedy of the Holocaust is not just the sheer number of those exterminated, but that an entire population looked a cohort of their neighbors, coworkers, and friends in the eyes and justified their extermination. People did this to people. We did not let the Holocaust happen; we made the Holocaust happen.

I have studied the Holocaust. I have read books. I have analyzed evidence and explanations. Like many, I know the overarching facts of the situation. But, I have also held the hand of a teary-eyed

granddaughter as she prayed in front of the gas chamber at Birkenau in which her family members were killed. I have run my fingers along the menacing bricks of the execution wall at Auschwitz where so many were murdered, not because of what they had done, but because of who they were. I have looked upon the graves of thousands and felt a desperate sense of helplessness as I realized their stories would never be told or heard. No matter how complete an account of the Holocaust may be, whether thousands of pages or a matter of sentences, the stories of those murdered will never be included. I was there. Thus, I will never understand.

Witnessing the Unwitnessable

BY JULIA KOLCHINSKY DASBACH

“You’re never just theoretically involved with trauma,” says psychologist, Dr. Dori Laub, a child Holocaust survivor himself who helped establish the first video archive of Holocaust testimonials in 1979.²³ Laub suggests that like survivors, scholars—and I’d add artists, especially—immersed in traumatic subjects are driven to the material for a specific reason, a personal connection to the very death or loss they study. While participating in the Auschwitz Jewish Center Fellowship was integral to my doctoral research on intergenerational memory, my interest in this subject is inseparable from my family’s Holocaust experience in the former USSR, and my own futile quest to find a record trace of my great-grandfather, who stayed in Kiev during WWII and was deemed “пропавший без вести” [*propashvi bez vesti*, missing without news/trace].²⁴

The archive, as Derrida notes, while preserving some things to be remembered, simultaneously leaves out others to be forgotten.²⁵ In turning to the archive to provide my family with a tangible history of my great-grandfather—from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum’s (USHMM) electronic databases to the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum’s (ABMM) Book of Names “Shoa” exhibit—I only found him to remain traceless. And this very absence became an answer in and of itself. Like the postmortem title given to his person after the war, his name remained likewise missing or forgotten by the very archive that names, catalogues, and counts so many others like him. This archival/historical mode of memory, one preoccupied with tangible/material record, is one of the most troubling aspects of the way the Holocaust history is dealt with throughout historic sites and institutions—especially those in Poland. While I am not denying that the knowing facts like the number of victims is critical to understanding the scale of the catastrophe, to some degree, the focus on questions like “how many?” distract us from asking “who?” “why?” and most importantly, “what do we do now?”

Turning my attention specifically to the three days spent at the ABMM, I aim to outline some chief concerns regarding the way this state-run institution serves as a global representative of Holocaust history, overshadowing other equally necessary Holocaust narratives and paradoxically re-enacting—or re-perpetrating—the horrific past it seeks to memorialize. The popularity of this venue as a tourist attraction was immediately apparent from the mob of people gathered at the ticket counter and the amusement-park-length line to get into the front entrance. In fact, another group in line with us was very disgruntled that we were being let in ahead of those who had been waiting longer. Even when a museum staff member explained that we are an educational group, a man complained, “So are we!” And then louder, more vehemently, and almost yelling, he went on to exclaim, “This is Auschwitz. Everyone wants to get it!” The ironic agony of his words hovered over the next three day of my visit, along with those of our tour guide, who didn’t

²³ Caruth, Cathy. *Listening to Trauma: Conversations with Leaders in the Theory & Treatment of Catastrophic Experience*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press: 2016. 60. Print.

²⁴ Simcha Barash, or Sima, his Russified name, was a partisan in the Kiev Oblast’. He sent his wife—my great-grandmother—their two young children, and both sets of aging parents away from the city to evacuation the Russian caucuses. While in 1943, Kiev was still being bombed, my great-grandmother smuggled her way back into the city in order to find her husband. For weeks there was no word as to his whereabouts, until finally she heard through talk of one of their neighbors calling in a Nazi officer, pointing to their apartment door and saying, “There is a Jew in there.” Simcha was never seen again. My family assumes that he perished at Babi Yar in 1941.

²⁵ Derrida, Jacques, and Eric Prenowitz. “Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression.” *Diacritics*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (1995): 9-63. Print.

hesitate to mention, on multiple occasions, that the Museum is proud to welcome over 1.5 million visitors annually—400,000 more than the 1.1 million Jews he told us were deported there. How calculated and evaluative this kind of knowledge transfer becomes, especially when a Museum representing an event whose perpetrators measured their success in the number of deaths achieved, now measures its own accomplishments in the equally astronomical number of visitors who those very deaths attract.

Even more disheartening than this focus on numbers—a symptom that extends beyond a single institution and addresses a deeper issue with a historical approach to trauma based primarily on material evidence—is the unmitigated presence cameras, phones, and young children. Children with smart phones taking photos of photos of emaciated child victims; parents lining these children under the “Arbeit Macht Frei” gate and against the recreated death wall and in front of the crematoriums and gas chambers; and parents carrying toddlers down into the cells of Block 11 where even adults might have a hard time breathing. For me, it was impossible to engage in any emotional or intellectual connection with this space given the distracting spectacle that it has become. Rather than photographing the exhibits, I found myself photographing the visitors—the way they interact with and photograph this place where everything is collected: eye-glasses, suitcases, toothbrushes, household cups and plates and silverware, and the infamous shoes. “In our collection,” the tour guide told us, “There are more than 100,000.” And these shoes are here to be counted, photographed, and displayed. While all the objects mean to represent and even honor the bodies of the victims to whom they once belonged, they are at once a reminder of the way the Nazis took these items away and used them for their own purposes. This process is mimicked by the Museum’s own methods of catalogue and display, as well as the photographing by visitors, irrespective of the voiceless victims’ wishes.

In Room 5, “Exploiting Bodies”—again evocative of the way bodies were exploited by the Nazis and the way that they continue to be exploited by the institution, for us, the visitors—we are told we can’t take pictures. Then, there are the questions to which we’ve become accustomed: the guide asks us to guess the numbers of casualties and survivors as though we were at a fall fair guessing the weight of pumpkins. He asks us how many people had to die for this mound of hair to exist. No one answers. “2 tons of hair,” he says. “40 thousand people.” But does this specific number matter? Does it take 40 thousand deaths before the parts of the body become worth collecting? What about a single body? What about millions? The room glows a purplish blue and the guide tells us, “It’s on purpose,” to protect the wall of human hair from damaging light. “We don’t preserve it,” he says, “We can’t stop the process of disintegration.” It is out of respect for the dead he tells us. But why then, having said, “These are human remains... This is *real* human hair... *Real* lives lost,” should visitors serve as spectators to this *real*, *human* deterioration? Isn’t said spectacle part of what the Nazis were initially after themselves? And in putting such fleshless decay on display, the Museum’s very attempt at rendering the dehumanized bodies human again, achieves the exact opposite effect. The hair, shoes, household objects, clay replicas of bodies going into the model gas chamber, and mug shots lining the walls of most blocks are a grotesque metonym for the individual body—a part standing in for an irretrievable, traceless whole. Rather than honoring an individual’s memory, these metonyms deconstruct it, inflicting a metaphorical violence reminiscent of the physical one that both victims and survivors endured.

In *Rabelais and His World*, Bakhtin refers to as Grotesque Realism as “carnival,” constantly present, subverting official culture, creating jokes, parodies, and the general category of “public laughter.”²⁶ However, the aforementioned grotesqueness works instead to create official culture and reassert a single historical narrative based one kind of material evidence. “These are *real*

²⁶ Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Trans. Helene Iswolsky. Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2009. Print.

human ashes,” the guide told us while we were walking around the grounds of Birkenau, and this emphasis on the “real” serves to make the story of Auschwitz central to the entire Holocaust narrative. The countless bodies that go unrecorded and unaccounted due to a lack of any material remains—particularly those exterminated in eastern territories²⁷—and their untold stories of suffering or survival become overshadowed by the powerful effect of “real” or “authentic” evidence: human remains, photographs, and structural remnants of brick blocks, crematorium chimneys, barbed wire²⁸, and wooden barracks that stand as iconic pillars of Auschwitz, legitimating its central position in Holocaust history and its global cultural.

I recognize that my analysis of the ABMM has lingered in criticism without providing an alternative. This is because rather than pass judgment on the way state run museums remember, I seek to point out the limitations and ethical dangers of national or more gravely, global memory construction. It is also important to acknowledge that this mode of memory may in fact be an inescapable repetition compulsion, re-enacting the trauma it seeks to commemorate.²⁹ Thus, while collection and the metonymic treatment of the body may be read as grotesque and even disrespectful to the diseased, these actions can also be interpreted as the only way for members of the subsequent generation to deal with, “act out,” and then hope to “work through”³⁰ ancestral trauma. The danger arises though, when only the “acting out” is achieved or displayed by the museum and stands as institutional memory, whereas the “working through” remains just a hopeful goal. The other concern questions whether this individual psychological approach to dealing with and recording the past should be coopted by an institution or community with political power and cultural capital. And what or who is at stake when it is?

While when it comes to museums, I do not as of yet have a proposed methodology to avoid these pitfalls beyond my initial cautionary analysis,³¹ I’d like to turn my attention to finding the *art* within *artifact*. By this, I propose turning away from a focus on material evidence and towards literature as an alternative mode of memory construction. As David Eng and David Kazanjian suggest in the introduction to *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, rather than focus on what has been lost, “The dawn of the twenty-first century is a moment when the pervasive losses of the twentieth century need to be engaged from the perspective of what remains.”³² And these “remains” refer not to tangible material evidence that stands for everything that has been lost, but instead, calls for “the creation of bodies and subjects, spaces and representations, ideals and knowledges.”³³ After my experience with Auschwitz Jewish Center Fellowship, I believe more strongly than ever, that literature, and especially the genre of lyric, holds the key to memory—to bearing witness to an unwitnessable event like the Holocaust.

The lyric—what most refer to as poetry, although there is an abundance of lyrical prose as well—embraces and even calls attention to its own compulsion to repeat. According to Roman Jakobson, poetry in particular, functions primarily through repetition, be it in form, rhythm,

²⁷ For a more detail on this, see Father Patrick Desbois’ *The Holocaust by Bullets: A Priest’s Journey to Uncover the Truth Behind the Murder of 1.5 Million Jews*, 2009.

²⁸ While at Birkenau, we saw uniformed German Volkswagen interns working to replace the barbed wire that surrounds the camp. A member from our group said that on a previous tour around the site, he or she was told that the wire was authentic. The authenticity of the wire seems like a less important issue than the fact that young Germans are doing the same actions that their ancestors may have done, the latter to keep prisoners in and the former to attract visitors.

²⁹ Freud, Sigmund. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Group Psychology, and Other Works*. London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1962.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ My dissertation project will focus on Holocaust memory in the United States as rendered by museums and by poets.

³² Eng, David and David Kazanjian, eds. *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*. California: University of California Press, 2002. Print.

³³ Ibid.

rhyme, symbol, or, as is often the case with writing related to trauma, the return to the same story, image, or event, over and over again.³⁴ While I've always been conscious of this impulse within my own writing, upon returning from Poland, I have embarked on a project tentatively titled, *Don't Touch the Bones* a cross-genre collection that obsessively tells, retells, and hovers around trauma and absence. The project will play with formal lyrical verse as well as prose forms in order to explore global Holocaust memory and specific stories of survivors and victims that have been overlooked by the institution and archive—these range from my family's personal narratives to survivor testimonies to my travel experiences around the death sites as a great-grandchild of survivors to things I have yet to imagine or encounter in my research. Because poetic form *informs* lyric and narrative content, I will use traditional forms to tell what some might call “expected” or “conventional” Holocaust stories, hoping to question the very notion and possibility of such a conventional narrative.

For example, the Villanelle³⁵ and Pantoum³⁶ forms rely on repeating the same line or lines of verse throughout the poem according to a set pattern, but the nuance and success of such poetry depends upon the repeated lines shifting their meaning each time they are reiterated. Thus, rather than fulfill expectation, these formal poems interrupt the normality of narrative construction with lyric intrusions that distress, thwart, or recasting the poem's temporal and semantic landscape. And, to briefly return to the Freudian repetition compulsion, if each recurrence of the same line is read not merely as a return or “an acting out” of a traumatic past, but rather a progression or “working through” towards the present or future, then these poetic forms hold the potential for a necessary kind of memory construction. One in which, as Eng and Kazanjian urge, “The past remains steadfastly alive for the political work of the present.”³⁷

While *Don't touch the bones* broadly falls under the genre of elegy, a poem of mourning, it questions whether elegizing the unwitnessable is even possible or whether another genre, another form of mourning is necessary. Traditional elegies feature the movement through three stages of grief, from lament to praise to consolation and modern elegies are trapped in a repetitive cycle of lamentation, usually without ever finding solace.³⁸ Perhaps, the elegies that will emerge in this collection are postmodern ones, still inescapably trapped in the repetition compulsion to grieve and retell, but dissatisfied with remaining in this cycle and ultimately seeking to find something other than solace or consolation as an escape from repetition. An engagement with the past in order to influence the present—mourning not only to remember, but to construct how we understand traumatic memory itself. So when Adorno infamously said, “To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric,” he was perhaps foretelling or calling for the lyrical mode to deal with such catastrophe in a manner that's irrevocably changed, irresolvable, and at its core, always political. Just like my great-grandfather's traceless body and name, poetry after the Holocaust

³⁴ Jakobson, Roman. “Metaphoric and Metonymic Poles.” *Modern Theory and Criticism*. Nigel Wood, David Lodge. UK: Pearson Education Limited, 2008. 165-169. Print

³⁵ Eng, David and David Kazanjian, eds. *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*. California: University of California Press, 2002. Print.

³⁶ The villanelle is a nineteen-line poetic form consisting of five tercets followed by a quatrain. It relies on two rhyming refrains, which are established in the first tercet by the first and third lines. The refrains then repeat alternately until the last stanza, which is composed of two new lines followed by both refrains. “Using capitals for the refrains and lowercase letters for the rhymes, the form could be expressed as: A1 b A2 / a b A1 / a b A2 / a b A1 / a b A2 / a b A1 A2.” *Poets.org*. The Academy of American Poets. Web. 19 Oct. 2015.

³⁷ The pantoum is a poetic form similar to a villanelle in that there are repeating lines throughout the poem. However, the modern pantoum does not have a predetermined line length and is composed of a series of quatrains. The second and fourth lines of each quatrain are repeated as the first and third lines of the next. *Poets.org*. The Academy of American Poets. Web. 19 Oct. 2015.

³⁸ Ramazani, Jahan. *The Poetry of Mourning: The modern Elegy from Hardy to Heaney*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1994. Print.

must reach beyond mere meaning, and through both content and form, acknowledge and render unknowable absences—it must witness the unwitnessable without touching its bones.

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Quieting Female Voices

BY GABRIELLE HAUTH

In the United States and much of Western Europe, discourse about women is ever-present in fields as diverse as popular culture, politics, and history. Members of such societies often forget the ways in which other cultures conceptualize gender. Whereas the feminist movement in America initiated gendered scholarship that has gained support throughout the nation, gender studies are not given priority in Poland. While this dissimilarity does not diminish scholarship that comes out of Polish academia, the underestimation of the significance of gendered narratives affects the memory and memorialization of the Holocaust. Because Poland remains a place of increasing Holocaust tourism, the narratives that Polish institutions propagate are important to the global field of public history of the Holocaust. Places that hold such authority on Holocaust memory and education do a disservice to their visitors by neglecting female voices.

During my first visit to the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York City, the seamlessly interwoven male and female experience was striking. The core exhibition chronicles Jewish life from the 20th century to the present. The artifacts displayed do not separate the female history from male experience, but create a holistic presentation. Even in displays of religious life and political activism in the early 20th century, the female voice is considered in the presence of a wig-making tool used by Orthodox Jewish women in Poland to the sports blouse of a young Jewish girl. These articles are not presented independent from objects of male experience. They are not relegated to a distinct or secondary history; rather, they are celebrated as an integral part of the complete history of Jewish life. This trend is carried throughout the museum's temporary exhibitions as well. *A Town Known as Auschwitz: The Life and Death of a Jewish Community* uses the collections of the Auschwitz Jewish Center to portray pre-Holocaust Jewish life in Oświęcim, Poland. In this exhibition, female Jewish groups are pictured alongside male Jewish groups, and one of the focal photos depicts a pair of friends—a Jewish girl beside a Gentile girl, their heads almost touching in familiarity. The way that the Museum of Jewish Heritage undertakes the inclusion of the female voice reflects a broader movement in America and Western Europe towards acknowledgement of gendered history.

Women's specific narratives are not celebrated in the same way at the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum. Many tourists only visit Auschwitz I, the main camp. Though the Nazis used Auschwitz I as a men's camp, the museum presents a holistic history of Auschwitz and the death camp Auschwitz-Birkenau (which held both male and female prisoners) at the former site of the main camp. Photographs of women are displayed in a barrack of prisoner's intake portraits, where our tour guide explained that the camp life expectancy of women remained significantly lower than that of men. Evidence of women can also be seen in the infamous human hair on display, as well as in the hall of shoes, where colorful women's heels stand out among hundreds of loafers.

For all these feminine traces, one place in Auschwitz where women were imprisoned during its duration is completely ignored—the brothel. Heinrich Himmler, “*Reichsführer SS*,” established a prisoner brothel in Auschwitz in 1943 as part of an incentive program to boost Aryan work performance. The SS recruited women from Ravensbrück and later Auschwitz-Birkenau for work in this brothel, as well as multiple other brothels set up in Nazi concentration camps.³⁹ Despite

39 For more information on camp brothels, see Sommer, Robert. *Das KZ-Bordell: Sexuelle Zwangsarbeit in Nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslagern*. Schöningh, 2009.

this fact, the brothel barrack (block 24) at the former Auschwitz I camp—located directly behind the “*Arbeit Macht Frei*” sign and camp gate—has no distinguishing marker and tour guides do not mention this gritty part of the history of Auschwitz, the one piece of evidence showing women’s presence at Auschwitz’s main camp.

Auschwitz-Birkenau, which contained an entire section of women’s barracks, seems the opportune place for pointing out gendered aspects of suffering and surviving in Auschwitz; however, these narratives are neglected by guides and information posts onsite. As we were directed through the so-called sauna building, our tour guide explained that the SS used one room for shaving incoming prisoners and another for medical checks to ensure work ability. He did not explain the significant suffering women experienced in this area. A majority of female survivors’ memoirs detail the dehumanizing and de-gendering effect of the sauna. Women lost their hair, which was for many a sign of their gender identity, and they were also forced to endure unprofessional gynecological checks.⁴⁰ This was a specific form of gendered abuse that is imperative to understanding the everyday horrors of camp life. Adding to the silence of female narratives in Auschwitz-Birkenau, the former women’s barracks are currently in preservation. While I appreciate the museum’s commitment to conserving this important part of history, the institution fails to substitute the visual evidence with additional information explaining the preservation work or describing what a visitor may have seen in the women’s barracks. Our guide briefly mentioned the reasons for preservation but gave no supplemental information regarding women’s experiences that would have been broached had we had the opportunity to see the women’s barracks.

Despite the absence of a gendered narrative, explicit photographs of women are unreservedly displayed in both Auschwitz and Auschwitz-Birkenau. The most used are the famous *Sonderkommando* photos, one of which portrays naked Polish women moments before entering the gas chamber. In Auschwitz, these photos are shown as part of the museum exhibition. In Birkenau, the *Sonderkommando* photos are enlarged near the area in which they were taken. The use of these explicit photographs is not obscene simply because they are displayed but for the fact that they are presented with absolutely no commentary about the experience of these women. The distinct humiliation they may have experienced in that moment is ignored in order to focus on the act of murder that they would soon become victim to. The presentation of the photos forces visitors to focus on the women’s death and its perpetration rather than the complexity of their existence and experience.

Gendered studies of the Holocaust have been contested—some believe they are too specific and thus create a hierarchy of victim suffering, as if women suffered to a greater extent based on certain abuses they endured because of their feminine identity. However, this is not why we study gender in relation to the Holocaust. Rather, gendered research elucidates the ways in which men and women were subjected to *different* suffering. Myrna Goldenberg and Amy Shapiro’s aptly titled volume *Different Horrors, Same Hell: Gender in the Holocaust* presents several historians who support this idea. Like the Museum of Jewish Heritage, the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum is an important platform that contains the resources to address issues of gender. To systematically overlook gender in an important site that has seen the torment of both men and women is a detriment to the important work of Holocaust education. The Holocaust was not a genderless tragedy, and discourses surrounding it should not be similarly generalized. By creating a space to discuss gendered aspects of the Holocaust within museums and memorial sites, one can open up public dialogue and create a realm in which visitors can learn about past atrocities on a deeper level.

40 See, for example, Perl, Gisella. *I Was a Doctor in Auschwitz*. US: Yale Garber, 1987.

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The Visitor Experience A Living Sculpture

BY SHAUNA RAK

The Auschwitz ‘Amusement Park’

Walking into Auschwitz for the second time in a little over a year was easier than the first. Not because I had broken in my emotional protective shield, but because I was desensitized to the shocking commotion of visitors competing to the front of the line at the Auschwitz ‘Amusement Park.’ The line into the camp was filled with visitors cutting in – “we want to get in first, everybody wants to get in,” they would squeal; if only we paused to think of the irony. The absurdity continued as we walked into the camp and read the burning words, “*Arbeit Macht Frei*.” At Auschwitz, families with children lined up to take pictures under the gate. I was already prepared for the display - where Auschwitz is a manifestation of the past - a stage - and where visitors gather outside the entrance to eat ice cream in the heat, picnic on the grounds, and through their cameras, feel as though they have become a part of history. As these characters sucked out the despair and grief that haunts the site at Auschwitz, I found myself missing the depth of sorrow.

Seeking Connection

Reminiscent of my first visit to Poland, I found the emotion I was seeking while there with the AJC Fellows. When visiting the memorials in Poland, we were faced with groups of Jewish visitors from around the globe. These visitors wore white and blue, adorning themselves with Israeli flags, often standing in circles chanting *Hatikvah* (The Hope), the *Mourner’s Kaddish*, or other memorial ballads in Hebrew. They huddled around the sites, listening to each other tell stories, recite memoirs, and speak of Jews who were either lost or survived the Holocaust. I am privy to this type of experience as I took part in *The March of the Living* in 2014. *The March of the Living* was an emotional journey; a community of Jewish people, some descendants of survivors, some not, who mourned at the sites and marveled at the resilience of our culture and nation. For some of the AJC Fellows this type of behavior was deemed theatrical, overly dramatic. I was torn. I respected my colleagues, their intelligence, their analytic ability, their erudition, yet I was one of the few Jewish Fellows and I missed this community: the pride in our people, and the right to mourn our deceased, in the way we do. I found myself easing closer to these people, hearing the Hebrew words and singing quietly to myself – *Hatikvah*. This hope deepened my connection to the memorials, to the emotion that I yearned for in Auschwitz, yet my feelings were muted. I was there as an academic, not as a Jew.

Museum goers – Who are they?

As the AJC Fellows toured the memorial sites, we observed the other visitors. These people came from everywhere. Were they tourists or visitors? The tourist experience is researched and defined by Sheng and Chen (2012) as “the same as the visitor experience in a museum study” (p. 54). As they wandered around I heard the whispers from our group; academic snobbery. The “others” were not as educated as we were; they were too emotional, too loud, too...not like us. But, who are these memorials for? Who is the audience? Falk (2009) states, “If we knew something about who visited museums and what meanings they made we would also understand something about the role museums play in individuals’ lives” (p. 21). Reflecting on this statement, I don’t know who the people were at Auschwitz - these children who lined up to take pictures under the gate, why were they there? And who am I to judge their museum experience? According to Larsen (2007):

Tourists relate to or participate in particular events while travelling and they accumulate memories as a function of undertaking tourist trips. Accordingly, a meticulous description of tourist experiences concerns at least the planning process (the individuals' foreseeing of tourist events through expectancies), the actual undertaking of the trip (events during the trip) and finally the individuals' remembering of these tourist events. (p. 9) Such a pattern of cause and effect is comparable to my experience with the AJC Fellows. I longed for the connection and memory making I felt during my previous visit. These memories contributed to my experience and so, I judged those at Auschwitz, yet still felt alienated when my fellow researchers passed judgment on the Jewish groups who were chanting and weeping for their lack of apparent intellectual engagement. I was once one of them.

The Visitors as Sculpture

As museumgoers we share the space with other visitors. They become a fragment of the memory - of our experience. The relationship of the visitor, experience and museum has been theorized by North who writes: "As the aesthetic focus shifts from the object to the experience it provokes, the relationship of the two goes beyond mere implication: the public *becomes* the sculpture" (p. 861, 1990). North's description helped shaped my understanding of 'public as sculpture'. The way the Third Reich used humans as sculpture is no longer a secret; the Nazi propaganda team was, in fact, crafting a false sense of humanity and using the community as their medium. Today, visitors have their dignity and freedom; their experiences are personalized and must be respected. As they interact with memorials they become part of the work, a part of history and as a result, they too should be experienced. We must remember that we do not know these people. We may not understand or 'approve' of their experience but we must try not to let it interfere with our own.

Arts-Informed Research

As an artist, researcher, and teacher, I have explored various approaches to learning about trauma, memory, and historical phenomena. Through my research practice and past experience visiting the memorials in Poland, I developed a teaching philosophy that includes multiple art practices. I believe that a creative approach to learning can promote a dialogue about diverse beliefs, experiences, and backgrounds, and an interdisciplinary outlook to teaching and learning about social justice and genocide. I would like to further take up the issue of visitors and connectedness to sites such as Auschwitz by using a multi-media approach through an arts-informed installation. This method is exemplary for "redefining research form and representation and creating new understandings of process, spirit, purpose, subjectivities, emotion, responsiveness, and the ethical dimensions of inquiry" (Cole & Knowles, 2007, p. 59). Through rendering a visual response to my narratives and the broader theme of visitors, I will reach a wider audience through accessible work that creates shared memory.

As Leavy (2009) suggests, "visual art inherently opens up multiple meanings that are determined not only by the artist but also the viewer and context of viewing (both the immediate circumstance and the larger sociohistorical context)" (p. 215). The process will include superimposing and manipulating photographs from my visit to Poland through the Auschwitz Jewish Center Fellowship. By layering these photographs, as a digital assemblage I am "recontextualiz[ing] these images...thus presenting them in new ways" (Hirsch, 2002, p. 242). Assemblage is defined by the Museum of Modern Art [MoMA] as an art method where, "the banal, often tawdry materials retain their individual physical and functional identity, despite artistic manipulation" (2009a, Assemblage section, para. 1). The final product will be presented through projection. I will then invite visitors into the projected image, thus becoming part of the sculpture. This method is inspired by the work of Lori Novak who uses projection to "explore issues of memory and transmission, identity and loss, presence and absence, shifting cultural

meanings of photographs, and the relationship between the intimate and the public” (<http://lorienovak.com/bio.html>). Through this, I hope to engender personal connectedness to the sites and develop a deeper understanding of history. This installation will invite the audience to pose questions about themselves, their role, and the role of others in these environments. Furthermore, the art experience will make memories that people will have with them when they visit memorial sites ‘in person’.

Conclusion

Through this exhibit I will rediscover and be re-inspired by my recent memories from the AJC Fellowship; the experience will be informed by the process, and ultimately the outcome of the art installation. This exhibit will be an ongoing learning experience as I participate and observe visitors interact with the images. The audience will learn about tolerance, compassion, empathy, and identity, in addition to history. Participants will gain a greater understanding of how we relate to each other, how we relate to art, and how art relates to others’ experiences.

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Names in the Shadows: The Memorial Use of Transport Lists in the Łódź Tunnel of the Deported

BY DANIELLE TASCHEREAU MAMERS

The Radegast Station Museum (*Muzeum Stacja Radegast*) is located in the northern part of Łódź, Poland. The museum's buildings include the Radegast train station—originally built in 1929—and the Tunnel of the Deported and a Holocaust monument—both opened in 2005. The museum buildings are flanked to the north by railway tracks and to the south by a small courtyard, enclosed by one wall of enlarged gravestones inscribed with the names of the six Nazi concentration and extermination camps and a second wall bearing commemorative plaques. The station marked the northern boundary of the Łódź ghetto.

The interior of the restored station building narrates the history of the Łódź ghetto, from its establishment in 1939 through to its final liquidation in the summer of 1944. The story of the Łódź ghetto, named Litzmannstadt ghetto under German occupation, is told through a series of text panels, fabric banners featuring archival images of life in the ghetto, and a few physical artifacts exhibited along the walls of the station's single room. A long table sits in the centre of the room, surrounded by a dozen chairs. Six stacks of thickly laminated paper, held together and attached to the table with silver binder rings, line each side of the table. The twelve books are each copies of the transport lists that documented the arrival of Jews expelled from Poland and other Nazi-occupied countries into the ghetto and the deportation of the internees from the ghetto to Chelmno and Auschwitz-Birkenau. Presented in the pedagogical space of the museum, the lists serve as evidence of Nazi crimes committed in Łódź and illustrate the conditions of violent movement of life into and out of the ghetto.

These same transport lists re-appear inside the Tunnel of the Deported. The tunnel is 140 metres long, is fabricated from light grey cement, and narrows in width as it stretches from entrance to exit. A set of railway tracks leads into the tunnel from its western entrance, adjacent to the station building, but disappear into the tunnel's smooth floor. The sunlight that floods the western entrance soon gives way to near blackness in the windowless space, which made for a striking shift from the harsh mid-afternoon July sun to cool semi-darkness during my visit to the museum. Motion-sensitive track lights flick on as visitors make their way through the tunnel, illuminating three dozen Plexiglas panels. Eighteen pieces of paper listing names and addresses are suspended in each glass panel. The flow of the panels along the tunnel's southern wall is intermittently interrupted by inscriptions marking the years 1939 through 1945 and offering brief contextualizing explanations of the forced deportations into and out of the ghetto. The tunnel exits into the attached Holocaust monument constructed from red brick, which features an eternal flame and tall column that extends upwards and opens into the sky. Above the exit to the monument, the only other source of natural light in the adjoined structures, a panel written in Hebrew, Polish, and English reads: "Thou shalt not kill."

Unlike the station building, which seeks to educate visitors about the history of the Łódź ghetto, the Tunnel of the Deported functions as a primarily commemorative structure. This paper posits that the copies of transport lists exhibited along the walls of the Tunnel of the Deported embody a tension inherent to the memorial use of materials that directly contributed to the violence being

marked. In exploring these tensions, I will address questions broadly applicable to the challenge of Holocaust memorialization: How do the objects used in memorials shape the project of remembering? To what extent can the material transformation of an object loosen its connection to its violent function in the past, making space for its commemorative function in the present? What additional “memories” do particular objects bring to the spaces in which they are displayed?

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The narrative technique embedded in the architecture of the Tunnel of the Deported—the long progression of page upon page of names on either side of 140 metres of windowless concrete—fixes attention on the sheer volume of pages and of names on each page. The tunnel draws the visitor’s focus to the individual victims: names fill pages, pages fill Plexiglas panels, panels fill the grey walls. The tunnel itself is a hall filled with victims’ names, but it does not present detailed accounts of their lives. Rather, the tunnel presents a material trace of victims on the way to their deaths. The medium of representation—the transport lists—is a technology that contributed directly to their deaths. The tunnel provides a commemorative account of victims’ lives, but does so through the very form of accounting that enabled the murder of those dispatched from the ghetto to the camps.

The lists displayed in the tunnel perform two different functions. They are evidence of crimes perpetrated, illustrating one of the bureaucratic technologies deployed in contribution to a larger apparatus of violence. The lists are also a testament to the thousands of individuals sent from Łódź to their deaths. The lists indicate *who* the victims were, but also provide a valuable illustration of *how* they were sent to their deaths. The commemorative nature of the exhibit deploys the list with the intent of marking the thousands of lives inscribed on the hundreds of pages of transport lists; however the memorial use of these lists is inescapably tied to their status as documentary evidence.

The evidentiary status of the pages exhibited in the tunnel hinges on their histories as technologies deployed in service of violence. As Raul Hilberg argues, the destruction of the European Jews was not the outcome of a single event, but was a “process of destruction,” which involved a wide diversity of strategies, tactics, and technologies.⁴¹ Georges Didi-Huberman similarly describes the Holocaust as an “infinitely large, complex, ramified, multiform historical phenomenon.”⁴² Transport lists can be read as one of the many technologies employed in the perpetration of Holocaust. Such lists are a tool that helped accomplish the organization of bodies and their movement from into and out of the ghetto, contributing to the larger project of the destruction of the European Jews. However, a transport list is also a material artifact of many other technologies interacting: from typewriters and pens through the telephone or telegraph system used to call for a deportation to the trains that arrived and departed from Radegast Station. Technologies can be further read as examples of “things as people acting together.”⁴³ In this vein, the Łódź transport lists are material objects resulting from Nazi policy, racist and nationalist political philosophy, anti-Semitic hatred, political economic decisions, external pressures along the various war fronts, and other factors. The lists and their bureaucratic—perhaps banal—veneer obfuscate the violence to which they contributed. Orderly and efficient documents, the lists resemble a hybrid of a census and a shipping manifest. The standardized entries obfuscate the

⁴¹ Hilberg, Raul, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (New York, Holmes & Meier, 1985 [1961]).

⁴² Didi-Huberman, Georges, *Images in Spite of All* (Chicago, University of Chicago, 2008), 58.

⁴³ Becker, Howard S., *Tricks of the Trade: How to Think About Your Research While You’re Doing It* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1998), 47.

crimes the lists are directly implicated in: lives violently disrupted, forcibly relocated, and—in most cases—destroyed.

Line after line and name after name, the repetitive banality of transport lists belie the complicated apparatus of violence to which they contribute. As artifacts of a bureaucratic process, the lists can also be read as involved in the obliteration of memory. Ghettos across Europe, including the Łódź ghetto, were directly connected to the vast network of concentration and extermination camps, a network of what Didi-Huberman describes as “experimental machines for a *general obliteration*.”⁴⁴ The program of general obliteration was not limited to mass murder, but extended to any traces of these lives, including the tools used in their murder. . The destruction of the tools of obliteration, such as the demolition of the gas chambers and crematoria at Auschwitz-Birkenau, also extended to the attempted erasure of archives. In the final months of 1944, documents, photographs, and other material traces were destroyed along with other elements of the murderous infrastructure of the Nazi concentration camps. The Łódź ghetto transport lists remained largely intact and, as a result, the lists displayed in the Tunnel of the Deported are both evidence of and resistant to the Nazi program of general annihilation.

The display of these lists, however, can be read as an act of resistance to the obliteration of memory. In documenting the forced relocation of Jews from the ghetto to the Chełmno extermination camp,⁴⁵ the lists enunciate the names of Łódź ghetto residents. The lists marked hundreds of lives for death; however, these pages also (likely) bear the final written traces of victims as individuals. While it is possible that some victims may have been registered at Chełmno and Auschwitz-Birkenau, the transport lists written in the Łódź ghetto could be the last time the victims’ names were written down prior to their deaths. As a final trace of individual identity, the display of the lists at Radegast Station resists their original, bureaucratic function. Though the documents are a material trace of the process of obliterating life, they also preserve and communicate the identities of victims.

The lists are an accounting of the dead: a form of accounting that managed the violent shipment of bodies to their death, but also an accounting of lives with individuated specificity. As an installation, the tunnel uses the names on the list as an index of the human victim. This indexical trace was produced in the service of violence. It is now being deployed to honour victims. Without any additional contextualizing information about the victims, their lives, or their deaths, their memory is tightly knotted up with the bureaucratic process that contributed to their being sent to death—a process that flattens the individual life from a subject that matters into an object that is counted. In depicting the thousands of names of those deported from Łódź, the installation also depicts thousands of instances of subjects violently transformed into objects. But in focusing the visitor’s attention on those names—page after page, panel after panel—the installation attempts to gesture towards a belated restoration of individuality and a return from objectification. Read this way, the Tunnel of the Deported is a memorial that remembers the violent work of obliterating individuality, but also resists that obliteration.

As material examples of one ghetto’s involvement in the Nazi bureaucratic and communications network, the Łódź transport lists gesture towards to the incredible scale of the genocidal operation

⁴⁴ Didi-Huberman, *Images in Spite of All*, 20.

⁴⁵ The lists displayed in the Radegast Station Museum and the Tunnel of Deportees only include lists of deportations to Chełmno, which occurred in 1942 and 1944. These lists do not account for the so-called final liquidation of the Łódź ghetto in August 1944, which involved the transport of some 65,000 Jewish ghetto inhabitants to Auschwitz-Birkenau, as the Nazis did not order the recording of these final transports. However, prisoners deported from Łódź in August 1944 may have been registered upon arrival at Auschwitz-Birkenau (Source: private correspondence with Radegast Station Museum historian, 02 Sept 2015).

by not just articulating a number of those forced from the ghetto and into the camps, but by enunciating individual names, one after the other. While representing just a fraction of the individuals forced through the network of concentration and extermination camps throughout the Holocaust, the Łódź transport lists provide a concrete glimpse into the particularity of individual life embedded in cumulative numbers of lives lost. The lists displayed at Radegast Station visually translate the statistic of 145,000 victims transported from Łódź to Chełmno and Auschwitz-Birkenau into several thousand individuals, in the form of their typewritten names. Not all of the individuals transported out of the Łódź ghetto to their deaths were recorded on transport lists; indeed, the final transport of some 65,000 victims to Auschwitz-Birkenau in August 1944 was not recorded at all. Representing only a portion of the individual victims, the names on the displayed lists are both indexical—a specific name tied to a specific life—and representational—a specific name gesturing towards many other lives, unmarked.

Despite the glimpse they provide into a localized apparatus of genocidal violence, the transit lists are also merely names. As a trace of the lives once expelled to and then deported from the Łódź ghetto, the lists offer only the most basic details about the victims loaded onto trains at Radegast Station. A name does not speak to the thickness of an individual life. It does not hint at the many expressions a face once held nor does it echo anecdotes of joy and sorrow. The flatness of the name cannot begin to capture the dimension of a life, contoured by experience, inheritance, and endurance. The typewritten name serves as a metaphor for the victim, a material representation of the body: a person, rendered as inked letters on yellowing paper. On some of the displayed lists, names are accompanied by additional personal information, including: gender, address in the ghetto, or profession. While these details lend a semblance of dimension to the names they accompany, they do not add the texture of understanding. To know where someone lived and what tasks they did in order to survive provides only the smallest of steps towards knowing the shape of a life or the full weight of its loss.

The listed names are not acts of self-expression. Rather than an account of oneself in the form of a signature, the listed names were typed by Nazi SS and members of the Łódź Ghetto Judenrat as a bureaucratic task in service of a larger apparatus of violence. While the lists preserve the specificity of victims, they account for individuals as prisoners rather than as citizens. As a medium of representation, a list can account for the name or the number, but it cannot capture the dimensions of a human life. The conditions of the lists' production and the enabling role they played in deaths of those imprisoned in the ghetto haunts the commemorative use in which the lists are now deployed. In being copied and installed on the walls of the tunnel at Radegast Station, the transport lists undergo a material transformation from objects of violence to objects of memory. However, the commemorative function of the displayed lists remains laminated to the repressive function of the lists as a key technology within the Nazi apparatus of violence. The dramatic lighting, architecture, and sparse additional text used in the Tunnel of the Deported combine to create an atmosphere that is explicitly commemorative. The objects used to memorialize the victims—the lists—also remember the specificity of the violence perpetrated against them and the particular tools that were used for it. In the context of the tunnel, the lists seem to be offered as purely commemorative, unlike the more explicitly pedagogical museum space that points to objects as tools of violence.

The tension inherent in using the transport lists—artifacts that were both tools of violence and evidence of the apparatus of that violence—for memorialization raises several important questions: Does the commemorative installation of the list overcome the violent discourse in which the lists are invested? As a representation of individual lives as objects to be accounted for and shipped, does reusing the list for memorial ends also risk re-mobilizing perpetrator discourse? If these lists are presented as unproblematically commemorative, does the root of the violent

processes embedded in the lists risk going unexamined or unchallenged? Does the memorial use of such objects exempt the logic embedded within them from interrogation? The explicitly memorial use of the transport lists misses an opportunity to think through the often banal ways that violence comes into being—a risk that haunts many of our technologies and media of representation.

These questions are applicable not only to the Tunnel of the Deported, but to the general project of commemoration and the challenges posed by artifacts intimately entwined with violence and its victims. The dual status of the list as an account of individual victims and as a material force of victimization is a tension at the core of the memorial. Indeed, this tension is at the core of much Holocaust memorialization, which speaks to the challenge of remembering lives in the face of an obliterative project that sought to destroy lives and all traces of it. Commemorating murder on a genocidal scale presents a seemingly intractable conceptual problem. To communicate the texture of a single life is itself a challenge: to grasp that same value if multiplied by thousands or millions of lives bears heavily upon the limits of all of our imaginative faculties. The inability of the transport lists to meaningfully provide an account of the specificity of victims' lives is not a unique failure of lists or names, but a shortcoming common to many forms of commemorative representation that is, perhaps, unavoidable.

Searching for Esther: Finding Myself

BY ANNETTE FINLEY-CROSWHITE, PH.D.

A few months before the Auschwitz Jewish Center Fellows Program began, I was leafing through Serge Klarsfeld's *French Children of the Holocaust: A Memorial*ⁱ when I stopped abruptly on a page citing a familiar address: 6 rue Sainte-Isaure in the 18th arrondissement of Paris. I knew this address near Montmartre as a building in which I had rented an apartment in 1985 when I was a graduate student. The name listed as part of Convoy 34 that caught my eye was Esther Fersztenfeld, a girl who, I learned to my surprise, lived in the same building I inhabited some forty-three years later. Quick research on the Yad Vashem website revealed that Esther had been born in France to a Jewish family from Będzin, Poland and was fifteen years old on the day of her arrest in 1942. Held first in internment camps in France, Esther and her parents, Solomon and Devorah, were eventually deported to Auschwitz where they all perished. It was disturbing to realize that a site of the Shoah had once been my home.

When I received the course syllabus for the summer 2015 program, I was intrigued to learn that we would be going to Będzin. Erin Einhorn's *The Pages in Between: A Holocaust Legacy of Two Families, One Home*ⁱⁱ was required reading in preparation for our trip, a story that takes place in Będzin. I began researching the town while at the same time trying to figure out if members of Esther's family had survived. In turn, I learned that an English boy on holiday in Paris had fallen in love with Esther's older sister; a teenage romance ensued that led to marriage and life in London prior to the World War II for the elder Fersztenfeld daughter, Marie.ⁱⁱⁱ I was thus able to track down Esther's nephew, Leon Magar, in London and her great-nephew, Jonathan Kalman in Jerusalem. They opened up their family archives to me inclusive of pictures of family from Będzin. As a result, one of my major goals of the Fellows Program was to learn of this place and survey its landscape. I also wanted to find out what had happened to Esther. In preparation for going to Będzin, moreover, I made contact with Piotr and Karolina Jackoweńko of The Cukerman's Gate Foundation. This organization works to raise money to restore and preserve a Jewish House of Prayer in Będzin known as Cukerman's Gate. Karolina agreed to work with me and help me track down Fersztenfeld family history in the city archives.

I was not sure what to expect in Będzin, a site visit that came at the end of the Fellows Program. By that point we had been well exposed to the complex and conflicted cultural landscape of Poland. On the one hand, we experienced the exhilarating vitality of rabbis, scholars, community leaders and Holocaust educators all committed to rebuilding Jewish life and culture in Poland today making us feel like a part of something remarkable. On the other hand, the synagogues we visited were rarely active religious houses. Jewish philanthropy meant some had been restored as museums but others were in ruins, like Działoszyce, where tall grass on the backside of the structure concealed empty beer bottles and cigarette butts, clear indication that people still denigrate the former temple today. As Fellows, we participated in a Jewish Cultural Festival in Kraków. While it was fantastically fun, it still felt artificial, "a Jewish festival without Jews," as some of my colleagues lamented, held in the center of the 21st-century recreation of Kazimierz, charming but something of an artificial Yiddish wonderland set to the folk melodies of klezmer music and driven at least in part by capitalist pursuit of the profit factor in historical recreation and tourism.

And of course we had been to Auschwitz-Birkenau. One anticipates being moved and/or angered by Auschwitz and the history of the atrocities committed there. I had been to the camp before on two occasions taking my own students on Study Abroad. But those trips had occurred in the depth of winter, and this time I confronted Auschwitz during the period of summer vacation when it was crowded with tourists. Nothing really could have prepared me for the families eating their McDonald's "Happy Meals" in front of Auschwitz or the marketing of dark tourism in Kraków, a city serving as the hub for visitors going to and from the former factory of death. One of the things that shocked me the most was a store inside the central building at Auschwitz that houses the ticket booth. One can also buy tissues there. The museum store offers postcards, books, and soft drinks, and in large bins next to the cash distributor machine, there are packs of tissues sold for three złoty each. It seems that everything has been thought of in marketing the Holocaust down to the profit to be made off visitor sorrow.

My anxiety about going to Będzin grew during our trip to Auschwitz-Birkenau. At Birkenau we explored the Central Sauna Building where prisoners were once disinfected. It now houses an exhibit of photographs entitled "Before they Perished" taken from a cache of pictures Liberators found discarded in "Kanada," the warehouses in which Jewish property from the transports was sorted and housed. I had always been attracted to the beauty of this exhibit and the images of Jewish families and life before the Holocaust. Indeed, I even have a picture in my office of my students exploring this exhibit taken on one of my study abroad trips. I am perfectly aware of the controversies surrounding the use of images like these in Holocaust museums. They purposefully manipulate our emotions and turn us into voyeurs. They pose ethical problems about showing images of people who never gave their consent to be in a museum display. Even so, how could any sensitive human not be utterly captivated by such lovely family scenes, *especially* while back shadowing their personal tragedies?

On this occasion I was in for a shock. It seems I had never acknowledged before that many of these images came from Będzin. In the past, these pictures had left me intrigued, but this time I realized I might have been looking at Esther's cousins, her grandmother's friends, or even the street where her father had lived as a child. At the very least, there were images of the city that Esther's parents would have recognized. My gaze now produced a shift in meaning of the photographs, tying the pictures to a known biography and thus giving them more agency in my mind because of the personal connection. I felt like I had real insight into the visual world the Fersztenfelds had known before the war, and that thought brought tears to my eyes. Esther's story should not have made the pictures more compelling, however, and thus I felt guilty for assigning more weight to their importance by repurposing their meaning simply because I had made a connection, imposing my own form of ownership over them in the process. Was I creating some weird prosthetic memory out of the museum exhibit? Did I want to feel Esther's pain at this very site where she died? This confusion was something I had to reckon with. The dual identities of serious scholar and vulnerable human seemed to be at cross-purposes at that moment of discovery leaving me feeling quite ashamed. Unbeknownst to my colleagues and even to myself, I was looking for Esther Fersztenfeld at Auschwitz-Birkenau and that pursuit, however impossible, affected everything I did.^{iv}

The day we finally went to Będzin began with a stop in Bielsko-Biała. There was less ambiguity about "the presence of absence" in this poor southwestern region of Poland far from the thriving urban centers of Kraków and Warsaw, a part of eastern Europe where the Nazi agenda had been so complete that today there are few traces left of prewar Jewish life. Our hosts at the JCC in Bielsko-Biała spoke of being the last generation of Jews in this mid-sized industrial city where the community no longer has enough members to form a *minyan*. Indeed, we learned that a shortage of Jewish men in communities throughout Poland make mixed marriages the norm, and

this is true for Bielsko-Biala. Our host explained only one traditional Jewish married couple still live in Bielsko-Biala, but out of necessity all the other Jewish women have married outside their faith. In Bielsko-Biala and then Będzin, moreover, we encountered landscapes still marked by the Nazi's initial invasion of the country and the destruction that ensued in the wake of the terrifying *Einsatzgruppen*. The Germans burned the Great Synagogue in Bielsko-Biala on September 4, 1939, only three days after the opening of World War II. Destroying synagogues became an immediate action of occupation in the towns and villages the Nazis overran in their initial eastward advance. Such was the fate of the Great Synagogue in Będzin on September 8-9 when the Germans set fire to it as well as neighboring homes in its vicinity and shot everyone who tried to escape. Reports indicate it took about twenty hours to destroy completely the synagogue and the surrounding neighborhood that included many Jewish homes and businesses. At least two hundred Jewish victims died in the fire and ensuing chaos, a prelude only nine days into the war to what became the Nazi plan for Jewish annihilation. In Będzin, they achieved their malicious goal.^v

There are no Jews in Będzin today. More alarmingly, there are few Jewish sites to even testify to the life of a town that in the early 20th century was more Jewish than Christian with Jews making up 62% of the population.^{vi} We met Karolina Jakoweńko who walked us through Będzin pointing out tiny remnants of what had once been a thriving Jewish community. We saw one instance of menorah grillwork high up on a balcony, and we beheld the ruins of Rutka Laskier's home, the teenaged diarist known popularly as "the Polish Anne Frank." We also visited a stunning former Jewish *cheder* complete with historic polychromies on the walls that are being painstakingly restored by the Cukerman Gate Foundation and its founder, our guide, Karolina. Karolina represents an interesting phenomenon in Poland today, non-Jewish citizens who are passionate about preserving Jewish history and reviving Jewish culture in their country. Karolina and her husband recently won the Maria and Lukasz Hirszowicz Prize given by the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw for their contributions to Jewish education and the promotion of Polish-Jewish relations. Karolina explained that students in Będzin know nothing of the Jewish history of their city or what happened to the Jews during the Holocaust. Part of her mission is to take this history into the schools. We also met Karolina's toddler, Helene, and perhaps took some solace in knowing that Helene's generation will not grow up unaware of the Jewish history of their town.

Karolina's enthusiasm aside, our tour of Będzin left us gloomy and desirous of a quick exit. The town itself or what we saw of it looks shabby and run down, and while the Fellows were supportive of my quest for knowledge about Esther, they clearly wanted to leave Będzin as soon as possible. One of the most remarkable moments of the trip for me, however, occurred in this place. Walking toward the archives and close by the ruins of the town's medieval castle, Karolina pointed out to me the site where the Great Synagogue once stood. We never stopped, however, and although I took a quick picture with my phone, there was nothing to indicate that one of the most spectacular synagogues of southwestern Poland had once towered over this site. I later learned there is a small commemorative marker there, but I never saw it, and from my perspective it felt like the entire Jewish past had been wiped away. That site is close by Modzejowska Street in the heart of what was once Będzin's Jewish quarter that is no more. Solomon Fersztenfeld or at the very least his relatives had lived on this street at number 95 in the early 20th century, but virtually everything is gone. It was a cloying, hot summer day in Będzin, but I remember looking down Modzejowska Street and shivering from the visual realization of Nazi evil that is still present in the nothingness left from the destruction that burned the Jewish quarter to the ground. If I had glimpsed an understanding of the topography of annihilation at places like Auschwitz or Treblinka, it was here in the emptiness of Będzin where the geography of loss was just as profound.^{vii}

At the end of the Fellows Program I flew to Paris. Testimony given at Yad Vashem by Esther's sister in 1972 had led me to believe that Esther was arrested in June of 1942 and gassed on arrival at Auschwitz. Materials Esther's nephew sent me revealed his mother had searched long and hard after the war to discover what happened to her family but was never entirely successful in finding the details. In Paris I found the Fersztenfeld's arrest warrants dated July 16, 1942, the date of the notorious Vélodrome d'Hiver Roundup in which over 8000 Jews were kept for four to five days in a bicycle stadium enduring deplorable conditions with no food, water, or sanitation. As a French historian I knew only too well the details of the Vel d'Hiv Roundup and I felt the sting of tears once again when I realized Esther had been a victim of it. From the Vel d'Hiv, the Vichy collaborationist government sent the Fersztenfelds to an internment camp near Orléans called Pithiviers, from which Esther's mother was deported to Auschwitz. In August, Esther and her father were sent to Drancy, the main French internment camp outside Paris, after which they were deported to Auschwitz on September 18, 1942, never to be seen again.^{viii}

The day after my return home, I received an email from Wojciech Płosa, the head of the archives at the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum and Memorial. As a Faculty Fellow, I had been able to talk with Dr. Płosa during our visit to Auschwitz, and I had asked him for information on the Fersztenfeld family. He attached to his email the death certificates of Esther and her mother Devorah.^{ix} All of this time I had imagined that perhaps Esther's father had been admitted into the camp but that Esther and her mother had most likely been gassed on arrival. I found that the opposite had been the reality. No documentation exists for Esther's father but given that most of the men from his transport were immediately gassed, Dr. Płosa felt this had likely been his fate. Esther's mother was processed into the camp but lived only sixteen days, dying nearly a month before her husband and daughter were deported. Esther arrived at Auschwitz on September 20, 1942 and was selected to enter the camp. She survived thirty-eight days, dying - so the death certificate indicates- of a heart attack on October 28, 1942. (We know Nazi doctors filled out death certificates based off a list of possible causes of death that usually had little to do with the reality of why a prisoner died). Esther was sixteen years old, and she died alone without her mother and father, parents I knew she adored from the letters her sister's son made available to me. The horrifying reality that came with Dr. Płosa's email meant that Esther's suffering at Auschwitz-Birkenau must have also included the psychological torment of having been separated from her parents, making her physically and emotionally vulnerable and thus limiting her chance of survival.

The Auschwitz Jewish Center Fellows Program greatly enriched my life as a teacher-scholar. In the first instance, it allowed me to travel widely in Poland to sites of Holocaust history the knowledge of which will enhance my classroom instruction and Study Abroad trips at Old Dominion University in the years to come. It greatly expanded my spatial understanding of the implementation of the Holocaust as well. All of the landscapes of memory we surveyed left an indelible impression whether we viewed them as sites of commemoration, ruin, obliteration or more positively as places of recuperation where Jewish communities are in the process of being reconstituted. The Program also contributed greatly to my own research on dark tourism and a forthcoming book on Esther Fersztenfeld called *Esther's Shadow: French Memory of the Shoah and Why it Matters*, aspects of which are touched on in this essay. In many ways, however, the most important parts of the Program were those moments that offered time for self-reflection encouraging us to consider our own failings and implicit biases. Bogdan Białek of the Jan Karski Society in Kielce informed us that "toleration is not enough," and Sister Mary O'Sullivan of the Center for Dialogue and Prayer at Oświęcim encouraged us to "listen to the voices of the earth," ideas I think that urged us as AJC Fellows to grapple with deeper understanding of our *own* humanness and personal ethics while standing on the historical ground of the Holocaust. Our

group leaders Shiri Sandler, Tomasz Kuncewicz, and Maciek Zabierowski also encouraged personal insight into ethical obligations.

In one sense the Holocaust occurred because human relationships disintegrated in the context of war and individuals and nations fell into a moral abyss. The consequence was disastrous for six million Jews and other persecuted groups. Poland seems to be engaged in a resurgence of improved Polish-Jewish relations, and the AJC Program exposed us to that positive energy. But the trip also introduced me personally to some incredibly talented and insightful student and faculty Fellows, and our willingness to embrace each other and develop meaningful relationships despite our many differences I found to be life affirming, especially in the context of a trip focused on death. The Holocaust was the most comprehensive plan of mass destruction devised in the modern era, but we have yet to grasp fully its significance for humankind. The Auschwitz Jewish Center Fellows Program helped me to learn, however, that understanding the Holocaust means I must be ever ready to take a stand on human dignity, social justice, and equality, issues tied to the very essence of life, past, present and future.

ⁱ Serge Klarsfeld, Susan Cohen and Howard Epstein, *French Children of the Holocaust: A Memorial*, Trans. Glorianne Depondt and Howard Epstein (New York: NYU Press, 1996).

ⁱⁱ Erin Einhorn, *The Pages In Between: A Holocaust Legacy of two Families, One Home* (New York: Touchstone, Simon & Schuster, 2008).

ⁱⁱⁱ Leon Magar, telephone interview with author, May 28, 2015.

^{iv} For more on images and exhibits see for example, Elizabeth Edwards, "Objects of Affect: Photography Beyond the Image," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 41, (2012): 221-34. I thank my "Fellows" colleague, Danielle Taschereau Mamers, for this reference.

^v Mary Fulbrook, *A Small Town near Auschwitz: Ordinary Nazis and the Holocaust* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 50-52.

^{vi} *Ibid.*, 24-45.

^{vii} For more insight on prewar Będzin see, Sam Pivnik, *Survivor: Auschwitz, the Death March and My Fight for Freedom* (London: Hodder & Stoughton Ltd., 2012), 1-59.

^{viii} *Archives Nationales de France* [hereafter AN] F/9/5611, Fichier Familial, AN, F/9/5755, Fichier des Camps de Pithiviers et Beaune-la-Rolande, AN F/9/5691, Fichier Adultes du Camps de Drancy. Solomon, Devorah and Esther Fersztenfeld were arrested at their home at 6 rue Ste-Isaure on July 16, 1942 and taken to the Vélodrome d'Hiver as part of a massive roundup. On the 19th of July they were transferred from the Vel d'Hiv stadium in Paris to the Camp at Pithiviers near Orléans. Devorah was sent from Pithiviers to Auschwitz on Convoy 14 leaving France on August 3, 1942. Her Auschwitz death certificate says she died of "influenza" on August 21, 1942. Solomon and Esther were transferred from the Vélodrome d'Hiver to Pithiviers with Devorah on July 19, 1942. From there father and daughter were sent to Drancy on August 25, 1942. On September 18, 1942 Solomon and Esther Fersztenfeld left Drancy as part of Convoy 34 arriving in Auschwitz on night of 20-21 September where there is no record of Solomon. Esther's Auschwitz death certificate indicates she died of a "heart attack" on October 28, 1942.

^{ix} Dr. Płosa has yet to send me the citation information for these death certificates. Wojciech Płosa, email to author, July 29, 2015 with attachments.



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