NARRATIVITY AND UNIQUENESS IN CANADIAN WOMEN'S HOLOCAUST MEMOIRS

by

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Table of Contents

Abstract

This thesis examines eight memoirs of the Holocaust by Canadian women from a feminist, poststructuralist perspective, and argues that deconstructive notions of meaning as differential, genre-bound, and ultimately ungrounded are essential to grasping the ethical and historical quandary facing Holocaust testimony. Drawing on the work of Jean-François Lyotard, Jacques Derrida, Maurice Blanchot, Luce Irigaray and Judith Butler, the thesis investigates the meanings and legacies of the Holocaust by addressing texts outside the usual canon of Holocaust literature and with a skeptical interest in considering how individual texts incorporate or resist norms that determine the possible meanings of the genocidal past. The Nazi genocide has proved resistant to historiographic narrativity, and the violence inflicted on survivors makes the recollection and representation of their experiences exceedingly difficult. The predominance of normative hermeneutic or generic constraints is problematic for Holocaust testimony not only because survivors' experiences defy norms of verisimilitude, but because similar norms define notions, such as subjectivity, community, and history, by which meaning in general is understood. Each chapter of this study addresses a locus of expressiveness where narrative generality meets individual experience: subjectivity, gender, place, meaning, and mourning. These explorations suggest that the experience of genocidal violence interrupts and reflects quotidian structures of narrativity, both in general terms of communication, morality, and politics, and in the intimacy of temporalized and situated self-conception. By emphasizing, among other things, the presence of the gendered body, the evidential constraints of legal and historical argument, and the violent restructuring of space and time by Nazi power, these texts foreground the perspectival immediacy and authority of the witness, whose only power is the capacity to evoke readerly responsiveness. Readers of Holocaust memoirs are faced with texts that explicitly and implicitly resist normalization; the responsiveness they elicit is not easily turned into the comforting abstraction of knowledge or identification, but rather involves failures of precisely such recuperative generality. The meaning of the Holocaust, then, as expressed in these few memoirs by women who survived, lies in the challenge it continues to pose to each of us in our existential, ethical, particularity.

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Chapter One
Introduction

Without memoirs of the Holocaust, our understanding of its terror and its consequences would be partial indeed. Holocaust historian Yehuda Bauer notes that,

> The historian's art is, after all, limited, and in order to present understanding more satisfactorily, the writer, the poet, the artist, the dramatist, the musician, the psychologist, and, for the religious among us, the theologian have to be asked for their insights to enable us to probe deeper into that darkness. Above all we need the witness. There is no history without witnesses, and in this case, it is only the witnesses through whom we can sense something that approaches a vicarious experience. (*History* 44)

The historical study of the Holocaust, beginning late as it did after the end of the war (Marrus 4; Herbert 4), has amassed a tremendous amount of factual detail, and historians have interpreted the evidence with respect to increasingly nuanced causal and explanatory narratives—for instance defusing the overly-polarized intentionalist/functionalist debate (regarding the premeditated or contingent nature of the Nazi decision to annihilate the Jews of Europe) that dominated Holocaust historiography during the 1980s.[1] Simultaneous with these achievements has been a tremendous upsurge of interest—both academic and not—in hearing

and recording the stories of individuals who suffered and survived. In North America, the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies and the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation have gone to tremendous effort and expense to offer survivors the opportunity to record their recollections for posterity. The publication of Holocaust survivor memoirs has continued apace since the first explosion of public interest in the 1970s, and has been supplemented by second- and third-generation perspectives on the ongoing impact of the past.[2] The continued audience for individual stories of the Holocaust may be motivated in part by the advancing age and diminishing numbers of survivors with living memory of the events, but also, as Bauer suggests, because such immediate and affecting stories offer insights and meanings not addressed by even the most convincing and thorough historical explication. And, given the ongoing ubiquity of organized political and racial violence, personal stories of suffering and loss remain perpetually relevant to our understanding of current and historical events in terms other than those of factual reportage or historiographic explanation.

Berel Lang argues that Holocaust literature arises with its insistent moral urgency because it is rooted in tragic history, and that this urgency implies an aspiration to collapse the distinction between the two meanings of the word "history": the textual narratives that represent the past and the events and experiences of that past themselves ("Holocaust" 19). As he also argues, however, notions of historical reality are dependent on historiographic representation; he notes that the very different narrative approaches taken by Raul Hilberg and Daniel

Goldhagen imply different perspectives on the nature of the past ("Holocaust" 25). History, in the sense of the past itself, is thus always essentially indebted to narrative form for its reality, and the two senses of "history" are not so easily distinguished. It is widely acknowledged that certain forms of narrative—those of nineteenth-century novelistic realism—are canonical with respect to addressing the reality and the nature of the past.[3] Whether deployed in formal historiography or not, the predominance of such canonical norms proves deeply problematic for Holocaust survivors faced with the prospect of expressing experiences that fall far beyond the pale of everyday existence, and so of narrative plausibility or verisimilitude. Maurice Blanchot summarizes this dilemma by way of a text buried by a murdered *Sonderkommando* worker: "The truth was always more atrocious, more tragic than what will be said about it" (*Writing* 82). Blanchot concludes that "We read books on Auschwitz. The wish of all, in the camps, the last wish: know what happened, do not forget, and at the same time you will never know" (*Writing* 82). We see here a challenge to epistemology that is both formal (such knowledge is incomplete) and ethical (such knowledge is inadequate). The narrative dilemma facing survivors' testimony is twofold: their representative goals are constrained by pervasive norms which may not offer the expressive freedom required to do their experiences justice, and their audience's grasp of the past is mediated by similarly canonical notions of narrativity that predispose them to dismiss or misinterpret deviant expressions (cf. Gilmore 144-147).

Blanchot radicalizes the latter fear in his observation that genres of discourse

that seek to translate expressions of experience into matters of disembodied fact participate in a troubling transcendence that tends away from ethical relations and embraces knowledge as a sufficient response to expressiveness. Blanchot presents the repeated desire on the part of prisoners to be remembered as inviting the dangerous possibility that they will be merely "known" (*Writing* 82), that their stories and their sufferings will become a matter of epistemological interest rather than of, say, ethics or responsibility. The often-repeated injunctions in the wake of Holocaust to "Remember!" or "Never forget!" could thereby be fulfilled in theory without taking effect in practise. Edith Wyschogrod argues similarly:

> The historian who assumes liability for the dead feels the pressure of an ethics that is prior to historical judgement. Historical narratives cannot avoid depicting the past for that, after all, is the historian's task. Yet when description is applied to the dead other something is missing, left out, something that cannot be stated in the language of description. [...] [T]he other who cannot speak for her- or himself has a meaning prior to the meanings that are conferred upon her or his behaviour, prior to the events belonging to a milieu of the past.
>
> ("Shoah" 30)

Any reading of testimony that subordinates or passes over the particularities of its form, the specificity of its meaning, in the interest of larger concepts and narratives, leaves its distinctiveness open to forgetting, ignores the implied remainder of alternate readings. Not all Holocaust memoirs find the constraints of canonical

reportage or interpretation problematic, but neither do all Holocaust memoirs simply foreground verisimilitude and historical realism. The texts under consideration here vary widely in their relationship to normative genres of autobiographical and historical narration, but all involve tensions between partiality and generality, between idiom and genre, between narrativity and uniqueness.

I use the terms "memoir," "autobiography," and "testimony" more or less interchangeably in the argument that follows. Autobiographical criticism, which was once constrained to a small and restricted canon of 'great works by great men' (cf. Gilmore 1; Rosen 2-7) has in the past couple of decades, and under the influence of postmodernist and feminist ideas, become very broad indeed, to the point where terms such as "life writing" and "auto/biography" have been coined to describe its new breadth of interest. I agree with Harold Rosen's objection to the latter term (8), and unite the notions of memoir, testimony, and autobiography in their meaning as a subject's presentation of her own experience. (Although I generally reserve the term "testimony" to refer to the peculiar situation of a first-person attestation to witnessed events, a genre of narration whose perspectival authority is precariously based on phenomenal uniqueness and certainty, and which is explored at length in my first chapter.) The overlap between these various terms lies in their common reference to a real past, to the difficulty of representing recollected events. The pressure that reality exerts on these texts problematizes the critical task because, as Alvin Rosenfeld points out, much of the imagery seen in Holocaust writing is not

figural in any traditional sense, but is altogether too real: "the flames were real flames, the ashes only ashes, the smoke always and only smoke" (*Double* 27), and the practise of literary criticism makes an uneasy transition to addressing texts structured by such non-literary imperatives. Despite the insistent reality of such extreme experience, however, the very processes of remembering and expressing involve us immediately in matters of literary textuality. As James Young notes,

> no matter how real historical events were, once narrated, they enter a discourse that necessarily overlaps with the fictional. That is, real things happen, and then we write about them, using many of the same literary techniques and strategies as novelists, forms and structures endemic to all narrative. [Hayden] White has undertaken such an inquiry not to show that real events must be regarded as fiction, but to show how, once told, real events are necessarily assimilated to novelistic story-lines and methods. ("Toward" 25)

Critics of autobiography have made this point as well, and Rosen notes that "Every serious commentator now agrees that autobiography is in a special sense a kind of fiction in several quite different ways" (13). Studies of memory have suggested that narrative structures and contexts are involved earlier still, in the formation of memories of "real things" in the first place (Bourtchouladze esp. 35-36, 59-60, 76-77, 93-99; Rosen 100-101, 123). Indeed, overwhelming and traumatic experiences such as those narrated by Holocaust survivors have their peculiar quality precisely because they disturb the quotidian narrative structures by which we understand our

experience of selfhood itself (Herman 11).

Given the parameters of this study—memoirs written in English by Canadian women who survived the Holocaust—it might appear primarily concerned with matters of identity politics and historical events. Feminist theory and Holocaust studies, after all, are scholarly disciplines commonly distinguished by the specificity and pathos of the histories of injustice they evoke. But this is first and foremost a study of texts: texts selected and interpreted by way of an interest in identity and history, to be sure, and understood with respect to those overarching issues, but understood primarily on their own terms, to the extent this is possible. David Hirsch writes, contentiously, that "our philosophers, men of letters, and literary critics ignore the writings of the victims" (87); the goal of this study is to foreground the writings of survivors, and moreover to treat those writings from a specifically literary point of view. Young describes history as "the combined study of both *what happened* and *how it is passed down to us*" ("Toward" 41); the literary study of Holocaust memoirs can be described analogously as seeking to explain the effects or meanings produced by such texts by paying careful attention to the means by which that meaning is produced. This interpretive stance is enacted by way of theoretically informed, contextualized close reading of the strategies at play in each memoir, and so largely excludes the evaluation of these texts in terms of their historical veracity; each text is assumed to have significatory effects—which may or may not explicitly involve establishing or defending the factuality of the narrative —that are to be understood on the basis of textual form and content.

My attention to "the text itself," it will be apparent, is a matter of deconstructive as opposed to new-critical close reading. Deconstructive close reading implies that texts are not unproblematically themselves, and that getting "close" to a text involves contextual determinations not partial to that text, whose boundaries and meanings are determined to some extent in and by the critical approach. Such poststructuralist and deconstructive perspectives have not been much brought to bear on the field of Holocaust studies, and have indeed been explicitly excluded by some scholars and commentators concerned about some of the seemingly threatening aspects of these anti-foundational modes of thinking. Concerns about the situatedness and narrativity of knowledge have, as Young reports, been dismissed as "postmodern evasion and navel-gazing" by many academics ("Toward" 43). Hirsch, for instance, devotes much of *The Deconstruction of Literature* to arguing that deconstruction is a dangerously anti-historical ideology; he suggests, for instance, that decentered theories of meaning enable Holocaust denial (18) and are "powerless to reveal Auschwitz as evil" (19).[4] Michael Bernstein similarly denounces deconstruction as "radical relativism" (7) whose assertion of the "textuality" of historical events leads to "moral bankruptcy" (14).

The work of Emmanuel Levinas seems to be the one exception to the general distrust of postmodernist thinkers on the part of Holocaust scholars. This may be because of his overtly Jewish identification and the highly theological nature of much of his writing, which has been described as divided between his "philosophical" works (prominently *Totality and Infinity* and *Otherwise than Being*

[Pittsburgh: Duquesne UP, 1998]) and his "Talmudic" or theological works (which include *Of God Who Comes to Mind* [Stanford: Stanford UP, 1998], *Nine Talmudic Readings* [Bloomington: U Indiana P, 1990], and others).[5] Moreover, Levinas is himself a survivor of Nazi internment, a fact that gives—or has been used to give—his work both relevance and legitimacy with respect to addressing the Holocaust.[6] His radical ideas about displaced, or "fragmented," subjectivity and abyssal responsibility, however, have been important and formative for thinkers, including Jean-François Lyotard and Jacques Derrida, whose ideas remain problematic for traditionalist or positivist scholars. The challenging and deconstructive elements in Levinas's writing are thus displaced in many readings by the apparently redemptive or theological aspects of his work.[7]

Seemingly few critics have recognized the relevance, and indeed the importance, of deconstructive thought to the study of Holocaust literature, and all the more so to Holocaust memoirs. Hirsch, for instance, asserts that deconstructive theorists write and publish "in blissful ignorance of the recent European past" (70), a claim that is manifestly false. As can be seen from the example of Lyotard's *The Differend*, matters of historical reality—and more specifically, the history and the consequences of the Holocaust—are central to at least some postmodern thinkers (although it should be noted that Lyotard and other poststructuralists write at length on Holocaust topics with explicit reference only to a limited range of primary sources). Whereas Hirsch asserts that "deconstructionist literary theory [...] cannot deal with this recent past" (87), Derrida claims that his philosophical work

> would not have had the same force or the same urgency had the great issues of Western rationality, of Western philosophy, of the Western metaphysics of Europe, not somehow been called into question, first by twentieth century totalitarianism, but more uniquely by something like the Holocaust. (Derrida and Ben-Naftali 2)

And indeed Derrida addresses European history and identity, including the challenges posed by the Holocaust, specifically in several publications, and alludes to these issues of history and justice in many more.[8] Lyotard's attention to the vicissitudes of witnessing and to the problem of silence in *The Differend* has made this work of interest to some Holocaust scholars, including a few of the authors whose work appears in Saul Friedlander's *Probing the Limits of Representation*, a collection whose primary focus is historiography, although contributors such as Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi and Geoffrey Hartman offer literary analyses as well. *Probing the Limits* also, however, stages an extended conflict between Hayden White's claims about the narrativity and partiality of historiography and detractors who understand such claims as relativist denials of historical truth—including Friedlander himself, whose introduction to the volume offers a cautionary assessment of the role of interpretation and narration with respect to historical writing. Young traces this conflict and offers a nuanced defence of White, noting as he does so the embarrassing lengths to which White has been forced to go to persuade this critics that he is not collapsing the distinction between real and fictional events ("Toward" 25).

Theoretical readings have, however, begun to claim a place in Holocaust studies to some degree. A handful volumes have been recently published that address some of these issues: *Postmodernism and the Holocaust*, edited by Alan Milchman and Alan Rosenberg (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998), *Theoretical Interpretations of the Holocaust*, edited by Dan Stone (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001), *The Holocaust: Theoretical Readings*, edited by Neil Levi and Michael Rothberg (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 2003), and *The Holocaust and the Postmodern* by Robert Eaglestone. These volumes are all very recent, collect work by relatively few authors, and represent an as-yet tiny proportion of the field of Holocaust studies.[9] Moreover, they vary widely in their presentation of "theory," and remain ambivalent about the claims of poststructuralism, which is at times misrepresented. Eaglestone, for instance, criticises some recent attempts to assess "how deconstruction views the Holocaust" as asking "the wrong question. It presupposes that deconstruction is a method or a model of thinking, and the Holocaust is one single event: as if deconstruction is the telescope and the Holocaust is a remote constellation" ("Derrida" 33). "Theory" and poststructuralism are not equivalent, and, as Eagletone's *Postmodernism and Holocaust Denial* (Cambridge: Ion, 2001) makes clear, the latter still tends to be seen as threatening and problematic in terms of the Holocaust.

Perhaps as a result of this general disciplinary suspicion of overly theorized or critical readings, only a small canon of Holocaust writing, dominated by interest in the works of Elie Wiesel and Primo Levi, has received extended and

sophisticated critical attention. Holocaust memoirs by lesser-known writers remain largely subject to readings that assess their validity as historical source materials (e.g., Farbstein) or that offer general analyses about their historical themes.[10] Young's *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust* is a key contribution to Holocaust literary criticism that insists on the importance of a sort of deconstructive formalism in reading a variety of Holocaust texts, but his emphasis is on fictional literature and more generally cultural texts such as films and memorials. Theorized discussions of representation seldom take place with respect to testimonial works, but address instead public commemorations and memorials, films, fiction, and historiography: critical writing with an interest in postmodern theories of textuality and meaning is far more likely to discuss such texts as D.M. Thomas's *The White Hotel*, Binjamin Wilkomirski's *Fragments*, Art Spiegelman's *Maus,* or Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* than memoirs written by survivors.[11] The present study has thus been motivated in no small part by a desire to treat the autobiographical writing of survivors in a literary-critical manner that has been largely reserved for more self-consciously sophisticated literary texts.

A no-less-traditional division of interest and validity has also resulted in the general exclusion of women's experiences from the domain of Holocaust studies. Lawrence Langer's *Art from the Ashes: A Holocaust Anthology* (New York: Oxford, 1995), for example, collects work by thirty authors, only four of whom are women. Scholarly attention to gender differences and the specific experiences of women was —somewhat amazingly—all but non-existent in critical and historical approaches

to the Holocaust before the mid-1980s (cf. Pine 364-365). The vigorous and principled insistence of scholars such as Myrna Goldenberg and Sybil Milton has led to a gradual increase of interest and a growing number of publications that foreground gender issues. Divisions have arisen, however, between scholars regarding the notion of bringing gender to bear on interpreting, analyzing, or otherwise responding to the Holocaust. Langer, to begin with a cautionary example, argues that scholarship predicated on gender difference tends to introduce comparative hierarchies of endurance or resistance, in so doing creating the illusion of an ordering principle in the chaos of suffering ("Gendered" 362). Joan Ringelheim, on the other hand, finds that the extremity of victims' and survivors' suffering calls out for the explicit attention to the gendered variety of that experience: "The Holocaust is defined by death. In this domain of death, it is crude if not obscene to avoid talking about gender" ("Split" 349). Inasmuch as such measures as segregated incarceration and sex-biased selection for labour or execution made gender differences inescapably relevant to the experience of the victims, any attempt to maintain that the experience of the Holocaust was undifferentiated by such concerns seems at the very least misguided.

Unfortunately, some scholars who pursue gendered analyses tend to present precisely the picture that Langer criticizes. Lilian Kremer's *Women's Holocaust Writing*, for instance, upholds the commonly held notion that women were characteristically supportive of one another in various forms of female peer bonding which replaced familial ties as a source of support and strength (19), as does Lisa

Pine's recent summary of current historiography on women and children in the Holocaust (369). Langer cites testimonial fragments that challenge the generality of this rule, which is problematic both in terms of its universality (not all women were mutually supportive in this way) and its transitory nature (supportive groups that coalesced during the nadir of camp existence tended to evaporate, sometimes traumatically, upon liberation, as seen in Elizabeth Raab's account). The all-but unanimous focus on solidarity in critical analysis of women's experiences reflects the fact that women are often portrayed in the critical literature in terms none too distant from the tradition of the "angel in the house": Susan Nowak, for example, finds women's participation in moral "grey zones" especially troubling because "the image of 'woman' evokes images of maternal nurturing, self-sacrifice, and unconditional love" (36). Such assumptions structure many of the admittedly groundbreaking works that first took up the experiences of women in the Holocaust. Marlene Heinemann's *Gender and Destiny*, for instance, relies heavily on biological determinism in defining and examining women's experiences, and often draws sweeping generalizations about women's experience on the basis of individual stories supported only by very traditional notions of the role and nature of women. Anna Harman similarly criticizes Goldenberg: "when Goldenberg refers to 'women's experience', this understanding is based on certain assumptions about gender difference which go unarticulated" (58).

This lack of articulation has resulted in some problematic readings of women's narratives of experience. As Sara Horowitz observes, analyses of gender in

the Holocaust have tended toward one of two poles, especially in writers who attend to the archetypal or biological experiences of pregnancy, birth, and abortion: commentators tend to posit women's narratives as either tragic or heroic, depending on the outcome of the pregnancy ("Women" 371-372). "In the actual testimonies of women survivors," however, "the strands of these two narratives come through intermeshed" (Horowitz, "Memory" 270). The critical simplification of the complexity of women's narratives results in part from the application of comfortably normative ideas about gender: as Zoë Waxman argues, "studies of women in the Holocaust favour stories that are seen as suitable or palatable for their readers, often avoiding those that do not accord with expected women's behaviour or pre-existing narratives of survival" ("Unheard" 662-663). In short, much feminist analysis of women's experience substitutes stereotypical generalities about women for responsive attention to individual expressions of gendered selves.

At this still-early stage in gendered and feminist analysis of the Holocaust the questions being asked about women's experience and women's memoirs are primarily focused on their past experience, on the stories they narrate, as opposed to their present act of narration. The questions Carol Rittner and John Roth ask in their introduction to *Different Voices: Women and the Holocaust* are representative of this interest:

> How did women respond to their circumstances during the Holocaust? What was most important to women who had to live under the conditions of deprivation, humiliation, terror, and death?

> Were there gender-related resources that women drew upon to sustain hope as well as life in the ghettos and camps? What particular vulnerabilities exposed them to extraordinary suffering and death? Does the study of women and the Holocaust highlight new or at least different questions we should be asking—not just about women but about every human being who had to endure the Holocaust's darkness? (3-4)

What seems to me absent in this urgent and profoundly necessary line of questioning is the formal, epistemological, and fundamentally literary question *How can we know?* As Langer and Young have insistently argued, contextual and formal determinations shape textual meaning, whether those texts are oral or written; the memoirs that are our source materials for answering the pressing ethical and historical questions seen above simply must be understood in part by way of detailed formal analysis if they are to stand on their own terms as particular, gendered, individual records of recollected experience. Esther Fuchs notes that her edited collection of essays, *Women and the Holocaust,* is "concerned with the broader definition of the Holocaust as a master narrative, told by men about men" (xiii). For feminist analysis to offer an alternative to epistemological master narratives, it must thus proliferate responsive readings that attend to the particularity of the text at hand. In the sphere of women's writing—as in Holocaust studies more generally —far more responsive and sophisticated attention has been paid to works of fiction, from both traditional (e.g., Kremer's *Women's Holocaust Writing*) and contemporary

(e.g., Horowitz's *Voicing the Void*) perspectives, than has been paid to memoirs, which are often collected and presented, as in Brana Gurewitsch's *Mothers, Sisters, Resisters*, as texts that speak for themselves as a matter of historical record (xx). Approaching memoirs instead with a deconstructive and literary respect for their specificity allows each text the opportunity to signify meanings beyond the constraints of factual, heroic, or tragic meaning as evaluating not only the past and its relationship to the present, but the relationships between experience, recollection, and representation themselves.

Attention to singular expressiveness is characteristically poststructuralist, given that poststructuralism challenges traditional notions of both expressiveness and individuality—especially as they meet in the notion of the subject. The appearance of prescribed, easily recognizable forms of subjectivity is seen as problematic by postmodern or deconstructive thought because standards of intelligibility institute coercive identity positions with troubling ethical ramifications. Diane Elam, for instance, argues that "women become subjects only when they conform to specified and calculable representations of themselves as subjects" (29). She shares Derrida's "horror of calculable subjectivities" and argues that such calculable "subject positions are occupied by objects" (29). The notion of definitively gendered subject positions was taken to an extreme by Nazi ideology, which summarized women's role in the slogan "*Kinder, Küche, Kirche* (children, kitchen, church)" (Bock 168). Nazism saw women first and foremost in their reproductive role as responsible for the future health of the Aryan race. Gisela Bock

argues that Nazi eugenics policies and laws crossed sexism and racism in that women's contribution to "racial hygiene" was measured against negative standards: women of non-Aryan ethnicity were by definition unworthy mothers, but women of approved ethnicity and class were deemed satisfactory only if they proved sufficiently fertile and compliant with Nazi ideology (178). Under Nazism, motherhood was redefined as a gendered category to the extent it was also racialized: Aryan women were threatened with misogynist violence distributed according to political criteria, the antisemitic aspects of which denied Jewish women access to even this coercive mode of gendered identification. Jewish women's experiences of Nazi violence thus involved a catastrophic collision with a sexist and racist ideology that defined them as unworthy of life on both gendered and ethnic grounds. Horowitz notes that "The Nazi genocide destabilized the boundaries of the self, unmaking the gendered self" ("Women" 376). The work of Luce Irigaray and Judith Butler, among others, addresses the means by which gendered identity emerges as a matter of tenuous and unique confrontation with traditions and histories of constraint and implied and literal violence. What might be called "postmodernist feminism" is thus particularly well-suited to addressing both the coercive imposition of manifest injustice and the failures of individual and collective identity characteristic of traumatic violence.

I agree with Elam's statement that "there is a sense in which feminism already 'is' deconstruction and deconstruction already 'is' feminism" (19). This affinity (which cannot be considered unproblematic or complete) arises in large

part because deconstruction is critical of coercive universality, of the hegemonic use of power in both the conceptual and the political spheres. Lyotard, for instance, has famously championed resisting the decontextualized and abstract "grand narratives," which have historically claimed to order and evaluate the sweep of human history and destiny, with a focus on multiplicity of local narratives (esp. *Postmodern Condition* 40, 60, 81-82). Deconstructive and postmodernist thinking has thus taken a strong interest in matters of particularity, of individuality and uniqueness, even as it has critiqued traditional conceptions of texts and of human consciousness as autonomous, instrumental, and self-sufficient. As Derrida's famous notion of *différance* suggests, any determination of specificity is intrinsically connected with otherness, is indebted to that from which it differs in being thereby distinct. Derrida thus notes that on the one hand, "Any event is unique, any crime is unique, any death is unique" (Derrida and Ben-Naftali 2), and goes on to claim that "Auschwitz is a place, it is terrible. Auschwitz, it is something monstrous, of course. But it was only, even during the experience of the extermination, a place among others" (Derrida and Ben-Naftali 22). Poststructuralism is thus caught up in what Jeffrey Bell calls the "problem of difference." Bell describes this problem as a central—and perhaps, ultimately, the only—issue that philosophers have grappled with through the centuries. He defines this as a situation where a "fundamental distinction form[s] the cornerstone of a philosophical theory," but wherein "the two sides of the distinction are nevertheless related to and dependent upon one another" (3). Plato thus offers *mimesis* as linking appearance (the world) and reality

(the forms), and Kant postulates that the schematism of the understanding bridges the *a priori* and contingent categories (Bell 3). Whereas traditional philosophy has sought an overarching or underpinning identity within which the problem of difference could be resolved, postmodernists instead offer up difference as the general case, and identity as an effect that must be repeatedly and vigorously produced:

> The problem of difference cannot be resolved by revealing a fundamental identity; subsequently, Foucault's and Derrida's response is to show how it is a fundamental difference which accounts for identity, or motivates responses to the problem of difference, and how it is not a fundamental identity which is the 'fatherland' and condition for all difference. In short, the problem of difference is explicitly recognized as the problem with no *identifiable* solution.
>
> (Bell 5)

As in the case of *différance* specifically, the postmodern approach in general identifies unity, sameness, and identity as effects of non-conceptual, primordial difference. Paying attention to the instantaneous or the specific is thus both necessary and, strictly speaking, impossible, as any determination invokes a movement of difference that allows the discrimination of such particularity only by way of association with the absent. This repetition of difference in identity means, however, that both identity and difference are forever reasserted in an endless division of the presence of the present instant. As Elizabeth Grosz argues, such an

ungrounded, kaleidoscopic vision of meaning and being does not result in a levelling of all possible distinctions, but effects rather a call for ever more careful attention and argument: "it means that we must hone our intellectual resources much more carefully, making more distinctions, subtleties, and nuances in our understanding than any binarized or dialectically structured model will allow" ("Time" 12); if truths and conclusions are provisional, then the task of thinking is both endless and all the more important for its inconclusiveness. The undecidable play of *différance* does not, then, absolve us of the pragmatic requirement to act, to decide, and to account for our acts and decisions, and Lyotard presents his kaleidoscopic philosophy of phrasing as an attempt to "save the honour of thinking" (*Differend* xii).

Difference thus both enables and disrupts homogeneity and certainty, and it is in this spirit of constitutive difference that I offer the title of my thesis. The coordinating conjunction in the phrase "narrativity and uniqueness" both collects the terms and divides them in the very act of so gathering them. In much the same way, uniqueness, or idiomatic individuality, and narrativity, or generic intelligibility, engage in a continuous collection and dispersion. Robert Smith makes the astute observation that there are universalizing forces at play whenever one discusses subjectivity as a general notion, but also when considering "the" subject or—less obviously and so more insidiously—"a" subject. He notes, however, that "[l]ong after the subjective has been taken up and incorporated in the universal, there are remains, a remarkable specificity" (4), and that

autobiographical writing attempts to address this specificity, which is "more intractable than the subjective" (5). Survivor memoirs thus insist on an individual perspective on the past, on the particularity of witnessing, and so deploy the generalizing effects of narrativity in the service of attesting to the phenomenal uniqueness of survival.

These notions of particularity and individuation remain the case when considering a category—such as "women"—drawn from the field of collective identity politics:

> If critics are to take seriously the ambiguities and contradictions inherent in women's narratives, this will involve an alternative understanding of both testimony and the nature of survival. This entails challenging the way certain critics rely on the supposed factuality inherent in testimony in order to authenticate their own assumptions regarding feminist theory and survival. (Harman 62)

Harman's statement implies that feminism must be refracted by the anti-foundational respect for generalized difference offered by poststructuralism in order to address the role of gender difference without uncritically reinstating gendered hierarchies or naive assumptions about the sufficiency of traditional modes of identification. Poststructuralism must, in turn, take up the political commitments of feminism and the feminist recognition that the play of discourse is pervasively constituted by hierarchic gender identities (cf. Elam 1-2). Sidonie Smith, for instance, notes that "some kind of history of the body is always inscribed

in women's autobiographical texts" (271), whereas the gendered nature of bodies and of materiality in general has been at times marginalized in postmodernist thought. The intractable difference that obtains at the level of corporeal individuation is given a categorical status by morphological differences between male and female bodies—differences that are in the same moment understood as universal and individuating. If Holocaust memoirs are to evoke the affective silence of the differend in reaching addressees on the level of obligation, on terms of particularity that escape from or challenge the closure of cognitive abstraction, they must be unavoidably gendered to do so, insofar as gender difference can be understood—in an intersection of postmodernist and feminist thought—as difference par excellence.

Gender or sexual difference may be taken, on the one hand, as a facet of corporeal, existential, individuation among others; on the other hand, as Irigaray has shown, gender structures our understanding of corporeality, individuality, and difference in the first place. The women's memoirs under consideration in this study, in part as a simple function of the exigency and suffering they recount, foreground the ineluctable presence of bodies: bodies that hide, hunger, bleed, urinate, run, fall down, die, and are shamefully exposed to the gaze and control of their captors. They are thus, as are all Holocaust memoirs, immediately caught up in the relations between corporeality and intelligibility, in the gendered narration of physical selves. Lyotard identifies the manifestly physical nature of sexual difference as "an irreparable transcendence inscribed on the body," yet notes that "I

don't know whether sexual difference is ontological difference. How would a person *know*? [...] Sexual difference isn't just related to a body as it feels its incompleteness, but to an unconscious body or the unconscious as body. [...] This difference is *ex hypothesi* out of our control." ("Can Thought" 23, 21). "This difference," although grammatically singular, refers both to sexual difference and the distinction between conscious and unconscious thought: the mind and the body are understood by analogy with one another in a mutual definition that relates the visible and invisible with the thought and the unthought:

> A field of thought exists in the same way there's a field of vision (or hearing): the mind orients itself in it just as the eye does in the field of the visible. [... W]hat makes thought and the body inseparable isn't just that the latter is the indispensable hardware for the former, a material prerequisite for its existence. It's that each of them is analogous to the other in its relationship with its respective (sensible, symbolic) environment: the relationship being analogical in both cases. (Lyotard, "Can Thought" 16)

Lyotard claims that the ineluctable demand of gender difference produces the analogical relation between these fields of experience: "to this neutrality gendered difference adds the suffering of abandonment because it brings to neutrality what no field of vision or thought can include, namely, a demand" ("Can Thought" 21-22). His rather scattered reflections on gender are suggestive; Butler's more comprehensive analyses identify the experience of corporeality as an essential

element in the performance of gendered selfhood whose seemingly foundational biology is to some degree a product of matter conceived of in already gendered terms: "What does it mean to have recourse to materiality, since it is clear from the start that matter has a history (indeed, more than one) and that the history of matter is in part determined by the negotiation of sexual difference" (*Bodies* 29). Women who write memoirs transcribe bodily experiences onto the *corpus* of text and, in so doing, translate between the corporeal performance of gendered identity and the linguistic performance of legibility and meaning, both of which involve intractably gendered negotiations of difference. Sidonie Smith notes that the transition into text has traditionally restricted female authors to either repress the corporeality of their experiences or accept constrained—largely maternal—notions of feminine physicality (272). The memoirs of Holocaust survivors, explicitly attentive as they are to the experiences of incarcerated or concealed hungry bodies and the omnipresent threat of violent death, not only foreground the crossing of materiality and conceptuality in our understanding of embodied subjectivity, but explore the limits of our conceptions of corporeality and push critical responsiveness to the meeting points of feminist and deconstructive notions of embodied and theoretical difference.

The interaction between calculable generality and ineffable immediacy is perhaps best illustrated by a theoretical example central to the chapters that follow. Lyotard describes language according to the unit of the "phrase," which can correspond to a sentence in a written or spoken utterance, but is more generally

understood as any linguistic or gestural act onto which a subsequent phrase can link (*Differend* §18, §94-97). Meaning, in this view, entails a relationship between the addressor, addressee, referent, and sense that are presented in the "universe" of a phrase (Lyotard borrows what he calls the four "pragmatic positions" from Frege) (*Differend* §25, §54). Insofar as silence, or an absence of signification, takes place as an excluded phrase, phrasing cannot not happen. Phrases, then, must follow phrases simply as a matter of the ineluctable passage of time, but what phrase follows another is in no way determined in advance (*Differend* §105, §136). Phrases can arise, can link on to, prior phrases with or without reference to what has gone before; such linkages are a matter of genres of discourse, which are styles or strategies of meaning that involve specific stakes and therefore mandate specific strategies of linkage (*Differend* §147-148). (The notion of the "genre" is Lyotard's revision in *The Differend* of his earlier use of Ludwig Wittgenstein's notion of "language games" [cf. Lyotard, "Wittgenstein" *passim*, *Differend* §91].) This theory of language thus identifies a fundamental heterogeneity at the basis of meaning and experience—the arbitrary yet necessary concatenation of phrases. This concatenation, the instantaneous experience of the advent of a new phrase whose nature is necessarily undetermined in advance, has a quality of wonder, of questioning, of uniqueness. One's experience of meaning, and indeed of oneself as an instance presented in the universe entailed by such a phrase, is thus a continual mutual interruption of the undetermined advent of phrasing and the teleological generic delimitation of such spontaneity, a determination that arrives after the fact,

and that must be insistently repeated to forestall its displacement by the advent of further phrases.

In Lyotard's notion of phrasing, the uniqueness of the moment is organized into a variety of meaningful, teleological genres, narrative among them. "Narrative" is a word with remarkable extension: it can be applied with equal correctness to *The Canterbury Tales*, *Tom Jones*, and *Blood and Guts in High School*. Lyotard uses it in two distinct senses: generally to refer to imaginative prose or any text that organizes and relates its diegetic elements in terms of, say, time, space, and logic; and specifically as a canonical genre of legitimation wherein present addressors and addressees are assigned their social roles (*Differend* "Cashinahua Notice"; "Missive" 23, 32). Philip Sturgess defines narrativity as the quality of being a story, understood as both the coordination of narrative elements in their proximate ordering and the overall coordination of such elements in the text as a whole (30-31, 39). He offers a number of definitions of the term, among them this one:

> Narrativity refers preeminently to the way in which a narrative articulates itself, the way in which each stage of its own extension creates what might be called a crisis or a dilemma of the discourse, which is solved by its own furtherance in whatever form that happens to take. (26)

The generality of this definition is confirmed by his later assertion that "the shaping power of discourse" is "its logic of narrativity" (31). Any text is narrativized, then, to the extent that it offers a coordinating causality that joins its

elements in some explanatory way.

I use the term narrativity to refer to texts with explicitly causal or temporal ordering, as opposed to texts wherein sentences are juxtaposed in seeming randomness. This is a somewhat narrower sense than Sturgess invokes when he argues that the simple sequentiality of text prohibits the total absence of narrativity in a story, however attenuated its coordination might be:

> There cannot be mere sequence, since there will always and unavoidably be one powerful sense in which juxtaposed events 'owe their existence to each other', namely a sense of the mediating or juxtaposing power of narrativity, which might equally have chosen to disjoin them, or delete them altogether and substitute other events. And to claim this at once invites us to entertain the idea of causation in some form. This causation may be thought of as the logic of narrativity. (31)

This claim is problematic, given that there is no text, no sequence of phases, that would not exhibit narrativity in this sense. Sturgess seemingly intends to restrict his definition to texts that are self-evidently organized to a high degree, although he repeatedly claims that his ideas include postmodern texts that challenge various assumptions about coordination, syntax, and narrative logic. He is able to turn possible contingent consequentiality into meaningful causality because he imports an implied *a posteriori* moment of critical commentary that identifies the two elements as joined by the force of intentional necessity. Simply, no two utterances

are already conjoined in this way until a third, subsequent utterance declares this to be so, even if this *a posteriori* phrase claims that the connection is a property of the prior phrases (cf. Lyotard, *Differend* §97). In a universe where phrases are endlessly catenated, there exists no definitive final word on meaning and therefore narrative structure. Furthermore, texts testifying to experiences of violence and trauma, often fail to cohere, fail to order the events in space and time; as Michael Bernard-Donals and Richard Glejzer suggest, this lack of coherence is not a matter to be sublated in a notion of ultimately narrative meaning: they identify such failures of narrativity as attesting to the division between witnessing and testimony, to the failures of meaning that render the impact of the events inexpressible except in such incoherence and silence (52). They are thus not inherently meaningful on a higher order of structure, as Sturgess's theory might suggest, but refer to idiosyncratic failures of meaningfulness. Failure of expression thus remains a continual threat despite the ongoing necessity of expressiveness.

The importance of these aspects of the poststructuralist "linguistic turn" can be seen when considering the fact that so many survivors describe their experiences as inexpressible, not necessarily on account of their inherently unfathomable nature (although that too is a common claim), but because audiences, readers, addressees have responded to their already painful plight with interpretive and definitional hostility. Raab, for instance, recounts the experience of liberation from murderous captivity as a delivery into another sort of homogenizing discursive confinement:

> To make it simple, to understand who we were, we became known as

> Displaced Persons—for short, D.P.s. In the public eye, under that catch-all name we represented the same image—those who had escaped the same fate. We alone knew that those of us who came out were not identical. But the times did not care about individual hurts. We were too many, so we were fused together. (157-8)

Raab, like other survivors, writes her memoir not only in the name of the millions murdered by the Nazis, but in her own name, out of the distinctive experience of her own history of survival. She resists the homogenizing effects of labels such as "D.P." or, for that matter, "survivor" as a simplifying reduction of a multiplicity of experiences to a claimed sameness of fate. This experience suggests that survivors' silences—the famous inexpressibility of the Holocaust—is a manifold phenomenon involving failures on the part of any or all of the addressee, addressor, sense, and referent, and that such failures involve the fundamental relationship between idiomatic expression and conceptual or political determinations that differentiate between meaningful speech and incoherence or silence.

Canonical or hegemonic genres of meaning offer us consistent, and in many cases mandatory or coercive, modes of understanding, and rely for their effectiveness on shared certainties that are themselves narrated. The opening chapter of this study explores the foundational aspect of certainty in the experience of subjectivity, and traces its destruction in Raab's description of surviving the Holocaust. Following the ideas of Wittgenstein, I use the term "certainty" in reference to the axiomatic, pre-reflective conditions by which regimes of thinking

define themselves, but that remain beyond their judgement as constituting its possibility. According to Levinas, the everyday experience of subjectivity is a narrativized coherence that relies on such certainties, such conditions of legibility, for its seeming homogeneity. As Levinas and others have argued, however, this persona effects its persistence with respect to a primordial subjectivity whose instantaneous uniqueness offers a receptive, responsible individuation that is gathered moment by moment into an experience of enduring selfhood. The "I" thus arises as a matter of instantaneous, discursive certainty, as the isolation of affective, idiomatic experience, in response to a primordial moment of displacement. Subjectivity experienced in future-oriented intersubjective existence is deeply indebted to contingent certainties provided by culture and history to effect its in-gathering. The events of the Holocaust presented the Nazis' victims with a betrayal of many of the manifest truths of the modern age, and the physical and cultural genocide destroyed survivors' family, friends, and communities—necessary others in an enduring narrative of identity. Raab's memoir, *And Peace Never Came*, attests to her sense of being lost in time, of being unable to inhabit the present moment, which is denied her because of the trauma of the past. This loss of connection with narrated self-certainty is expressed in her distinctive narrative method, which foregrounds the discontinuity and phenomenality of her experience and her profound sense of abyssal displacement. She is isolated in her experience of herself as a self and, literally, in the world of human relationships, when she is deported to Auschwitz with her parents and her daughter—all of whom are murdered upon

arrival. The enormity of this tragedy structures her experience of loss and liberation and continues to affect her narrating present as stranded without a future or a past.

The second chapter, "Gender," considers the experience of subjectivity in specific terms of gendered identification; in assuming or performing a gendered identity (and, as Elizabeth Grosz reminds us, our identities are understood in the context of a pervasively binarized sex/gender system, like it or not [*Space* 84]), each of us forges a possible affiliation between individually embodied experience—the idiom of an "I"—and a gender understood as definitional or classificatory generality—the possibility of a "we." Under the pressure of their various histories of violence, Mina Rosner, Ann Kazimirski, and Eva Brewster present notions of gendered identity whose viability is threatened by the conditions they experience. The social and somatic experience of gender is a particular, and particularly fundamental, mode of certainty permitting or enacting subject formation; it is fundamental not only to individual subjects, but, as thinkers such as Irigaray have shown, to the social-cultural-philosophical *Gestalt* within which subjects and subjectivity arise. Our concepts of subjectivity—and conceptuality itself—are fundamentally gendered, and these women's recollections of the experience of Nazi violence illustrate both the intensified and transformed experience of gender under conditions of mortal threat and the differential experience of that threat according to gender. Each woman's identity is highly familial in its orientation, each is deeply indebted to the canonical feminine roles of maternity and marriage, and each undergoes crises of gendered identification as a result of genocidal violence. In *I*

Am A Witness, Rosner experiences a disorienting loss of identity as a mother because of the vulnerability, and ultimately the death, of her infant son. Her narrative account of this tragedy and its aftermath reveals that traditionally gendered norms are suddenly and disorientingly inapplicable to relationships and events unrecognizably transformed by the violence of genocide and war. Kazimirski's experiences in *Witness to Horror* are pervasively influenced by her relationships as a daughter and as a wife, such that her story reflects the traditional distribution of feminine roles subordinated to masculine activity. In a remarkable and troubling scene of sexual violence, Kazimirski illustrates the coercive regulation and indeed production of gender norms, norms that differentiate not only between women and men but between young and old women. Inter-generational relationships are also important to Brewster's story of surviving with her mother in Auschwitz, where she finds the visual economy of gendered identification rendered incoherent by the deadly effects of the extreme conditions. In Brewster's memoir, *Progeny of Light/Vanished in Darkness*, like in Rosner's, the experience of traditionally gendered feminine identity becomes deeply problematic, and ultimately involves a sense of responsibility for others that is impossible for her to fulfil, leaving her with a strongly gendered sense of survivor guilt. In all three women's experiences, the norms of binarized gender identification are hyperbolized—and transformed in that intensification—or rendered incoherent by the sheer extremity of the situation; in both cases the fundamental nature of this challenge to identity and intelligibility leads to narratives that foreground the loss of gendered identity as a central issue

both in terms of the suffering these women narrate and as a representational issue of narration.

Whereas the opening chapters consider experience and subjectivity primarily in abstraction as a matter of identification on terms of interiority, the third chapter, "Place," explores the relationship between interiority and exteriority and their co-implicated participation in the narrativity of selfhood. The imposition of antisemitic laws across the breadth of the Nazi sphere of influence effected an identity-based reorganization of space and time that isolated and constrained the Jewish population. Thinkers as diverse as Elizabeth Grosz and Mikhail Bakhtin have argued that space, time, and narrative are intimately related, and the memoirs *Theresienstadt* by Vera Schiff, *And Peace Never Came* by Elizabeth Raab, and *Mina's Story* by Mina Deutsch offer varied reflections on both this experiential co-implication of place and agency and the expressive use of narrative time. The reorganization of place by the Nazis positioned each of these women in very different contexts of suffering—Schiff in the Theresienstadt ghetto, Raab in the Auschwitz death camp, and Deutsch in a variety of hiding places in the Polish countryside. They all report a similar imposition of progressive and disempowering control over place and agency under Nazi rule, but the specific nature of each woman's survival gives them very different perspectives on the role and transformation of place. Schiff, for instance, offers a narrative that identifies the Nazi years as an aberrant sojourn, a deviation from collective agency and futurity, which she insistently reclaims after the war. Raab, as we have already seen, has a

dispossessed experience of space and time: her narrative, alienated in terms of place and agency, cannot so confidently posit a temporal-spatial experience either before or after her time of loss, although she expresses a consciously futile, impossibly nostalgic, and nonetheless insistent desire for her childhood sense of peace and home. Deutsch presents the experience of emigrating to Canada in terms chillingly homogeneous with her experience of hiding from the Nazis, in so doing illustrating the transformation of her sense of place by wartime violence. These women's experiences reveal the fragility of space and time as expressions of narrative possibility, of collective and personal agency. Their narratives reveal, in their structural use of variant chronotopes, that these perspectives on experienced place are intertwined with the narrative representation of that experience, and that the narrative presentation of personal closure is enabled to no small degree by the closure provided by certain forms of narrative.

The fourth chapter, "Meaning," approaches two memoirs with the more traditionally literary-critical goal of assessing the relationship between narrative form and narrated meaning. As the varied memoirs at hand illustrate, texts by survivors treat transformations of subjectivity and experience implicitly or explicitly; similarly, the evaluative or communicative goals of survivors' writing can be clearly set forth, as in the case of Kazimirski's *Witness to Horror*, or remain ambiguous, as in *I Wish it Were Fiction* by Elsa Thon. Textual meaning, like the experience of individual subjectivity, is a matter of negotiation between idiomatic seclusion and communicable generality. Survivors such as Kazimirski and Thon

face the task of making sense of events characterized by their traumatizing challenge to both individual and collective memory and understanding. Moreover, memoirists face not only the aporias of individual uncertainty, doubt, and despair when facing the terror of the past, but also the hermeneutic paradigms that have arisen to shape the interpretation of individual voices such as theirs. In seeking to express the meaning of their memories, both Kazimirski and Thon explicitly negotiate with interpretive genres that situate individual voices with respect to canonical metanarratives such as history, law, and psychotherapy—or more generally as nonfictional and non-literary—to produce meanings not simply reducible to the strictures of such categories. They claim different imperatives, different forms, in their memoirs, with Kazimirski refracting a quasi-legal or positivist mode of demonstration through the subjective certainty she claims as an eyewitness, and Thon insisting on the relevance of poetic and literary devices to the expression of events and memories that are no less true for this flirtation with traditionally non-literal aesthetics. Both women claim, by way of this negotiation, an idiomatic form by which their experiences can have meaning explicitly related, but not subordinated, to the usual canons of understanding.

All of these issues of identity and experience have their forceful impetus and their terrible injustice in these women's encounters with the unprecedented violence the Nazis inflicted on the Jews of Europe. The Nazi "final solution" was murderous, but was threatening and deadly long before it arrived at explicitly genocidal finality. The transformations and effects described so far thus arise as a

result of confrontation with murderous intent, with threatened and literal killing on an awful scale. Many commentators and survivors (prominently, Theodor Adorno and Primo Levi) have noted the transformation of death in the Holocaust experience; the fifth chapter, "Mourning," addresses the experience of this final certainty with respect to the overall challenge to intersubjective and egoistic identification posed by the poisonously lethal context of Nazi rule. Martin Heidegger argues that death offers a common fate that effects individuation more so than collective identification insofar as one remains uniquely bound to the fate of one's own death; the truism that we are all destined to die does not join us in a community of the mortal, but rather illustrates the insurmountable uniqueness dividing us in our existential solitude. The gendered nature of mourning and of the conceptual determination of death, however, can be seen to cut across the uniqueness of such mortal individuation. As the ideas of Irigaray and the stories of these women suggest, the experience of mourning and of the threat of death involves an inherently gendered partiality. These texts thus offer a perspective on mourning and on the nature of death beyond its traditionally masculine definition as nugatory loss, an understanding that is exploited and intensified in the Nazi world of mass killing. Mourning becomes, in the texts of these women, a means of reasserting the gendered and embodied particularity of both lives and deaths in the face of the neuter abstraction of death understood as a matter of impersonal negativity.

This project is clearly an idiosyncratic reading of a selected number of

Canadian women's Holocaust memoirs. Given the impossibility of searching library holdings in an authoritative manner for works that fit these criteria, my discovery of these texts has been a matter of happenstance as well as research; I came across approximately as many by haunting used book stores as by searching databases.[12] Formal constraints and my strategy of extended close reading, which makes addressing more than a handful of texts in any given chapter impossible, prevented a more comprehensive survey of published—to say nothing of unpublished—memoirs. In selecting only overtly non-fictional and first person texts, I have implicitly accepted a partial version of Phillipe Lejeune's much-maligned "autobiographical pact," which Harold Rosen describes as "a kind of implicit contract between author and reader in which the author commits himself to the sincere effort to come to terms with and understand his or her own life by means of a narrative of the events of that life" (10). I agree with the almost universal analysis of this "pact" as involving impossibly ambiguous notions of contractual agreement and sincerity, but, like Lejeune, I advance it for the pragmatic purpose of reducing the number of texts possibly relevant to the task at hand (cf. Rosen 70). By emphasizing first-person retrospection, I have chosen to focus my investigation on the pressures of meaning-making that arise primarily out of a sense of responsibility to the experienced and recollected past. Texts that were excluded from this study as explicitly fictionalized include Anna Baum's memoirs in short-story form (*A New Beginning* [Toronto: Childe Thursday, 1999], *A Chance Encounter* [Toronto: Childe Thursday, 1993], and *Procession* [Toronto: Childe Thursday, 1990])

and Anne Charney's *Dobryd* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1973). Significant Canadian texts originally written in languages other than English, such as Chava Kwinta's *I'm Still Living* (Toronto: Simon & Pierre, 1974), Chava Rosenfarb's *The Tree of Life* (Melbourne: Scribe, 1985), and Sara Nomberg-Przytyk's *Auschwitz: True Tales from a Grotesque Land* (Chapel Hill: U North Carolina P, 1986) were also excluded from consideration. Memoirs that were left out primarily for lack of space and time include *Toby* by Toby Kodawski-Flam (Toronto: Childe Thursday, 1988), *Chosen* by Eta Fuchs Berk (Fredericton: Goose Lane, 1992), *One Who Came Back* by Anita Mayer (Toronto: Oberon, 1981), and *A Partisan's Memoir* by Faye Schulman (Toronto: Second Story, 1995). During the writing of this thesis a number of memoirs by women have been published in limited print quantities and on the Internet by the Montreal Institute for Genocide Studies (MIGS). The initial offerings from MIGS included only very short texts by women (and, as the editors of this project note, only one third of the submissions to their project were written by women [Butovsky and Jonassohn 147]) that were therefore excluded from consideration, although more substantial texts have appeared recently, and would undoubtedly reward critical attention.

The texts I do address were selected for a mix of contingent and thematic reasons, such as my fascination with Mina Deutsch's tendency to laconic understatement and Raab's moving expression of alienation. The memoirs by Thon, Baum, and Raab recommended themselves as formally distinctive, each rejecting some key aspect of linearly realistic narrative; Kazimirski, Deutsch, Rosner, Schiff,

and Brewster, by contrast, display a far more traditional approach to narrativity. Ultimately, both the chapter topics and the selection of texts developed out of my engagement with the primary texts. Certain issues—such as the experience of subjectivity and the nature of linguistic meaning—were sure to be important, given my interest in deconstruction and feminism, but the direction of the argument and the juxtaposition of authors in each case arose from my sense of obligation to both the memoirs and the theoretical ideas at play in my readings of them. For example, the painfully awkward prose of *Witness to Horror* and its odd and seemingly self-indulgent inclusion of news clippings and elementary school students' testimonials praising Kazimirski's community education efforts led to my considering its relationship to authoritative genres of narration and validation, a theoretical interest that supplanted my initial impression of it as simply badly written with attention to the motivations behind its form, and which eventually gave rise to my fourth chapter. Similarly, Kazimirski's insistence that her text would act "as a Kaddish" presented her memoir as a curious hybrid of testimony and mourning that inspired the investigation that became my final chapter; her strongly gendered language and relationships helped initiate my consideration of sex and gender in chapter two. It is a matter of no small surprise that a text I initially considered poorly written and of little interest has ultimately come to structure much of my investigation.

This study was never intended to be an exhaustive survey; the style in which it is written, however, is far more impersonal than was originally planned. This is

due in no small part to the (in retrospect foolishly underestimated) difficulty of writing analytically about texts expressing so much suffering. In my experience, writing critically about these memoirs became possible only once I acquired an immunity of sorts to the terror and loss they embody and convey. This is not to say that the texts lost these qualities altogether, or that the awful reality of the events they recount ceases to appal, but that attending to the nature of these texts as texts involved a quite frankly merciful schism between the head and the heart. Young reports that Saul Friedlander has called for historiographic writing to arise out of a combination of anguish at the subject matter and the "protective numbing of intellectual work" ("Toward" 38). Gurewitsch similarly reports that, the first time she taught a course on the Holocaust, "when I approached the material analytically rather than emotionally, as I had in the past, it no longer frightened me" (xi). This "analytic numbness" has led, in my case, to traditional argumentative structures whose systematicity obscures, for instance, the cyclically iterative relationship that obtained throughout the writing process between the primary texts and the theoretical ideas that guide my close readings. Dominick LaCapra notes that, "Transference is inevitable to the extent that an issue is not dead, provokes an emotional and evaluative response, and and entails the meeting of history with memory" (*History* 40), and he notes that the attendant dangers of "unease" and "fascination" are helpfully kept in check by "an explicit act of critical distancing" (*History* 34). The unsettling insistence of the transferential demand, however, suggests that this objectivity will be partial and responsive and thus indebted to the

affecting power of its object. In the present study, each chapter is introduced with sometimes lengthy philosophical discussion that seemingly sets the stage for readings of the memoirs; in fact, as I suggest above, the memoirs themselves were the inspiration for many of these theoretical explorations, and this mutually informative relationship is perhaps overly obscured by the structured formality of the current presentation. However objectively presented, this study remains a record of my own idiomatic encounter with these women's texts and certain key ideas from the realm of feminist and deconstructive thinking. It is my hope that, however seemingly denuded of my own first-person perspective, the present text nonetheless attests to and retains the traces of that narrative of encounter of wonder, dismay, exploration, and, to my best efforts, specific and attentive reading.

Notes

1. The intentionalist / functionalist debate is well summarized by Michael Marrus (31-46). Ulrich Herbert's *National Socialist Extermination Policies* presents more recent analyses of Nazi decision-making with respect to the final solution. The essays in Herbert's volume suggest (at the risk of drastic over-simplification) that the decision-making process that arrived at the policy of extermination resulted from the increasing population of Jews coming under the Nazis' control (due to their military success) and a mutually influential interplay of central control and local improvisation that

led to isolated massacres becoming official policy by a sort of "feedback mechanism" within and guided by the *Fuhrer* principle and by the radicalness of Nazi antisemitism.

2. Zoë Waxman points out that a small number of survivor memoirs were written and published beginning all but immediately after the end of the war ("Testimony" 487). Most commentators note, however, that there was little interest in the Holocaust, on the part of scholars, before 1961, which brought the publication of Hilberg's pioneering study and the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem (Cole 65), and, in the sphere of popular culture, before the 1978 airing of the TV mini-series *The Holocaust* (Waxman, "Testimony" 495).

3. James Young argues that this specific form of narrative ("documentary realism" [*Writing* 17]) has become canonical with respect to Holocaust narratives. Similar arguments have been made in more general terms by Hayden White and Jerome Bruner with respect to historiography and psychology, respectively.

4. Hirsch's book makes excellent points regarding the simplified version of New Criticism so often attacked by newly minted postmodernists during the 1970s and 80s, and his criticisms about the absurdity of linguistic idealism offer a helpful corrective to hasty or imprudent theorizing. That he is so

attentive to the fallacious nature of the "straw man" arguments he details in his first chapter makes his own use of them to dismiss poststructuralist and deconstructive thinking wholesale both ironic and disappointing. In his chapter "Martin Heidegger and Pagan Gods," for instance, he announces the goal of evaluating whether Heidegger's philosophy was "an ineradicable part of that fatal stain in German culture that led [...] to Auschwitz" (85). His colourful rhetoric suggests that this is more a declaration than a question, and the ensuing analysis is unfortunately simplistic, for example claiming that Heidegger's desire to return to the pre-Socratic question of Being is equivalent to "Hitler's political agenda of returning to a pre-Biblical, pre-Christian past" (86). He goes on to assert without qualification or support that, according to Nazi ideology, "as both Hitler and Heidegger believed, the German *Volk* [...] was fated to impose its will on Europe and the rest of the world" (86), rhetorically collapsing their perspectives, and tarring Heidegger with a Hitlerian brush. Much of Hirsch's book proceeds by such underhanded means and in such strident tones, as in the case of his commentary on the undeniably disturbing fact of Hans Robert Jauss's wartime service in the Waffen SS. Unfortunately, as in the case of Heidegger, Hirsch spends more time drawing speculative and *ad hominem* conclusions from this fact than he does attending to any detail of Jauss's thinking that might involve fascist overtones, as though his past behaviour and current thinking could simply be equated. Moreover, the title of the

chapter on Jauss is "Deconstruction and the SS Connection," which enacts a truly sensational generalization.

5. Jacob Meskin notes that "Levinas maintained a rigorous and intriguing separation between his properly philosophical texts, and his Jewish religious writings, going so far as to publish the two genres with different publishers" (508). This separation is so intriguing in part because, as Meskin argues, Levinas's attempt to re-envision the fundamental nature and task of philosophy involves a specifically "Jewish transformation of modern thought" (515).

6. In another example of the legitimating effect of identity politics, Sara Kofman explicitly sets her analysis of Maurice Blanchot in a context of gratitude arising from her personal history and identity: "it behoves me, as a Jewish woman who has survived the holocaust, to pay homage to Blanchot for the fragments on Auschwitz scattered throughout his texts" (7-8). She thus offers perhaps a defence of Blanchot by participating in the critical response to his work in the name of her experience as a Jewish woman.

7. David Patterson's *Sun Turned to Darkness*, for instance, takes an explicitly Levinasian perspective on the expressiveness of Holocaust memoirs. He takes Levinas's interest in the particularity of alterity in an unusual

direction, however, insisting as he does on the implicit search for Jewish divinity as characteristic of survivor memoirs. His approach relies on the notion that the experience of surviving the Holocaust, and thus the memoirs recounting that survival, involves a "transcendently Jewish element" (8) seemingly derived from the categorical nature of the Nazi threat (4), making the nature of Jewishness unfortunately dependant on a specific and extreme antisemitic definition. His interest in transcendence leads him to unusual claims that normalize Levinas's peculiar take on both theology and phenomenology to a recognizably normative onto-theological Jewish deism. For instance, Patterson rewrites Levinas's claim that the phenomenological method leads consciousness to "reflect upon itself and this to discover [...] its intentionality" (qtd. 2) by arbitrarily defining intentionality as the "longing for life that distinguishes the authors' pursuit of memory" in a mode that "belongs to a sacred history that is particularly Jewish" (3). It is certainly the case that Levinas's philosophy takes phenomenology in directions that can be accurately, but not unproblematically, called Jewish. It is much less clear that Levinas's ideas reflect what Patterson calls—in the singular—"the Jewish question of life" (2). This homogenizing theological perspective seemingly influences Patterson's critique of Young, whose formal emphasis Patterson rejects with an insistence on the redemptive power of the reader or the audience: in his view, Holocaust memoirs involve "a recovery of the future, which is a recovery of time, through a relation to the other" (19). In

so doing, he both homogenizes memoirs as a genre and assumes a redemptive relationship with the future as defining the relation between others. Such a relation is alien to Levinas's presentation of otherness as "an-archic," as arising out of an irrecoverable past, thus giving rise to time experienced as heterogeneity itself, not as a promise of fulfilment. Recuperative transcendence requires a diminution of otherness in the economy of the same, an economy requiring the sort of onto-theological grounding that Patterson imports into his putatively Levinasian analysis, in do doing contradicting some of Levinas's most central—and deconstructive —notions.

Another example of this can be seen in Josh Cohen's assessment of Levinas's importance to post-Holocaust philosophy. Despite presenting Levinas as a key Continental philosopher suspicious of finality in thinking about ethics and epistemology (478), Cohen's citations and analysis are drawn entirely from Levinas's religious texts, and couched in terms of Levinas dealing in "religious language" and matters of "divine approach and withdrawal" (483).

Levinas's writings on Judaism are unquestionably important to both religious thinking and to the rest of his *oeuvre*, which is itself, especially *Totality and Infinity*, marked by theological and eschatological language and concerns. My criticism here suggests only that focusing on them to the exclusion of his explicitly philosophical works seemingly permits or invites a

return to traditional models of thought that he otherwise rigorously resists.

8. A list of the texts in which Derrida analyses politics, violence, racism, and issues arising from the Holocaust will minimally include the books *Cinders* (Lincoln: U Nebraska P, 1991), *The Other Heading* (Bloomington: U Indiana P, 1992), *Given Time* (Chicago: U Chicago P, 1992), *The Gift of Death*, *The Politics of Friendship* (London: Verso, 1997), *The Monolingualism of the Other* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1998), *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness,* and essays such as "Violence and Metaphysics" (reprinted in *Writing and Difference* [Chicago: U Chicago P, 1978]), "Force of Law" (reprinted in Drucilla Cornell's *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice* [New York: Routledge, 1990]), and "Racism's Last Word" (reprinted in H.L. Gates' *"Race," Writing, and Difference* [Chicago: U Chicago P, 1985]). This catalogue remains deliberately partial, and has been derived from a moment's recollection rather than a formal literature search to illustrate the number and range of his publications and interests in terms of politics, injustice, and history. See Grosz's "The Time of Violence" for a subtle discussion of Derrida's approach to politics and the nature of violence.

9 They are also not widely available. A search of the National Library's AMICUS database on February 24, 2006 revealed that Hirsch's *Deconstruction of Literature* was available in 29 Canadian university libraries,

Postmodernism and the Holocaust in four, *The Holocaust: Theoretical Readings* in six, and *Theoretical Interpretations of the Holocaust* and *The Holocaust and the Postmodern* in only two.

10. David Patterson's 1992 *The Shriek of Silence* summarizes the extant critical literature similarly, for instance faulting Lawrence Langer's *The Holocaust and the Literary Imagination* for its thematic generality and Edward Alexander's *The Resonance of Dust* for its summarizing approach (6-7).The problem of overly-general commentary on survivor testimony is illustrated by Suzanne Egan and Gabrielle Helm's essay "Generations of the Holocaust in Canadian Auto/biography," which glosses no fewer than eight Holocaust memoirs in a scant four pages of commentary (36-39)—the same amount of space they dedicate to Lisa Appignanesi's sophisticated second-generation memoir *Losing the Dead* (41-44).

Patterson's own work takes up an interestingly phenomenological critical perspective, but he deals only with fictional texts in *The Shriek of Silence* and, as my earlier note argues, offers a problematic reading of Levinas when discussing memoirs in *Sun Turned to Darkness*. Langer's turn from literary representation in *The Holocaust and the Literary Imagination* to oral testimony in *Holocaust Testimonies* exemplifies recent trends in hermeneutic Holocaust studies, which frequently address either formal literary texts or spontaneous, oral texts. Those critics who address written

testimonial texts tend to draw on and reassert a canon of writers foregrounding Wiesel and Levi, among others. For instance, Rosenfeld's early *A Double Dying* is explicitly intended to be an introduction to the new field of Holocaust literature (10), and so surveys a number of memoirs, but emphasizes Wiesel and Levi with detailed discussion. More recent examples include Schwarz's *Imagining the Holocaust*, which explicitly discusses "pivotal and often-discussed texts" (5) to address the formation of cultural memory in general, and Bernard-Donals and Glejzer's *Between Witness and Testimony*, which involves a variety of memoirs and video testimony, but privileges Levi as the touchstone for its overall thesis. The relative attention paid to these authors can be illustrated by results from searching the *MLA International Bibliography*: a search (performed on May 27, 2005) for "holocaust memoirs" produced 42 results, "holocaust testimony" produced 64, and "holocaust autobiography" produced 78 items. In contrast to these broadly generic searches, specific searches for "Wiesel, Elie" and "Levi, Primo" resulted in 148 and 192 items respectively.

11. There has been a pronounced tendency for texts with an explicit interest in matters of representation to pass over memoirs in favour of a wide variety of other texts. Schwarz's *Imagining the Holocaust*, Young's *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust*, Bernard-Donals and Glejzer's *Between Witness and Testimony*, and Rosenfeld's *A Double Dying*, for instance, each cover a great many genres

of expression and remembrance, including fiction, cinema, and sometimes public museums and memorials. Interest in issues of representation has largely been inspired by the work of Hayden White, and most of the best-known texts devoted to this aspect of Holocaust studies—such as Saul Friedlander's *Representing the Holocaust*, Berel Lang's *Writing and the Holocaust*, Inga Clendinnen's *Reading the Holocaust*, and Dominick LaCapra's *Representing the Holocaust*—are explicitly devoted to historiography; when these authors address cultural or literary texts, they select texts that are canonical (such as *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen*, *Fragments*, *Shoah*, or *Maus*).

12. Almost ten years ago, Alain Goldschläger, Professor of French and founder of the Holocaust Literature Research Institute at the University of Western Ontario, provided me with a short bibliography of Canadian Holocaust literature, fictional and not. I am indebted to him for helping to get my research off the ground.

Chapter Two
Certainty

Memoirs of the Holocaust are typically told in the retrospective first person characteristic of confessional testimonial writing; this is a familiar point of view involved in the day-to-day narration of stories of events and experience, and thereby of ourselves as selves for whom and by whom expression is organized. Such autobiographical narratives are implicitly organized by the common perspective of the narrating and the narrated "I": "both as writers and as readers of first-person narratives, we are inclined to 'make sense' by assuming that the 'I' is self-identical, and we are all the more inclined to do so as it is precisely this 'I' that guarantees the sense of the narration as a whole" (Trezise 58). This seeming homogeneity is to a large extent illusory, however, because of the synchronic difference between the "author in contingent reality" and the "narrator, a fiction" (Egan, *Patterns* 24) and because of the diachronic difference between this present, divided self and the "I" who witnessed the represented events. In the case of Holocaust memoirs, moreover, the recollection of experience is plagued with traumatic discontinuities that reveal the degree to which the identification of selves and experiences relies on overarching structures of narrativity to effect its everyday coherence, its coherent everydayness. Elizabeth Raab's memoir *And Peace Never Came*, for example, explores conditions under which the expected identity of the "I" fails to guarantee the coherence of either the narrated events or its own subjective continuity. The

traumatic events that disrupt her sense of herself as an abiding subject throw her back onto the ground of an instantaneous, fundamental uniqueness experienced as idiomatic affliction. Her narrative thus attests to both the possible failure of narrative coherence and the raw signifying effects that yet remain in the wake of such ruined signification.

The problems inherent in individual attestation to uncommon and traumatic violence rest upon paradoxes common to any attempt to bear witness, paradoxes that arise from the simultaneously solitary and shared nature of subjective being. Jacques Derrida suggests that the idiomatic first-person point of view is definitional for the very idea of testimony, which is intrinsically focused on the unique perspective of a witnessing "I," and thereby on the nature of that "I" itself: "In essence a testimony is always autobiographical: it tells, in the first person, the shareable and unsharable secret of what happened to me, to me alone, the absolute secret of what I was in a position to see, hear, touch, taste, and feel" ("Demeure" 43). Testimony is autobiographical because, regardless of the content or historical-referential intention of the testimony, the witness must approach the form and content by enacting an essential, situated, observing role. Whatever story a witness tells is the story of the witness, in the double sense that it is unreservedly theirs to tell and inescapably about him or her even if its goal is not autobiographical self-presentation as such.

This autobiographical entailment is problematic insofar as writing in the first person involves one immediately in a well-known aporia of individuation: what

is distinctive about immediate experience is betrayed by the generalizing gesture of communication. The chaotic contingency of experience is given meaning by communicative ordering (Egan, *Patterns* 15-20; Rosen 102-103), but such meaning is inherently indebted both to the structure of its narrativization (cf. White; Bruner) and, more generally still, the nature of discourse itself. Giorgio Agamben, for instance, argues that empirical, psychosomatic individuality is antithetical to the anonymous abstraction involved in taking up the necessarily empty position of "I" in an utterance (116). Thus, every experience remains to some extent an "unshareable secret" because of our phenomenal or existential individuation as other to one another; as Emmanuel Levinas observes, "the fact of being is most private; existence is the sole thing I cannot communicate; I can tell you about it, but I cannot share my existence" (*Ethics* 57). And so Derrida describes testimony as the "shareable and unshareable secret": it is both necessary and problematic because of our inescapably perspectival relationship to our common world and because any such commonality relies on discourse that connects only at the cost of alienation.

Testimony, then, necessarily involves a problematic individuation that provides both its impetus and its necessity: "I am the only one to have seen this unique thing, the only one to have heard or to have been put in the presence of this or that, at a determinate, indivisible instant" (Derrida, "Demeure" 40). Even in the case where various witnesses are called to attest to the same events, each "can only testify when he asserts that he was in a unique place and where he could testify to this and that in a here-now" (Derrida, "Demeure" 41). That witnessing takes place

"in a here-now" indicates that the present moment of testimony is also a matter of individuation: the idiomatic past perspective of the witness is called upon in a new instant that is also and again unique. The identity of the witness thus involves a paradoxical division between the witnessing "I" and the testifying "I" (Bernard-Donals and Gletzjer xiii), and the witness who is called here and now to attest to events that happened there and then is caught up in the passage of time as an experience of continuity in uniqueness: no longer the one who underwent the initial experience, the witness is nevertheless individuated as uniquely continuous with that past self. Recent investigations into trauma and narrative suggest that this doubled uniqueness is problematized not only by divisions between past and present selves but by schisms involved in the moment of witnessing: in the case of catastrophic or traumatic events, the witness does not develop a narrativized and narrativizable recollection of the events, which instead take effect as delayed and displaced interruptions in the coherence of self-presence (Caruth, "Unclaimed" 181; Felman and Laub 57-58). The general situation of witnesses called upon to attest to the situated secrecy of past experience is thereby complicated in the case of catastrophic or disastrous events by the inaccessibility of such experiences, which inscribes another, disruptive, degree of secrecy in the division of the witnessing moment from itself.

Derrida's notion of testimony involves a secret that is "shareable" as well as "unshareable," however; he notes that there is a paradoxical demand made of witnesses: they are expected both to be uniquely qualified to testify to what they

saw (each one and no one else saw it) and yet their testimony is expected be universal (were another to have been there, the same things would have been seen): "The example is not substitutable; but at the same time the same aporia always remains: this irreplaceability must be exemplary, that is, replaceable" ("Demeure" 41). The hegemony of this demand for universalization is maintained by means of well-defined genres of discourse that are policed by the communicative and institutional contexts within which testimony arises. Victims are compelled to testify: they may be summoned by their sense of being wronged, by a sense of duty or debt, or by the power of the State. They thus offer testimony by virtue of obligation uniquely addressed to and acknowledged by each. Once engaged in the arena of communal validation, however, the secrecy of their uniqueness, of their idiomatic seclusion, must remain veiled, subordinated to the goals and stakes of institutional discourse. Witnesses who ignore the requirement of universalization, who insist on the idiosyncrasy of their perspectives or imperatives, are no longer recognized as witnesses; their discourse is discarded as unreliable, irrelevant, or pathological (Derrida, "Demeure" 48; see also Campbell, esp. 160-161). In Derrida's description, the testimony of the witness is called forth by an external authority whose coercive power in effect underscores the unique reserve of singularity that remains opaque to generality: the tribunals of law and history seek to elicit the voice of the individual to attest to particular events as experienced from an idiomatic standpoint, yet at the same time deny the inherent solitude or secrecy of the testimonial voice. Leigh Gilmore argues, in a similar vein, that autobiographical

writing always involves the "paradox that the autobiographer is both unique and representative" (7), and that the challenges posed by stories of limit experiences, or "trauma narratives [...] expose the conflict between identification and representativeness" (22).

Jean-François Lyotard identifies this same vexed relationship in the logical impasse between individual, testimonial witnessing and the regimens that define truth more generally. As the expression of an individual perceiver, the testimony of a witness can always be assailed as mistaken or as insufficiently well-informed about the context or totality of the events in question. This difficulty is broadly relevant to all instances of individual testimony, but Lyotard approaches it specifically by way of its especially problematic nature in the case of victims of traumatizing violence. Such victims, in Lyotard's description, are faced with fundamental epistemological dilemmas posed by the dominant mode by which truth and reality are determined, a mode that he calls the cognitive genre of discourse. Under the cognitive regimen,

> Reality is not that which is "given" to this or that "subject," it is a state of the referent (that about which one speaks) which results from the effectuation of establishment procedures defined by a unanimously agreed-upon protocol, and from the possibility offered to anyone to recommence this effectuation as often as he or she wants.
>
> (Lyotard, *Differend* 4)

Disciplines that so interpret testimonial evidence thus incorporate or transform the

perspectivism of testimony according to established validation procedures, which demand among other things consistency and corroboration, and thus deal in and produce what Derrida calls "proof," propositions whose believability is enmeshed in discourses of generality and necessity.

The difference between testimony and proof lies in Derrida's observation that the authority of testimony rests only in the insistence that "you must believe me because you must believe me" ("Demeure" 40). When such an utterance takes place on a general or institutional stage, it is subject to criteria of validation in order to transform its assertional certainty into demonstrable truth. Gilmore argues that "memory is only as authoritative as the person who is remembering, and only to the degree permitted in particular contexts" (24). Ludwig Wittgenstein addresses this matter of context and degree when he observes that "The procedure in a court of law rests on the fact that circumstances give statements a certain probability" (42e). The "procedure" invoked here might be called "generic" certainty, and is a matter of convention, of what is agreed-upon as necessary: "what men consider reasonable or unreasonable alters. At certain periods men find reasonable what at other periods they find unreasonable. And vice versa" (Wittgenstein 43e). We can thus see that there is both conflict and similarity between idiomatic and generic certainties. The cognitive genre, like all genres of discourse, is defined by stakes and means not themselves subject to its own methods of validation, and which therefore resemble the ungrounded insistence of the testimonial "I." Universalizing genres thus incorporate singular expressiveness explicitly, in the cognitive transformation

of certainty into proof, and implicitly, in the necessary certainties that ground such generic definitions of proof and truth in the first place.

In his late text *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein explores the difference of category between propositions of knowledge and propositions of certainty (39e). He asserts that knowledge involves propositions whose truth can be held in common by others, that can be subjected to tests of validity, and that are in principle falsifiable: "One says 'I know' when one is ready to give compelling grounds. 'I know' relates to a possibility of demonstrating the truth" (32e). Certainty, on the other hand, can be seen in propositions whose falsehood would make no sense, even as a mistake. Such certainties operate as axioms defining the system within which we attribute truth or falsehood:

> All testing, all confirmation, and disconfirmation of a hypothesis takes place already within a system. And this system is not a more or less arbitrary and doubtful point of departure for all our arguments: no, it belongs to the essence of what call an argument. The system is not so much the point of departure, as the element in which arguments have their life. (Wittgenstein 16e)

Certainties are certain—beyond doubt—because to doubt them is to throw aside all grounds for judgement in general (Wittgenstein 9e). This is not to claim that these certainties are in any way grounded or necessary. Wittgenstein insists, on the contrary, that they define the system by which we speak of grounds or of necessity:

> If it is the ground of our judging like this, and not just the cause, still

> we do not have a ground for seeing this in turn as a ground. (19e)
>
> Really "this proposition is either true or false" only means that it must be possible to decide for or against it. But this does not say what the ground for such a decision is like. (27e)

We are clearly not paralyzed in our judging by this lack of groundedness. The recursive "giving of grounds" does indeed come to an end, but what brings it to an end is not an intuited final truth but an action (Wittgenstein 28e). Ratiocinative or logical truths are part of our pattern of living, not platonic parallels to our empirical lives: that something is certain or true comes forth in the effects it produces, in our material or discursive behavior.

Building on the work of Wittgenstein, Lyotard describes language in pragmatic terms as a matter of individual utterances ("phrases," in his terms), the relationships between which are necessarily undetermined but are dictated in practice by genres of discourse. Each phrase is an instantaneous presentation of a "universe" of relationships between the addressor, addressee, referent, and sense of the phrase (Lyotard, *Differend* §25). The relationship between the phrase instants, the nature of this phrase universe, is a matter of the regimen of the phrase: they are marked and disposed very differently, for instance, in a description as opposed to a command. Phrasing cannot not happen: silence is understood, for instance, as a "negative phrase" that too participates in the genre-bound process of linking (Lyotard, *Differend* §22, §24). The ineluctable passage of time and the contingency of the reality presented in phrases (including the reality of utterances and speakers)

means that linkage is never a matter of necessity. Linking itself is necessary, and for these same reasons, but a particular linkage between phrases is never necessary (Lyotard, *Differend* §40, §41). Linking nonetheless occurs, and thereby produces structures of meaning. Genres of discourse determine the goals, the uses of language, that are offered as justifying or prescribing particular linkages between disparate phrases. The rules that govern such links are criteria of meaning or of effect: the cognitive genre, for instance, joins predication to ostension and then expects either assent or recursion, whereas the prescriptive genre expects a command to be followed by its execution. A *non sequitur*, then, is only disconcerting from the point of view of the genre whose methods are transgressed by an unexpected mode of linking. Because genres are a matter of convention, and because each seeks goals incommensurable with all others, they have an implicitly antagonistic relationship, and their relative effectiveness is ultimately a matter of power: "In this sense, a phrase that comes along is put into play within a conflict between genres of discourse. [...] The multiplicity of stakes, on a par with the multiplicity of genres, turns every linkage into a kind of 'victory' of one of them over the others" (Lyotard, *Differend* 136). These conflicts and victories are not a matter of human volition, nor are they a matter of conflicting human goals. The stakes are those of language considered in general as the object of an Idea, and existing only by instantiation in phrasing. The implicitly adversarial logical dilemma of the testifying witness is thus an outcome of the inherently undetermined nature of linguistic meaning.

Lyotard criticizes the notion of "a language naturally at peace with itself, 'communicational,' and perturbed for instance only by the wills, passions, and intentions of humans" (*Differend* 137), and does so because this conception implies that language exists as a determinable totality whose goals and meanings can be confidently and finally determined. He argues that, on the contrary, language in general does not exist (except as an idea), and there cannot be an overarching genre that encompasses all the other genres and assigns each its place *vis-à-vis* some ultimate purpose or authority. The notion of such an authoritative meta-genre runs aground on what Lyotard calls "Russell's aporia": either this genre is one among the others and thus subject to their challenges, or it is of a different order entirely and may not therefore aspire to totality "since it excepts what is at stake in itself" in its description of them (*Differend* 138). This fact also gives rise to the notion of the differend itself, which Lyotard defines most generally as "a case of conflict between (at least) two parties, that cannot be equitably resolved for lack of a rule of judgment applicable to both arguments" (*Differend* xi). Given the lack of an authoritative meta-language that might resolve the claims to validity of linkage on the part of multiple genres, differends proliferate within and as the motive force of linguistic expression. Philosophy and literature arise, according to Lyotard, from the experience of silence that marks the differend: "What is at stake in literature, in philosophy, in a politics perhaps, is to bear witness to differends by finding idioms for them" (*Differend* 12). New idioms will, however, institute new differends, thus requiring eternal vigilance and creativity on the part of responsible thinking.

Genres aspire to varying goals, none of which can delimit the infinitely diverse field of possible phrases, nor the necessity for the advent of yet another phrase. Given this kaleidoscope of necessary and momentary phrases, singularity is continuously at work. Each phrase situates its instances—including, prominently, addressors and addressees—with respect to one another in an instantaneous disposition characteristic of its phrase regimen:

> It should be noted that the addressor and addressee are instances, either marked or unmarked, presented by a phrase. The latter is not a message passing from an addressor to an addressee both of whom are independent of it (Lawler, 1977). They are situated in the universe the phrase presents, as are its referent and its sense.
>
> (Lyotard, *Differend* 11)

With this notion of isolated presentation, Lyotard dismisses the notion of continuous individual human subjects that pre-exist and control discourse, much as he refuses the possibility of a meta-language authoritative with respect to meaning. The traditional description of language as an instrumental medium at the disposal of people understood independently of it "is not false, it is a way of talking about language, humanity, and their interactions which obeys the rules of the family of cognitive phrases" (Lyotard, *Differend* 12). In *The Differend* and elsewhere, Lyotard presents a description of human being that situates language and individual certainty as integral and complicating elements in the problem of subjectivity. Wittgenstein also moves in this direction in his investigation of certainty, which

begins on an epistemological level but rapidly involves psychological and ontological stakes as the intractably fundamental and pervasive role of certainty unfolds. Lyotard's theory of phrases is an attempt to radicalize Wittgenstein's insight, to remove from the notion of a "language game" the anthropomorphism that suggests that people "play" with language in a way analogous to how we play with chess pieces (*Differend* §91; see also "Wittgenstein" *passim*). The individual certainty at stake in the testimonial genre is thus intimately connected with the certainties of individuation, and subjectivity and intersubjective relations are themselves, in a way, always a matter of testimony.

Subjectivity is often described (by Kant or Husserl, say) as an ongoing process of identification, the gathering of diverse temporal and spatial entities under the heuristic unity of a sense of self guaranteed by some final principle that underwrites its fundamental wholeness (the synthetic *a priori* judgement for Kant; internal time consciousness for Husserl). The paradoxical demand made of witnesses, that they be at one and the same time unique and representative, rests on an implied understanding of subjectivity as self-presence, and on the continuity of past and present selves as similarly and unproblematically self-present, in a presence defined with reference to a principle of identity. Levinas describes this process:

> It is as though subjective life, in the form of consciousness, involved being's losing and rediscovering itself, or as *to possess itself* by showing itself, proposing itself as a *theme*, exposing itself in the truth. This

> identification is not the *counterpart* of any image. It is a *claim* of the mind, proclamation, saying, kerygma. It is by no means arbitrary, however, resting as it does on a mysterious operation of a schematism, through which an ideality corresponds with the dispersion of aspects and images, adumbrations, or phrases. Consciousness is therefore always the grasping of a being through an ideality.
>
> ("Substitution" 80)

Levinas suggests that this "mysterious schematism," the discursive fiat that effects self-referential coherence, is realized in narration (*Basic* 180n4). In his description, the self-aware and self-sufficient process of ego formation is secondary to and relies on a more fundamental subjectivity not based on a consuming and totalizing relationship to events, uniqueness, and others. This atomic subjectivity comes "before" consciousness because it is the self-effacing principle of unique individuation that permits the cohesiveness of the ego in the first place, that allows the in-gathering effect of consciousness to come to pass. This fundamental and atomic subject is responsiveness, vulnerability, or susceptibility itself, a passivity so utter that it underlies our cognitive-rational understanding of the active/passive distinction; like Wittgenstein's notion of certainty, it is primordial, foundational for the propositional terms by which we come to terms with the elements of reason, including the volitional agency by which we usually understand activity and passivity. Levinas identifies this atomic subjectivity most frequently with images of being taken hostage or of suffering from insomnia. These examples stand in for any

number of traumatic or tragic experiences that denude us of our sense of egoistic subjectivity, and yet are the moments of unique identification upon which our sense of coherence or temporal contiguity rests.

What one recognizes as a conscious self relies on processes that unify, that provide linkages between the desolate separation of one's uniqueness and the intersubjective life one experiences with others. As Alphonso Lingis suggests, in a formulation drawn from Levinas' ideas:

> Language, where all the words are common words, is not a means for the ego to be recognized as a pole of unity and also uniqueness, is not a means for my peculiar identity to be confirmed, attested, and certified. It is in tears, and in passionate rejection, that I experience my separation from others. (*Dangerous* 93)

In keeping with this isolated relationship with shared language, Lyotard offers a description of subjectivity experienced as the frustrating injustice of the differend: "This state includes silence, which is a negative phrase, but it also calls upon phrases which are in principle possible. This state is signalled by what one ordinarily calls a feeling" (*Differend* 13). Subjectivity is a matter of an idiolect, not a substantial "self" (such a notion of selfhood is a matter of genre, convention, remembering, narration). Lyotard defines ipseity and idiolect in terms of one another: an idiolect is the case when "'I' am alone in hearing it" (*Differend* 83). Moments of distinctive individuation take the form of being affected, of being subject in the third person to effects wrought from without: "human beings who

thought they could use language as an instrument of communication learn through the feeling of pain which accompanies silence (and of pleasure which accompanies the invention of a new idiom) that they are summoned by language" (Lyotard, *Differend* 13). Selfhood thus rests on a fundamental displacement from the first person that founds the capacity to claim that position; the passage from affected uniqueness to speaking subject, however, takes place at the cost of erasing the primordial, affective moment of identification. Taking up the place of "I" involves a necessarily anonymous movement out of the idiomatic instant and into language: in speaking as "I," the living being "pushes his own lived experiences back into a limitless past and can no longer coincide with them" (Agamben 122). Nonetheless, according to Agamben "it is thanks to this unprecedented self-presence as 'I,' as speaker in the event of discourse, that there can be in the living being something like a unitary centre to which one can refer lived experiences" (122). The discursive enactment of this self-consciousness, however, necessitates (in the very shift from third to first person implied by the turn from responsiveness to articulation) an erasure of the dispossession of the "I" by the advent of otherness; both the idiomatic singularity of this displaced ipseity and the transcendent vulnerability of the other are lost when language arises to intervene and displace the moment of contact.

Lyotard's theory of phrase instants echoes the solitude of such individuality, but asserts that sociality is nevertheless implied by phrasing: "The universe presented by a phrase is immediately social, if by 'social' it is understood that an addressor, an addressee, a referent, and a sense are situated together within it"

(*Differend* 139). The immediacy of the presentation (the fact that they are so related only for the instantaneous time of the phrase) means that no instance can be deduced from any other (to do so would require the intervention of another phrase, whose presentation would itself be instantaneous in turn); the "sociality," or relationship between the phrase instants, is thus a function of the regimen of the phrase. This instantaneous gathering of abstract instances is recognizably social in a communal sense only "insofar as that situation is related to human names" (*Differend* 139). According to Lyotard, the proper name is the linchpin that permits the linkages, gathering, and identification involved in subjectivity. The name, unlike pronouns and deictics, is invariant across phrases in which it takes up different instances: "The name designates the same thing because it remains the same" (*Differend* 39). We thus identify ourselves as subjects in large measure by analogy with this element that persists in time, that operates independently of the instant of the phrase, within which any one may be variously "I" or "you" or "him" or "her." These pronouns, functions of the linguistic instant, enable momentary participation in utterances, but cannot be said to take the same referent in permuted or subsequent phrases.[1]

Proper names, then, act to connect disparate instances and direct them toward some posited thing. Lyotard argues that naming can do no more than provide this empty possibility for ostension: "The proper name is a designator of reality, like a deictic; it does not, any more than a deictic, have a signification, it is not, any more than a deictic, the abridged equivalent of a definite description or of

a bundle of descriptions. It is a pure mark of the designative function" (*Differend* 39). Its designative purity enables linking to take place, but at the same time does not preclude any particular mode of linkage because it does not involve any content that might become criteria for judgement. The "meaning" of a name is determined by its relations to other names, and the rigidity of designation affects the relations between names as well as the names themselves: cities, for example, are known to be separated by fixed distances (Lyotard, *Differend* §59). The "world" of names is a structure of relations between names; names come to mean in relation to other names by way, say, of genealogy or geography: "Networks of quasi-deictics formed by names of 'objects' and by names of relations designate 'givens' and the relations given between those givens, that is to say, a world" (*Differend* 40). The coherence of this world demands specific modes of support or validation. In *The Postmodern Condition*, Lyotard famously identifies two predominant methods of validation: the narrative and the cognitive regimens. The former relies on a discursive situation of instances in relation to other instances (for example in the bestowing of traditional, genealogical names such as patronyms); the latter involves subjecting propositions to tests of coherence and ostension (Lyotard, *Postmodern Condition passim,* esp. 29-33, 38-41). These two modes of validation reflect the dual nature of this onomastic world: its internal, or discursive, relations and its external, or ostensive, references.

This "world of names" is not a fleeting illusion—it is, rather, the well of certainty from which one's understanding of reality and one's notion of oneself as an abiding self arise. Thus, the certainties of self-consciousness provide the basis

from which I organize and distribute my world view, with its attendant external certainties. The coherence of this world view, however, in turn bolsters the certainty of my self-identification. These certainties affirm one another in an ungrounded circle that rests on, and is set in motion by, the primordial, instantaneous subjective moments of idiolect, of responsiveness, of momentary identification that are lost when translated into ratiocination and language:

> A *lag* between the fact of *being thematized* and the fact of *being made manifest in intelligibility* can thus be adduced [...]. This event or this becoming within intelligibility itself can be called subjectivity. But then subjectivity thinks itself fully on the basis of objective intelligibility [...]. Disappearing into the intelligibility or the objectivity of structures, the subject becomes aware of itself as called forth by intelligibility. (Levinas, "Truth" 98-99)

That this passage must occur as an event, however, reminds us that self-consciousness is an ongoing project accomplished across the distance between phrase instants. This lag or transition locates the subject between primordial interpellation and the claim to intelligibility offered by ipseity, by pronominal enunciation. Agamben describes subjectivity as the very moment of this displacement: "consciousness constitutively has the form of being consigned to something that cannot be assumed" (128). And testimony grapples directly with the paradox of subjectivity in that it is necessarily an expression of this very experience of idiom meeting generality; its narrativization of individual being on general terms

inevitably involves elaborating and grappling with the instantaneous paradox of being "I."

The idiomatic dilemma of testimony in general is pushed to an extreme when survivors of the Holocaust seek to attest to their experiences. Lawrence Langer (in *Holocaust Testimonies*) and Derrida (in "Demeure") both insist that there is a division between the past and present selves involved in testimonial narration; Michael Bernard-Donals and Richard Gletzjer posit this difference, the inevitable and irretrievable division between the self who witnesses and the self who testifies, as defining traumatic, and especially Holocaust, memoirs (xiii). Testimonial selfhood is thus always a testament of identification with a past self; the everyday ambiguity involved in claiming and recognizing such an identity is rendered still more problematic when violent events introduce a division into the moment of witnessing that renders the supposed self-presence of witnessing problematic, insofar as traumatic events by definition elude narrative remembering and instead produce indirect effects that discomfit the experience of subjective self-presence (Caruth, "Unclaimed" 181). Holocaust survivors saw the collective values that govern modern, cosmopolitan social relationships betrayed; they also experienced directly or vicariously overwhelmingly murderous violence that destroyed much of their culture and murdered the overwhelming majority of their friends and relations. The difficulty of finding means to articulate such experiences is founded in no small part by the degree to which these losses erase the shared contexts of certainty that enable identification and signification (cf. Draper, "Canadian" 43).

The difficulty of attesting to events often called "unspeakable" may be displayed or veiled according to how the author seeks to present the privacy of individual experience in the public forum of published work. Gilmore notes that autobiographers dealing with traumatic subject matter face, or fear facing, sceptical or hostile audiences and claims that, "In the imagined encounter with such judgements, many writers seek grounds other than the explicitly testimonial for self-representation" (14). Raab's memoir *And Peace Never Came* conspicuously foregrounds its idiomatic, perspectival status throughout, and begins with a prologue that explicitly considers fears or questions about the validity of her testimony. The text begins, in fact, with the question "Why?" (1). She appears compelled to preemptively respond to accusations of irrelevance, arrogance, or redundancy in writing the story of her experiences, and she asks and answers expected, feared, or otherwise anticipated questions demanding that she account for her recount, that she be held responsible for the story of her life. Her fears are multiple, as the text immediately expands on the initial "why" with three variations dealing with the timeliness of her project. Each question brings a different sceptical nuance to bear.

The first is "Why am I writing this now after so much time has gone by?" (1), which suggests that the passage of time has affected the validity of her storytelling project. One one hand, it may imply that the passage of the past makes it irrelevant to the present in general, on the basis that what matters to human being is the present moment understood as a-historical contemporaneity. From a standpoint

that so privileges the immediate moment, past events are simply over and are therefore of no interest here and now. On the other hand, it may imply suspicion about Raab's delay in bringing her story forth on the basis that it ought to have been told expeditiously, with a narrower interval between her witnessing and her attesting. The nature of her story—its specific content, form, and effects—is irrelevant to this objection, whatever the underlying temporal logic, because it suggests that she has in one way or another missed her opportunity to speak, that the increasing temporal distance between the present and the events she recounts makes the worth of her project inherently suspect.

The second and third questions offer utilitarian sceptical perspectives with respect to her story's possible historical or thematic significance. The second question, "Why now, when what happened has become common knowledge?" (1), shifts the sceptical enquiry from temporality to epistemology. This question assumes that a testimonial story is intended to situate specific events in space and time for informational purposes, and that new texts pursuing this goal are no longer required, given the well-known historical facts of the Holocaust. This question thus stands in for accusations of evidential redundancy. Memoirs so understood serve the goal of collective historical knowledge, a goal that in this case has seemingly no further need of additional evidence or dissemination. The third question is "Why now, when the sufferings in the world have lost their ability to shock us, when inhumanity and atrocity are no longer any secret?" (1), and so moves from the historical specificity of Nazism to outrage over human malevolence in general. This

question entails another assumption about the nature and goals of narrative: that stories, memorial efforts among them, are to offer general, thematic or emotional signification by way of their specificity. The sceptical perspective on such generality is analogous to the previous question's dismissal of historiographic specificity, in that this question attacks the utility, the purpose, the literary value of her memoir understood as a story with a moral. Raab here differentiates between historical knowledge and moral outrage in the twin fears that the former has been sufficiently served and that attempts to inspire the second are futile. These questions collectively assume that the memoir arises and can be judged with respect to general repository of factual knowledge or capacity for moral outrage that are complete, in the first case, and exhausted, in the second.

A final "why" steps away from the issue of temporal or historical relevance. It is more personal, and expresses an anxiety familiar to readers of other memoirs of the Holocaust: "Why *my* story, when there are countless others who suffered as much or more?" (1). This question can be understood as directed at the nature of Raab's personal experience or at her narration of that experience. In the former case, this question resonates with the phenomenon of "survivor guilt," which Primo Levi describes as the shame survivors feel when they retroactively apply quotidian standards of ethics and causality to their experiences of imprisonment and suffering and find them unable to justify or explain the largely random chance of their survival (81). The "saved" (in Levi's terms) are racked with guilt for having lived whereas so many others "drowned." This sense of guilt is relevant to any project of

literary testimony, as in Levi's assertion that "we, the survivors, are not the true witnesses" (81). Precisely by surviving, the saved demonstrate that they did not plumb the depths of despair and suffering that the lost victims experienced and so cannot be "complete witnesses" (82). A tiny and anomalous minority, survivors can thus attest to their survival, but not to the darker totality of the concentrationary experience, which must therefore remain unknown because, as Raul Hilberg notes, "One cannot interview the dead" (7). Understood, on the other hand, with respect to her narrative as a contribution to a body of writing—the genre of Holocaust survivor memoirs—this question also suggests that the profusion of texts defining this category has begun to make new additions to it suspect on the grounds that it has been completed, filled, or otherwise fulfilled, and that additions to the genre are irrelevant if they fail to extend the concept in some new and dramatic way, such as by telling ever more appalling tales of suffering and loss. In each case, this sceptical question demands of memoirs an account of suffering that, when taken to extremes, denies the possibility of memoirs in general because the demand for an increasing degree of suffering in each case leads once again to death, to the "drowned" who cannot testify. Agamben presents this impossible relationship as defining the testimonial gesture: "the value of testimony lies essentially in what it lacks; at its centre it contains something that cannot be borne witness to" (34). The hyperbolic demand for the "absolute witness" is critiqued in Lyotard's analysis of Robert Faurisson's Holocaust-denying epistemology, which involves exaggeratedly positivist criteria for testimony that, for all their manifest injustice, partake of and

are enabled by commonly held, speculative-cognitive demands made of individual perspectives in general (*Differend* §2). This final challenge, then, corresponds to the fear on the part of the memoirist or witness that one's story, no matter how moving or vivid, is intrinsically insufficient.

Raab ends her prologue without a direct answer to these various challenges. She concludes, instead, with a narrative:

> From the moment I started to uncoil and allow myself to think about the past, I realized that forty-three years has passed since I regained my freedom; it has taken me this long to acknowledge that the past holds the present out of my reach, and that I am still not free. This is simply my story, my life. (1)

Her response denudes the foregoing questions of some of their threat by restating the same issues—time, history, meaning, and suffering—in experiential rather than theoretical terms. To respond to these theoretical concerns about relevance and propriety, Raab shifts into a different frame of reference, a different genre of discourse. To the assumption that time has passed, that the events are done and over with, she replies that her experience of the "inexplicable present" (157) remains overshadowed by past history. This individual experience of dislocation is heterogeneous to a chronology confident of the present moment or of the pure passage of the past; similarly, what is or is not common knowledge is irrelevant to her particular experience of suffering and remembering, and—as she finds when confronted with certain postwar mythologies in Hungary—may erase or exclude it.

Similarly, any experience of guilt or inadequacy she may experience with respect to her experiences or the desire to represent them is an intrinsic part of those experiences and that expression. Her present lack of freedom from her past, her sense that "peace never came," has alienated her from a subject position confident of its relationship with intersubjective and abstract generalities. She thus discards or bypasses these various challenges to her right to speak as irrelevant to that right; they are irrelevant because they are formulated on categorical and general terms heterogeneous to individual experience, and because they make unwarranted assumptions about the comprehensiveness of abstractions such as time and history. Her narrative response obviates the need for a theoretical refutation of such challenges, or at least draws attention to the fact that, given the untranslatable multiplicity of discourse genres, a challenge posed in theoretical discourse cannot necessitate a similarly theoretical response. It is thus possible to respond to an interrogatory phrase with a poorly-formed response (from the point of view of the question) that is nevertheless not meaningless. Her final sentences do not, then, attempt to make an explicitly logical or causal connection between her realization and the act of her writing. She notes that her experience of time is not that of passage, and she holds firm to the fact that her story remains hers: it is not a historical document, a moral tale, or an exploration of a new magnitude of extremity. Her story, rather, is distinctively hers in that it testifies to events and effects that individuate her through a radical sense of loss and displacement.

The response "this is my story" asserts the situated individuality of Raab's

witnessing and testimonial selves, but places that solitude in the context—necessary to any testimony—of narrative. Insofar as narrative orders and collects the events it portrays, it has been described as inherently generalizing; representation thus unavoidably misrepresents of the chaotic contingency of lived experience, and particularly overwhelmingly traumatic experience (cf. Gilmore 144-5; Egan, *Mirror* 7, 160-1). As Sarah Kofman asks with respect to Holocaust testimony, "But how? How can testimony escape the idyllic law of the story?" (36). Narrative is also, however, uniquely capable of juxtaposing heterogeneous regimens of discourse, as Lyotard argues: "There is a privileging of narrative in the assemblage of the diverse. It is a genre that seems to admit all others" (*Differend* 158). The intrinsic mutability, hybridity, or multiglossia of narrative permits it to cite and comment on a plurality of genres of discourse. A mode of writing without internally predetermined axioms or rules, narrative is perhaps the method *par excellence* of exploring the presuppositions or unspoken cornerstones of cognitive-perceptual systems precisely because it can fulfil or challenge generic expectations of structure, coherence, and meaning. Raab is particularly attentive to the relationship between narration and personal identity. She repeatedly expresses a sense that she does not know who she is, that she shares no context that can allow her to take part in and identify with a living community. Her realization, quoted above, that the past holds the present out of reach is her motivation for taking up writing in the first place, and her memoir explores the trauma and loss that has deprived her of a sense of who she is. She thus deploys the self-referential capacity of narrative to unsettle generic constraints that

might denude her testimony of its specificity. She does so by exploring the central role of narrative certainty in the experience of selfhood, and thus offers a narrative critique of the certainty of narration.

Raab's relationship to the story of her birth exemplifies the paradoxical and tenuous grounding of self-conscious certainty, and the story of her life as it unfolds explores the interpenetration of social and subjective certainties in the relationship between denuded uniqueness and the coherence of a self-identifying ego. The narrative of *And Peace Never Came* begins—after her prologue and a one-page nostalgic idyll titled "The Window"—with Raab reporting that her aunt Nora has died. She then tells Nora's version of the story of Raab's own birth. Raab, in recounting the story of Nora hearing about Raab's birth, presents a conspicuously depersonalized and displaced version of the straightforward "I was born" formula found in so many memoirs. It begins with Nora hearing that "Olga has a daughter" (5). Nora is then identified as "my mother's younger cousin," and she proceeds to "the house" where a band of friends plays impromptu music under "my parents' window" (5). Raab herself arrives in this story only as "the tiny bundle" that her father brings to the window in acknowledgement of the serenade (6). In this retelling, her familial relationship to Nora gradually unfolds by increasingly precise terms of kinship relation rather than direct identification, and Raab herself doesn't quite appear in the story, except as an indeterminate object in Nora's visual field. This approach emphasizes the difference between the manifest fact of Raab's having been born and narrative testimony to that birth. Moreover, it suggests that

the roots of personal identity—which develops out of the raw biological fact of infancy—begin with familial relationships that must be narrated and established. Raab is not herself (neither "I" nor "me") in this story, nor is Nora "her aunt" in the retelling because both of these identity claims are relationships that develop in time by way of narration.

This story is especially significant because, as Raab notes, the final living witness to the event of Raab's birth was Nora (6). She thus notes the paradoxical situation (common to all) of not knowing one's own birth except in the mute facticity of one's existence. The simply material aspect of our existence as self-aware living humans is not, according to Martin Heidegger, essential to our being, which is a mode of being he calls *Da-sein*: "the essential definition of this being cannot be accomplished by ascribing to it a 'what' that specifies its material content" (10). Rather, "Da-sein always understands itself in terms of its existence, in terms of its possibility to be itself or not to be itself" (10). That we inevitably experience our lives as corporeally embodied and situated in specific physical contexts is only part of what makes humans human. We are also characterized by a sort of existential narrativity, by the projective capacity to intend that our actions have results; we experience ourselves as intrinsically narrativized and mortal selves. Facts—even such inescapable ones as one's embodied materiality—arise in narratives that situate them as meaningful and significant. Raab, then, differentiates between the story of her birth, which she can only experience second-hand, and the fact of her birth, which she constantly experiences in being. Her existence as a human being

testifies to the fact of her birth, but is a testimony without content, without discursive force or meaning. It is, however, the fact that founds the possibility for such meaning.

Birth thus has the character, one might say after Wittgenstein, of certainty as opposed to knowledge. Raab is repeatedly forced into experiences that transgress deeply-held certainties about human behaviour. The socio-cultural changes that strand Raab's dislocated identity take place in stages, in quantized leaps, as public and private events beyond her control sweep away the idyllic world of her youthful freedom. In Italy on a school art trip during the spring of 1938, she is absent for Hungary's adoption of Nazi-inspired antisemitic laws: "On my return to Hungary, I find things have changed" (19). She is not present for the legislative events, and so returns to a Hungary suddenly discontinuous with the one she left behind for her cultural and romantic sojourn.[2] Shortly after her return home, she is married by way of a courtship and engagement in which she is passive, wholly acted upon: "Suddenly everything changes around me: I am lifted from my teenage world to the higher, important world of adulthood. I am treated as an adult by family and friends of the family, and I am supposed to fit into my role instantly, without preparation" (20). This is a relatively quotidian or recognizably traditional change, albeit abrupt and, at the time, increasingly uncommon (Hyman 34). But like the more serious and ominous antisemitic legislation, it transforms Raab's social world. She is reconciled with her new life in part, she says, because "I come to terms with my marriage as a door out of Szemere into a wider world. At the same time I am

secure in the knowledge that the same door will be open for me to come back to my cradle for repose" (21). This change, then, is tolerable because it is reversible. As sudden as it is, she is able to flower under her new relationship with an overbearing husband in part because she sees that her family home remains a refuge for her. Her sudden projection into an uncertain future is tethered to the possibility of returning to the past, to the capacity to narrate a future drawn from that past and so known, familiar, and calculable.

The genocidal events that sweep Raab up in the tragic destruction of Hungarian Jewry present her with an annihilating series of dislocations, including deportation and internment, that are all the more traumatic and denuding because they irreversibly destroy her home and family as a place of refuge, and the past as a source of certainty about the present and future. As the family packs and leaves her childhood home, Raab notes that "An epoch is closing. This is the end" (28). What follows this "end" is a stepwise intensification of control and violence, the subjective ramifications of which are explored in the narrative by her portrayal of relationships between people in suddenly murderous circumstances. During an early stage in their deportation, a young man offers to help her carry her daughter, but is rebuked by a guard. Raab thinks, "He hasn't altered his values yet; he is still ignorant of the times" (30). When they are subjected to quickly escalating humiliation and violence, her father "insists on maintaining a pretence of normalcy" (31). Raab, on the other hand, recognizes that somehow things have changed: "I feel I have given up on nobility and am unable to pretend" (31). She

seems here to possess a clarity of vision not shared by the men around her, an understanding that the conditions of life have changed, although her understanding is conspicuously restricted to a sense of loss. This is perhaps the last time in the text when Raab manifests such a capacity for agency, as the changing conditions quickly overwhelm her capacity to recognize—to represent to herself—the nature of the world into which she is cast.

When Raab arrives at Auschwitz-Birkenau, she undergoes a traumatic, disjointed transition to the demands of concentrationary existence. During the terrifying moments of arrival, she sees emaciated prisoners begging for food from behind the wire, and thinks, "Poor women. They must be insane" (34). As Wittgenstein notes, anything beyond the confines of certainty can only be seen as madness from within (§220, §281). The conditions of camp existence are impossibly distant from the outside world: the inmates subsist in a twilight world of pointlessly repetitive tasks and the certainty of anonymous death, where the most fundamental aspects of their previous existence are stripped from or turned against them (cf. Eitinger 767; Gutman 19-20; Sofsky 167-168, 213-215). The deportees are quickly rendered speechless. Raab finds herself next to an old school friend on the unloading ramp. They interact silently, on the level of acknowledging touch: "We grasp and squeeze each other's hands. No words are exchanged, only a look of mutual pain" (34). The slender thread of recognition that permits their mute communion is destroyed, however, when the women are roughly shaved and stripped. Having lost track of her friend in the confusion and standing amidst the

naked, terrified, shaved-headed women, Raab notes that "Even sisters don't recognize each other now" (36). They are violently rendered anonymous—deprived of visual distinctiveness—and speechless by the loss of fundamental certainties with respect to which their speech might have meaning.

The prisoners repeatedly see language fail them, as seen again in Raab's encounter with her old school friend: "My friend and I exchange a terrified glance. We are silent" (34). Raab also reports on the unanimous silence within which the new prisoners stand for roll call: "Having nothing to say, we are silent. Without wanting to, I close my eyes while standing in the row. When I wake from the trance, tears are spilling down my face" (37). She is thus driven by the shock and humiliation of her experience to a silent encounter with a displaced sense of alienated, nonvolitional embodiment. The dehumanizing transformation of language and identity is also marked in the language of the guards. The women are herded into showers with a flurry of epithets that reinforce their fallen stature: they are referred to repeatedly as "animals," "idiots," and "imbeciles" (35–37). Language itself becomes a disorienting weapon, as Raab discovers when the women are met inside the wire by a female Kapo speaking Hungarian: "Somewhat relieved that we speak a common language, I expect a few soothing words" (36). Raab's sense of hope is abruptly turned against her as the Kapo begins to excoriate the new arrivals with a "frenzy of screaming abuse" (36). Thus even her mother tongue is poisoned, turned against her as an instrument of violence rather than a medium of comfort or understanding.

As the prisoners adjust to camp existence, they regain a desire to speak and discover things to say, but for Raab the relationship between speech and meaning has been transformed. She responds to camp rumors simultaneously with hope that they might be true and an incomprehension of the meaning of that hoped-for truth: "And what if it is true? What then?" (39). Knowledge, in the context of the camp, is rendered pervasively suspect, a matter of empty hope rather than truth (50, 51), an effect that remains the case after liberation as well (63). If the meaning of utterances in the camp has become suspect, the fact of their exchange remains meaningful on a much different level. Raab describes her fellow prisoners turning to one another in conversation in the moments they are able to do so: "As soon as we sit among our fellows, our old selves pop up obediently and our minds travel away from our wretched existence" (54). This return of familiar selfhood is experienced as a matter of "non-physical needs"for literary escapism and conversation (54-55).This episode presents the experience of selfhood under concentrationary conditions as an alienated matter of bare desire and the return of their "old selves" not in terms of unified psycho-somatic being but in a further displacement from the intolerable present moment. The poems her friend Hanna recites, for instance, offer her listeners an opportunity to "leave the present [....] The pure, unburdened love for art replaces, somewhat, without our awareness, our true longings" (54-55). This unconscious pursuit of a displaced object of longing reflects the painful burden of the present moment and the immediate, murderous past. Likewise, their conversations "in some ways include the past, but don't step over neutral ground"

(55). The prisoners collectively avoid calling one another into the very temporality that gives self-consciousness the possibility of identifying itself, and avoid so doing by escaping from the present moment into poetic or "neutral" discourse.

The exchange of recipes is a significant element in this delicate tactic of interaction. As a shared experience, the exchange of recipes "takes a different shape and deeper meaning than it did when we were free" (55): it serves both to indicate the past by way of a cook's idiosyncratic preferences and to indicate a possible, imagined future: "the listener raises her spirits by imagining a merry, beautiful home where the recipe can be made. Maybe it awakes a tiny secret hope. The colourful picture takes us away from our dull existence for a short while" (55). This exchange permits them to experience themselves by displacing themselves, by exchanging a veiled reference to the past for the barest hope for a future, in an example of what Kofman calls the bare "relation without relation" of recognition (51). This recognition takes place in a context that is conspicuously gendered: despite the terrible gulf between their present experience and the past "when we were free," they turn to recipes, the exchange of which is a traditionally female marker of relationship and of family tradition. Raab reveals the affective power of shared food and the feminine genealogy of recipes in an episode from after the war, when she visits her unexpectedly unfriendly cousin in Salzburg:

> My cousin eats his meal with a stern face, looking at his plate. It is when he has the second spoonful of my dessert in his mouth that his facial expression softens. He lifts his eyes from his plate and glances

> at me, then in slow motion his face transforms itself almost into a smile. I know the taste reminds him of something. My mother and his mother were sisters. (101)

Shared food thus offers a moment of idiomatic proximity, as the parallel solitudes of the diners are drawn into asymptotic relation by a common experience of a dish, in this case one made familiar by relationships between women. The prisoners thus reclaim the capacity to identify by repeating this gendered genealogical gesture; they share an instant of affective recognition founded on the specifically, culturally feminine capacity to create such moments of connection by way of food.

Raab presents these women as returning to consciousness not as a matter of abiding, psycho-somatic self-presence but rather in moments of affective displacement. They become themselves in becoming an audience—and thereby differentiated in the second, not the first person—for utterances that turn them away from the brutal reality of the present moment in an encounter with otherness. They in effect welcome the transition from both first-person and empirical being to the anonymous individuality of the second person as a means of being their "old selves." Raab repeatedly finds such displaced ipseity in moments of linguistic recognition that offer brief instants of reprieve from her desolation. When her cousin Ditta arrives in the camp and sends Raab a message, Raab experiences "a forgotten feeling [...]. I have been singled out with a personal message in this godforsaken, unholy place" (45). Similarly, when a Ukrainian labourer gives Raab an apple and a glass of milk, she has a brief experience of optimism: "I let my

locked heart open cautiously to feel for a moment that there is hope. Maybe the whole world has not gone crazy" (50). These moments of recognition suggest that subjectivity remains available to the prisoners in a very specific mode—that of instantaneous recognition, of momentary uniqueness. In short, they have been thrown back onto an experience of language whose role is to signify its significatory capacity rather than to collect and narrate enduring coherence. This results in an experience of subjectivity founded on affect, on being affected, on the evanescent experience of the idiom.

In the absence of a calculable future, the women prisoners cling to the "neutrality" (55) of present-tense recognition that affirms the mere fact of individuation without inflicting the intolerable burden of selfhood. Selfhood has become a terrible burden because the absolute nature of Nazi violence and power has severed the narrative thread that might link memories of the past to an imaginable future. This can be seen with tragic specificity in the murder of Raab's family, especially her daughter Kati. When Raab and her daughter arrive at Auschwitz, they are accompanied by Raab's mother and father. During the chaos and violence of disembarking from the freight car, Raab holds her daughter even more tightly when asked to give her up (33). Her first instinct is to protect the child, or at the very least to share her fate. Soon, however, Raab surrenders Kati to her father, who passes her to Raab's mother. She speculates that he heard a rumor that "Grandmothers do not have to work. They will take care of the children" (33). Both actions—her clinging to and then giving up her daughter—reflect fundamental

familial relationships of protection and trust that are betrayed and exploited by the deceptiveness of the camp induction process. Weeks of subsistence under the brutal conditions of the camp fail to convince the prisoners, Raab among them, that their loved ones have been killed. Rumors persist that children and grandparents are alive and well elsewhere in the camp, and when pregnant women are gathered to "join" them, Raab scrawls a quick note and begs one of the women to take it to her mother and child (39). She reacts in this way despite recognizing the generally malevolent transformation of the prevailing ethos, and so reveals the foundational importance and relative intransigence of the certainties of the world of familial relationships within which each of us matures and where Raab took on the role of wife and mother. The gendered, eugenic specificity of these Nazi actions thus attacks subjective self-conception at its elementary core of gendered embodiment.[3]

Raab does not identify a decisive moment wherein her sense of herself as a self is decisively compromised, nor does she clearly know at this point in the text that the gendered partiality of the Nazi actions is murderous. Nevertheless, these experiences of explicitly gendered threat are entwined with failures of meaning and communication, which suggests that this betrayal of the most intimate and general notions of community fundamentally alienates her from the common round of intersubjective life. The cynical Nazi dissemination of misinformation links the fate of pregnant women with the as-yet unrecognized deaths of the old women and young girls, and suggests that the concentrationary world is defined both by mass murder and by deception. Raab's stubborn denial of her daughter's loss intersects

with narrative events wherein Raab identifies signification becoming divorced from meaning: she reacts, for instance, to the possible truth of various rumors with incomprehension of what that truth might mean (39). Later still, her friend Hannah makes her a pendant of a child's head with a bonnet: "I wore it only to honor her work, but with great reluctance. I didn't want to believe that Hannah was suggesting that something tragic had happened" (85). Raab's grief over the impossibility of her protecting her daughter, or even being sure of her fate, shatters her capacity to relate to meaning in intersubjective, contingent experience: her sense of herself and of meaning in general is thus overthrown by the violent and deceptive conditions of endurance in Auschwitz.

Raab persists in her attempts to narrate a future for Kati, but does so on the most tenuous and forlorn grounds. When her cousin Ditta is deported and arrives in the camp, for instance, Raab takes heart: "It gives me hope that my child, my parents, and my brother are also somewhere here and that I will be able to hear from them" (45). Her cousin's arrival is connected to her daughter's possible survival only by metonymic association insofar as her cousin, who still lives, is also a member of her family. Her hopes thus have a fantastic, dreamlike quality: indeed, she briefly drifts off during roll call and imagines she hears Kati calling her (42); the blow that shocks her back to reality reveals in an instant that her fragile hope for Kati's survival is circumscribed by her still more powerful faith in the murderous power of her oppressors:

> Understanding comes to me suddenly: my deeds, good or bad, don't

> matter. I am unwanted either way. My existence is extinguishable at any moment, without anybody's regret. I am here under the sway of unchecked hatred, delivered to sadists, protected neither by country nor by law. (42)

Her insight into this new world of untrammeled malevolence seemingly forces her out of the confusion and inanition that were brought on by her futile attempts to help her newly-arrived friends (41). Her belief in Kati's survival and her desire to assist her friends are sequentially crushed, first by her numbing realization that "I have nothing here. I am nobody here" (41) and then by the blow that inspires her sudden grasp of the overwhelming nature of Nazi evil, an impression that persists throughout her experiences. At the end of her imprisonment, when the prisoners are left behind by the retreating Germans, Raab is unable to accept that they have been released, and explicitly entrusts her future to the power of the Nazis:

> Who can tell what is the limit of their irrational hate? I don't believe in their clemency. Unwilling to let myself entertain useless hope, I vacate my mind of further thoughts and return to my familiar indifferent animal-like state. [...] Only the SS know what lies ahead. (60)

With this recognition of the certainty of her family's murder and the concomitant destruction of her most intimate notions of self-certainty, the manifold world of Raab's social relations and identifications is reduced to one overwhelming fact: her helplessness in the face of Nazi domination. That these realizations take place in

articulable form as avowals of disempowerment suggests that Raab retains only the bare capacity for resignation, for a powerless, expressive vulnerability that Kofman, following Blanchot, describes as the core of human being: "the irreducibility of man reduced to the irreducible" (73). This deadly certainty offers neither a future for projective, self-conscious narration nor a basis for shared identification, but rather the abyss of bare individuation, and so leaves Raab dispossessed and alone.

Months after her arrival, when she was dismayed by her first sight of the seemingly mad, starving women prisoners, Raab has seemingly come to identify with those desperate madwomen as her fellow inmates. During a work detail that takes them into contact with the outside world, she realizes,

> We are like women out of a lunatic asylum, heads shaved, grey starved faces with sunken dull eyes, worn dresses hanging loosely down on bare legs in ragged shoes. I am also positively aware that the onlookers can't imagine that I am not what they see. I am somebody else, known only to me and my friends. (48-49)

Raab describes this experience of selfhood as split between external and internal identifications, between the perspectives of those who participate or not in shared contexts of certainty. She recognizes that she is identified as abject and troubling from the perspective of normalcy. She shares this identity with her fellow prisoners, who have crossed a fundamental threshold of recognizability and shared context to discover that something of identity remains on the other side, although not in a positively articulable mode. Her experience of the outside world thus includes a

collective sense of identification, but on the tenuous basis of shared difference from the norm, a difference whose criterion is being subject to Nazi persecution. Kofman asks, "could the deportees at least establish among themselves relationships of real community? For Blanchot, the detainees were simply a boundless entanglement of Other men, a magma of the Other (*autrui*), facing the power of the killers" (49). This is a negative collectivity, defined as it is by difference from the norm and by shared risks offering a collective identity that can only be experienced as radical isolation.

Raab's experience of freedom at the war's end is deeply ambivalent from its beginning: unbeknownst to them, she and her fellow prisoners are abandoned by their SS guards, and it is some time before they are aware that they are no longer under armed guard. "Standing there we remain motionless for who knows how long, daring no question, expecting no answer, knowing no time" (60). This description illustrates the problem of prisoners' community: they are gathered together under the common condition of subjugation, but experience it without any context of meaning or futurity that can turn that togetherness into an idea or a means of positive identification. The experience of captivity nevertheless pervasively influences their behaviour and self-understanding once they are freed. Two days after they are released, the women still find themselves sleeping in closely-packed groups of five: "We move in with seven other girls, making ten. Our two rows of five from camp are kept intact. We feel more comfortable with each other than with any others. [...] Habit dictates that our whole group is within reach" (67). The women are shocked out of this mind-set by hearing a group of freed Frenchmen

enthusiastically singing as they prepare for their day's march toward home. The women, reminded of the nature of the outside world, find themselves abruptly individuated. This sudden, solitary freedom leaves Raab empty of any sense of self: "We leave the hall promptly, each of us going her separate way to sample freedom independently, without even a friend's influence. [...] I wander between the houses, not knowing who I am, or what I am looking for, or what on earth I am doing here" (68). Separated from these women and their ambiguously collective ethos, Raab finds nothing with which to replace it; her incoherent sense of herself seemingly involves the failure of both intentionality and memory, in that her present seems to her disconnected from the past and unable to give rise to a future. This psychic homelessness leaves Raab stuck in a myopic present moment: "The days pass unnoticed. I am unable to occupy my mind with anything other than trivial, momentary worries. My mind functions as if I were in an empty world. No ties. Unattached. No past" (75). This rootless existence leaves her relentlessly singled out by her suffering in an experience of consciousness that seems to refuse unity and coherence even at the most basic level: Heidegger's insistence that intentionality and possibility are primordial structures of *Dasein* seems to fail in the face of a self unable to envision a future on the basis of the past. She finds herself caught up in the momentary battle for survival along with everyone else around her, but she does not share their energetic sense of direction and motion towards some more distant personal goal. Shortly after Raab and other former prisoners take up temporary residence in towns in the region of Westphalia (in westernmost Germany), she

comes along with Hanna and some friends who attempt to return to Hungary, but quails at the sight of the filthy Danube, filled with the detritus of war; she is unable to go on and so returns to Westphalia. Thus, when the group of camp women dissolves into a diaspora of homeward-seeking exiles, Raab instead finds herself stranded: "I sit empty, without thoughts. I have nothing to think about. I don't know how to start my life again" (77).

Raab's desolation is so abyssal in part because of its solitude. She repeatedly expresses a sense of uniqueness, of her misery as anomalous and so all the more desperate. Still stranded in Westphalia months later, she hears from Hanna, who has returned home, found her husband, and set about energetically building a new life in a new household, surrounded by a circle of friends. This "vision of a home" makes Raab tremble: "I can't see myself in any circle or in any environment. I don't feel I belong anywhere" (93). Further correspondence with her surviving relatives in Hungary underlines her sense of disconnection: "Miki wonders why I haven't come back to Hungary. How come everybody who has been liberated is back, except me? I have no reply to his question" (95). She is thus isolated with respect to her fellow survivors as well as with respect to larger social contexts from which their experiences alienate them. She is repeatedly unable to justify or explain herself, even to those with whom she retains some connection; nor does she offer any speculation or rationale for this singularity in retrospect. The inexplicably distinctive isolation of her solitude seemingly compounds her sense of aimlessness and sorrow. When Raab finally visits Hanna, she finds a nurturing sense of comfort:

"There is no need to exchange thoughts. I know she can read them without words. I feel free with them" (106). Despite this easy sense of connection with Hanna and her husband, Raab cannot share Hanna's ability to mourn the past or plan for the future. Hanna has named her firstborn daughter after Katalin, Raab's murdered child, but Raab finds herself unable to feel gratitude for an act that she recognizes as loving and generous (106). She distances herself from the "major miracle" of Hanna's adjustment to normalcy with an anaphoric observation of her solitary sense of disconnection: "For me, it is too short a time after our cataclysm [...]. For me, the peril is not that far behind me yet" (106). Although Raab refers to Hanna and her shared suffering as "*our* cataclysm" (106, italics mine), their suffering was cataclysmic in part because its effects are not shared, not held in common.

Raab eventually pursues the temporally complex task of seeking out her past, thereby crossing the relations of intention and retention to deal with the discomfort of being marooned in an impossible present. She recognizes the irrevocable change the war has wrought even as she seeks out the past she thereby identifies as lost. Shortly after liberation, she meets an American GI, who is the first Black person she has ever seen. Conspicuous for his race and his nationality, he signifies for Raab the extremity of the change brought about by the war:

> This encounter couldn't have happened to me before, in Middle Europe, in Hungary. [...] The Americans in Europe. [...] I am looking for the old Europe from before the war, to find my previous place. I just want to pick up where I left it. I also know that here is a change

that can't be unmade. (69)

Raab is here conscious both of the ineluctable passage of time and the abyss that yawns beneath its scattered instants. As Lyotard insists, the passage of time is instantaneous, less a matter of determined occurrence than an unmediated event that "becomes" an occurrence only in retrospect ("Sublime" 90). The metaphor of time as a passage is a matter of narrative assertion, and grasping the experience of time as such a passage all the more so. When Raab sets forth to discover her past, then, she seeks an escape from the differend of her undecidable experience of time.

When she eventually returns to Hungary, she finds its urban and rural landscapes remarkably unchanged. Despite, in a way, finding in this continuity exactly what she came for, she is alienated and isolated by this very sameness: "It is eerie that it is the same. [...] It is only I who am not the same" (102). She notes, on the one hand, that "now is now," but she is burdened, on the other hand, by her need for stasis: "I want to hold onto a past that I can't bring myself to abandon" (102). She thus finds herself simultaneously reliant on her memories and betrayed by them. When she is preparing to leave Hungary again, for example, she realizes that she needs companionship. In pursuit of someone to accompany her, she relies on her cousin Ditta, but does so wholly on the basis of her memories and hopes: "I retain the thought that Ditta will come with me, even though I haven't spoken to her yet. I am relying on the past" (114). She relies on the past as though the past were still simply itself, as if it still existed in some manner, preserved, in the static way it appears to her traumatized sense of the world. In the world of others—such

as Ditta, who refuses to accompany Raab—the past includes the transformations of the war years and has given rise to a dynamic present in which Raab seemingly cannot participate. She is seeking a past that is so compelling precisely because it has been destroyed. Dori Laub argues that survivors face tremendous obstacles attempting to reclaim a "benevolent past" because it "will always be associated with the circumstances of its destruction and loss" (801). Raab's search for a present that is identical with the past is doubly, impossibly nostalgic both because the past cannot ever simply be itself, eternal and unchanged, and because the murderous intervention of the Holocaust decisively precludes any simple continuity between the world of her childhood to her adult present. The sameness Raab seeks is so uncanny when she finds it in the materially unchanged railway stations and streetscapes of postwar Hungary because her perception of the objective sameness of the world conflicts with her subjective certainty about its transformation; her pursuit of the past in the present is given its urgency and its futility by the manifest loss of that very past.

Raab discovers on her return to her homeland that the survivors of her extended family bear no resemblance to the loving community she remembers. Her reunion with her brother Miki is characteristic of her attempts to regain a sense of connection that has been destroyed by Nazi violence. She greets him with much emotion, but is aware that "The pillars of a whole world—our world—have collapsed since we last saw each other" (103). They are initially close and talkative, but quickly find themselves in disagreement over their perspectives on post-war

life, and these disagreements leave them unable to communicate at more than a superficial level. Raab realizes with disappointment that they "are no support to each other, and see the world differently, though we started out with mutual roots" (104). Similarly, her cousin in Salzburg provides her and her travelling companion Steve a less than welcoming refuge (100). With the passage of the post-war decades (during which she left Europe for Ecuador and, 14 years later, Canada) the gulf between Raab and her family remains, compounded or replaced by her expatriate distance from them. Travelling through the Hungarian countryside long after the war, she realizes, "I don't know this person beside me, my cousin Ivan [...] though we have met every time I have visited Hungary since the war" (163). Raab's experiences with her family both immediately after the war and years later consistently demonstrate that the persecution that murdered most of her immediate family also destroyed the possibility of her finding common ground with her surviving relatives. She cannot connect with her uncle because maintaining the playful nature of their prewar relationship precludes their asking one another difficult questions and telling difficult stories (111). She cannot accept a reconciliation with her husband because she recalls and recognizes in retrospect his controlling and jealous nature (107-108); this recollection is aversive for obvious reasons, but also, perhaps, because she is fixated on memories of childish happiness unalloyed with adult pain (9, 160). In rejecting her husband's suggestion that she stay, Raab realizes that "the road back is closed for me" (108). She thus finds herself trapped in a free-floating present, doubly estranged: she is diachronically adrift

because her present sense of isolation cannot project an emancipated future, and she is synchronically alone because her separation from her family deprives her of her most valued, intimate, narrative context for identification. Her family remains at a distance both because they are divided by the traumas of collective suffering and because of Raab's insistent desire for the impossible idyll of her childhood that she cannot find in the real, adult world, let alone the devastated world of postwar Europe. Her family is thus doubly unable to provide a community in which she can find her place, in which a "we" inclusive of her can arise.

Raab's sense of loss is perhaps most sharply delineated in her loss of community and plurality. The capacity to say "we" is as commonly accepted as the ability to say "I," and is intimately related both to the possibilities and the paradoxes of singular being. Lyotard argues that the collective identification of the first-person plural requires a shared participation in narrative legitimation: "Narrative is authority itself. It authorizes an infrangible *we*" ("Missive" 33). The ability to say "we" in the name of diverse individuals rests on common participation in a legitimating genre of discourse. Lyotard also argues that the experience of the Holocaust struck unprecedentedly deep divisions between the subject positions involved (the SS, the prisoners) that preclude there being a common "we" from which the experience of Auschwitz might be articulated (*Differend* §158-160). The separation between Raab and her surviving family is of a different order, of course, although not an unrelated one. As Lyotard points out, the "we" masks the heterogeneity it collects in that the implied "I" and "you" comprising it occupy very

different positions at the very instant they are so drawn together (*Differend* §155). The genre of discourse in which this "we" is lodged can, furthermore, exacerbate this fragile difference, especially in the case of genres of prescription (*Differend* §155). The possible failure of a "we" is thus a constitutive, continuous threat, as is the analogous failure to secure a definitive "I." Raab's highly motivated search for relationships comes into immediate conflict with the differently temporalized interests of her various family members; this mutual conflict of expectations and demands prevents them from participating in even the already tenuous commonality of a "we"—or at least a "we" in which Raab can participate as a narrated and narrating subject—precisely because they do not share a relationship with time that can allow them to accede to imperatives and narratives held in common.

To bridge the abyss left by the failure of this communal certainty, Raab repeatedly seeks out contingent communities. Karim Bennamar argues that the community forged by kinship structures produces an understanding of identity "defined by one's station, allegiances and actions" within the context of "civil duties, solidarity, family obligations" (39). In the absence of such familial/ancestral narratives, which offer a sense of continuity on a mythological scale encompassing the life stream from birth to death, Raab turns to pragmatic relationships that sustain her from project to project, in a piecemeal experience of time as strung out between transit camps, refugee hostels, and border crossings. Her experiences after liberation and her travels across Eastern Europe are thus characterized by passing

allegiances. She first explores this strategy during her internment in Auschwitz: "All kinds of coteries are formed from the need for joint power. [...] The need for association is so strong that a faint link is enough to build a life-saving relationship and to create instant support. A vague connection will do" (46). She also meets and leaves travelling companions as necessary in the general chaos of post-war travel. Her connections with others appear and vanish as a matter of chance and convenience, disconnected from larger narratives of community or the sense of any destination as final. In the absence of the well-defined responsibilities and roles implied by familial, ethnic, and national narratives of legitimation, Raab finds herself amidst what Bennamar calls the "community of those with nothing in common"—nothing, that is, that partakes of the traditional, calculable world of identity politics (39-40). The tremendously diverse mass of refugees she encounters in the dying days of the war, for instance, shares only the phrase "DEUTSCHLAND KAPUTT!" as an emblem of the defeat of their conqueror, a phrase they exchange in the absence of common language or experience, in moments of recognition amidst transitory chaos (66). Bennamar calls such community without commonality "absent community," and describes it as the bare capacity for connection exemplified by our common subjection to individual mortality: "While our death remains irrecuperably private [...] our mortality outlines an absence of community. Our fragile absence of community consists of this intangible and unspoken bond, it is woven of our embodiment of the other's death" (38). "Community" in its strong positive sense of mutual identification with

delineated principles or history is thus replaced—in the absence of such cohesive norms—by the paradox of shared alienation. Intersubjective community, then, is subject to the dilemma of narrative legitimation much as is self-conscious identity. Its ruination leaves the bare possibility for commonality, without positive terms, in its wake. Under such conditions, identity is thrown back onto its ground of idiomatic responsibility and one's decisions become a matter of immediate and uncalculating responsibility undetermined by given models or principles.

Unfortunately for Raab, her experience of dislocation suspends her in this disorienting state of undecidability, a state that her peers seem to merely pass through on the way to regaining some semblance of traditional community. Paul De Man asks, with reference to the problematic distinction between fiction and autobiography if "it [is] possible to remain [...] within an undecidable situation? As anyone who has ever been caught in a revolving door can testify, it is certainly most uncomfortable" (70). Raab ultimately cultivates less ephemeral modes of connection, but even her closest relationships remain founded on this pragmatic, ungrounded partiality. Raab becomes friends with her future husband, Nathan, because "we seem to understand each other well, and so share a general view of life" (96). She is welcomed into his family and appreciates their easygoing friendliness as a comfort even as she feels distanced by such trivial yet fundamental details as their Polish inability to make Hungarian-style coffee (133). They share a mutually supportive and loving relationship in the years it takes them to leave Europe in search of a new life elsewhere, but their marriage founders precisely because they

cannot both participate in the long-term teleology of familial time. Raab's lack of connection to common time and experience seemingly leads her to a desire for the reassuring certainties of participation in traditional familial patterns of community, a desire that Nathan apparently does not share. Nathan is disappointingly non-responsive after Raab's terrible experience of miscarrying in a refugee hospital staffed by former SS medical personnel (142) and is indifferent to their ongoing inability to have children during their expatriate years. Raab describes the end of the marriage as "inevitable," and identifies the break as resulting not from their failure to start a family of their own, but from their divergent attitudes toward this absence (158). Her relationship with Nathan allows her to escape from the historically overdetermined world of Europe to the apparently blank slate of the new world, but he seemingly does not share Raab's mourning for and a desire to rejoin the narrative of ancestral temporality.

Raab's discontinuous history of loss and disappointment culminates late in life with a loss of a different type: the erasure, the annihilation of her childhood home. Years after the war, during a visit to Hungary, Raab's cousin Ivan takes her to visit her birthplace. When they arrive in Szemere to see the old house they find it ruined:

> We are now where our house is supposed to be. But it is not. It was an old-fashioned country house, built in an L-shape with walls a foot-and-a-half thick. Along the inner side of the L ran a corridor with arches and columns, vaulted ceilings, the usual style in the country.

> The house would have been about two hundred years old now. For forty-three years, the old house had been unloved and uncared-for. I heard that it was stolen brick by brick. (177–178)

Her response illustrates her trust in the tangible presence of house as material evidence capable of anchoring her identity. She reflects on its thick-walled, generic, "old fashioned" architecture, which was the "usual style," and so enduring in its solid peasant conformity. The durability of the house has such a hold on her imagination that in this moment, confronted with manifest evidence to the contrary, she thinks of it as having been standing, silent and empty but whole, for the entire duration of her forty-three year absence. This echoes her surprised response upon first returning to her home after the war that the cobalt vase of flowers she impulsively arranged while preparing for deportation (28) was not still there, dried but undisturbed (115). For her, the gradual demolition of the house is accomplished in the instant it takes her to see the end result. Raab immediately experiences a profoundly disorienting loss of her sense of self:

> I can't speak. Such an inglorious end; I avert my eyes. I feel unreal. I feel as if I am falling into a timeless abyss. [...] No trace, no sign, no sound, only me alone. Did my real life end then? Am I the same person who left with the parents, Raab Mihaly and Olga, and with my daughter, Hoffman Katalin? This is not the me from then. (178)

Without this tangible, visible, material anchor for her memories, Raab experiences the vertiginous fragility of a self that finds itself without ostensive support, "only

me alone." The names of her parents and daughter are invoked here, but are meaningful and supportive only in a discursive world where these names can be exchanged with reference to some reality that affirms them, where the living can answer in their own names.

As Raab describes elsewhere, a major element in the tragedy of post-war existence is the literal loss of places and people in a destruction that delivers the past over to a tenuously discursive existence:

> People here, in the after-war world, all have memories from the past. And that is all they have. What is lost, what is wiped out, is their tangible past. It is gone without leaving a trace; often not so much as a messenger is left. But people remember the past and speak about it. The listeners here are listening with their own painful memories, incapable of sympathy for others. And who knows what is real, imagined, or a dream come true in the process of remembering. I don't entrust my past to doubting, callous ears, to profane words, I don't want to rid myself easily of my pain. I want to *bury it with piety*, individually, so I keep it alive *under my own unconditional care*. (137-8)

Her response to this morass of reality and imagination is "piety" and "care" for the intimacy of her past. She attributes her reticence to the indifference and the confusion of this narrative paradigm: in a world of uncaring addressees and unreliable addressors, she chooses silence as an expression of her fidelity to a past that is entrusted uniquely to her. In the acknowledgements that precede even the

preface to her text, Raab thanks "all my friends and family who contributed silently throughout the years by accepting my chosen solitude" (vii). The visit to her ruined home however, "broke open the crust that had been closed for forty-three years. [...] 'The Visit' was the result. It took an additional nine years to put the painful, jagged words, one by one, on paper, to complete the full cycle" (160). Thus, displacement and alienation ultimately lead Raab to writing. This "elating new freedom" awakens a "strong desire to share the spirit of the past, its slow pace, a gradually fading away of life" (160). Raab was seemingly unable to write this vision, as the only portrait of "the spirit of the past" that appears in *And Peace Never Came* is a mere sketch, the glimpse at prewar life provided by "The Window," a half-page vignette whose nostalgic presentation of familial and village happiness is overshadowed by the tragedy of its utter destruction. *And Peace Never Came* does not fulfil the vision of writing as a means of capturing or portraying the spirit of the past. It is a memoir about the ruination of Raab's relationship to the past, and thus offers a narrative structured by her experience of dislocation and displacement rather than by a shared experience of temporality. If *And Peace Never Came* offers a "full cycle," it is the recurrence of loss in narrative circularity that reflects Raab's own cyclical turning to the past in order to claim presence in the present. This relationship of indebtedness or displacement is reflected in the conjunction beginning the title of the text: *And Peace Never Came* is a phrase that arises in reply to an unknown phrase of violence and suffering; it responds by affirming the ongoing continuity of this lost moment of war even as this continuity is displaced

by the moment of affirmation. Raab's title, and her book, thus reflect and depend on the impossible responsibility of the instant, and attest to the conflict between idiomatic solitude and the "profane words" of narrative expression.

From the first moments of her passage into the deadly concentrationary world, Raab's narrative presents a strikingly asyndetonic narrative structure. Events, even such intimate events as weeping, seem to happen without motivation or intention. They are disconnected from agency, from the plotted, narrative time that characterizes intentional self-consciousness. Raab repeatedly finds herself feeling and acting seemingly without volition or awareness. These conditions reveal that the temporal nature of narrated subjectivity gives it both the possibility of cohesiveness and its fundamental incompletion. One's sense of oneself is always displaced by the passage of time. Lyotard argues that "Time is not what is lacking to consciousness, time is what makes consciousness lack itself" (*Differend* 77), and so that the ongoing coherence of a self experienced in instantaneous moments involves a forever-deferred final synthesis. Time passes in fits and starts throughout Raab's incarceration and post-war experience. Punctuated occasionally by dates, most of her narrative is vague about the order of events and the duration of various situations, and is non-linear in its overall structure. The structure of the text reflects Raab's complicated relationship with time in that the semi-linear story of her deportation, liberation, and post-war travelling is framed by episodes from much later in her life. These episodes delve into her identity as an author and produce a second time-line: a temporality of her writing self. The text also breaks

this frame, however, by concluding with a chapter that Raab identifies as her first attempt to write her story, and which takes place after the war but before the "now" of her penultimate chapter. Without a synthesizing moment or a linear chronology, the narrative structure of *And Peace Never Came* reflects Raab's inability to become or to determine her present self because her experience of the present, narrating moment is overwhelmed by the incoherence of the narrated past.

Raab's prologue expresses an awareness that there are various modes of discourse that pursue different stakes, including different ways of witnessing to past events. As Derrida's analysis of the testimonial mode and Lyotard's notion of the differend show, the solitary witness has a vexed relationship to the proof demanded by cognitive tribunals such as history or law. Levinas discusses testimony in terms that offer alternative orders of truth to the hegemony of the cognitive genre. For Levinas, the idiomatic nature of testimony, its intersubjective immediacy (*I* tell *you* about what I saw, heard, felt, smelled, tasted), partakes of an original interpellation that gives rise to subjective experience. On these terms, I am able to become I only in relation to the other whose arrival inspires my capacity to become myself. This original subjectivity—the responsive capacity to say "I" that precedes actually claiming this pronominal identity—is reflected in the expressive approach of the other. Primal expressiveness thus involves an experience of the raw fact of significatory capacity before any significant expression, an experience (in Levinas's terms), of the Saying before the Said. In testimony, the reader is presented with the powerless plea of the witness: as Derrida says, "you must believe me because you

must believe me" ("Demeure" 40). Raab's use of an inconclusive meta-narrative structure emphasizes her narrating persona and the narrativized relationship between past and present. She thus foregrounds the relationship between the narrating, testimonial persona and her past, witnessing self as the implicit focus of the text. Her story involves events and places located in intersubjective, historical time, but the narration of *And Peace Never Came* is dominated by its attention to Raab's perspectival specificity, which thereby emphasizes the very idiomatic elements seen as problematic and suppressed in speculative or historical determinations. This self-conscious attention to events understood in phenomenological terms results in a mode of witnessing that lets Raab insist on the nature of first-person experience not as a particularity to be overcome in historical generalization, but as the very meaning of her story.

This mode of witnessing is also embodied in the book of recipes that Raab assembled while imprisoned. She listened to her fellow prisoners share their memories and methods of cooking favourite foods as a way to remember the past and anticipate the future without committing to remember the former or hope for the latter (55). That Raab *recorded* these recipes, however, raises questions of textual significance in addition to the effects she experienced while taking part in such sharing. Raab describes participating in this sharing of recipes amidst the misery of starvation as a pursuit "unaware of the question 'What's the use?'" (81). Raab is at first ashamed to listen, but comes to find this "useless" communication compelling:

> I jotted down all that I could.

> I jotted it down on scrap paper found in trash cans in the factory—taken, stolen. [...] I wrote the ingredients down, hardly able to grip the stump of a pencil, the recipes of nameless women—whoever happened to pass by. I kept writing down the ingredients, words enshrouded in secret meaning and language in my mind. [...]
>
> I kept recording recipes, whatever anyone could remember. (81)

The exchange of recipes was a performance allowing speaker and audience to escape the present moment, but the physical nature of the recipe book offers a mute attestation to the conditions of deprivation under which the women suffered. Raab wrote the recipes on "scrap paper," that was "covered in pencilled recordings of German workers' wages but I overlooked the words underneath" (81). Raab's writing thus takes up scraps of paper imprinted with the public language of Nazi bureaucracy and power—payroll records that implicitly attest to the difference between remunerated labour and the prisoners' status as slaves—and transforms them into testimonial fragments drawn from the private world of women's experience. The recipe book is important to Raab largely because her friend Eszter collected the scraps of paper and bound them into a rude volume, making the binding out of "oil soaked rags she had spotted in garbage cans" (81) and decorating it with the image of a pot file-worked from "scrap metal, the ends of hand grenades" (83). These women thus, at great effort and risk, collectively produce a volume explicitly characterized as a work of utter futility under camp circumstances. Raab

and Eszter worked with the discarded trash of the labour camp factory to produce an object whose meaning lies precisely in its refusal of utility, its miraculous, marginal existence, and its uncertain purpose and audience.

Raab managed to retain the book throughout her imprisonment, liberation, and postwar travels: "It served as my only link with freedom and normalcy, even long after the war" (83). Raab's relationship to the book is an emblem for her relationship to the past, to the Holocaust, and to post-war life. For Raab, normalcy and freedom are understood by way of this anonymous, collective text of memory and longing written under the most oppressive of conditions, rather than by any personal or political transformation wrought by the end of the war. Raab was torn from a world she loved by tremendous violence, and finds more comfort in the memory of that lost time as experienced during the time of its loss than she has found in the world that defeated Nazism left in its wake. "Freedom and normalcy" are entirely nostalgic concepts for her, and the permanent loss of the *shtetl* world of her childhood is identical with her personal inability to live in the present moment: "for me, the past remained the true reality" (186). The recipe book thus serves Raab as a record of the experience of hopeful sharing under conditions of fundamental deprivation; these stolen instants of sharing at the nadir of concentrationary existence remain more important to her than the problematic "end" of that period of suffering insofar as her experience of the present remains marooned by the ongoing violence of a past that will not pass.

That the book exists at all as a bound volume is a testament to both Raab's

attentive recording and the resourceful generosity of her friend, and the nature of its binding attests to their shared suffering under the brutal conditions of the camp. Raab gives another example of such mute physical testimony when she describes the trains serving Europe's refugees after the war:

> The mutilated trains are painful to look at. They are an accusing finger pointed at humans' boundless craziness. [...] They tell about the bombing, the shooting, the escapees, the troop transports, the running away, the deportations, the deserters, the Jews, the occupations, the wounded, the homeless, the hounded, the hunted, the hatred, and the loneliness that is greater than words will ever be able to express. (105)

This mute form of attestation operates by way of suggestive significance: events and losses are recorded in a visceral, nonthematized mode that offers an approach to witnessing other than the textual representation of facts. In highly narrativized witnessing, the mode of signification almost immediately supersedes the ephemeral relation of signifying: the Said tends to obscure the Saying. The descriptions of objects such as the book and the trains, however, offer examples of textual witnessing in which sheer relation, unthematized experience, or the silent impact of affect is preserved. A series of photographs and descriptions of objects, including the recipe book, comprise "What Remains," the central chapter of *And Peace Never Came.* This display of material evidence does not offer proof of the facts, but rather a grim sense of the nature of her experience. Her report, for example, that she

named a broken comb (which cost her a slice of bread) "Starvedforyou" effects an imagistic moment of affective clarity without a narrative or epistemological goal. Raab describes these objects, in so doing situating and narrativizing them to a degree, but the unexpected and anachronistic presentation of this chapter interrupts the already loose chronology of the text, further fragmenting its tenuous temporal organization. These items, each with its evocative *petit histoire*, thus cut across the narrative of *And Peace Never Came*, interrupting the consistency of its narrative perspective and thereby challenging the consistency of the narrating present with their mute insistence.

These affective modes of witnessing point to the secrecy that is veiled and unveiled in any attempt to bear witness to idiomatic experience. The book of recipes is a model for this key aspect of testimony in the particularity of its existence, but also in its terse and fragmentary use of written discourse. Raab presents two recipes (walnut torte and chestnut cream) and notes that "Hungarian recipes don't direct every movement because the culture assumes cooks know" (83). The recipes thus entail a cultural world of experience that these women share, and within which they are individuated. The recipes are anonymous—dissociated from the unique moment of their recitation by a specific woman and from her name—but they remain marked by that woman's individual geographical, cultural and class history: "the recipe and its quality throws some light on each person's previous circumstances" (55). The book of recipes thus has characteristics akin to the testimonial genre as described by Derrida: as a set of instructions anyone might

follow, they present the possibility for universality; as a culturally-coded record of the idiomatic geographical, ethnic, class, and familial identity of a gendered speaker, they remain simultaneously veiled in partiality, in secrecy. Raab's sample recipes offer problems of interpretation even to someone versed in cooking and in the metric system; they thus simultaneously offer and withdraw transparency and intelligibility in a moment of expression that records a bare moment of contact that, in its opaque specificity, offers readers only a sense of such contact in turn.

Raab explicitly explores the nature of writing when she reports on composing letters immediately after the war. She writes to her friends to engage in a "solitary communication" (143) that she experiences time and again as a leap into the void. She is astonished to get replies to her letters, convinced as she is that her utterances cannot or will not reach their intended destinations (143). Her attempts at communicative expression thus retain an instantaneous quality of individuating wonder despite her difficulty comprehending her interlocutors' meaning (most conspicuously, her sister-in-law's husband's claim that "I feel like at home" [144]). Lingis describes correspondence as involving a necessary slippage of identity, a disjuncture between intended and literal addressee: "Finding the right words takes time, and the one to whom they are addressed is no longer the one you thought he or she was when you wrote. One sends letters to an address he or she has left" (*Abuses* vii). Similarly, Raab finds herself writing with ease only, in a sense, to the past: "I try to describe in words to [Hannah] what I experience and what I see. My words flow with unrestrained ease on paper, because, in my mind, we have never

parted" (151). Addressing the past about the present offers a very different experience of writing than does her eventual turn to the task of addressing the future about the past, narrating her experiences to the unknowable audience of her memoirs. She describes the latter process as "[putting] the painful, jagged words, one by one, on paper" (160). Writing, then, is unavoidably threatening and tenuous: in her efforts at correspondence, her expectation of consistent sameness of addressee is interrupted by the reality of alterity, of change, of at times incomprehensible interpellation in return; situating the past as sense and referent, however, exposes her not only to the terror of unknown addressees but to her realization that "I am still not free" (1), that her "I" is a fragmented and displaced addressor.

Lyotard's presentation of subjectivity as a matter of idiomatic solitude suggests an explanation of how alienated individuality can result in expressive testimony. Unrecognized or traumatic idiomatic experience places the subject in the position of victimization; isolated or fragmented subjectivity is experienced as the troubling silence indicating a differend:

> The differend is the unstable state and instant of language wherein something which must be able to be put into phrases cannot yet be. This state includes silence, which is a negative phrase, but it also calls upon phrases which are in principle possible. This state is signaled by what one ordinarily calls a feeling. (Lyotard, *Differend* 13)

In the affective experience of the differend, in the suffering that accompanies the

unfulfilled demands that something be put into language, "human beings who thought they could use language as an instrument of communication learn [...] that they are summoned by language [...] to recognize that what remains to be phrased exceeds what they can currently phrase" (Lyotard, *Differend* 13). Lyotard notes that silence implies a suppression of one or more of the pragmatic phrase elements (addressor, addressee, sense, and referent) but "does not indicate which instance is denied, it signals the denial of one or more of the instances" (*Differend* 14). Silence can only be overcome by instituting an idiom that will allow phrasing to take place. To Raab's experience of denuded and solitary subjectivity, then, corresponds an expressive effort to engage with the experience of loss, to bear witness to her loss of the past not by a mimetic return to it—such a return has been tragically foreclosed —but by tracing her alienated distance from both the past and the present. Raab's text ends with her weeping in response to the totality, enormity, and specificity of her loss, a moment of affective recognition of individuation as differend. This moment of tragic insight concludes the text of the memoir, but, as Raab notes, inspired its writing (160), and so this moment, of both diegetic and hypodiegetic significance, turns our attention from the concluding event of the narrative to the event of its narration. Her text thus enfolds its narrated past in the narrating present, and this involuted structure foregrounds the present phenomenality of the past, its narrative indebtedness to her uniquely displaced perspective. Her expression of the events results in a self-conscious attentiveness to their expressiveness, a strategy that leads her to foreground relational, affective, and

perspectival truths over narrative coherence. Raab cannot represent and so retain the lost past, but she can attempt to represent its loss. Her experience of subjectivity as differend gives rise to an idiom of reflexive and inconclusive writing, and this is how she is able to convey her experience of "piety," of her unique responsibility to care for the loss of her past while entering into narrative discourse

Agamben argues that testimony, arising as it does from the tension of idiolect translated into narrative, insists on a remainder that prevents the translation from being understood as complete, that prevents the event of Saying from being wholly determined by the factuality of the Said:

> *The authority of the witness lies in his capacity to speak solely in the name of an incapacity to speak—that is, in his or her being a subject.* Testimony thus guarantees not the factual truth of the statement safeguarded in the archive, but rather its unarchivability, its exteriority with respect to the archive—that is, the necessity by which, as the existence of language, it escapes both memory and forgetting. (158)

The objects Raab retained and the partially intelligible recipes she presents provide modes of signification that resist the simplicity of archival meaning. Her text thus both instantiates and gestures toward expressive forms that can attest to her fundamental disorientation with respect to the common ground of experience, and thereby allow an assessment and so a remembering of her experience in terms other than truth or falsehood. In *And Peace Never Came*, the factuality of the events is generally displaced by the perceptual and affective forcefulness of their effects, and

Raab's narrative strategy, which thereby foregrounds phenomenality over referentiality, does not offer readers a narrative guided by a desire to provide evidence for validation. Her desire is nonetheless to approach the past with "piety" and "care" that are intended to distinguish her memories from delusions spawned by loss and chaos, from the illusion of "a dream come true in the process of remembering" (137). She thus attempts to convey what Agamben describes as essential to testimony: "a reality that exceeds its factual elements" (12). Her memoir thus bears out her deceptively simple response to anticipated scepticism about her writing by presenting her singular relationship to the events of the past more so than their remembered factuality: "This is simply my story, my life" (1). Her strategy foregrounds the idiomatic, testimonial status of the text and the situated partiality of her self-presentation, thereby asserting an intransigent remainder in the face of interpretive generality.

The mute feeling indicating the differend is akin to what is sometimes called the (in)experience of trauma. The notions of primordial or ethical subjectivity at play in the work of Lyotard and Levinas imply that egoistic consciousness is a continual overcoming of dispersion effected by the passage of time: traumatic dissociation is thus a constitutive threat that is held at bay by the narrative coherence provided by subject-forming certainties. When events divide the subject from itself in the experience of trauma, the narrativized self finds its sufficiency challenged by symptomatic effects unrelated to intentional ordering. What large-scale upheavals such as the Holocaust add to this solitary suffering is an ongoing

challenge to such traumatized being: the effects of the Nazi genocide were so general, the murder so widespread, that survivors are faced not only with the catastrophic immediacy of witnessed and suffered violence, but also with the extensive consequences of that violence in the shape of a devastated postwar world. By insisting on both of these traumatic moments—which amount to a trauma of suffering and a trauma of recovery—*And Peace Never Came* bears witness to the interval between witness and testimony, to the ongoing impossibility of the simple presence, and so the simple testimonial representation, of the past.

Notes

1. Emile Benveniste classes pronouns such as "I," "you," and "she" with temporal and spatial deictic prepositions such as "there," "here," and "now" as non-referential. Unlike nouns or proper names that claim referential contact with material reality, these pronouns and prepositions do not refer to anything outside the momentary language act of which they are a part.

> There is no concept "I" that incorporates all the *I*'s that are uttered at every moment in the mouths of all speakers, in the sense that there is a concept "tree" to which all the individual uses of *tree* refer. The "I," then does not denominate any lexical entity. [...] *I* refers to the act of individual discourse in which it is pronounced, and by this it designates the speaker. It is a term that cannot be identified except in

> what we have called elsewhere an instance of discourse and that has only a momentary reference. The reality to which it refers is the reality of the discourse. It is in the instance of discourse in which *I* designates the speaker that the speaker proclaims himself as the "subject." (Benveniste 226)

In the case of the pronouns "I" and "you," their very lack of material reference allows them to be "filled" in turn by various speakers. These nonreferentials are "empty" words that permit language to function moment by moment without an absurdly infinite proliferation of unique names for a multitude of perspectives on a multitude of entities.

2. Although Hungary was "the first country in post-war Europe to adopt [...] anti-Jewish legislation" in 1920 (Braham 430), they, along with many of their Eastern European neighbors, adopted dramatically more severe antisemitic measures in keeping with the Nazi model, and—in the case of Hungary—in response to Nazi Germany's successful territorial acquisitions of 1938 and 1939 (cf. Braham 431; Gilbert 55-56).

3. The Nazi assault on the old and the young—including the not yet born—not only murders these women, who are condemned in ontological terms for being Jewish, but attacks the very foundations of collectively Jewish and individually gendered existence by erasing youth, old age, and reproduction

as possible experiences for Jewish women. As Ringelheim notes, Jewish women and children were targeted for murder because they represented the ongoing possibility of Jewish existence ("Split" 345; "Women" 399-400). The violence directed against these women and children thus reflects the genocidal desire to eradicate all traces of the Jews, in particular by attacking the possibility of new Jewish life, a possibility embodied by pregnant women.

Chapter Three
Gender

Elizabeth Raab's experience of isolation resulted from the collapse of fundamental conditions that allow a consistently narrativized consciousness to arise from moments of bare, responsive subjectivity. If it seems counter-intuitive or contrary to experience to claim that subjectivity is experienced, at its root, as primordial destitution, it is because traditional (Western) metaphysics, which has over the centuries become everyday common sense, understands selfhood in an egoistic manner as a self-sufficient, autonomous kernel that experiences material reality as something given to it from without. As Jacob Meskin notes, "the Cartesian ego, an autonomous center of consciousness [...] has become a sort of paradigm for thinking about human being" (509). Paul John Eakin traces various criticisms of Descartes, and notes, in conclusion, that "the Cartesian subject is not a suitable model for the self represented by the 'I' of autobiographical discourse" (8). Self-sufficient models of the ego have been challenged from a number of disciplines and perspectives, among them poststructuralism and feminism. Feminism has pointed out that describing the ego as autonomous and ratiocinative ignores such fundamental facts as intersubjectivity, corporeality, and maturation. Any categorical subject-object model that distinguishes between a disinterested nuclear self and experiences that happen to this observing self ignores the degree to which subjectivity arises as the experience of subjectivity, and not before experience in general. Or, as Joan Scott

observes, "It is not individuals who have experience, but subjects who are constituted through experience" (779). Rather than being a self-made self-presence, a subject comes to be only in social relationships with other subjects, and individual self-understanding takes place by way of various identifications with available subject positions—such as being unavoidably sexed or gendered. Judith Butler points out that "there is no 'I' prior to its assumption of sex, and no assumption that is not at once an impossible yet necessary identification" (*Bodies* 99).

The terms "sex" and "gender" have been much debated in recent years. The usual distinction between sex, understood as a matter of biological difference, and gender, understood as a matter of cultural norms, has been challenged by thinkers such as Butler and Diane Elam. Elam notes that privileging either in attempting to define women is problematic: "On the one hand a notion of sex identity produces a quasi-religious mystification. On the other hand, the proclaimed demystification of sex turns gender into a mystical and all pervasive force"; she argues that "the strict opposition between sex and gender, nature and culture, is the product of the desire that women have an identity above all—be it natural or cultural" (44). This disagreement, arising as it does from a desire for foundation, for a decisive sense of identity that can authoritatively define women, unfortunately participates in the production of categorical norms, the implicit limits of which are problematic. As Elam argues, any feminism that asserts a clear-cut definition of gendered subjectivity "both forecloses the limitless possibilities of women and misrepresents the various forms that social injustice can take" (32). Butler argues, in the face of

such desire for foundational definition, that any attempt to biologically differentiate between the sexes relies on pre-existing notions of difference and distinctiveness that are always already gendered. Any attempt to posit biological / morphological sex as the foundation for cultural / discursive gender in effect asserts as *a priori* a quality that veils its own constructedness:

> Insofar as power operates successfully by constituting an object domain, a field of intelligibility, as a taken-for-granted ontology, its material effects are taken as material data or primary givens. These material positivities appear outside discourse and power, as its incontestable referents, its transcendental signifieds. But this appearance is precisely the moment in which the power/discourse regime is most fully dissimulated and most insidiously effective. [...] [T]his is a move of empiricist foundationalism that, in accepting this constituted effect as a primary given, successfully buries and masks the genealogy of power relations by which it is constituted. (*Bodies* 35)

In this Foucaultian formulation, one of the effects of gendered power is the production of bodies as naturally, oppositionally, sexed and therefore available as the foundation of secondary, "gendered," cultural roles (cf. Butler, *Gender* 7, 71). Butler's turn to this notion of gender as determining sex does not, however, offer the former as an alternative structure of similarly foundational certainty, because she understands gender as a matter of performative iteration: gendered identity has the structure of an event; it takes place by way of projective and partial allegiances

or promises made with respect to normative laws and under the threat of punishment (*Bodies* 105). The sex/gender matrix is thus a matter of power that is visible in its effects, which include the differentiation not only of the sexes, but of the material and cultural norms by which this difference is experienced, understood, and enforced. The difference between sex and gender can thus be seen as an element in the distribution and definition of sexual/gendered difference. And ultimately, as Elam argues, "The relationship between sex and gender is a continuously self-deconstructing one which produces structures that are called natural only because we have forgotten they are structures" (50).

The structural complexities of gender identity are reflected in Luce Irigaray's argument that assuming a gendered self involves a tension between uniqueness and universality: "I belong to the universal in recognizing that I am a woman. This woman's singularity is in having a particular genealogy and history. But belonging to a gender represents a universal that exists prior to me. I have to accomplish it in relation to my particular destiny" (*I Love* 39). This negotiation between impersonal genres and particular experiences is also seen in Butler's notion of performativity. Contrary to Irigaray, who too often presents gender as a matter of self-evident certainty or a matter of "natural identity" (*I Love* 39), Butler presents gender as a phantasm or a promise in the name of which one enacts identity: "Identification is constantly figured as a desired event or accomplishment, but one which finally is never achieved; identification is the phantasmatic staging of the event" (*Bodies* 105). Her analysis of sexuality speaks against some of

Irigaray's sweeping pronouncements about the natural sexual binarism of humanity (e.g., "The whole of human kind is composed of women and men and nothing else" [*I Love* 47]) that ignore the sometimes ambiguous complexities of gender identification. Butler insists instead that "gender [...] must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self" ("Performative" 270). Gendered identity is thus performed or narrativized, and so constituted as "a compelling illusion, an object of *belief*" ("Performative" 271) that may be more or less viable and complete, rather than a simple matter of fact.

Poststructuralist or postmodernist feminisms thus attempt to address gender as a site of difference, a (perhaps privileged) instance of intractable alterity that defines the nature of individuality even as it offers a seemingly universal categorization. Lyotard, for instance, describes gender difference as an "irremediable differend" in the form of an "irreparable transcendence inscribed on the body"; this fundamental heterogeneity is a difference that "makes thought go on endlessly and won't allow itself to be thought" ("Can Thought" *22-23*). For Lyotard, gender difference is both an example of individual insufficiency whose lack opens up the space of thinking and writing, and a motive force that impels thinking by evoking desire. He explicitly refuses to oppose "women's" and "men's" bodies, however, because "the 'difference between the sexes'" is not "exempt from masculine imperialism"; rather, he insists that sexual difference takes place only in specific instances: "the differences constituting sexuality [...] penetrate each so-

called 'individual' body, be it anatomically male or female" ("One" 117). Thus, gender difference is inscribed as both inescapably fundamental and theoretically underdetermined. Irigaray similarly insists on the individuation of sexual difference as a means of overcoming the vague "otherness" at play in much poststructuralist theory: "We have to talk about the concrete existence of living men and women for us to falter over the question of who is this *I* and who is this *you*" (*I Love* 48). She argues that these concrete gender differences effect the fundamental separation that permits relationship and desire to arise in the interval between two who are other to one another: "Whatever identifications are possible, one will never exactly occupy the place of the other—they are irreducible one to the other" (*Ethics* 143). Gender is thus experienced immediately as an ongoing intersubjective negotiation involving the interval of mutual difference, but this negotiation is a performance that takes place in the coercive context of heterosexist and phallocratic norms that define viable subject positions. Butler argues that subjectivity must be repeatedly assumed, repeatedly asserted and cited, in its gendered particularity, and that sex "is always produced as a reiteration of hegemonic norms" (*Bodies* 107). If gender is a matter of individual performance and differentiation that must be continuously put into effect rather than simply effected, the nature of its performance is to a large extent determined long before one assumes adult agency, in the familial and social norms that shape what it means to be an adult, an agent, a gendered self. Gendered embodiment "clearly manifests a set of strategies or what Sartre would perhaps have called a style of being [...]. This style is never fully self-

styled, for living styles have a history, and that history conditions and limits possibilities" (Butler, "Performative" 272) These determinations of possibility cannot be absolute, as the ongoing requirement for performance suggests, but nevertheless provide hegemonic criteria by which subjectivity is judged.

The experience of gender as a repeated assertion of difference and relationship arises, according to Irigaray, in the very passage from instantaneous uniqueness to enunciative ipseity, in the possibility of being "I" in a present utterance. She refers to sexual difference as dividing human nature into two "genres" ("Three" 142) and argues that,

> *Genre* as index and mark of the *subjectivity* and ethical responsibility of the speaker [...] constitutes the irreducible differentiation *internal to he human race* [*'genre humain'*]. *Genre* represents the site of the nonsubstitutable positioning of the *I* and the *you* and of their modalities of expression. ("Three" 140-141)

Her research into the gendered use of language suggests that women are far less likely to claim the position of "I" in utterances: "Men remain in the logic of the I whereas women have difficulty affirming themselves as subjects" (*Why* 48). There is thus a gendered interval between the primordial self of dispossession and the enunciative self of ipseity in the subtle but key difference between the marked and unmarked status of the addressor of a phrase. Women position themselves as addressors, but as addressors whose existence is unmarked, whose status is ambiguously subjective. Irigaray notes that, in the case of women who do not claim

the status of "I," the "subject who is apparently producing the message occurs only as the possible object of the person addressed, an object that is no longer a point of convergence for the protagonists of the utterance, an object of exchange, because the only subject is (you)" (*Ethics* 135). The presence of a feminine subject in such a phrase is entailed by the fact of phrasing, but arises without the explicit claim to existence and authorial status that amounts to recognizable and recognized (masculine) subjectivity. This differs from the unmarked addressor characteristic of rhetorics of objectivity (of theoretical or scientific discourse, say; cf. Irigaray, "Three" 141) in its tendency to give way before the object-become-subject. Masculine objectivity consists in a rendering-invisible of a perspective that retains mastery; Irigaray's observations suggest that the gendering of discourse tends to deny women both mastery and subjectivity. Women are thus identified as women in discourse that posits them as objects; the gendered hegemony of discourse tends to render feminine self-identification a matter of displaced masculine objectivity or allegiance to a patriarchal communal whole.

According to Lyotard, the "I" at stake in subjectivity is an empty possibility, a pure marker of the enunciative position; it takes its place in a phrase universe characterized by various relations between the phrase instances. Lyotard defines phrases as invoking the four instances of addressor, addressee, sense, and referent: these instances may not be explicitly marked in the phrase (for instance, neither the addressee not the addressor is marked in a command such as "Shut the door!"). Subjectivity or self-presence is generally understood on the basis of the marked

addressor, the "I." Indeed, giving voice to differends demands some idiom in which "I" can become capable of speech: being deprived of the first person is itself an example of the differend. As Lyotard insists, however, claiming this place does not do away with differends. This is due in part to the fundamental instability of the "I"—the masculine confidence it implies is belied both by its evanescent nature and the inherent indebtedness it marks. Butler, for instance, argues against the simple wholeness of the "I" as a marker of identification:

> In this sense identifications belong to the imaginary; they are phantasmatic efforts of alignment, loyalty, ambiguous and cross-corporeal habitation; they unsettle the "I"; they are the sedimentation of the "we" in the constitution of any "I", the structuring presence of alterity in the very formulation of the "I." (*Bodies* 105)

Irigaray's research, however, suggests that this tenuous identity is differently precarious for women and for men. Women's phrases differ from men's in that the position of explicit, subjective mastery (illusory or not) is less available to feminine discourse. Irigaray notes that women who explicitly claim the status of "I" do so such that "the *I* often makes way for the *you*, *the world*, for the objectivity of words and things" ("Three" 146). This suggests that there are gendered phrase regimens, gendered phrase universes, and that gender difference arises in the experience of subjectivity not only in the varied capacity to explicitly claim the first person, but also in the disposition of the addressor instance—marked or not—relative to the rest of the world. Gender, then takes effect in a differend at the level of phrase

regimens as well as more broadly teleological genres of discourse; it is a matter of the instantaneous utterance, the performative moment, as well as the explicit and implicit hegemony of norms. As Lyotard's idea of the differend and Irigaray's observations about the gendered relation between "I" and "you" suggest, gender as a telos of power is continuously reasserted, but thereby continuously threatened, at the level of experience. Thus, although dependant on general and constraining notions of propriety and punishment, individual women and men find themselves continuously enacting individually gendered selves.

Irigaray identifies pervasive androcentrism as the organizing constraint that permits the assumption of a gendered identity. She thus refers to the sex/gender system as "hom(m)osexuality," a term expressing her thesis that femininity is always already masculine: "the feminine occurs only within models and laws devised by male subjects" (*This Sex* 86). This system determines not only the solitude of personal identity, but also ensures that social relationships—including, conspicuously, those between women—are pervasively structured by the roles recognized and valued by the phallic economy (Irigaray, *This Sex* 184-188). Women thus relate to one another by way of masculine ideals and norms, on the terms of their place in structures of relationship and identity that are determined by masculinity. Irigaray's linguistic experiments reveal that singular subjectivity is relatively inaccessible to women; feminine being and intersubjective feminine relationships, accordingly, take place on the masculine terms that define the scene of representation within which subjectivity takes its place. Irigaray discusses

mother-daughter relationships at length because the nature of hom(m)osexuality makes them at once the most intimate and most distant of relationships between women, "the dark continent of dark continents" (*Why* 18). Gendered society "excludes between-woman sociality, separates women from one another and hence does not have a female culture. The only thing it does have is training for motherhood" (Irigaray, *I Love* 44). Irigaray thus argues that mother-daughter relationships are mediated by abstraction, by their relative functions in the masculine economy of power and gender. "The daughter wants to become like her mother and, at the same time, is repulsed by this idea because this 'do like' is imposed on her and doesn't give her any worth as a unique person" (*Why* 31-32). In this view, the phantasm of identity is policed by means of representation, in presenting subjectivity as a coercive operation of mimesis.

This notion of mimetic relationships is central to Irigaray's presentation of the construction of sex/gender: according to Irigaray, we claim a place in, and collectively police, the performance of gender under conditions of surveillance that emphasize propriety and legibility of appearance. Irigaray calls the hegemony of the visual in determining subject positions "scopophilia," or "love of looking" (Moi 134), and argues that rational thought in general has been traditionally characterized by "the predominance of the visual, and of the discrimination and individualization of form" (*This Sex* 25). Her analyses, especially of Plato and Freud, demonstrate that the notion of visuality, alive in the etymological sediment of terms such as "enlightenment," is a metaphor indispensable to philosophical

rationality and the subject positions it entails. "Finding an economy of light in all its dazzling brilliance, without risk of combustion and death, marks humanity's first steps into philosophy" (*Speculum* 147). The notion of a pure and heatless yet brilliant light of the intellect is present in Plato, whose theories of the forms and mimesis are frequent targets of her analysis. Philosophy, in Irigaray's view, has failed to escape the Platonic founding gesture, expressed in the metaphor of the cave, that identifies clarity of thought with clarity of vision. She sees the same logic at work in Freud, whose presentation of gender differentiation revolves around the in/visibility of sex organs, making the gendered and visual nature of identification altogether more obvious (*Speculum,* "The Blind Spot of an Old Dream of Symmetry" *passim*). Irigaray argues that the phallogocentric system of sexual indifference is a matter of conceptual mirroring that reflects masculinity back upon itself: "'Sexual difference' is a derivation of the problematics of sameness, it is, now and forever, determined within the project, the projection, the sphere of representation, the same" (*Speculum* 26-27). Under such conditions, and given the hegemonic imperative for unambiguous gender identification, standards of feminine identity are caught up in demands for unambiguous visual discrimination: "A female one, thus, at least as far as the eye can see; the striking makeup, the motherly role she plays, cover up the fact that she is torn to pieces" (*Speculum* 228). Femininity is both —for 'her'—a void of representation, insofar as she is silenced by the differend that forbids her to express herself as herself and—for 'him'—nothing but representations that obey the law of gender indifference that produces femininity as

an adjunct to masculine self-presence.

Women thus identify as women by means of representations that are predermined as masculine and visual. Irigaray claims that there remain strategies of resistance by which more just representations of experience and selfhood can arise; she privileges notions of appropriative mimicry in her own work (most conspicuously in the counter-hegemonic virtuosity of *Speculum of the Other Woman*). Butler also suggests that the norms that determine viable subjectivity, as materially coercive as they are in lived experience, are fundamentally representational in nature, and as such, are available for resistant performances of citation and appropriation (*Gender* 136-139). Lyotard's notion of open-ended of phrasing and Butler's notion of performativity both indicate that the future, including the promised phantasm of identity, remains contingent, even in the face of repressive norms, and that alternative "genres" of gendered being can be articulated by means of canonical forms.

The three narratives under consideration here all reveal the extent to which experiences and representations of gendered lives are a matter of negotiated immediacy that takes place in intimate proximity to representational norms. Mina Rosner, Anne Kazimirski, and Eva Brewster have all written memoirs that display a variety of strategies by which they identify as women in the process of telling their stories. In contrast to some critical perspectives, in which "women's testimonies are often used to show us what we already want to see" (Waxman "Unheard" 663), what is of immediate interest in these texts is how the authors work with or against

traditional norms, how standards of femininity are treated before and during their experiences of deportation, and how various inter- and intra-gender relationships figure in their expressions of gendered selfhood. Overall, the stakes are those of exploring the relationship between the experience of gender (how gendered and sexed identification arises as a theme in and of itself) and the gender of experience (how events arise for and are refracted by gendered selves).

Mina Rosner's memoir *I am a Witness* recounts her and her family's experience of the Holocaust in Poland. Rosner strongly identifies with, and by means of, traditional gender norms throughout her experience, and attempts to retain and rely on her sense of herself as a wife and mother to sustain her in the face of overwhelming tragedy. Traditional cultural roles and activities are very important to her family in general—so much so that in the wake of a brutal massacre that leaves fewer than a third of the Jews of Buczacz alive, they begin preparing for Passover: "We clung to those forms and customs that bound us together as a family and as a people" (63). These traditions are those of successful, but not affluent, entrepreneurial Eastern European Jewry, and include providing girls with little formal education (14) and arranging marriages by way of "the customary matchmaker" (13).[1] Perhaps not surprisingly, then, marriage and motherhood are central to Rosner's sense of identity. The first chapter of Rosner's memoir proper begins not with her birth or with the violence of invasion or deportation (frequent narrative strategies in Holocaust memoirs), but with her

marriage. This brief first chapter sketches her family history and lifestyle, and ends with a telling self-assessment: "As a young married woman, I was full of my own life, the love of my new husband, and the baby now growing inside me" (16). Rosner's memoir gives us little insight into what her "own life" might be as something distinct, however, insofar as her narrative traces her devoted behaviour as a wife and mother with little reference to activity outside these roles. She works with her husband running a store that had been her father's, and that sells the confections her father imports and wholesales. This recalls Irigaray's argument that women's identity arises on masculine terms and in terms of relationships with men as objects of social commerce: "woman is traditionally a use-value for men, an exchange value among men [...]. Women are marked phallicly by their fathers, husbands, procurers. And this branding determines their value in sexual commerce" (*This Sex* 31). Tellingly, another five chapters of family-centred narration pass before we are introduced to Klara Sparks, whom Rosner nevertheless identifies as her "closest friend and companion" (27). Her own representation of her experience, then, foregrounds her role as a daughter and as a wife to the exclusion of other modes of relationship, in this case female friendship.

Rosner's narration reflects a collective and gendered sense of identity in its use of plural pronouns: the narrative point of view is very often plural not only in describing events but in assessing their affective impact. Early on in *I am a Witness*, Rosner is seldom individuated as "I," and when she is so identified her individuality is often promptly folded back into a collective "we." As the Nazis rise

to power in Germany, for instance, Rosner describes reacting to news from the west with possessive plural pronouns that link her with her husband, and the two of them with Poland more generally: "now news from beyond our borders interrupted our busy days" (16). These shared identifications pass over into first-person effects ("and I had to start to think about events beyond my town"), but this individuated response is immediately subsumed by a familial plurality:

> We had no radio at the time, but we knew from the newspapers and from travellers about the rise of the Nazis. It seemed to us that, just as in the First World War, we would be the pawns in the big power manoeuvring that was taking place. (16)

Rosner generally retains the first person for moments of powerful emotional response ("I was overwhelmed by the situation" [20], "the sight and smell made me sick to my stomach" [48]) but very often describes both physical and emotional activity from a plural perspective ("it is impossible to describe the feelings we experienced" [49], "we trusted him completely" [96]). This reliance on the plural is in part an effect of Rosner's extensive use of summary and indirect discourse, strategies that compress nine years of experience into less than a hundred pages of narrative, but it has the effect throughout of collapsing what would otherwise be personal, idiomatic responses into a collective "we." Her use of the plural with abstract verbs such as "trust" and "experience" suggests that this is not the trivial case of plural pronouns used to tell a story involving more than one person because these moments do not pass by way of phenomena or events that can be shared: it is

not reported, for instance, that "we *agreed* that we trusted him." These uses of "we" appear to function, rather, to define a group with which she can identify and within which she can recognize herself. In Irigaray's presentation of gender as always already masculine, such ventriloquism is the traditional place of women, who have no place but their own displacement. Rosner thus exhibits a tendency to disclaim first-person discursive agency, and finds her voice primarily by association with others, in whose name she attempts to speak.

After the ultimately genocidal violence of Nazi persecution murders her family, and so leaves her literally without the most intimate possibility of belonging, Rosner embarks on a trajectory of contingent connections with other fugitives—such as her friend Betka (103)—who have also lost families. These people become her necessary others, and demonstrate that the plurality of her identity is an end in itself, even when divorced from traditional pairings. It is a fragile strategy, relying as it does on the erasure of difference in the creation of a new plural whole. Lyotard describes the formation of any "we" as intrinsically partial: despite the seemingly unremarkable grammatical synthesis of I and another as "we," this fusion does not simply combine them without remainder: "There is something of the non-I in the *we*" ("Discussions" 373). This strategy of identity in plurality is thus tenuous and contingent, yet remains consistent through her experiences. Rosner's memoir ends, for instance, on an optimistic note whose positivity is wholly a product of her matrimonial identification. The last few pages of the text skip from her unexpected reunion with her long-lost husband Michael in

early 1946 to their emigration to Canada in late 1948. The arrival of Michael dissolves the bond she has with Betka, despite the intensity of their shared wartime experiences and the difficulty Rosner has relating to her husband, who spent the intervening years deep in Russian territory, away from the Nazi threat:

> Betka and I had come to depend on one another, but from the moment Michael arrived we both knew that we would soon go our separate ways. On a snowy evening in February, my husband and I boarded a train for Bytom with the same feelings of expectation we had had when we were first married seven years earlier. (106)

Rosner here characteristically experiences first knowledge and then emotion in the plural, in the grouping "Betka and I" and its successor "my husband and I." Her shift in allegiance is conspicuously marked by the grammatical construction of these two compound subjects: the first comprises a proper name ("Betka") and "I," whereas the second combines "I" and a relational possessive ("my husband") that identifies Michael with his matrimonial role and Rosner with respect to that role. Her reunion with Michael and its effect on her connection with Betka is presented as matter-of-fact, natural, or necessary consequence of marital identity that effects a return to the optimism and hopefulness of their prewar youth. This shift in loyalty is presented as product of the pairing itself; Rosner does not present the transition as a moment of conflict or decision because such relationships are effectively the motive force of her agency, not matters for decision in and of themselves. With the end of the war and the return of her husband, Rosner's ongoing sense of herself as

part of a larger whole tries to reclaim its traditional roots in heterosexual pairing, and she turns with hope toward recovering her sense of prewar abundance and possibility.

This recuperation and optimism are largely belied, however, by the grim "Foreword" that opens her memoir. Rosner there reports that "the events of that terrible time are indelibly burned into my memory and consciousness" (7) and describes a return visit to her hometown that involves suspicious locals and defaced monuments (8-9). This insistent return of personal misery and historical injustice introduces a retrospective tension that works against the optimistic sufficiency of Rosner's return to gendered matrimonial identity.[2] The implicit failure of marriage to provide a definitive "happily ever after" is a function both of the necessary contingency of such plurality and the disruptive effect of Rosner's wartime experience on the possibility of forming a "we" with Michael. Although the nature of the plurality that sustained her through the war years was transformed by the deaths of her family and friends, the intrinsic instability of the "we" that prevented it from definitively supporting her sense of self also enabled its mobile attachment to various others. Upon Michael's return, Rosner is thus able to, with a perhaps naive optimism, attempt to reclaim at least some part of the self she lost to Nazi violence. This demonstrates above all that subjectivity is an ongoing project, a repeated and contingent narration of connection, desire, and hope in the face of fundamentally divisive experience.

Rosner directly experiences the isolated core of shared experience when she

joins her friends and family in a hidden basement bunker. The *Aktion* they escape proves unexpectedly long, forcing them to hide without provisions and in close quarters for two full days. During this arduous time, Rosner finds herself unable to comprehend her mother's simultaneous experience of this terrible waiting. She illustrates her time in the bunker almost exclusively through her attention to her perceptions of her mother's ordeal, to the exclusion of the other twenty people hidden in the dank basement, in so doing reflecting the powerful if conflicted mother-daughter relationship that Irigaray foregrounds as emblematic of feminine being. When Rosner attends to her mother's distress she is driven both by the power of identification and by the heterogeneity of individuation:

> I looked across the room and saw my mother. Her face was completely flushed, and she had a frozen and terrified look. She was a heavy woman with high blood pressure. I couldn't imagine what was going through her mind at this moment, or how she was coping with the stress. (60)

Rosner describes her mother's reaction as one of terror and distress very different from her own resolve: "I steeled myself for what was coming" (60). The description of her mother's poor health has an ambivalent effect: it offers a possible explanation for her mother's response but also introduces physiological facts that further divide Rosner's experience from that of her mother. These descriptions, phenomenal and contextual, lead Rosner to recognize that her experience and her mother's experience—at that same moment, in that same tiny room, and under the same

impending threat—are so heterogeneous that she cannot grasp her mother's reaction to the present moment despite its visible manifestation in her features. The distress of the moment interrupts both simple intersubjectivity and the relationship of gendered becoming implied by the maternal image as an object of the daughter's mimetic desire: Rosner is unable to interpret the signs of distress on her mother's face. She reacts to this gulf of incomprehension by explicitly directing her emotions away from her mother, whose inarticulate suffering seems to deflect Rosner's capacity for emotional sympathy; she does not feel empathy for her mother's suffering, but rather anger at their tormentors: "I didn't feel pity for her; I was angry at those who had destroyed so many lives and brought decent people to such a state" (60). Divided by their experiences of the present moment, they nevertheless share the common oppression and threat that has forced them into this moment of mutually incomprehensible suffering, and, consistent with her strategy of plural identification, Rosner focuses on that tenuous commonality. She does so, however, in the face of inassimilable alterity that divides the "we" so formed.

Rosner eventually expresses a more compassionate connection with her mother: "As we sat and waited, I couldn't help looking at my mother. It tore my heart out to see how she was suffering" (62). She thus passes from a sense of failed sympathy for her mother's experience to acknowledge and pity the fact of her suffering. The unusual length of their time in hiding eventually forces Rosner's mother to overcome her deeply ingrained modesty to use the latrine bucket, which sits in the open at the bottom of the stairs. When she gets up to move, "Every

movement seemed to be painful and laboured for her. I couldn't imagine how she would endure this ordeal much longer" (62). Rosner's observation again divides her perception of her mother from her capacity to identify with her experience: the actions "seem" to be painful, and her use of "imagine" shifts from meaning present-tense compassionate identification (seen a few pages earlier) to meaning hypothetical future-tense projection. This moment of identification takes place, importantly, as a result not only of her mother's pained difficulty moving, but of Rosner's recognition of her mother's gendered experience of shame. Giorgio Agamben identifies shame as a primordial excess that is common to all but is nonetheless fundamentally alienating insofar as it reveals subjectivity as consigned to unavowable uniqueness, to the proximity and exposure that make us our vulnerable selves (104-112). Sure neither of her mother's present experience of suffering nor her future capacity to bear it, Rosner is nevertheless anguished on her mother's behalf, perhaps because her mother's actions in this moment arise from gendered modesty that both compounds her physical suffering and adds a dimension of emotional anguish all its own, the gendered specificity of which Rosner can recognize. She responds to this moment of exposure, however, by turning back to the abstraction of gender roles, praising in the next paragraph her parents' devotion and sacrifice, and declaring that she "was determined to see that they would be among the ranks of the survivors" (62). Rosner's reaction illustrates the interplay of individuality and abstraction in intersubjectivity: her relationship with her mother is a matter of the uniquely present moment, but such moments are

with her mother is a matter of the uniquely present moment, but such moments are experienced and narrativized by way of gendered norms.

Rosner's representations of subjectivity and experience explicitly emphasize a gendered sense of what it means to be a viable, worthwhile subject. When the final organized *Aktion* in Buczacz renders the town officially *Judenrein*, the prospects of the few remaining Jews in hiding become bleak indeed. Faced with squeezing eight people into a bunker made for six, Rosner exempts herself from hiding and so, presumably, from survival. She does so on the deeply gendered grounds that her husband and child have perished: "I've lived my life already. I have had a husband and a child, and now they're gone. Even if I survive, what will I have to look forward to? Just think of me as an eighty-year-old woman whose time has come" (73). The bunker she leaves is discovered by the Nazis, and her friends and remaining family are killed. Her sense of grief at their loss is consonant with her gendered attempt at self-sacrifice: "Sala was twenty-three. David was still unmarried, while Anna had not yet started her family" (76). For Rosner, then, the tragedy of their young deaths is compounded or highlighted by their relative sexual and romantic inexperience—their as-yet incomplete participation in their gendered roles as spouses and parents. Amidst immediate and overwhelming tragedy, Rosner reacts out of a fundamentally gendered perspective that determines the meaning of events according to explicitly reproductive familial values and roles.

Accordingly, Rosner's self-understanding as a mother is consistently foregrounded in her recount. When she first describes her pregnancy, it is in the

pre-war context of being newly married, and part of why "Nothing mattered more than the present that would give way to a bright future" (16). She gives birth after the invasion of Poland, during the Soviet occupation of her town. With the sudden onset of wartime hardship, Rosner's "principal concern came down to the most basic of all instincts—survival" (20). First, under conditions of wartime privation, and later, under the pressure of ghetto life and the continual threat of deportation and murder, parent-child (and especially parent-infant) relationships are transformed from the everyday care-giving inherent in parental nurturing. Lyotard notes that the helpless inability of children and the capable agency of adults provide competing examples and definitions of humanity, and argues that both versions of the "human" (the raw, entropic possibility of the infant and the educated capacity of the adult) reflect "inhuman" elements (deregulation and coercion) that are necessary to understand each *as* human (*Inhuman* 4-5); parents and children are thus united in a common humanity whose defining feature is a paradoxical chiasmus that differentiates adult and infant modes of being. Rosner's presentation of the Nazi threat makes it clear that the vulnerability of the infant and the protective role of the parent are both suffused with a deadly threat of imminent violence that exaggerates the vulnerability of the child and extends that vulnerability to the parent, thereby threatening the traditional boundary between adulthood and childhood that defines human being. The "starvation policy" of their new rulers leads Rosner, like many other mothers under similar circumstances, to give most of her own ration to Izzienko, her son (35). Limited resources force her

into a "choiceless choice" that effectively weakens her in the hope of better supporting his life and so draws her adult capacity closer to his infant helplessness in the shared precariousness of their survival.[3]

Rosner thus experiences motherhood as intimately shared and heightened risk, a notion exemplified by the problems involved in attempting to hide a young child. Having joined her parents in Buczacz, Rosner is unable to share the prepared bunker to escape impending Nazi violence because of the threat her child poses to their tenuous security (46-47). Her anger over being excluded from the bunker is attenuated not by her own recognition of the reality of the risk (46), but by pointedly maternal fears: she knows that the Nazis and their henchmen can be exceptionally cruel and murderous with respect to Jewish children; moreover, she recalls a story about a father who unintentionally smothered and killed his crying son in an effort to keep him silent during a raid (47). For Rosner, motherhood is thus transformed by the Nazi occupation from a future-oriented role of nurturing and upbringing into a present-tense struggle to eke out mere survival in the face of murderous certainty which forces her to share in the infant vulnerability of the very young.

Because it is impossible for them to share a hiding place with their friends and family, Rosner and Izzienko are forced to hide elsewhere: on the occasion of the first rumoured *Aktion*, they hide out in the corn fields for three days and nights; for subsequent *Aktions*, they find refuge in a friendly peasant's grain shed. As the weather turns colder, both these options become untenable, and the family decides

to send Izzienko into hiding with the farmer who hid them in her shed. With this painful experience of being separated from her son under extremely dangerous circumstances, Rosner finds herself in the paradoxical position of identifying as a mother in distinction from other mothers, thereby both claiming and rejecting common ground with the maternal category in general: "It is impossible for any mother to know what kind of hell I was going through unless she has experienced a similar situation. Yet how can any situation be similar to this?" (52). The extremity and specificity of the circumstances leads her to repudiate possible commonality with other mothers, and so Rosner finds herself isolated in a state of incommunicable misery: "I had no words to express what I was feeling" (53). Her experience, here explicitly framed in terms relative to her identification with the cultural category of motherhood, fractures the commonality of that category, throwing her back into a disconnected individuation that she cannot assimilate to the notion of communicable maternal experience. Rosner is thus, in her extremity, thrown back onto the isolation of the "I" because her sense of self, enmeshed as it is in gendered familial roles and norms, finds itself alienated from the possible "we" of maternity. The putative cohesion of this plural category is anchored by certainties about mother-child relationships that are betrayed by circumstances and decisions whose violent extremity is alien to their quotidian criteria. This loss of communal identity is conspicuously accompanied by a sense of incommunicable pain as Rosner experiences the violence of the differend—the silent anguish of individual affliction that cannot find expression.

Her sense of inexpressible anguish is immediately followed by the thought that "it is easier for a mother to lose a child than be kept wondering and worrying twenty-four hours a day" (53)—that is, that her uncertainty and isolation is worse than the undeniably tragic but nevertheless comprehensible situation of a mother whose child has died. This notion proves prophetic, as Izzienko falls ill while hidden in the countryside, and by the time the farmer notifies them of the problem his illness has become severe. Rosner brings him back to Buczacz for medical attention and to care for him herself. Izzienko is coughing and feverish when she is warned about a possible *Aktion* that night, and she elects to stay in her parents' house with her son despite the risk: "For the first time I felt no tension or fear [...]. I didn't care any more. I had made up my mind what to do. 'There is nowhere for me to run this time,' I told my father" (54). Izzienko's precarious health precludes him being moved into hiding, and Rosner decides to remain by his side despite her certainty that this *Aktion* would target their district and street that night (54). They are unable to hide from the Nazis because of the severity of his illness, and so his death from one cause or the other appears to be imminent. His state of vulnerability leads Rosner to no longer care about the likelihood of her own death, and so pushes shared maternal risk to the limit of its threat.

The Nazi attack does not materialize, and despite her care Izzienko dies the next day. He is buried in the old cemetery in a small grave between Rosner's grandmother and uncle: "I was happy to have marked the spot. My son would not be one of thousands of children dumped into mass, anonymous pits across Nazi-

occupied Europe" (55). Rosner's reaction to Izzienko's death and burial reveals that death is no longer the limit of maternal loss:

> In a strange and horrible way, I considered myself to be a lucky mother. The two weeks I had endured without my child, after I had given him away, were among the most agonizing of my life. Somehow the certainty of his death relieved the tension. A part of me had died and I could feel no emotion any longer in that part.
>
> I had been with my child to the end, and I buried him myself. Yes, I thought to myself, I was the lucky one indeed. (55)

Rosner is grateful both that her son was spared the anonymous death of mass murder and burial, and that she has been spared from the agonizing and isolating limbo of fearing for him every moment. Her first gratitude marks the difference between a death that is individualized, commemorated, and marked with a monument and the form of death characteristic of the Nazi genocide: a death in which "it was no longer an individual who dies, but a specimen" (Adorno 362). His individual death frees her from the anxious terror that he might die in degraded circumstances that preclude mourning.[4] After, and as a consequence of her ability to mourn his individual death, comes her thankfulness that she is no longer subject to the open-ended terror that was her experience of motherhood under the Nazi threat. This turn to gratitude is conspicuously and disturbingly different from both everyday maternal relations and the ongoing anguish of mothers who lost children under conditions of mass death. For example, Elizabeth Raab's daughter, Kati, was

taken from her on the loading ramp at Auschwitz and suffered the unknown fate of mass execution in the gas chamber. Raab's response to her daughter's disappearance is one of anguished denial, a dissonant conjunction of her knowledge of the deadly concentrationary world with her abiding hope her daughter survived. Raab is unable to directly acknowledge the death of her daughter even after the war, when she has long discovered that Kati did not survive. Whereas Rosner responds with thankfulness for the possibility of morning, Raab's is a loss seemingly inassimilable as a loss, as the death of a child who can be mourned. Rosner's capacity for gratitude, then, is a direct product of categorical or narrative recognition—she suggests that comprehensible tragedy is preferable to ambiguous worry, that a death falling within the boundaries of recognizable norms is preferable to a threat that exceeds them.

Rosner's experience of motherhood as risk foregrounds the degree to which her maternal relationship with Izzienko is a relationship of mourning, a relationship with his death. Derrida argues that subjectivity always involves this relationship to death as an implicit mourning for others: "The 'me' or the 'us' of which we speak then arise and are delimited in the way that they are only through this experience of the other, and of the other who can die, leaving in me or in us this memory of the other" (*Mémoires* 32). In peacetime, this relation of mourning is expressed in nurturing the helpless vulnerability of the infant, but in the world of Nazi violence, the deathful mode of maternal identification leaps to the foreground. That this experience of motherhood is structured by mourning suggests one reason

why it fails to attain categorical necessity or totality as a subject position: the primordial and unsettling nature of mortality and grief. Emmanuel Levinas argues in *God, Death and Time* that one's relationship with death is a relationship with the death of others (*passim*). That this relationship comes from without, with all the disruptive power of a foreign interpellation, and that it brings the unknowable threat of mortality with it, makes any process of identifying by means of such an event or advent a precarious process indeed. Over the course of Rosner's expression of gratitude, she moves from identifying herself as "a lucky mother" to being "the lucky one," a semantic shift from differentiating herself within a collective identification to fortunate but otherwise undetermined solitude. This suggests that Rosner's experience of motherhood in this moment of grief and loss is one of alienating individuation that cuts across her desire and her ability to participate in a common category that remains nonetheless central to her self-conception.

This existential fracture of motherhood as a category of identity is exemplified in a macabre episode following the two-day *Aktion*. Rosner and a friend leave the basement bunker in search of food and information and find, lying in the street in front of the house, a seemingly dead pregnant woman whose unborn child is visibly moving inside her (61). They are then suddenly forced into hiding by approaching troops, and when they are able to return to the outside, several hours later, the woman is gone (62). The figure of the woman in the street offers an incomprehensible rewriting of Rosner's maternal loss: is this woman a mother? Is the unborn infant a child? Is either of them dead or alive? Undeniably terrible, the

image of this woman is categorically ambivalent, its generality fractured by the mutely expressive movements of the infant seemingly doomed to die unborn. Despite its grimness, but perhaps because of its incomprehensibility, this episode is presented without affect; Rosner's concern for the woman is implied by her actions ("I tried to turn her head towards me and talk to her" [61]) but not explicitly registered in the narration. Rosner is forced back into hiding, and notes, upon her return, that "we could no longer see the pregnant woman in the street" (62). She makes no further reference to her. The ambiguous fate of the woman and her child seemingly make no lasting impression. She offers quite a different response, however, to the uniformed, blood-spattered policemen whom they also see on their second reconnaissance mission. Rosner and Chava report back about the sight of the returning police, which is explicitly described as impressed on Rosner's memory: "I couldn't erase the sight of those policemen and their bloody boots from my mind" (62). The woman in the street, however, seemingly pushes the limits of fundamental categories and remains an inscrutable unknown for Rosner—she does not coherently participate in the representational economy of mourning that, for instance, allows Rosner to transform the terror and sorrow of grief, by way of well-bounded abstraction, into gratitude—and so she vanishes from the narrative.

Rosner's experience repeatedly challenges her attempts to mediate that experience by means of determined norms. Many of the strategies that she brings to bear to order her experience are structured by gendered assumptions drawn from traditional cultural values whose application to the violence and loss of living under

the Nazi death sentence divides the commonality of each category in unexpected ways. Her terrible story of loss—her entire immediate family is murdered—forces her into efforts to narrate an ongoing identity that involves a fundamental relationship between gender, death, and mourning understood with respect her gendered familial roles as a wife and mother. Generational differences, then, and the fulfilment or not of the traditional expectations of women (marriage and motherhood) are central to her understanding of life and to her experience of mourning for the dead. If her gendered experience of motherhood is structured by mourning, then, it can be seen that the experience of mourning is also structured by gender.

Age, gender, and mourning are central to Anne Kazimirski's account of her experiences in *Witness to Horror*. The second chapter of her memoir explores a variety of traumatic losses that are intimately related to her presentation of gendered identity. The chapter is titled "Darkness, Death, and Betrayal," and takes place immediately after the 1941 German attack on the Russian-occupied regions of Poland breaks Hitler's pact with Stalin. In Kazimirski's recollection, the bombing and invasion entailed vast property damage and the continual threat of death (24). Her mother consoles the terrified young Kazimirski by pointing out that "We're all fine. Property damage can be repaired, human lives cannot" (25). The rest of the chapter, with tragic irony, details some of the irreparable human losses that ensue as all of Poland is taken under Nazi control.

The first such episode involves the death of one of Kazimirski's teachers, Kizel, with whom she "had fallen in love" (25). During the bombardment, she defies her mother's prohibition and sneaks out to visit him, only to discover that "he had been killed in a ditch by a bomb while he was running for shelter" (24-25). The understated pathos and brevity of this episode downplays the tremendous danger Kazimirski placed herself in, as illustrated by the helpless violence of Kizel's death. She was willing to risk grave bodily harm in order to "see how he was doing" (24), and she did so directly counter to her mother's instructions. Her young crush thus introduces the importance of heterosexual romantic attachment to her experience and self-understanding. This moment is also indicative of Kazimirski's relationship to her mother, who is presented as a source of prohibitions and demands that arise from her concern and protectiveness. The tension between maternal and romantic demands seen in Kazimirski's disobedience foreshadows the conflicting ties between Kazimirski, her husband, and her mother; moreover, it links the gendered experience of relationships to dangerous personal risk.

Death from above during a bombing campaign is relatively impersonal in its technological anonymity, and is indifferently capable of striking down both men and women. Following Kizel's death, however, Kazimirski tells a story that highlights the interpersonal, gendered relationship between feminine experience and masculine violence. During the initial Nazi occupation of her home town and before the imposition of systemic, large-scale repressive measures such as resettlement and deportation, the Jewish community is subject to smaller-scale

violence inflicted upon them individually by Nazi soldiers and sympathizers. It is at this time that Kazimirski's neighbour and friend Sarah Chuver is set upon and raped by a group of German soldiers. She dies that night. Kazimirski witnesses the attack, and both her narrative and narration are profoundly suggestive with respect to the interplay between this experience of gendered vulnerability and the linguistic representation with which it is retold and remembered.

The attack begins while Kazimirski and her mother are peeling potatoes in the kitchen, and is announced by the piercing sound of Sarah screaming. When the family hears it, the initially anonymous "screaming" is immediately individuated, identified as "Sarah's screams" (26). As she flees and fights off her first attacker, Sarah's continued screaming is reported in the third-person simple past tense: "Sarah was screaming and sobbing [...] she fell to the ground and cried out in anguish" (26-27). But once the assault has overwhelmed her, Kazimirski notes that "the screaming had stopped," suddenly shifting to the impersonal past perfect (27). Sarah is individuated as an active agent in her resistance to the attack, but is reduced to silent objectivity as she falls to the soldiers. Once she has succumbed, she is displaced as an addressor, and becomes a referent ("poor Sarah") in Kazimirski's recount. Sexual violence thus both evokes and terminates Sarah's voice; she is present to enunciation herself in resisting, but is present in name only once she has been overcome. Her experience, including her experience of this violence, is thereby erased, lost in the silence entailed by her exclusion as the addressor of future phrases. Neither her wordless screams nor her silence are

meaningless, however, and the violent differend of her destruction as a speaking subject is experienced in their affective impact on Kazimirski who, witnessing this terrible moment, "knew how Sarah was suffering" (27). Sarah's screaming is silenced, replaced by the voices of her attackers, and Kazimirski's understanding of the event is explicitly associated with their brutal expression of victory. In her narration, it is not the agonized cries of her best friend that lead her to know "what was going on," but rather the fact that the "satisfied whoops and laughter of the soldiers was so loud" (27). Sarah's suffering is presented as silently unintelligible in and of itself: what Kazimirski grasps as the meaning of this moment is mediated by the grotesque pleasure of the rapists. This is not accidental, insofar as the representational displacement of feminine suffering by masculine pleasure is characteristic of the invisibility of feminine experience under phallogocentrism. Sarah is not merely silenced: her expression of gendered individuality is replaced by the anonymous triumph of masculine violence, and it is this silencing and threatening distribution of identity that shapes the terrifying gendered framework of this moment.

Kazimirski's understanding of Sarah's rape is both conceptually mediated and experientially immediate: she cries uncontrollably and her "body was racked with sobbing" (27). In ambiguous syntax she notes that "I, as a young girl, knew what was going on," which suggests both that she comprehends *despite* and *because of* her youth and gender. Kazimirski thus vicariously feels Sarah's agony, and identifies with their shared, gendered vulnerability in the very moment when Sarah

is silenced by its violence. The Nazis' masculine violence therefore has a chiasmic effect, at the same instant subjecting Sarah to desubjectifying violence and subjecting Kazimirski to a defining moment of terror. Kazimirski explicitly connects this event to her own gendered identity, but her narration also implicitly generalizes Sarah's suffering as feminine in general. Butler argues that the determination of gendered identity is always a matter of threatened violence, and that the "feminine position is constituted as the figural enactment of that punishment, the very figuration of that threat and, hence is produced as a lack only in relation to the masculine subject" (*Bodies* 102). In recounting the episode, Kazimirski does not individuate Sarah's father, whereas she specifically identifies the female members of Sarah's family. Sarah's "mother and her oldest sister" are chased back inside by the soldiers (26), and her mother wears a mourning shawl after Sarah's death (27), but her father is present only in impersonal conjunction with her mother when Kazimirski notes that "[Sarah's] parents" tried to lift her from the ground, and mentions that "they" never recovered from her death (27). The Chuver and the Kazimirski women are thus individuated as women against a ghastly backdrop of explicitly gendered violence.

This threat differentiates not only between genders but also between young and old women. It is as a "young woman" that Kazimirski experiences the vicarious terror of Sarah's fate, a terror that has remained with her for the many years since. To this day, Kazimirski remains dismayed and terrified by Sarah's suffering and death. Writing in the narrating present, she reports that "When I visit my daughter

and leave, I will not go till I hear the door being locked behind me. The helpless terror I felt so many years ago has remained with me" (28). The fear has remained, but the passage of years has clearly shifted—or perhaps sharpened—its locus, which is the vulnerability of young women to unrestrained masculine violence. Her fear, initially sparked by her identification with Sarah's suffering, has been transferred to her daughter. This transformation of identificatory terror illustrates the internal heterogeneity of such gendered identification. Kazimirski experiences the same terror, but its object remains the young woman, a woman whom Kazimirski no longer is. This abiding terror has obeyed the generational law implied by the soldiers' violence: that old women are to be afraid on behalf of young women. If the sexualized threat of violence effects gendered identity, it also intervenes within the space of femininity, affecting relationships between women. In this case, the nature of a mother-daughter relationship is determined by rape and death—a limit-case illustrating Irigaray's claim that phallic power determines relations between women even as it distributes sexual identity itself.

Kazimirski, like Rosner, strongly identifies with traditional, familial gender roles. Unlike Rosner's repeated identification with traditional and contingent group identity, however, Kazimirski reveals her gendered self in her relationships with specific authority figures, such as her mother and husband. As Kazimirski's rebellious behaviour during the bombing suggests, her relationship with her mother is ambivalent. Kazimirski's mother is portrayed as the family disciplinarian: "Abe [her father] never hit us—my mother was the one to punish and slap us" (4). Over

the course of the narrative, her mother is the source of key imperatives that illustrate the transformation of gender roles under the Nazi threat. When Sarah Chuver is raped, Kazimirski's mother tries to prevent her from watching from the window: "Don't stand near the window—someone will see you" (27). But she doesn't actively prevent her from witnessing the attack, as Kazimirski reports that "Mama held me tightly" as she watched (27). After reporting on the dismal aftermath of the assault, Kazimirski notes that her mother tells her not to "say a word about this to anyone" (28). She doesn't note the irony in reporting both this forbidden event and the interdiction itself. That Kazimirski tells the story of Sarah's death seemingly without attention to her mother's demand for discretion reflects a later maternal command—a demand for speech. After the second *Aktion* and before the final massacre of the ghetto population, Kazimirski's mother tells her that "you are chosen to survive. You must live on and tell the world how we suffered and how we died" (76). Clearly, Kazimirski participates in a multitude of "we"s: her family, her ethnicity, and her gender, to name only three. The context of this utterance immediately crosses these identities, in that her mother speaks in reference to the destruction of the ghettoized Jews, about Kazimirski's survival in the face of the deaths of her father and brother, and as a mother speaking to her daughter. Kazimirski is thus multiply positioned, but with reference to roles intimately tied to gendered identity. Butler argues that "gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities. As a result, it becomes impossible to separate out 'gender' from the

political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained" (*Gender* 3). Familial relations, the context in which this prescriptive call to witness arises, are among the most explicitly gendered. And it is the pervasive gendering of this familial "we" that involves Kazimirski's testimonial effort in various conflicts of authority, including the detailed portrayal of both Sarah Chuver's rape and her mother's injunction to silence. The gendered violence of rape brings with it the silence of shame and propriety; the threat of annihilation, however, makes telling the story of this suffering imperative, shame and all. Both demands are implicitly gendered: the first in terms of a silencing propriety about sexual violence, and the second in its demand that she convey the specific quality of "how we suffered and how we died," which requires acknowledgement not only of brutal sexual violence but the multiple silences that must be broken in order to bear witness to it.

Kazimirski's memoir suggests that her romantic attachments mark the limit of her mother's authority. A central tension in the narrative of *Witness to Horror* arises over Kazimirski's mother repeatedly insisting on returning to the ghetto despite the ongoing threat of violence. After the ghettos (the "ghetto of life" and the "ghetto of the dead" [39]) have been created but before the first large-scale massacres, the family is divided. Kazimirski and her husband Henry take advantage of his privileged profession to live outside the ghetto walls, whereas "Mama preferred living with her sisters and parents in the ghetto of life. Perhaps she felt safer in the ghetto" (41). Indeed, when news of the first *Aktion* sends Kazimirski and

Henry into hiding, her mother reluctantly agrees to join them "because she understood that remaining in the ghetto meant certain death" (45), but only after Kazimirski pleads and cries for her to join them (46). Kazimirski's mother is thereafter reluctant to remain in hiding even after repeated massacres that decimate the Jewish population. Despite the risks, she wants to return "to see if [her] family is still alive" (61). It becomes clear, as Kazimirski and Henry continue to live in hiding, that her mother's intentions and goals are being judged from Henry's point of view. On two occasions her mother attempts to convince them to join her in the ghetto, and in each case she is opposed by Henry's knowledge that the Germans intend to eradicate the population: he "had overheard conversations while working at the Wehrmacht dental unit that the Germans planned to eradicate all the Jews, without exception" (66). The certainty of this knowledge—or, more precisely, Henry's certainty about its accuracy—is juxtaposed with Kazimirski's mother's desire to take care of others and share the community's experience.

This conflict leads Kazimirski to a deeply ambivalent portrayal of her mother as simultaneously admirable, misguided, and childlike in her insistence. In hiding, she is portrayed in one episode as a source of inspiration: "Mama was the bravest of all and gave us hope and support" (58). She is also calm and steadfast about her determination to return to the ghetto to seek out and help her surviving family (57-58, 61). In contrast to this self-possessed firmness, however, Kazimirski more often portrays her mother as truculent and petty about the conditions in their various hiding places. While they are hiding in the attic above Henry's clinic, she is

described as "somewhat of a complainer" whose age (38 years!) makes her overly sensitive to the "intense heat" (49). More specifically, however, "she was a person who liked comfort, so this discomfort affected her terribly" (49). They witness the murderous first *Aktion* from this awkward vantage point, but are forced to move when the building is requisitioned for another use. Their second attic is a small room, largely occupied by a bed; Kazimirski's mother immediately complains about the arrangement, "grumbling: 'I want to leave this place; I can't stay here'" (63). She carries out her plan to return to the ghetto, a departure that Kazimirski explains at length, emphasizing her mother's energy, confidence, and optimism (64). She also notes that "She had already lost her husband and son, and she felt that she was leaving me in good hands, in a safe haven" (64). All of this analysis is preceded, however, by the observation that "She was a person who needed her comfort" (64), which underplays the subsequent praise. Moreover, given that Kazimirski and Henry have deceived her about the fate of her husband and son (34), this claim that she had already lost them seems disingenuous and perhaps obscures her desire—a hopeless one, unknown to her—to be reunited with them. And furthermore, this description ignores her repeated assertions that she is returning for the sake of and to be with her family (57-58, 61). The values and priorities that lead her mother to accept the risks of the ghetto are thus retrospectively devalued in favour of Henry's perspective, and Kazimirski's praise of her mother is attenuated by her portrayal of her as childlike and irrational. Kazimirski thus plays out what Irigaray describes as the phallogocentric paradigm of mother-daughter relationships: "If we are to be

desired and loved by men, we must abandon our mothers" (*Ethics* 102). Kazimirski repeatedly finds herself torn between a male love interest (Kizel, Henry) and her mother; she consistently cleaves to the masculine choice, and in her representation of this choice continues to repudiate her mother's authority and virtues.

This conflict and evaluation reflect the most traditional of patriarchal values, and indicate the degree to which Henry's role is one of masculine authority. One of Kazimirski's few moments of independent agency (her search to learn the fate of her father and brother) introduces her to Henry, whose decisiveness and planning thereafter eclipse hers all but entirely. Her description of their relationship explicitly situates him as a surrogate father-figure: "Our two men were gone and Henry's presence made the knocks easier to bear" (37). By her husband's side, Kazimirski is an all but passive actor in her story. Henry generally takes the initiative, and is responsible for many of the key decisions that allow them to survive. This stereotypical division of agency is reflected in Henry's attitude toward Kazimirski's reliability. When Henry arranges for them to hide from the first massacre in the ghetto, he does not tell Kazimirski where they are going to find refuge for reasons that Kazimirski reports as matter-of-fact: "Henry had been afraid I would 'spill the beans' to somebody" (45). His paternal agency is exemplified by their escape during the final *Aktion*. Running from Nazi killers, they are taken into a hidden loft by Ciupa, a friend of Kazimirski's mother. Henry promptly takes charge of the attic: "Henry rose and walked to the midst of the people. He ordered them: 'These are the rules [...]'" (81). Their relative agency is exemplified in small

ways as well: as they wait, Kazimirski finds herself staring longingly at an icicle; Henry breaks it off and gives it to her (82). Despite her general inability to take independent action, later in this same episode she not only takes the initiative (by descending to search for food), but does so against Henry's wishes (82). Her own toughness of spirit is exhibited in the escape from the ghetto, when she successfully masquerades as a Christian (88), makes her way across the countryside and past a guard post (96), and fends off the advances of the farmer who is to hide them (97). Long after these events, she also exhibits stubborn courage when testifying at war-crimes trials (112, 120-122). These moments of initiative and agency, however, are enfolded in and enabled by Henry's decisions and values insofar as they take place within the context of his decision-making and are presented as either rebellious or circumstantial exhibitions of determination or—in the case of her legal testimony—as undertaken in his name. In this she resembles her mother, who thrived in the commercial world her husband made available to her: "My father trained her well, and she became an excellent businesswoman, shrewd and honest" (15-16). She is depicted as employing her feminine wiles to thrive in the masculine world of commerce: "She was very beautiful and that, coupled with her aggressiveness, came in useful.[...] She was a charming woman and thanks to her the business stayed open." (15). Both women are thus portrayed as capable and tenacious, but in a gender-constrained context in which it is ultimately the men who take action and make decisions.

In Kazimirski's experience, then, her gendered self is enmeshed in the

traditional roles that define her primarily as a daughter and a wife. These structures of definition and control are seemingly intensified by the experience of Nazi violence and control, and the threat of violence both distinguishes between the genders and effects a generational distinction between women that overshadows her relationship with her mother. The agency of both women is portrayed relative to privileged masculine agency: Kazimirski actively searches for her father only to find a husband who becomes the prime mover in their relationship, and her mother, in the absence of masculine partnership, attaches herself to her few living relatives with an insistence that is depicted as childlike from Henry's refracted point of view. Kazimirski's experience suggests that Nazi ideology intensified and reified the misogynist principles that Irigaray identifies as defining gendered relationships in general. Nazism was characterized by a thoroughgoing devotion to the totalized and violently policed distribution of viable subject positions, and it legitimated its social and ideological totalitarianism by reference to eschatological, mythical foundations (Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy *passim*, esp. 308, 311). The transposition of threatened punishment from the symbolic realm to literal experience involves a transformation of category, however, that threatens the possibility of identification instead of defining it as possibility. To a large extent, Kazimirski plays out traditional patterns of gendered identification, the sufficiency of which is not challenged until her postwar attempts to testify to her experiences (explored in detail in chapter four). Rosner and Brewster, on the other hand, both of whom underwent the experience of deportation and internment, find categorical identification deeply

problematic and perhaps ultimately impossible.

Gender identity and the complexities of women's inter-generational relationships are also explored in Brewster's memoir *Vanished in Darkness* (expanded and republished as *Progeny of Light / Vanished in Darkness*), which foregrounds the relationship between Brewster and her mother throughout its narration of their deportation to Auschwitz. The fragmentation of womanhood into youth and old age perhaps reflects the brutal binarism of concentrationary reality: young (but not too young) women were more likely to be selected for slave labour and so possible survival, whereas girls and older women were usually doomed to immediate murder. In a moment familiar to readers of Holocaust memoirs, Brewster's mother is told by a passing prisoner to lie about her forty-one years of age (117); she refuses to do so and is spared execution only because she is a nurse and therefore an unusually useful worker. Brewster, amidst the chaotic and terrifying process of induction into Auschwitz and faced with the stark distinction of age-based selection for life or death, turns away from her mother's shaven nudity and identifies hopefully with the young bodies that surround her: "She looked like death, and I turned quickly away to find some consolation in the round, healthy limbs, proud young breasts, and the stubborn, contemptuous faces of the girls my own age" (120). Her moment of identification presents, if only for an instant amidst an otherwise "sorry spectacle" (120), the deportees' youthful nudity as an inherently rebellious resistance to the disorienting and terrifying shame inflicted by their

leering oppressors.

The mother-daughter relationship in *Vanished in Darkness*, however, consistently refutes the equation of age and doom, as the younger Brewster owes her survival in no small part to her mother's indefatigable energy and activity. Moreover, the extreme conditions of concentrationary existence begin to blur the distinction between old and young women, as Brewster discovers when she encounters Ruth, an "old woman" with "thin shoulders and clawlike hands" and a "wrinkled little face," who turns out to be merely nineteen years old (124-125). This confusion of seemingly fundamental distinctions is rendered immediate and personal for Brewster when, after a long period of hard labour and starvation rations, she is fortunately plucked from a group of women selected for execution and reunited with her mother. She has the opportunity to see herself in a mirror: "what I saw made me shudder. I had the face and body of an old woman, wrinkled, grey, and sagging" (174). In the relative comfort of work in the staff quarters, Brewster "recovered quickly. In a very short time I filled out and grew strong again [...]. The day came when I risked another look in the mirror and found that I looked young and pretty again" (182-183). Brewster's experience of decrepitude—from which she recovered, an opportunity Ruth did not have—suggests a fracturing of traditional associations of feminine beauty as well as a blurring of the lines that distinguish young and old women.

Brewster's experience with Ruth and her own physical transformations reveal the highly visual economy of gender at play in *Vanished in Darkness*, wherein

women identify with femininity largely on the basis of traditional criteria of beauty and fashion. As Irigaray argues, the determination of gender identity occurs under fundamentally visual (specular, scopophilic) conditions of surveillance and identification. In Brewster's portrayal, female guards and blockovas (senior female prisoners in charge of women's barracks) are distinguished by excessively feminine aesthetics in that they tend to be conspicuously beautiful and vain. Her first blockova, for instance, wears "a lovely dressing gown, high-heeled slippers, beautifully curled black hair, and carefully made-up face" (120). As she introduces the new prisoners to the camp layout, she is described as "Tripping delicately through mud and puddles" (123). The beauty and delicacy of these women are, however, united with brutality: "She went past the bunks, holding a handkerchief over her nose with one hand, and with the other, hitting immobile backs with her stick" (122). Prisoners who fell to the floor "received a last kick from the high-heeled slipper" (122). Feminine beauty is thus morally ambivalent, a characteristic of both oppressors and oppressed: Brewster finds the young beauty of her fellow prisoners a source of rebellious pride during camp induction, but the first SS woman she meets is also "young and fair" (122). This SS woman, however, has an "expressionless" face and is accompanied by guards and dogs (122). Brewster's Canada commando supervisor is a "tall, fair SS woman" who is plied with bribes including cigarettes and "a large bottle of French perfume" (141), and spends the day paying little attention to the workers: "If she wasn't laughing and flirting with the men, she was stretched out on a heap of blankets, smoking and reading a book

or combing her long golden hair" (144). The appearance of the Nazis and blockovas is thus consistently foregrounded and distinguished by both feminine adornment and threatening violence. In Brewster's descriptions, luxurious aesthetics render the youth and beauty of these women somehow pathological in the very excess of femininity they betoken, conjoined as it is with masculine militancy. This categorical ambiguity can also be seen in the several instances where cruel, privileged women are described as having suspiciously deep voices that belie their feminine appearance (121, 122, 165, 185). These authoritative women's aesthetic claim to femininity is, moreover, an element in the abjection of the prisoners, a mark of the fact that the deportees have been deprived of a valued place in the scene of gendered representation. To remain overtly feminine in appearance under conditions wherein female prisoners are shaved, clad only in rags, and starved to emaciation is to visibly partake of the power of oppression, and so illustrate the inherently phallic nature of this rigorously traditional visual economy of gender.

The prisoners, displaced as they are from decorative feminine norms, are nevertheless firmly caught up in scopophilic structures of power and control. Unadorned physical beauty is seen to provide female prisoners with advantageous work opportunities: Brewster and her fellow deportees form the "Berlin Commando" and gather nettles for the kitchen (a relatively light task) because an SS officer has "a soft spot for girlies from our great capital" (128); their guards refer to them as the "Beauties of the Kurfuerstendamm" (131). Similarly, the privileged "White Caps" commando consists of "the prettiest girls from Eastern Europe"

(136). Beauty and youth ultimately offer little protection from the murderous nature of Birkenau, although some women continue to cling to these criteria of worth until the end, as does one prisoner who is selected for execution: "She said she was too young to die and that it was all a ghastly mistake. Over and over she repeated that she had been pretty and that she was still strong" (168). If women's experiences of violence under the Nazi regime challenge and overwhelm their normal sense of their gendered selves, this effect takes place in the particularity of the experience and not its fundamental visuality. The Nazi system of oppression seemingly reifies and intensifies the role of visibility in subjectivity and identification: from the shaving and stripping involved in camp induction to the explicitly specularized ordeal of medical inspections that determine survival or execution (116-117, 161-163), the nature of camp life intensifies the fundamental emphasis on form at play in the traditional differentiation of sexual difference and its gradation of the viability or worth of individuals. The extreme conditions, however, have such drastic effects on health, metabolism, and appearance that traditional aesthetic, morphological criteria are rendered all but meaningless, and are replaced with the arbitrary and maleficent standards applied during Mengele's inspections. The prisoners thus undergo a process of abjection that first displaces them from the vestimentary and aesthetic standards of femininity and then subjects them to examinations the camp environment predisposes them to fail. The invisibility that threatens women under phallogocentric hom(m)osexuality is thus horribly realized in the Nazi effort to dehumanize these women and, ultimately,

make them disappear.

Brewster's presentation of gendered experience reflects traditional feminine roles as well as the hegemony of appearance in the definition and stratification of identity. She experiences the threat of death under a variety of conditions, and in each case responds to the possibility out of a sense of familial, gendered responsibility. In her first near-miraculous escape from execution, Brewster is captured by junior Gestapo agents while carrying out a mission as a courier for the resistance. Sentenced to death by firing squad, she faces the prospect of dying with remarkable serenity:

> I felt, oddly enough, a tremendous relief. [...] Somebody else would shoulder my responsibilities and I was sure I would not be missed. My child was safe and too young to remember me. With that thought, I curled up in my warm, fluffy coat and, breathing in the faint, sweet scent of a perfume my husband had given me on my last birthday, I fell into a deep, dreamless sleep. (94-95)

Her sense of identity is explicitly familial insofar as she finds solace in a projected future for her child and the nostalgic enjoyment of past experiences with her husband. When she is taken out to be killed, her sense of relief is replaced by a tranquil lack of care: "I was a disinterested observer in a numb body" (96). She stands, stripped all but naked before the firing squad, and finds herself facing death in the solitary immediacy of the moment: "I thought neither of my family, nor my home, nor the past; I just stood there" (96-97). Brewster faces death as a unique and

immediate threat that differentiates her as little more than the present-tense grammatical first person whose experience of the present instant is neither physical nor affective: "I no longer noticed the cold and felt no emotion" (96).This impersonal equanimity is the product of Brewster's sense that she has satisfied her gendered responsibilities—which nevertheless remain relevant to the representation of this moment of isolation as the negation of familial domesticity. After her unexpected survival, this sense of personal responsibility for the lives and fates of others will burden and haunt her throughout her experiences.

A local resistance member engineers her escape from the firing squad; she is imprisoned for several weeks and begins to feel tremendous guilt and shame over having failed to escape capture (100). She is also terrified for her family: "Then I began to worry about my mother, my husband, and more than anything else, my child. [...] Everything I had done for my child seemed inadequate and heartless" (101). When faced with immediate death, her infant daughter's unknowing youth was a source of relief, but here it becomes a source of concern: "I had never taught Reha her real name. Although she was two and a half years old and talked like a child twice her age, she only knew her many pet names so she could not give herself away" (101). Threatened with death, the mere fact of her child's survival seemed sufficient to her sense of responsibility; threatened with life, however, Brewster is terrified that her daughter might not survive as her daughter. Whereas Rosner's experience in *I am a Witness* emphasizes maternal risk, in Brewster's memoir the life of the mother becomes a threat to the child. This is underscored when Brewster is

violently interrogated by the Gestapo in Berlin: they are concerned primarily with finding and deporting her daughter (107-108). She experiences her responsibilities as a wife and a mother under conditions that make fulfilling these gendered ideals impossibly difficult, and so she experiences a gendered form of guilt arising from the specificity of her identification.

By the time Brewster and her mother are deported to Auschwitz, she has convinced herself that her child "had a reasonable chance of being saved" (111). This assessment allows her to feel "free and reckless under such hopeless conditions" (115). Her conspicuous courage differentiates her from some of her fellow deportees, among them a young man who is in misery because he subjected himself to Zionist-inspired "iron discipline" that denied him romantic and sexual experience (114-115). Rosner's peace of mind inspires her to feel "responsible even for the despair of this young stranger" and so she kisses him to set his mind at ease: "It was no sacrifice to kiss his young lips. I imagined it was my husband I was holding and felt him relax like a little boy after a nightmare" (115). This experience leads her to wonder how many of the strong, young men deported and killed "had never kissed a girl, never lived at all" (115). She thus takes on a hybrid maternal/sexual role with respect to this young man, whose romantic inexperience makes him an object of pity. Brewster's narrative thus insists, much as did Rosner's, on the importance of traditional reproductive romantic and sexual roles in defining a life well lived. The inexperience of men and women, like this anonymous Zionist, who are only very slightly younger than herself divides Rosner from them in

fundamental ways, positioning her as a responsible, fully adult caregiver and surrogate parent to them. This effect is also seen when she is imprisoned with two carefree teenage girls whose shameless irreverence is both inspiring and alienating for Brewster. Their carefree attitude is explained both by their youth and because they were "a bit more fortunate in that they were not married, had no family ties, and had not been connected in any way with the Resistance" (101). These women are differentiated along generational lines into mother and daughter roles by sexual and romantic experience and familial responsibility, and contrary to the fact of their common youth. As with the younger man on the train, Brewster finds herself in a maternal relationship with these women. Despite the slight difference in their ages, Brewster felt she "had to mother these two children for, although I was only twenty years old, I felt like a hundred" (102). Brewster responds to the inexperience of these younger people by fulfilling variously gendered roles as a mother-figure and object of desire that arise out of her gendered sense of responsibility.

Her sense of responsibility becomes one of crushing guilt when her husband and child too arrive at Auschwitz. A casual question asked by a new prisoner informs Brewster that her child and her child's guardian have arrived and been gassed upon ramp selection. She reacts with an immediate desire to die:

> The last words I heard as if through a thick fog. I turned and ran, ran, and ran: To the electric wire, to peace, oblivion, death. [...] But there was no end to this long road, no kind God to take me by the hand and lead me. I did not make it. The world reeled and vanished in absolute

darkness. I fell and knew no more. (139)

After recovering from her physical collapse, she finds herself reassigned to the Canada commando and burdened by a transformed, numb sense of grief: "My heart was hard and heavy like the rocks I had carried but I did not want to die any more. Suffering would come later" (141). "Later" proves to be her first meeting with her husband, whose naiveté about camp life leads him to believe that their daughter is still alive. Their conversation, and Brewster's short temper with his incomprehension, leaves her burdened with the self-assessment, the "knowledge," that she "had failed them all, my mother, my husband, my child. [...] I thought my heart would break with the pain of the immense vacuum that was my future" (147). This "immense vacuum" recalls the "oblivion" that she pursued after her daughter's death. Her love for her family and her sense of responsibility for their fate leads her to confront and desire her own death with every threat they face. This can be seen when she learns, again in a casual manner, that her husband has been killed (154). Her reaction is to disregard the camp routine and race to her mother, as a result of which she is attacked by a guard dog and sentenced to an indefinite period of hard labour. That this is the "logical conclusion" (156) to her actions suggests that this instant of desire for her mother's support is also a suicidal expression of her gendered sense of responsibility and guilt, the intensity of which inspires a desire to die herself. Throughout her memoir, her sense of maternal and spousal responsibility is intimately related to her relationship with death. She faced a firing squad with equanimity, confident in the moment of her death that her

family was well. The deaths of her loved ones later inspire in her an explicit or implicit desire to share their fate, which suggests that the death camp's betrayal of her feminine familial identity involves an extremity of loss and affect, a seeming impossibility of mourning, that leads her to seek oblivion. Rosner's experiences suggest that her gendered identification becomes a matter of vulnerability, ruination, and insufficiency: her self-perceived inability to fulfil her gendered responsibilities results in a deadly incoherence, an inability to identify.

Vanished in Darkness, *I am a Witness*, and *Witness to Horror* collectively offer exemplary insight into Horowitz's claim that Nazi violence "[unmade] the gendered self" ("Women" 376). Identifying oneself as a subject involves assuming a gendered identity that is imposed from without and asserted from within with reference to shared certainties that define the parameters of recognizable subjectivity (Kessler and McKenna 11-13). The memoirs under consideration offer examples of the degree to which implied violence structures, and literal violence derails, this process of identification; moreover, they suggest that contextual and individual variation in this challenge to gendered identity and identification means that these processes take on an unpredictable contingency that prevents their difference from the norm from becoming a matter of normative variation. Brewster's memoir, for instance, shows that the visual economy of gendered recognition became still more stringent and dire under concentrationary conditions. This intensification of scopophilia ultimately threatens the gendered categories it defines, however, insofar as the

hostile conditions of life in Auschwitz ruin traditional visual signifiers indicating old age, youth, and beauty that define femininity as a system of internal differentiations. This failure of identification is an altogether different matter from Rosner's experience of hiding and losing her son: she insists on identifying with a notion of maternity under conditions and on terms that make her assertion of this category increasingly incoherent from a normative point of view. Her explicitly maternal gratitude for the death of her son defies the quotidian experience of motherhood, and so her desire to claim a traditional gender identity results not in identificatory cohesion but in a repeated and frantic assertion of categories fractured by trauma and by sorrow. Kazimirski's experience is different again: she represents violence as grounding gendered identification in an all-too-traditional hierarchy; gender identity in *Witness to Horror* is experienced as and through traumatic fear, and Kazimirski's formative experiences produce identity as an ongoing trauma rather than its resolution.

All three memoirs illustrate gendered identification taking place as an idiomatic negotiation with certainties that are transformed by the violence of the Holocaust. These women's memoirs, recounting as they do the undoing of categorical norms, unsettle our expectations about gendered identity. These terms ("gender" and "identity") are traditionally presumed to involve abiding metaphysical or physical substance: postmodernist theory suggests that they are, instead, produced in the perpetual passage from idiomatic solitude to discursive, recognized and recognizable being. Nazi antisemitism transformed the physical and

conceptual conditions of experience for Jewish women, however, by presenting an unprecedented scope and scale of threat. The power exerted over these women was thus rigorously traditional in its structure, but destructuring in its effects. This destructuring pushed the experience of subjective identity toward empty, anguished, individuation incapable of narrative unification: the general category of femininity, for instance, is seen in all three to be fragmented by traditional identity positions, such as being a mother or daughter, that might ordinarily serve to define it. The conditions of possibility of identification were thus ruined by violent excess nonetheless consistent with the productive mode of traditional power, and it is perhaps this seeming congruence with normative threats and coercion that lead to such disconcerting variations on recognizable modes of gendered identification in these women's experiences of the Holocaust.

Notes

1. Paula Hyman identifies these characteristics as typical expressions of gender roles among Eastern European Jews (31-34).

2. It should be noted that *I am a Witness* is unique among the memoirs under consideration in this thesis in its rosy portrayal of this postwar reunion. Elisabeth Raab's *And Peace Never Came* presents her return home as extremely reluctant, and despite pressure from friends and family, she

ultimately rejects her husband. Vera Schiff, in *Theresienstadt*, recounts meeting, falling in love with, and marrying a fellow inmate only to have the relationship fall apart after liberation when they discover that each has very different expectations of gender roles in postwar life.

3. I borrow the phrase and notion of the "choiceless choice" from Lawrence Langer ("Dilemma" 120ff).

4. Rosner's memoir is prone to "backshadowing," Bernstein's term for treating the contingency of experienced reality as in retrospect necessarily leading to what came afterwards (9ff). Although she does so elsewhere (eg., 42-44), in this case, Rosner does not necessarily import *post facto* understanding of the extent of the Holocaust into this early experience. Rosner escaped with Izzienko from a ghetto in Kolomyja, where she witnessed mass killing and the effects of starvation on the Jewish population. Moreover, when she and Izzienko travel to their hiding place in the fields, she passes through the Buczacz Jewish cemetery, which has become a horrifying mass grave site: "bodies lay everywhere, some in heaps and others neatly lined up, like logs. It was the first time I had seen so many corpses, and the sight and smell made me sick to my stomach" (48). Thus, although not necessarily conscious of the full extent of the Nazi's mass murder, Rosen witnessed enough to appreciate the transformation of death for Jews under Nazi control.

Chapter Four
Place

Narratives written by Holocaust survivors involve a variety of more or less violent displacements away from childhood homes, familiar landscapes, and the everyday world of human relations. Holocaust survivors who left Europe after the war compounded the violent displacements involved in suffering or escaping from Nazi violence with the difficulties attendant on the cultural and linguistic displacements of immigrant experience. The efforts of survivors to express their experiences thus arise within a complex and unsettled set of relations between time, space, and possibility. Mikhail Bakhtin suggests that there is a necessary relationship between narrative and place in his notion of the chronotope, which he defines as "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (84). Bakhtin broadens the relevance of the chronotope beyond the literary constraints of fiction when he observes that chronotopes are characterized not only by their ordering of space and time, but by the notion of human agency entailed by such ordering (105-110). Elizabeth Grosz argues along similar lines but suggests, moreover, that notions of subjectivity also determine any understanding of place:

> The subject's relation to space and time is not passive: space is not simply an empty receptacle, independent of its contents; rather, the

> ways in which space is perceived and represented depend on the kinds of objects positioned 'within' it, and more particularly, the kinds of relation the subject has to those objects. Space makes possible different kinds of relations but in turn is transformed according to the subject's affective and instrumental relations with it. [...] It is our positioning within space, both as the point of perspectival access to space, and also as an object for others in space, that gives the subject a coherent identity [...]. (*Space* 92)

This mutually definitional relationship suggests that the testimonial experience of subjects heretofore described in terms of interiority, as the possibility of coherent yet individuated identification as singular and gendered, is also caught up in relationships with exteriority—and in the mutual definition of "exterior" and "interior"—by way of the experience of place.

Jeff Malpas insists that being human involves a necessary, primordial interleaving of time, place, and subjectivity:

> [T]he very identity of subjects, both in terms of their own self-definition and their identity as grasped by others, is inextricably bound to the particular places in which they find themselves, and in which others find them, while, in a more general sense, it is only within the overarching structure of place as such that subjectivity as such is possible. (176)

Moreover, he argues, it is by way of narrative that time, space and self come into

this mutually constitutive relationship:

> The ordering of experience [...] is an ordering that is both temporal and spatial.[...] To have a sense of one's past is to have a grasp of one's own present and future in relation to the 'story' of one's embodied activity within particular spaces and with respect to particular objects and persons. (180)

The narrative of subjectivity is thus never wholly abstract: it is a narrative of times and spaces, the exteriority of which challenges the internal or abstract self-sufficiency of selfhood even as they make its subjective coherence possible. Moreover, the experience of emplaced subjectivity is a matter of potentiality and possibility, of agency in a world of intersubjective relationships:

> We understand a particular space through being able to grasp the sorts of 'narratives of action' that are possible within that space; we understand a place and a landscape through the historical and personal narratives that are marked out within it and give that place a particular unity and establish a particular set of possibilities within it. (Malpas 186)

This very general description inspires questions about the relationships and distinctions between "historical" and "personal" narratives in the particularity of any given representation of space-time. Vera Schiff, Elisabeth Raab, and Mina Deutsch have all written memoirs that involve very different relationships between public and private stories (as well as varied understandings of this distinction), but

in all three texts, the issues of narrativity, subjectivity and agency are interconnected with situation in geographical and cultural place.

In contrast to memoirs of private trauma (such as most of those discussed in Suzanna Egan's *Mirror Talk* and Leigh Gilmore's *Limits of Autobiography*), Holocaust memoirs take place in a context of public violence that had sweeping effects. Holocaust survivors' relationships to place are thus inevitably dominated by the specific violence of their individual experiences, but also by the overall effects of the genocide—which, for instance, destroyed the *shtetlach* as a social and physical reality, subjected Jews to unprecedented surveillance and violence, and instantiated a hideous reorganization of time and space in the form of the concentration camps. Edith Wyschogrod analyses the experience of concentration camp prisoners from a phenomenological perspective, and describes the destruction of what she calls the "life world," variously defined as "the horizon of experience from which human meanings originate," "the whole of our prereflective experiential field," and "the structure of experience that enables cultural forms to emerge" ("Concentration" 327-328). This rather vague notion encompasses the referential and foundational certainties that render experience intelligible, including the notions of interiority and exteriority that pre-reflective certainty provides as a basis for determining the mutually definitional relationships between the self and the world. In short, she posits a mutually defining relationship between "life" and "world" that reflects their phenomenal indivisibility. Wyschogrod observes that "[a]t the vital level of the life-world, which arises as spontaneity and is expressed in motility, affective

response, work, linguistic and gestural activity, the concentration camp succeeded in suppressing the primordial modes of man's being in the world" ("Concentration" 335). She argues that Nazism's ultimately genocidal antisemitism produced this effect because the camps were a place of exigency and deception wherein all activity, all signification was reorganized to tend toward a single signification: death ("Concentration" 334). Wolfgang Sofsky argues similarly that the system of absolute power in the camps "transforms the universal structures of human relatedness to the world: space and time, social relations, the connection with work, the relation to the self" (18) and that such power is structured by "the permanent vulnerability of the subjugated, and its own complete power of destruction over human life" (23). Survivors of the camps thus experienced a concerted transformation of agency and place organized by and oriented toward exploitation and murder; survivors who escaped deportation and internment did so in a world transformed by violence and surveillance that was ultimately directed toward their deportation to this realm of death.

Elaine Scarry's study *The Body in Pain* suggests that in situations of calculated and violent oppression, victims of violence are deprived of their place in the social and physical world. In torture, for instance, the experience of extreme and prolonged agony replaces the victim's extended and mediated experience of time and space with inarticulate and immediate bodily misery (33). Juxtaposed with this excruciating diminution is the unruffled agency of the torturer, whose own world of experience and activity seems expansive in inverse proportion to that

of the prisoner. This doubled and chiasmic victimization is accomplished not only through the humiliation and helplessness involved in torture, but also by the torturers' appropriation of physical and social aspects of the life-world from which torture excludes the victim (41-45). To the extent that torture mimics and appropriates familiar structures of civilized life (torturers' use of legal and medical discourse are Scarry's examples), the torturer effectively usurps the victim's experience of such systems of authority. Similarly, the common physical trappings of our shared existence (such as furniture and the protective physical enclosure of rooms) are malevolently transformed, not only altering victims' experiences of the world, but turning these same entities into destructive weapons. Victims of violence are thus threatened not only by what is foreign, but also by transformations of what is familiar. One of the effects of such violence is the collapse of time, with its implied possibilities of imagined futurity, into the timeless exigency of pain. This eternal present moment also deprives the victim of the experience of space because unmitigated agony blots out any "where" beyond the body. Scarry explicitly connects these intimate temporal and spatial transformations with subjective and objective contexts of agency, of personal and political will, and suggests that torture owes some of its terrifying power to the manifest disjuncture between the abstract political agency justifying and requiring the application of violence and the all-too-immediate subjective experience of such violence, which simultaneously deprives its victims of agency and place (57-58).

The Nazi strategies of concentration and deportation involved tactics similar

to the torturers described by Scarry. Antisemitic violence was founded on, and was supported by, legislative and scientific authority that divested Jews of any means of complaint or redress, in so doing turning the very structures of polity and discursive rationality against them. Richard Miller, for instance, notes that Jews were singled out by Nazi law for specific, repressive measures, but were also specifically subject to summary judgement and punishment by police (51-52); they were thus exempt from the rights and protections of due process. Zygmunt Bauman argues that the categorical basis of this persecution was carefully deployed to isolate the Jewish population to better corral it, but also to reassure the excluded gentiles that they were safe from the draconian measures being applied to resolve a specifically Jewish question (123). This marginalization had a tremendously alienating effect, and utterly circumscribed Jewish life within the Nazi sphere of control. As Bauman observes, "Withdrawal of the outside world cut down the boundaries of the 'situation'; it had to be defined now solely in terms of the persecutors' power, from which there was no appeal" (124). Circumscription by law gave way to physical concentration and constraint, a reification in material space of the social diminution of agency effected by law and social pressure. Bauman argues that Jewish agency was effectively channelled and assimilated by the Nazi system of oppression insofar as it consistently offered Jews seemingly significant, urgent, and portentous choices. This apparent agency was, however, illusory because "[t]he Jewish world contained the Nazi power as the only other agent; however the Jews defined their situation, that situation was reduced to one factor only: the actions

their Nazi persecutors deemed useful to undertake" (128). Circumscribed more than they realized, Jews' attempts to take action and make decisions occurred in ignorance of their true context. Lawrence Langer describes the point of view of the SS, who see the prisoners as "victims of a specific doom, not agents of their own fate" ("Gendered" 356), and Diner describes the *Judenrate* as "allowed just enough social normality, and just enough semblance of political autonomy, to retain an illusion of their capacity to further their own long-term survival" (*Beyond* 133). The massive extent of the genocide, its near success, was a consequence of the successful Nazi control of agency and possibility, of the "narratives of action" (Malpas 186) that define the experience of social and material place. Such violent constraint reaches its ultimate expression in the form of the concentration camps, which reify what Sofsky calls "ultimate power" in the total organization of space, time, and agency according to arbitrary and murderous principles (16ff).

Schiff, Raab, and Deutsch all experienced versions of these violent losses of place and agency. Each, however, takes a different perspective on the nature of place and its representation in narrating her story, and each memoir is structured by a chronotope that arises from and refracts the author's experience of place. Schiff's memoir, *Theresienstadt*, situates the transformation of physical and social conditions by Nazi dominance by first describing the broad historical context of Jewish life in the prewar Czech Republic, a strategy that illustrates her memoir's distinctive breadth of scale and causal linearity. Her memoir proceeds through a trajectory of crisis and denouement wherein the Nazi reorganization of place is seen

as a process with clearly defined structure and boundaries, a process whose end result is a return to normalcy of sorts. The Theresienstadt camp offers an unusual example of this transformation of place, however, because its urban nature and role as propaganda showpiece encourage a disconcerting veneer of normalcy, the illusion that life in the camp is somehow continuous with life before, despite its murderous reality. In contrast to Schiff's large-scale approach to events whose effects are relegated to the past, Raab's memoir *And Peace Never Came* testifies to her ongoing experience of displacement from linearity and resolution: for Raab neither peace not place have simply come to pass. She presents place as intrinsically social, political, and historicized, but at the same longs for the peacefully unmediated sense of place that she associates with her childhood. She is at least implicitly aware that such notions of idyllic wholeness are an effect of nostalgic narrativity, and deploys a narrative of fragmentation and repetition to explore the relationship between narrativity and emplacement with respect to her remembered childhood home. In *Mina's Story*, Deutsch represents place largely in abstraction until the violence of war makes every "where" a threat. The simplicity and abstraction of her initial chronotope is made complex and threatening by the onset of war, which transforms her situated capacity to act. The changes in Deutsch's experience seemingly structure both her post-war experience of emigration to Canada and her narrative form, despite her confidence in a present and a future free from the violence of the past. She thus presents by implication what Raab dwells on explicitly: that the effects of the past reverberate in the present, including the

present narration of that past.

Schiff sets a broad stage for her story by introducing her memoir with intertwined stories of Czech national history and Jewish settlement in Eastern Europe (1-3). She presents the history of Jewish-gentile relations as a trajectory of uneven but overall emancipation culminating in the enlightened philosemitism of Thomas Masaryk, who she describes as a hero to Czech Jews for his opposition to a lurid turn-of-the-century blood libel accusation (2) and to Czechs in general as the leader of the short-lived Czecho-Slovak Republic founded after World War I (3). Her narrative thus presents Masaryk as a figure uniting the aspirations and histories of Jewish and Gentile Czechs with the common thread of historical progress. Similarly, she takes pains to identify her family's Jewish lineage as deeply rooted in Czech history: her paternal ancestors had, for instance, "lived for as long as anyone could remember in Bohemia's southern townships" (3). Her family's history, then, is presented as inextricable from Czech nationalism. She thus places herself and her family's experience in a broad historical context and, in so doing, identifies a "before" scenario that the advent of the war then disrupts and uproots.

The implicit claims of community and solidarity allow her to connect these familial, ethnic, and national histories are, nonetheless, undercut to some degree by her observation of internal tensions that fracture the various group identities she describes. She insists, for instance, on distinguishing the Jewish experience in the Czecho-Slovak Republic as relatively liberated compared that of neighbouring

Poland and Russia (7). Schiff also notes that the Jews of central Europe (Prague included) regarded their more traditional Eastern cousins from the *shtetlach* cultures with disdain and dismay. For instance, she describes local Jews as responding with "horror" when they see Eastern Jews visiting the Czecho-Slovak Republic, a more negative reaction than the "amazement" exhibited by Czech gentiles (7). Her description thus presents the Czech Jewish community primarily in terms of national belonging, and as acculturated and urban. Schiff also identifies divisions within the borders of the Czecho-Slovak Republic: she describes political and social tensions between the the urban-industrial provinces of Bohemia and Moravia and the much poorer and largely agricultural Slovak provinces Slovakia and Ruthenia (2). Like Europe, the Czech people, and the Jewish diaspora, she also presents her family as divided: her father is a supporter of Jewish assimilation into Czech society, whereas her maternal uncles are staunch supporters of German culture and institutions (4). This at times heated difference of opinion seems to reflect divisions within Prague's Jewish community: "More than half of Prague's Jews had German acculturation and their adaptation to the Czech lifestyle was slow in coming" (7). These tensions seem to mirror divisions arising from the national history of the Czech Republic, which was carved out of the remains of the Germanic Austrian Empire at the end of World War I. Her presentation of the community as divided between German and Czech affiliations seems strategic in the light of Hillel Kieval's analysis of the Jewish population, which he describes as split primarily between Czech and Zionist identifications (195-196); he notes that German-

identified Jews were a very small minority by 1920 (195). Schiff, in so presenting the divisions within her community, continues to assert her sense that the Jewish community is identified in terms of national belonging, and is—even in its internal conflicts—primarily to be understood terms of acculturated nationalism.

Her sense of place thus encompasses a generally political and nationalist sensibility that emphasizes her cosmopolitan upbringing in an atmosphere of political and intellectual debate, and she sets the events of her recollection on the broad stage of twentieth century history. And she does so, perhaps, because she presents the Czech Jews as having been betrayed at the level of international modernity: as she notes, her community was delivered into the hands of the Nazis not by *Blitzkrieg*, but by "the unwillingness of the West to confront a dangerous and armed opponent" (Schiff 12), her summary of the Allied powers' decision to cede the Sudetenland to Hitler. The Nazi annexation of her country that soon followed was thus largely enabled by a political agreement that left the Czech Republic with neither willing allies nor this strategically important area, the loss of which "eliminated the powerful Czech army, whose main fortifications lay in the Sudeten region, and effectively dismantled the Czech republic" (Bauer, *History* 97). Schiff's experience as a Czech citizen is thus different, from a national point of view, from that of Raab (who is Hungarian) and Deutsch (who is Polish), because the Czech Republic was conquered in large measure by diplomacy and threatened violence rather than destructive invasion (although the German invasions of Hungary and Poland were very different indeed). Schiff's story differentiates her experience as

contextualized and understood on rational and historical terms, on the large scale of national politics. Despite this implicit difference, her story illustrates in some detail the Nazi system of antisemitic differentiation and repression, which intervened with similar goals and brutality in all three women's experiences.[1]

Schiff describes the looming Nazi threat as disrupting the place she claims for Jews in the fabric of Czech national life, but also their everyday experiences. She recounts an odd anecdote that illustrates in small scale the impact this threat had on the fabric of daily life. She attends a performance with her family after which they hear a lecture about the hardships facing Jews in Germany. As the lecture is about to begin and as her mother is sitting down, Schiff, in a moment of inexplicable impulse, pulls her mother's chair away, spilling her to the ground in public sprawl. After the lecture, however, this uncharacteristic and shocking act is nevertheless "forgotten, trivialized by the dismal prognosis for our future" (10). The mere spectre of Nazi antisemitism thus begins to shift her family's priorities; its brutal reality then proceeds to systematically strip them of their experience of urban and national place. Schiff identifies Nazi antisemitism as disrupting the Czech Jews' claim to national identity; after the Munich conference, at which the western powers agree to Hitler's territorial demands, the two ethnic groups are suddenly demarcated by their reactions: "While the Czechoslovaks were disillusioned and bitter, the Jews were frantic" (12). And when Hitler finally takes control of the country, declaring it a protectorate of the Reich, Schiff claims that "[t]he Czechs did not seem unduly perturbed by their puppet government. The

situation of the Jews was entirely different" (16). She thus identifies a sudden break between the Czech Jewish population and their formerly fellow citizens. Nazi antisemitism has the effect of making porous or slight differences of culture and opinion into extremely decisive lines of demarcation: as Bauman argues, this sharp ethnic differentiation was an important element in the repressive transformation of the conditions of Jewish existence. Schiff thus identifies the threat of Nazism as intervening in the everyday priorities of family life, and its realization as interrupting the Jewish community's historical place in her homeland.

Once the Nazis march into Prague, the Jewish population is subjected to increasingly onerous repression, and bureaucratic regulation comes to replace the spontaneity of daily life. Schiff's description suggests that ration cards, identity cards, and closely administrated records of residence operate both as instruments of control and oppression, in that each differentiates Jews for harsher treatment and fewer resources (19). Antisemitic laws immediately begin to regulate and restrict Jewish use of such basic metropolitan conveniences as "city parks and recreational facilities," public transit, and train travel (19-20). They thus faced a pattern of oppression similar to that which had already been imposed on the Jews of Austria (Gibert 59) and Germany itself (Miller 66-68). These laws not only brought constraints on the everyday details of Jews' lives, however, but intervened in their relationship to citizenship and to jurisprudence in general. Schiff reports that Jews had no legal recourse to challenge the laws that constrained them, nor could they defend themselves from abuses of the new totalitarian system: "A new and ugly

crime crept into Czech society: the use of Nazi laws to settle old grievances. [...] These accusations could be neither proven nor denied and the accused was always punished with utmost severity" (20). Her narrative thus emphasizes the Nazi re-ordering of the most basic experiences and structures of modern, urban, civil life according to totalizing and arbitrary principles. This rearrangement was accomplished by legislative restrictions on freedom of movement and opportunity, and therefore intimately connects the diminished experience of place with diminished agency, with a straitening of choices and future possibilities. The structure of Schiff's account reflects her sense of Nazi governance implacably and progressively effecting more oppressive measures. Her narrative traces this trajectory of increasing pressure from national, to urban, to familial scale, thereby mimicking in its structure the course of the Jews' diminishing place in the world.

Schiff describes the encroaching repression as denying Jews a place in the public sphere. When Jewish workers are thrown out of work (19) and Jewish children are forced to stop attending school (22), Jewish families find themselves effectively barred from or highly restricted in all aspects of public life: "we became *persona non grata*" (19). But she notes that Nazi laws quickly dominate the private sphere as well, as increased regulation of sexual conduct and marriage begins to threaten and divide intermarried families (20), and luxury items and radios are seized from homes (19). Jewish families, stripped of their capacity to participate and be visible in the public sphere, are not only constrained to the smaller spatial realm of the home, but are deprived of economic and political agency. Under these

conditions, Schiff's family life is utterly transformed: whereas her father had been a successful professional breadwinner, after his firing, "it fell upon my mother to resolve all the practical problems of our family" (24), in part because her father "fared the worst during that miserable period of our lives. He felt that his world had collapsed" (25). Marion Kaplan observes that such reversals of gender roles were common for Jews under Nazi rule (43-44); Ruth Bondy notes that this collapse of Jewish life into the home led to crises for both genders: men "lost their jobs and with them their economic security and their status" whereas women "had to cope with a new and growing burden of work" (311). The Jews of Prague are initially constrained in their collective access to the full diversity of urban spatiality, a stricture that redefines Jewish space and possibility in general; when the Nazis remove Jews' professional and economic rights, however, it affects the relative spatiality and temporality of the Jewish experience of place along gendered lines, and Schiff's father's suffering exemplifies the gendered impact of Nazi domination and transformation of place.

These strictures remove Jews from the public arena of economics, politics, and professionalism, but this does not result in a simple relegation to a distinctively private sphere. Defined by their mutual opposition, the private and public spheres effectively cease to exist for Jews under Nazi control: they are forced into the closed space of their homes and restricted to the narrow social environment of their family and neighbours, but this "private" existence is produced by the coercive use of public power that regulates such domesticity by means of intrusive surveillance and

the threat of deportation. Nazism generally sought to collapse this distinction, as suggested by one of its central slogans: "the common good before the individual good," and as exemplified by laws that governed marriage according to the eugenic demand for "racially appropriate" reproduction (Bessel 63-64). Even for German nationals, then, Bessel notes that "the private sphere was under assault" (65) on the fundamental level of familial and reproductive restrictions and repression. The public/private distinction has been traditionally based on the gendered differentiation of roles according to agency and spatiality, which produces femininity as a matter of private domesticity nevertheless ruled, on the public scale as well as the private, by masculine power. The domestic space of the home, where the private and public worlds meet, is thus "one of the most strongly gendered spatial locations" (McDowell 93). Indeed, the experience of place as gendered implies the converse—that the experience of gender is to some degree defined by the differential apportioning of place and agency.

The very distinction between time and space in the understanding of place has been criticized, most notably by Luce Irigaray, as an inherently gendered distinction. Women, for instance, have long been associated with spatiality, and spatiality with properties of mute, receptive fecundity associated with femininity, whereas time has been associated with abstraction, decisiveness, and agency—qualities conversely understood as masculine (Irigaray, *Ethics* 7-11; Grosz, *Space* 98-100). Irigaray argues more precisely that femininity has traditionally been identified in terms of an attenuated or insufficient spatiality, as place-less:

> The feminine-maternal remains the *place separated from "its" own place*, deprived of "its" place. She is or ceaselessly becomes the place of the other who cannot separate himself from it. Without her knowing or willing it, she is then threatening because of what she lacks: a "proper" place. (*Ethics* 10-11)

The Nazi threat claims a similar dominion over spatiality by way not only of the impact its violence has on its victims, but in its explicit desire to reorganize place as an end in itself, as seen in the ideology of *Lebensraum.* Hitler was obsessed with the notion that the German race must acquire sufficient land to fulfil its destiny; the lesser races occupying such land—consisting primarily of the farmlands of Poland and Russia—were unworthy by definition of place (Bessel 59-60; Bauer, *History* 88-92, 96). Nazism thus identified spatiality and agency with the mythical and racist substratum of its ideology in ways analogous to the masculine displacement of feminine place. The large-scale nature of rapidly institutionalized oppression not only collapses the private-public distinction for its Jewish victims, in so doing threatening their sense of gender as a matter of abiding certainty, but enacts in drastic form a power dynamic that can itself be seen as a hyperbolic reification of gendered power.

Even before they suffer physical displacement from their homes, the Jews of Prague have been stripped of the most fundamental roles, responsibilities, and narrative possibilities that made their experience of being at home—at their residences, in their cities, and in their country—coherent and familiar. They are

thereby reduced to an increasingly spatialized and therefore increasingly helpless mode of being by violently imposed measures that deprive them of temporalized public agency. These controlling and restructuring strictures reach their ultimate degree for Schiff when her family is deported, a process that extends the implacable "concentration" or diminution of place to the bodies of the deportees, which are defined by Nazi antisemitism as *a priori* or essentially without place. Upon reaching the fairground building used to stage the deportations from Prague, Schiff recalls that "our world changed to one we could never have imagined before. Inside, bedlam ruled—constant shouting, commotion, blows and nervous tension of an impending doom" (32). This new world is one in which Nazi regulations fully supply the organizing principles of identity and sociality, and in which the contingent vicissitudes of lived existence are forced to comply with arbitrary regulations strictly enforced. The bureaucracy of deportation assigns the deportees identity numbers that replace their usual citizen's identification and ration cards, which are taken away: "Now we would not need any other ID except the numbers suspended on our necks, our new names" (33). They are thus officially displaced from citizenship and polity and turned over to the placelessness of absolute power. It is here that Schiff experiences physical violence for the first time: she is struck in the face for, in her ignorance, failing to defer to a passing SS officer (33). Schiff thus presents the Nazi attack on her sense of place as a process that begins on the highest national and cultural level of collective national and ethnic identity and proceeds through an increasing intensification of scale down to the security of her very

person.

The violence Schiff experiences during deportation, however, reveals that the boundaries of her body are yet another "place" that is subject to the organizing principles of the concentrationary world. Therezinstadt was an anomalous concentration camp in that it was situated in an urban setting, in an eighteenth-century fortress and town (Lederer, *Ghetto* 2). It functioned both as a transit camp and as a labour camp, and, as in all the camps where the Nazis subjected Jews to inhumane and murderous conditions, as a *de facto* extermination center (cf. Bauer, *History* 189-190). The hardships of camp life pervaded all hours of the day. Schiff reports that for her the worst moment was waking up in the morning still exhausted and burdened by her knowledge of the struggle ahead: "Long after I had left the camp, my first instinct upon waking up was to shut my eyes again, to repress the anguish the new day might bring" (57). Sleep, food, clothing, and shelter were all apportioned and determined by a system of control ultimately designed to break down and kill the prisoners (cf. Sofsky 21-22, 82-83). Schiff reports that the extreme hunger and the crowded conditions led the inmates to surprising extremes of violence over small matters (54), and caused the simple integrity of normal bodily functions to break down: each day was a "day of torment, racked by hunger, loose bowels and oozing sores successively inflicted upon my body" (56). Scarry's analysis of the experience of prolonged pain suggests that suffering first reduces the experience of place to the immediate proximity of the body by virtue of its irresistible aversiveness (52). Extended suffering, however, eventually challenges

the limits of somatic individuation by exceeding the foundational internal/external distinction that permits bodily identification: "it eventually occupies the entire body and spills out into the realm beyond the body, takes over all that is inside and outside, makes the two obscenely indistinguishable" (55). Scarry of course makes this point with specific reference to torture, whereas Schiff's experience did not include this precise mode of violence. Her memoir nevertheless demonstrates that the process of spatial and temporal concentration did not stop at the boundaries of the body: the concentrationary world invaded the prisoners' sense of interiority, and did so most conspicuously with the imposition of bottomless and overwhelming hunger: "Every fibre of our beings seemed to scream for something to eat. It was the protracted starvation the Nazis inflicted upon us that reduced us to indescribable suffering before death mercifully released us from the bondage" (84). Disease and extreme hunger thus intervene in the prisoners' most intimate experience of bodily identity, producing through their symptoms a challenging, alien resurgence of exteriority that interrupts any sense of the body as a closed ground for intentional, conscious being.

Death seems to offer its finality as a limit to this suffering. Schiff, however,—like many other survivor-witnesses—finds the simply murderous intent behind her suffering less criminal than its dissolution of the ethical and bodily certainties that ground human being. She describes the penultimate state of extremity, the *"musselmen,"* as an "apparition unique to German concentration camps" and notes that "those who were not going to be able to survive could only hope that death

would be merciful and quick, sparing them the agony and humiliation endured by the *musselmen*" (56). She saves the depth of her anger and outrage for the existence of this fate: "[i]t is for the many *musselmen* that, I believe, the Nazis can never find forgiveness, for they did not simply kill" (56). She describes *musselmen* as oblivious to their own manifest suffering and starved to the point of emaciation yet unable to seek food: "There was not a thread of human dignity left in these people" (56). The atmosphere of violence and coercion and the precisely malevolent logistics—intended to produce conditions inimical to human life—that define the camp experience thus conspire to create a fate whose "agony and humiliation" is a spectre worse than death for the inmates, a fate that strikes such terror insofar as it erodes, or declares the irrelevance of, fundamental certainties about human being. Thus, the privation and danger of camp life give rise to experiences and degradations that become more threatening still than the risk of death due to hardship, challenging the physical limits of the body through unforeseeable deprivation, and displacing the conceptual limits on human suffering at the most intimate level.[2]

Schiff's memoir suggests that the Nazi strategy of concentration affected the experience of place both qualitatively and quantitatively: the space Jews inhabit is literally constrained by means of house arrest, ghettoizing, and so forth, but as this constraint becomes increasingly oppressive and as conditions of life tend more toward the deathly conditions of the concentration camp, the quality of time changes as well. The decades-long trajectory of a projected life story is reduced to the immediate instant, which becomes a matter of life, death, or worse. Place as a

matter of narrative agency thus becomes a matter of space more so than time, but space understood in terms of tenuous and invaded bodily integrity in the face of unlikely survival:

> The threat of severe penalties was so ubiquitous, that we learned to arrange our lives with disregard for it. We reasoned that almost all we attempted to do to survive was strictly forbidden, only death was approved of, but we had little predilection for that. (Schiff 50)

Her cavalier response notwithstanding, Schiff refers to life in Theresienstadt as an "environment of *Gotterdammerung*" (51). Schiff's narrative suggests that the reduction of place to continuously threatened corporeality results in strongly gendered effects. She notes that the Nazi system was one of omnipresent threat that produced a conspicuous transformation of eros by continuous fear: "sex is just one example of how our values clashed with those of the cesspool we had just entered [....] There was little time to get over the initial shock. Those who were unable to adapt went under—and fast" (51-52). Adaptation seemingly involved an intensification and transformation of quotidian gender roles, seen most explicitly in sexuality.

Schiff is exceptionally forthright about sexual activity in the camp setting. She reports on the pressure of her own sexual desire (50), sleeping with a protective and helpful man out of gratitude (76), near escape from sexual assault (44-45), and the physical and emotional anguish she experiences when she has an abortion (126-127). She describes furtive public sex acts as "so much a part of our lives that no one

paid any attention" (51), and observes that sexual relationships arose out of both strategic desperation on the part of women without power and opportunism on the part of temporarily influential men (51).[3] This resurgence of exaggerated and conspicuously sexualized gender roles reflects the return of a pseudo-public role for men in the administrative hierarchy of the ghetto. The creation of a council of elders (the *Judenrat*) reasserted the gendered division between masculine temporality and female spatiality: Schiff notes that the men, as decision-makers, were seemingly empowered with authority, and women used sex as "a bartering chip" (51). As Bondy notes, "[a]ll twelve members of the Judenrat of Theresienstadt during its three-and-a-half year existence were men, as were the heads of the various departments" (312). In the gendered economy of power in the ghetto, then, women are offered a somatic mode of agency immediately subordinated to the decision-making—temporalized—capacity of men. Schiff feels incapable of competing with "these beautiful girls who were older and more aggressive" (51) on these terms, and pursues instead a variety of strategies that, despite not foregrounding her sexuality, are nonetheless influenced by the sexualized atmosphere that identifies women as desirable bodies. She notes, for instance that "the advantage of a young engaging girl" is the "more lenient approach extended to her by men" (40), and that this gendered partiality allows her additional freedom of movement to "organize" the information and materials needed to sustain her family. She is also able to use the illegality of sexual contact between Aryans and Jews as a threat to simultaneously garner extra food and escape sexual assault (45).

Under the pressure of ghetto conditions, then, the implosion of the gendered distinction between private domesticity and public responsibility leads to a desperately intensified reassertion of their traditional relationship in a somaticized, sexualized form. These members of the *Judenrat* and the women who enter the sexual marketplace thus claim differentially gendered authority over the only "place" that remains to them: the vulnerable bodies of the less privileged, on the part of the men, and their own tenuous embodiment as desirable, on the part of the women.

The tenacious power of gendered division that identifies men as authoritative, desiring agents and women as objects of such desire is striking, especially given the manifestly contingent nature of masculine authority in the ghetto: Schiff reports that "Every Elder of the Jews and members of his council were mindful of the fact that their stint in power would be short and terminated at the pleasure of the commandant" (74). One of the most disconcerting changes in camp life from the ethos of everyday life was the combination of absolute and arbitrary power held by the Nazi command. Their relationship with the Jewish authorities in Theresienstadt was typical of the ghettos: the Jewish council was given power to carry out Nazi orders, but the nature of the orders was not subject to their influence (this relationship is made clear in Reinhard Heydrich's September 21, 1939 orders to the *Einsatzgruppen*, which define the ghetto councils' responsibilities exclusively in terms of delivering Jews for deportation according to Nazi dictates [Bauer, *History* 148-149]). Thus, the life and death distinctions that govern life in such

captivity could change arbitrarily and without seeming reason: Schiff notes that "The type of people to be deported changed constantly, according to the Nazis' demands. [...] At times certain work categories were exempted, deemed indispensable, and later became expendable" (37). Positions of influence were much sought after, and the influential were courted desperately by the powerless, but ultimately "no one knew how long his position in the camp's hierarchy might remain intact" (Schiff 43). The authorities, moreover, were held to arbitrary and impossible standards and regularly deported or executed by the Nazis for failing to meet them: Schiff twice witnesses the deportation to Auschwitz of the whole roster of privileged decision-makers (78, 117). Masculine decisiveness and feminine seductiveness are thus both contextualized by an overarching narrative of destructiveness that both gives them their impetus and denies their ultimate utility.

Sexuality was also overtly gendered in its physical and medical consequences: Schiff notes that "sexual activity endangered the life of women, for there were no contraceptives available" (50). Camp doctors accordingly arranged for abortions under the guise of treating women for "endometritis." The transformation of sexuality and the transformation of medical practice are thus co-implicated by the pervasive threat of death. Reproduction under these conditions was "most explicitly forbidden" (Schiff 50), and the camp hospital's strategic use of abortion surreptitiously mitigated the risks taken by sexually active prisoners. The risks of sexuality, the transformation of morality, and the nature of camp medicine all meet in an episode that haunts Schiff to this day. The catalogue page of *Theresienstadt*

notes that "One name only has been changed to protect the family of the deceased: Dr. Richard Freund is a fictitious name." One night, Freund calls Schiff into a small room, where he reveals a newborn infant just delivered by a recently-arrived woman who succeeded in hiding her pregnancy:

> The woman was a friend of his, and he wished ardently to save her life. She could be saved, he insisted, if the baby did not drag her into the abyss. He said flatly that we had to help her dispose of the child, for she could not muster the courage to do it herself. He had asked her to suffocate the baby, but she had been too weak and emotional to do it. (52)

Having failed to convince the mother to kill her newborn, Freund presents Schiff with a syringe and implores her to "inject the contents into the baby, to resolve his painful dilemma" (53). In answer to her furious questions, he replies that "he was bound by the Hippocratic oath to save life, not destroy it" (53), a notion that leaves Schiff amazed and startled. She notes that "he was paralysed by the pledge he had taken in other times and in another world" (53). Bauman argues that the majority of the choices Jews were offered were ultimately futile, unknowingly constrained as they were by the totality of the Nazi final solution (130). Schiff identifies this moment of decision as similarly futile: "The life of the baby, as well as the life of his mother, was beyond anyone's deliverance" (53). Schiff, then, is conscious of the chasm that separates Theresienstadt from a world in which the Hippocratic oath has its full meaning, briefly considers the doctor mad for being bound by this

anachronistic sense of ethics, and considers the act futile, but is nevertheless dismayed by the prospect of killing the child.

The impasse is broken when Freund forces the syringe into Schiff's hand and pushes it into the baby's thigh, injecting it with the toxin and, formally at least, distributing responsibility for the act between them. Schiff admits that "the memory of that moment has followed me my entire life. [...] Officially, then, this little boy never existed, but he did live with me and followed me mainly in my sleepless nights, long after the liberation" (53). The story ends without Schiff having discovered if the child's mother survived: "I never even knew her name nor did I want to. The last person I wanted to meet was the unfortunate woman who knew that her baby had to die to give her a chance to live" (52). Her summary of this event ambivalently straddles the nihilistic certainty of the camp ethos and the values of everyday life: "Dr. Freund had not only violated his Hippocratic oath (something he claimed he could not do), but he had also made me his accomplice, in his perhaps noble attempt to save the woman's life" (54). The infanticide was "perhaps noble" and yet was also criminal to the extent that Freund made her an "accomplice." The nature of the crime he forced her to commit is unclear, however: was it the killing of the child? the breaking of his oath? taking murderous yet futile action? Primo Levi famously notes that an ethical "grey zone" arises within the experience of victimization when victims are forced by the exigency of survival into positions of collaboration or opportunism that would be reprehensible in everyday life (44-45). Schiff's experience with Freund and the infant involves a collision

between the utilitarian ethic of survival, which she shows every sign of accepting, and an everyday ethic of reciprocity and consideration. She repeatedly insists that non-participants are unable to assess matters of meaning and morality arising under the unusual and desperate circumstances of camp life (80-81, 87, 131-132, 157); here, however, she seems herself unable to evaluate this infant's death in terms of either the camp world or the civilized world, and her sense of its criminality perhaps lies, then, in the uncomfortable collision of two systems of morality she describes otherwise as utterly heterogeneous. Importantly, they collide in the paradoxical yet iconic figure of Dr. Freund, who is both a prisoner and a man of science and authority.[4] Freund, reacting to the ruling authoritarian and deathful conditions, claims instrumental authority over the fates and the bodies of the anonymous woman and child. His anachronistic claim to morality, which seems at odds with the concentrationary world of the ghetto, thus partakes of its gendered differentiation of power in his astonishing (perhaps more so in retrospect) demand that the unknown woman take the life of her newborn. He then forces Schiff to collude in correcting the mother's all-too feminine "weak and emotional" refusal to sacrifice her baby to save herself. From an utterly practical point of view, the survival of the child would of course have doomed both mother and child; this act is thus a choiceless choice but not a pointless one. Schiff's continued dismay over this episode suggests, however, that Freund's actions enact a controlling and gendered violence that differentiates the "grey zone," fracturing the homogeneity of this sphere of moral undecidability with hierarchically gendered agency.

Schiff notes that "Most German concentration camps exhibited a predilection for the bizarre and insane" and that "Theresienstadt even outdid the rest" (70). This was because, she suggests, "its intent was multifarious," including roles as a transit camp, holding camp, and deceptive showpiece for display to the outside world (70). The ghetto's multiple personality made it all the more "bizarre and insane" because its murderous reality was cloaked in a seemingly normal, urban setting arranged to deceive. The title of Schiff's text, *Theresienstadt: the Town the Nazis Gave to the Jews*, in fact echoes the title of the Nazi propaganda film, *The Town the Fuhrer Gave to the Jews*, that was shot in the camp, and was intended—but not used—to dissimulate the fate of Jews under Nazi rule (Schiff 109-110; see also Lederer, "Terezín" 137-138). The propaganda function of the camp, Schiff suggests, lent it a pervasively deceptive atmosphere in which structures and practises held over from prewar life were pursued under the sway of the Nazi death sentence and so became hollow, tragic versions of their familiar selves. The hospital, she notes, "retained its structure of several departments [...] with room for a pharmacy and a laboratory for good measure. On account of the reigning conditions, the hospital became a farce" (48). The doctors who ran the hospital did so at times with disregard for conditions that made their healing efforts a grim travesty and the hospital a last resort for the ailing prisoners: for example, Schiff describes surgery performed with little expectation of patients' surviving, let alone recovering (48, 89, 111-113). This desperate pretence of normalcy was an aspect of the unusual social character of Theresienstadt, which Lederer calls "a grotesque likeness of a real

society" (*Ghetto* vii). Unlike the more desolate and remote transit, work, and death camps, the Nazi authorities permitted a modicum of social and artistic freedom in Theresienstadt. Schiff describes "the *freizeitgestaltung*, the cultural and recreational activities" (70) as including education, artistic pursuits such as the composition and performance of music (notably the children's opera *The Brundibar*), and even civil and religious marriage ceremonies (70-72, 81-82). Schiff identifies the overall Nazi attitude of permissiveness with respect to these cultural pursuits as cynically manipulative: as long as the prisoners were putting on plays and composing music, they were not plotting sabotage: "as long as we were lulled into the belief of a semblance of normality and hope to live another day, we would hardly become unmanageable and stage a major revolt" (70). She remains ambivalent about the value of these pursuits for the prisoners, noting for example that "At the time," the care taken to prepare school for the children "did not appear pathetic or ridiculous" (70)—which implies that it might seem absurd or pointless in retrospect. She nevertheless refers to the children's art as "testifying to the indomitable spirit of the imprisoned youngsters and their dedicated teachers" and credits the "battle of the will and spirit" exemplified by the musical and social activities as "the only way available to forget the misery of the camp" (72). Despite these acknowledgements, she considers the *Freizetgestaltung* a "sham" that nourished false hope (81) and lulled the prisoners into "a false sense of security" (82). Schiff's perspective perhaps ignores the extent to which the artistic activities of the inmates sought to acknowledge the truth of their context. Notably, she pays close attention only to

The Brundibar, which she describes as intended to boost the morale of the children and reinforce "the daily repeated hope for a better time to come" (71) and ignores works such as *The Emperor of Atlantis*, which presents a political allegory of resistance to absolute power (Karas 33-35). The social and physical structure of this urban concentration camp, then, was arranged, on the one hand, to utterly destroy the nature of the urbane life-world of the Czech (and especially Prague) Jews and, on the other, to cite that cosmopolitan existence in a deceptive mimicry that discouraged dissent and led to an often macabre facade of normalcy even as it offered some artistic inmates the freedom to explore the true nature of their situation, in an epistemologically and aesthetically subversive act, if not a practically efficacious one.

Schiff presents her liberation from Theresienstadt in very understated terms: the Germans leave and the Russians arrive with little fanfare and no warning. The moment of transition from captivity to freedom is also structurally downplayed by its unusual situation in the middle of a chapter (132-133). Schiff's experience of increasingly antisemitic repression leading to deportation revealed deepening transformations of environment and agency; her long transition out of the world of the camp suggests that this loss of place has long-lasting and far-ranging but ultimately transitory effects. The effects of her experience include, first of all, an inability to plan for the future: "For years I had not planned beyond the nearest hour because the camp situation was always unpredictable and volatile, and nobody had any future, much less plans for one" (138). The transition to liberated life

demonstrates as well that the value and meaning of human beings in general had been overtaken by the murderous ethos of the camp system:

> In particular, we had to re-establish our social contacts with children and the elderly. We had to experience children, not as automatic victims of the next transport or selection, but as delightful creatures who had bright futures ahead of them. As for the old people, in Theresienstadt the *sieches* were seen as a burden that the few functional inmates had to drag along. (142)

The lingering effects of such fundamental changes affect Schiff's relationship with physical place. She finds herself unable to return to her family's apartment: "I could not live there; I could not even enter the place" (143), and is dismayed to feel, upon temporarily returning to the camp to join her husband, "that a place as miserable as Theresienstadt could provide feelings of comfort and home" (145). Even as she slowly becomes more successfully social, her private experience of the topography of Prague is suffused with mourning: "I got into the habit of taking long walks through Prague, carefully avoiding the streets and corners where once my uncles, aunts, cousins, and friends used to live" (150). Avoiding the places of the dead and lost makes Prague into a city of absences; her missing loved ones transform the city into a map of mourning: "Prague, once so much loved, seemed to me a huge cemetery" (151). Schiff continues to suffer from a sense of social and physical displacement that is only significantly alleviated by some restful time away from Prague (158) and the discovery that she is pregnant (161-162).

Her capacity to complete this recovery, to envision and claim a home, is contingent upon her reasserting her gendered role as a wife and as a mother. This relationship is made explicit in the text, for example when her obstetrician, Dr. Klein, insists passionately that "the birth of Jewish children would [...] give a new lease on life to the decimated Jewish nation" (161). This focus on the birth of children as redemptive rebirth for the Jewish people implies a mythic or metaphysical set of values that ultimately offer Schiff the possibility of returning to a sense of agency and place. Indeed, throughout her pregnancy, Schiff makes a concerted effort to deny the traumatic effects of her experience in order to reintegrate into the fabric of social norms:

> From the moment I became aware of my pregnancy, I tried to avoid all the melancholic thoughts and memories that used to follow me in my strolls like a shadow. I stopped analyzing the roots of Jewish tragedy; I set aside all my doubts about our future. (163)

She is very clear that this was an act of will, a chosen refusal of the immediate past in the name of a possible future, and she presents cleaving to traditions of femininity as a recuperative and healing act. She also marks the difference between the strongly gendered norms contextualizing her narrated past and the world of the narrating present: "today, affected by the many changes advanced by the women's liberation movement, few young women would consider themselves satisfied with motherhood" (167); nonetheless, she insists on her traditional identification as a means of reclaiming agency. Indeed, as Waxman observes, "Part of the process of

writing a testimony may be to record a story of survival in a way that helps the survivor to carry on with his or her life within a culture in which gender norms are strong" (674). Ultimately, however, motherhood is not sufficient for Schiff: she is seemingly only able to come to terms with the devastation of the Holocaust when she places it in a redemptive political context:

> The miracle of the creation of Israel helped me to form my own private equation of the Holocaust. From that day on, I perceived the blood spilled as a metaphoric event, as a result of a complex delivery, as a kind of ransom paid for our right to a free state. (180)

It is a specific, mythic ideology, then, that allows her to reclaim a relationship to place after the trauma of the war. Her return to a sense of cohesive normalcy thus rests on a mechanism of abstraction that makes political sense out of the violence and loss of the recent past. She thus asserts an recuperative narrative fundamentally indebted to the nineteenth-century notions of historical meaning that foreground matters of of national power and identity in coming to terms with events (cf. Diner "Destruction" 67-68); the necessity for her turn to extra-historical eschatology to define her "private equation" of Jewish suffering and the formation of Israel supports Diner's criticism of the limited capacity of such discourse to address the irruption of Nazism and Nazi violence in European history ("Destruction" 67-72).

Schiff presents emigrating to Israel as the culmination of her liberation and a reclamation of cultural and physical belonging: the final words of the text declare, "We were home. At long last we were home" (186). This conclusion underscores the

fact that Schiff's sense of place is broadly social and political, as seen in the trajectory of her text, from its initial situation of her family experience in national scope to her final escape to another setting of explicitly national belonging. She describes her post-war alienation as a product of continental malaise: "Europe had nothing more to offer the survivor, who did not fit in" (186). Political Zionism was ultimately attractive to her because she wanted to "base [her] future on a rational foundation unaffected by [her] visceral Jewishness" (151). Her narrative of liberation suggests, then, that she regained a confident sense of belonging by participating in public discourse in both a national-political sense, by joining in the founding of *Eretz Israel*, and a rational one, by doing so as a result of a reasoned, historicized, thoughtful decision taken in response to the manifest criminality of the communist state (151, 184) (although her claim to rationality seemingly contradicts her definition of the Holocaust as a necessary sacrifice). Her postwar experiences eventually allow her to reclaim a sense of place, of "home" in part because she is once again capable of taking action, of narrativizing her relationship with time and space. Her memoir thus concludes with a reassertion of the very capacity to narrate that allows her to order her experiences; the successful resolution of her story permits its crisis-resolution structure, and seemingly renders the Nazi transformation of place contingent in the face of her abiding sense of self. Asserting her agency on the diegetic level thus parallels her implicit claims to narrating agency on the hypodiegetic level: her narrative structure of linearity and resolution finds its justification in the claims to resolution presented by the

narrative itself.

Elisabeth Raab's *And Peace Never Came* offers a dramatic contrast to *Theresienstadt* in its presentation of the narrativity of both situated experience and testimony. The text begins with what the dust jacket calls "a brief yet moving picture of her idyllic life before her internment." This first chapter is entitled "Our Window," and presents a fragmentary, impressionistic episode expressive more of nostalgic longing for than articulated memory of the world of her childhood. Recounted in the present tense, the scene is of an anonymous "we"—only her father and Raab herself are specifically identified—standing "at the window, our favourite place, looking out with trusting tenderness toward the stamped-down, sandy roads of our village" (3). Despite the constant change brought by the passing of the seasons, they remain "at one with the calmness of the view" as they sway and listen to operettas that "radiate the promise of a beautiful world ahead" (3). Raab's use of the historical present to generalize this moment suggests that this image is more than a remembered scrap of time; it offers both a prelapsarian idyll and an illustration of the nature of aesthetic mediation. Her memoir generally foregrounds discontinuity and fragmentation, so this opening scene is very much at odds in style and theme with the rest of the narration. Much later in the text, Raab describes her cousin Sarinka's poise and beauty as "as uplifting as a harmonious work of art" (167). Her cousin's elegance is ultimately tragic: a too-young marriage and domineering parents leave her profoundly alienated: "'The beautiful woman' was

the only role left for her [...]. And it was not enough" (168). Like the story of Sarinka, "The Window" presents a moving instance of aesthetic harmony whose beauty is a problematic veneer. Raab's nostalgia for this time and place is a tragic one; for all the harmonious promise of this pastoral vision, its situation at the beginning of a memoir of Holocaust survival makes it redolent with tragic portent. The idyll is necessarily situated with respect to looming catastrophe that makes its peaceful innocence a source of readerly discomfort, in effect turning the harmonious aesthetic against itself. For all that this passage offers a hopeful vision of Raab's desired past, its dreamlike quality and its narrative situation between the anxiety of the Prologue and the narrative of futile longing in "Nora" reflect her more tragic literal experience of memory—the past is here narrated as a distant ideal that gives way immediately to her present displacement from national and familial narratives of wholeness.

Raab's memoir suggests throughout that her sense of place in space-time is dominated by the cataclysmic loss of her prewar community. She identifies the loss of the rural Hungarian world of her childhood as her central source of anguish, in part because this loss of the past has stranded her in a nostalgic desire for its impossible return. Despite her obsession with the lost world of her home village Szemere and her desire to reclaim the sense of wholeness and security she associates with its memory, Raab initially provides little in the way of concrete details about the place where she was born, and portrays the world of her childhood very indirectly, by way of telling her aunt Nora's story. This refracted narration includes

the story of Raab's birth (with its overtones of loving family and community cohesion) (5-6) and an episode reflecting the gendered nature of household chores (8). The narrative then skips to her 1938 school trip (15-18), and it isn't until the chapter "The Visit" more than 150 pages later that any details about those childhood years are told. Unlike *Theresienstadt*, then, *And Peace Never Came* begins with highly indirect references to the prewar world of Raab's childhood: the scene is set by Szemere's absence rather than its presence as an object of first-person testimony or historicized knowledge. Without having set a very coherent or realistic scene in the first chapter, Raab's memoir moves on to recount a series of political and personal dislocations that throw her life into chaos.

The second chapter of *And Peace Never Came* begins with a class trip to Italy Raab takes at sixteen. Anecdotes about linguistic confusion suggest that she and her friends find their alien status amusing (16-17). These experiences partake of childish levity very different from the malevolent alienation she encounters upon her return to Hungary, where oppressive antisemitic measures have come into place during her absence. As respite from this new, frightening reality, Raab "dwells on [her] memories of Italy" (19). Unfortunately, her youthful Italian sojourn too comes to partake of the adult hatred characterizing this new world. Raab takes up an enthusiastic correspondence with a young man she met in Italy (19), only to have it end in tears when she reveals that she is Jewish and he rejects her (20). Her experience of the welcome and playful displacement of tourism thus leads directly to the disconcerting loss of her place in the world, her home, which in effect

vanished from beneath her while she was away travelling in certain confidence of returning to it. Both the general situation and her own experience are thus represented as an imposed, irreversible loss of comfort and freedom, and this representation is mediated by and juxtaposed with the autonomous departure-and-return experience of her Italian journey. She thus presents her sense of loss of place and innocence indirectly, by reference to a very different experience of chosen displacement, and before she portrays the details of what she has lost. Raab thus displays a very different narrative strategy than does Schiff, whose memoir offers a sense of more-or-less linear change from a well-understood and detailed initial state through a series of transformations that diminish her experience of her environment. Raab, on the other hand, understands her sense of place as intrinsically constituted by its irrevocable loss. She does not, for instance, present a retrospective narrative reconstruction of the lost context of her youth; it is lost to her narrating present, and it is the present of narration and loss to which Raab testifies instead.

Raab suffers a variety of experiences, including circumstances as different as her sudden, arranged marriage and her induction into Auschwitz, that suggest her experience of place is inherently gendered. As the story of her cousin Sarinka illustrates, Raab is conscious of the gendered partiality of social roles as matters of coercive performativity. Her own marriage both transforms her social world and requires her to move to a new town, where she works in her husband's business. She thus experiences a specifically feminine vulnerability to phallocratic power,

exemplified in this case first by her physical and social removal from her family, and next by her domineering and controlling husband, who "wants [her] isolated, away from everyone" (22). If gender is asserted in this all-too-traditional display of power over place, Raab's experience with the altogether more violent experience of deportation suggests that gender roles, as a matter of self-certain identity, are threatened by the radical deprivation of agency effected by the Nazis. She is introduced to Auschwitz with a speech that links gendered identity with the civilized organization of domestic space and asserts the irrelevance of both, given the merciless power of their captors:

> Ladies and misses don't exist here. There are no dining rooms, no bedrooms, no bathrooms, no running water. The latrines are outside. Don't dare use them before morning. If you dare to go outside after dark you'll be shot dead. Sit down where you are. You sleep where you are. There is no supper. (36)

This performance attacks social roles instantiated both in feminine identity and the organization of private, purposeful domestic space; moreover, it reduces the prisoner's freedom of space to bodily interiority and claims dominion over that somatic "place" as well.

Food, rest, and bodily functions are all subject to restrictive regulation in the concentrationary aspiration to total command over space and time (Sofsky 82ff). This totality is effected in part by arbitrary nature of concentrationary place, as reflected in the seemingly random orders the prisoners are forced to obey: "For no

apparent reason we spend days or parts of days locked in. We think it is one of the senseless caprices of the SS. But really, it doesn't matter to us where we are" (Raab 39). Deprived of purposiveness, the prisoners find differences of place irrelevant: place and agency are thus joined by the experience of subjective intentionality. From a world in which residential spaces are differentiated by function, Raab has been plunged into a world of random and pointless terror that deprives space of narrativity and agency, in short depriving her of place more generally. Traditional gender norms fall away with this transformation: the propriety characteristic of "ladies and misses," for instance, eventually vanishes entirely for the prisoners: "We don't care anymore about the SS guards walking up and down in front of [the windows]. We just undress as if they weren't there. We know they don't consider us to be humans anyway" (Raab 54). And even after they are liberated from the camp *per se*, these women find it difficult to come to terms with notions of vestimentary propriety (Raab 74)—perhaps the performative meeting of place and gender *par excellence*. Raab's troubled conception of herself as fragmented and adrift in time is thus linked, by way of the self-certainty implied by gendered identity, to a generalized loss of place, and her aimless post-war wandering can be seen as an expression of her loss of fundamental subjective certainty.

Raab's search for lost time occurs in space, most conspicuously in her repeated travels to Hungary in search of connection with people and places. Describing her 1987 visit to her Aunt Nora, she notes that "I come here from time to time from a different life, to find repose with her in the unchanged tempo of

bygone times, to strengthen myself and rest my life's clock again by the past's mirrored reflection" (162). The notion that the past she seeks in the person of Nora is both "unchanged" and "bygone" suggests her difficult relation to this personal and communal passage of time and transformation of place. Indeed, when she hears about the death of Nora, she muses about her separation from the Hungary of 1944 and "the interruptions, the changes, the disconnected, unbeaten paths between then and now: unmendable" (5). The juxtaposition of her search for "repose" across an "unmendable" abyss reflects the complex notion of place at stake in her memoir.

Raab looks to Nora's calm consistency for silent communion with her inarticulate sense of the lost past, and Nora is important to Raab in part because the nature of her comforting presence endures in the face of the grim conditions of modern, communist Hungary (6). Nora's apartment strikes a sharp contrast with the "soulless" architecture of her Soviet-style apartment block:

> once inside, you felt her presence in every last corner. It was whole and complete; the doilies, curtains, pictures, plants and furniture were in harmony with her personality, with her stately self-respect. They were like a living part of her. (7)

The in-place-ness of Nora, her seeming experience of place as a mute extension of bodily presence, is the very wholeness of place and person that Raab seeks. Nora not only brings Raab in touch with her lost home town Szemere, but personifies the sufficiency and completion that Raab's memories both deny and offer her. Raab associates this sense of peace wholeheartedly with her home town, and her visits

with Nora affirm her obsession with the village where she grew up. Indeed, these qualities of sufficiency and completion are never presented as a matter of the everyday details of Nora's present life because, for Raab, Nora seemingly personifies the persistence of the past in tangible form. In fact, Nora takes on a disconcertingly iconic role as Raab describes her in unlikely terms as someone who "never had to change" (12) and who had "remained essentially the same" (10) in her reassuringly familiar feminine domesticity. Raab cuts her final visit with Nora very short, seemingly because Nora's visible illness and disability make Raab "uneasy" and fill her with "torment" (12). When she checks in with Nora in the hope that "she didn't hold a grudge," Nora responds with stubborn anger as the woman she is and not the figure Raab would like her to be: "If you can only come for a few hours, then it's better you don't come" (13). Raab thus presents her relationships with places and people as fundamentally determined by her personal narrative of loss and desire. Both the apparent passage of time and Nora's expression of anger offer instances of exteriority that disrupt Raab's solipsistic quest but fail to offer her recognizable narrative possibilities for making links between the present and possible futures, obsessed as she is by the image of the past.

She seeks the familiarity of the past—the vistas, food, and language of her youth—in the Hungary of the present. She pursues these experiences, however, in a country transformed by postwar economic and political forces: the Hungary she visits is increasingly urbanized and ruled by the officious apparatus of Soviet-bloc communist rule. Raab returns to Hungary only many years after the end of the war,

and her first impression is that "the country was like a sinister monster [...] biting without mercy" (159). She finds, most disturbingly, that "the atmosphere did not lend itself to remembering. [...] people interpreted the same memories differently" (159). The only example she gives of differences in interpretation reflects her suspicion of public narratives that conclusively memorialize, that render the public discourse of history absolute. Her uncle Bandi may or may not have died in fighting at the end of the war, and she is unhappy that her cousin Ivan simply accepts the official, memorial conclusion to his story. She is doubtful that an official commemoration and a street named in his honour satisfy her sense of personal responsibility to the past, her curiosity about what may have really happened: "Is that unchangeable then? The end? Or could we try it once more? When we understand it better?" (172). At the same time, however, she is forced to acknowledge the gulf between herself and the contemporary Hungarian experience; this difference is exemplified by her relationship with Ivan, whom she finds distant and inscrutable both because of the general context of their countries' different freedoms (166) and her specific lack of insight into the details of his own struggles and sufferings (165-166, 173). She is thus displaced from the Hungary of the past and the Hungary of the present, although what alienates her from the present is at times unclear. She is repeatedly dismissive of the pervasive influence of urbanization and industrialization on the country's landscape and way of life, but is unsure whether this is a result of "the cold materialistic grasp of Communism" or more generally "modern times" (179).

Indeed, her travels to Hungary involve her in a complicated tripartite relationship to time and space: "I am caught between three worlds: the past, the present, and the present back home" (163). As an emigrant returned for a visit, Raab has multiple perspectives: she is conscious of Hungary now in relation to both Hungary in the past and Canada in the present. She emphasizes the *émigré* aspect of her perspective by noting details such as the poor quality of Ivan's car, yet the unusual luxury of his owning it (161, 171), and by her careless joke at the Czechoslovakia-Hungary border that enrages the guard and leaves Ivan "speechless" (166). It is, however, her Hungarian past that is most important to her present experience, and that makes her return home so disappointing:

> I found very little of the Hungary I knew before, hardly anything charming, and very little that was moving. For short moments I could rejoice at seeing a Hungarian plant, or fruit, or the sweet taste of a middle-European breeze. But I couldn't speak, and even to mention dear, lost names would sound like blasphemy to me. (159)

Her sense of place is here presented as primarily affective and social. Knowing a place is seen most importantly as a matter of being charmed, moved, and communicative; the physically distinctive details of climate and flora are secondary to her affective disappointment. Place and memory are consistently meaningful for Raab for connotative rather than denotative reasons. Even in her childhood memories Raab consistently foregrounds affect in her experiences of place: her uncle Bandi, for instance, once promised to take her to "The Kioszk," which was

"on an island in the middle of the city. For a young girl, being invited to The Kioszk meant being appreciated. It also meant sitting on a warm summer night upon the glittering open terrace" (169). Aside from its general location, the Kioszk figures primarily in its emblematic and performative role as a marker of maturity during her adolescence. It also offers another example of the abyss that lies between her childhood and her adult self: "Circumstances changed; he never took me there" (169). Raab presents the Kioszk, then, as less an architectural entity than a symbolic one, but its literal existence makes this a material symbolism tied to her experience of time: in her visits to Hungary, Raab reflects continuously on the past on the basis of her present experience of place, but is unable to experience place with respect to narratives of futurity. Her memory of the Kioszk illustrates this effect: initially a place signifying the possibilities of womanhood to a maturing girl, the intervention of the war foreclosed not only the fulfilment of that possible story, but narrative futurity in general. This leaves her with a present experience of place whose symbolic and affective power seemingly leads her endlessly into the past, in a temporal short circuit that inhibits her capacity both to grasp the transformation of the past into the present she experiences and to project that present into a possible future.

Her travels through the countryside with Ivan offer Raab the opportunity to describe and reflect on the landscape of her home country. Her appreciation of the rural landscape (161) is marred by her knowledge that the peasants' traditions are being changed by "modern technology" (162). Nevertheless, she looks eagerly

around her, intent on bringing these memories back with her to her faraway life in Canada (162). But the landscape does not exist merely in her visual field: "I watch the passing scenery interlocked with sceneries in my mind" (169). Raab's sense of place is evocative more so than literal, insistently contextualized by her personal history of alienation and loss. Both the natural world and the human geography of the countryside inspire mournful remembrance: passing Komarom, the former home of her great-aunt, she notes, "This is another town I am attached to, another town to grieve" (166-167). This associative relationship makes her feel "disconnected in time" (167) because the present moment continually gives way to the abyss that is her familial past. Part of the alienation she feels is her awareness that the "catastrophic drama took place here on the same soil under my feet. Does anyone stop life here for a moment to remember [....] Nobody remembers, nobody thinks that the fresh, new leaves, and the bright spring sunshine are cruelly sad; only me" (170). Thus, it is not only the dwellings and towns that inspire her disconnected remembrance; the very landscape that she recalls as the cradle of solace and peace was also the setting for her displacement from its wholeness, and so reminds her inevitably of this sense of belonging as well as its loss: "the friendly spring sunshine ended in the diabolic annihilation of all sunshine, all springs" (170). The narrativity of place is thus interrupted, fragmented, by the affective idiom of her memory: "place" as a shared narrative of situation in time and space is subject to continuous irruptions in the intersubjective assumption of common presence to a common context. Raab's experience of such interruptive identity

passes from the familiar difference between literal and meaningful existence to a more radical and generalized sense of discontinuity that reveals the individually phenomenal basis of the experience of generality itself: her sense of loss expands to encompass "all sunshine, all springs," a ruination of the seasonal experience of place in general. Raab's capacity to participate in shared narratives of situation is thus threatened by a universal perception of taint and threat that leads her to find other people strangely oblivious to the tragedy she finds so palpably manifest. Nevertheless, as she compares the "Canadian and Hungarian landscapes" she realizes that "this soil is close to me in spite of the pain" (173). Her Canadian existence, distant in present space from her homeland, does not worsen her alienation from its past: she is isolated in present-day Hungary as she is in present-day Canada because in Hungary the past is intensely present to her as lost. Canada fails to provide her with the familiar sights of her homeland, but her homeland fails to provide the associative narrativity she desires.

Her experience of place is thus an experience of vexation and disconnection made all the more troubling by the fact that space is commonly experienced as intersubjective commonality, a commonality that Raab's traumatic sense of self precludes. She cannot, for example, share a sense of the present in time or place with Ivan, despite their common presence to one another at the same place and at the same time. This seemingly insurmountable difference suggests that Raab's experience involves what might be called a differend of place: much as her sense of historical responsibility is at odds with Ivan's acceptance of the party line on her

uncle Bandi's fate, she finds herself alienated from common ground with respect to the nature of space-time and narrative. For instance, Raab and Schiff share a sense of national belonging, but thereby gain nothing in common. Raab understands her Hungarian identity as rooted in the affective experience of space, whereas Schiff identifies with Czechoslovakia as a historicized entity with enduring political cohesion in time. More seriously, Raab's experience of place is temporally immediate, situated at the narrating moment in space-time; Schiff, on the other hand, treats her narrative present as outside the continuum of place insofar as she is able, from her narrating perspective, to portray her experience of place as independent of that very narrative. Raab's memoir refuses the possibility of such synthesis, and in so doing attempts to find a fragmented and non-systematic idiom for her alienation. Her traumatic alienation from the common structures of subjectivity and meaning experienced as situated agency result in the peculiar structure of her memoir: the details of her childhood are presented only at the end of the book, in response to a long-delayed return to her home town. Their meaning is contextualized by her multiple displacements and her lack of communal connection with public discourses of commemoration. Lack of intersubjective experience provides the basis of Raab's narrative form, which moves back and forth in time as she revisits her past from a present uniquely transformed by that past. These strategies of repetition and disjunction suggest that her turn to writing attempts to register her alienation by structural means as well as descriptive ones. This effort, then, rests on the literary possibility of producing formal effects that

exceed the transmission of knowledge in approaching an experience that cannot be shared.

Raab comes closest to sharing her sense of place with her cousin Ivan when they visit the graveyards near Szemere. As they wander through the Christian graveyard, they "look at the names on the monuments. [...] Every name means an episode in our lives, and every episode comes alive. I am crying openly. I look at Ivan, who is shaking with grief. We can hardly go on" (187). They share their sorrow at a site whose role is the memorialization of particular deaths that—unlike those of their family and the other Jews of Szemere—were commemorated in this traditionally specific way. Despite their heretofore mutual incomprehension, they share in this moment an experience of tragic family history whose specific, radical, tragic quality is its nugatory relationship to place: the Nazi genocide both destroyed their family homes and precluded traditional burial for the family dead. Raab's text ends with her weeping after a village woman of her generation tells her that "I went to Auschwitz [...] and I looked up your father's name on the monument" (187). What Raab shares with Ivan at the graveyard is the difference between a family history whose past generations are named and known with respect to individual time and place, and a family history marked only by a distant, collective memorial denoting mass death. Kofman notes that the bare listing of many names (specifically on the Serge Klarsfeld Memorial, where her own father's name appears) invites viewers, by the sheer neutrality of this discourse, to appreciate of the scale of loss:

> [I]ts endless columns of names, its lack of pathos, its sobriety, the 'neutrality' of its information, this sublime memorial takes your breath away. Its 'neutral' voice summons you obliquely [....] This voice leaves you without a voice, makes you doubt your common sense and all sense, makes you suffocate in silence. (10)

This affective result arises from the sheer size of the list, from confronting the immense anonymity of the deaths of so many individuals. Such commemorations rely on the tension between individuality and anonymity inherent in such vast numbers, and in the tension between the necessity for both collective commemoration and individual naming. This tension, and the anonymity of this loss, are brought together in the name "Auschwitz." As Dorota Glowacka observes, "Auschwitz" is "a proper name that has become an overarching symbol for the atrocities of the Holocaust" (11). In so becoming emblematic, this word has been transformed from a geographic marker into a name for the ruination of place as offering the interplay of context and agency involved in intersubjective experience. Raab's narrative of her search for place thus leads her through the ruins of her home town and back to the name "Auschwitz," the place in whose name she has been deprived of place. She and Ivan thus share an impossible commonality in their mutual relationship with Auschwitz, a relationship whose meaning is its difference from the individually situated and named commemorative markers in the Christian graveyard at Szemere.

Raab's distinctive and disjunctive use of time and place has been framed by

her publisher (I presume) with attempts at explanatory clarification. An appended "Historical Note" sets out to explain the ambiguities of her chronology, whereas a prefatory map gives explicit, diagrammatic form to the confusing geography of her narration. Raab is insistently unable to unify her experiences of place and time and connect them with shared, public narratives, yet these examples of commentary seek to provide such coherence and connection from without. The events of *And Peace Never Came* are provided with a grounding in geography and history by the appended "Historical Notes to *And Peace Never Came*" by Marlene Kadar (189-196). This essay not only, as its title suggests, takes on the task of contextualizing the memoir with respect to larger narratives of nation and war, but also summarizes Raab's story in its overall outline within that larger context, and elaborates on and explains elements that Raab mentions more or less in passing. Indeed, the final page of this essay turns entirely to interpretation, citing the memoir to note Raab's ongoing sense of alienation, and concluding with comments on the nature of Raab's writing. For Raab, however, the narrative of her experience is a narrating, a situated act of telling determined by her distinct sense of lacking place. The commentary underscores the extent to which Raab's narrative refuses a common measure of time. Her inability or refusal to coherently temporalize her experience results in a fragmented and episodic narrative organized by space more so than time, by locations and change of location—implicitly temporal changes of place that nevertheless fail to provide an overall trajectory of causality and effect that would allow Raab to escape from the past. Thus, she presents shared geographic place as

infinitely divided by the combination of personal and public narratives that are brought to bear on space and time. *And Peace Never Came* suggests that place is continually to be determined as associative and affecting, and that such determination is effected by individual engagement in narrativity. Her narrative, in its disjoint refusal of conclusiveness, brings together the narrative of her loss of place with the loss of narrative linearity entailed by such a violent transformation of the relations between self, place, and possibility. Raab seemingly cannot posit a time and place "before" the war that do not partake of the effects of the war. She thus cannot claim, as does Schiff, a seemingly objective narrative point of view that clearly differentiates what came "before" the events that ruined her capacity to translate that past into the future via the present; this same effect prohibits an "after" to arise, and thus for Raab, neither place nor peace have come to pass.

Mina's Story, like *And Peace Never Came*, is a narrative of place that cannot escape the effects of the events it represents to portray a world untroubled by trauma. Deutsch does not present her childhood in rosy terms. She begins her story by introducing her family one sibling at a time with a brief physical description and a summary of how each family escaped from Nazi or Stalinist persecution or was murdered (9-10). Like Raab, then, Deutsch does not attempt to first set the scene as though the later events were still to come: *Mina's Story* and *And Peace Never Came* both refract the narration of the past through the effects of that past on the narrating present. Deutsch's earliest memories are of antisemitic danger under

Russian domination during the final years of World War I (11-12). She recalls escaping the vindictive violence of the Russian withdrawal with specific reference to the miserable geography of hiding: "My own family managed to escape to a nearby garbage dump, a hill covered in weeds and bushes, where we lay noiselessly all night in the mud and stench" (12). This is a bleak landscape very different from Raab's pastoral, long-lost village or the cosmopolitan possibilities of Schiff's Prague home. Deutsch's young experience introduces a key theme in her memoir: her experience of place is transformed by human malevolence into a disembodied and environmental threat. Her family and their home amazingly survive the Russian attack, but their night of hiding causes them to develop "large purulent sores that took a long time to heal" (12). Different kinds of violence are thus intertwined with place: the willed malevolence of the pogrom forces them into a hiding place that in turn presents an accidental, environmental threat. As *Mina's Story* proceeds, the experience of place comes to be consistently presented as a matter of danger: for Jews under Nazi rule, being visible and locatable means being in mortal danger, but going into hiding—foregoing visibility and location—involves alternate risks that are less intentionally evil but nonetheless threatening.

The sparse opening paragraphs of *Mina's Story* sum up the tragic lives of her loved ones in remarkably concise terms and with a matter-of-fact tone that is sustained throughout the text. The understated quality of Deutsch's prose is largely a result of her reliance on naming, a narrative strategy seemingly influenced by her medical training: as Paula Draper observes in her review of *Mina's Story*, "this is the

dispassionate and clinical retelling of a physician's life" (178). From very early on in her memoir, Deutsch uses the tersely indicative language of diagnostic terminology in place of more elaborate descriptions, such as when her mother develops a "gastric ulcer" (11-12). She acknowledges her mother's suffering, but the diagnostic approach she takes to narrating the episode emphasizes the abstraction of epistemology over the specificity of representation. Her playful life as a student is similarly summed up in a catalogue of events rather than a description of any of them (15). Throughout the text, Deutsch pays close attention to cataloguing proper names, for instance in one paragraph identifying by name Prague's lively main street, the university's student centre, and the various towns she and her future husband Leon visited, and in the next enumerating by name all of his immediate family (15-16). When she and Leon move to Warsaw to continue their medical training, she identifies the name of the hospital (Zofjówka) and the suburb (Otwock) as well as some medical luminaries who work there (18). Indeed her youthful experience of the world is presented as a set of relationships between places and people identified primarily with reference to shared public discourse by way of proper names. As Lyotard argues, names are meaningful in relation to one another within a common context describing a world (*Differend* §56). Names so understood provide an abstract framework for intersubjectivity, but remain removed from the specificity of things as a function of this very abstraction. The onomastic focus of Deutsch's memoir thus initially presents her adult experience of place as a matter of commonly-held abstraction rather than as a matter of

representational verisimilitude.

The outbreak of war affects Deutsch's use of naming, however, and introduces a distinction between the naive sense of place as an abstract network and the dangerous reality of living in a war zone. Travel between widespread villages and towns was at one time routine for Deutsch's family. She moves no less than seven times in the inter-war years, variously back and forth between towns in the Czernowitz area and to places as far-flung as Lwów, Prague, and Warsaw. None of these voyages merit mention, however, except as a change of locale, a transition between more or less adjacent points on the maps presented before the text of her memoir begins (8). With the outbreak of World War II, however, travel by road and rail becomes extremely dangerous, and voyages become violent and terrifying narrative events. Deutsch describes their trip to Przemyśl by train immediately after fighting breaks out as "a frightening one" (18); they make their way through crowds also seeking to flee, and board the train only to have it stop unaccountably in the middle of the night: "We were abandoned in the middle of a field with no one in sight" (19). The physical duress of this sudden difficulty is accompanied by a new, threatening social atmosphere. When they realize they are stranded, Deutsch and Leon are forced to rely on a passing peasant who promises, for a fee, to help them get to town with their luggage. Their response to this offer is apprehensive: "We prayed that he meant what he said; in such times, you could not trust anyone. We even had the fleeting thought that he might come back with someone else and try and rob or kill us"(20). This anxiety, both in its intensity and its specificity, is

unprecedented in the narrative, despite Deutsch's insistence that "Such occurrences were not uncommon in Poland" (20). Their escape from Prague, for instance, was inspired by "the threat of Hitler" as embodied by the overt Nazism and antisemitism of their classmates and professors (17). The visible hostility and explicit identification of the agents in this case are markedly different from the later case of an anonymous and seemingly helpful passerby. The outbreak of war thus seems to transform the unremarkable comfort of the prewar world into a generalized atmosphere of danger.

Travel proves to be an ongoing yet necessary risk for them: on the next leg of their journey, which takes them to the town of Sambor, they are fortunate to survive the bombing of their train (21). Rumours abound about the dangers of travel (22), but the risks of such voyages are made necessary by the still more dangerous social climate. Once Deutsch and Leon arrive in Sambor, for instance, they are briefly imprisoned by German soldiers, and only released when Russians take over administration of the town (21-22). The threat embodied by these encounters is compounded by the fact that Deutsch is all but due to give birth. Upon returning to Przemyśl, they discover that Leon's father was murdered by the Germans during their brief occupation of the town (23-24), and Deutsch reports that "Under these sad circumstances, in a house filled with mourning, a scarcity of food, and no means of heating, our daughter Eva came into the world" (24). Her daughter is thus born into an environment of privation and terror similar to the one Deutsch recalls in her earliest memories. Having escaped for the moment from the Nazis, her

prosperous family is persecuted by the Soviet authorities (25), and they decide once again to relocate, this time to Lwów. This trip is difficult largely because of their newborn daughter's discomfort, and Deutsch declares that "I will remember that trip for the rest of my life" (26). In Lwów, the family adjusts to wartime privation, and the dramatically threatening atmosphere recedes somewhat as they "became accustomed to [their] way of life" (28) in generally trying times. The violence of war thus transforms Deutsch's sense of place by materializing the now-dangerous intervals separating places; the spaces between places become places themselves. Furthermore, the various destinations she seeks offer varying degrees of refuge rather than positive possibilities, as they did in her prewar travels to maximize her educational opportunities. The coming of war disrupts her naive sense of geography as possibility; the victorious arrival of Nazi power effects a still more dangerous reorganization of place by compounding the risks of wartime with explicitly antisemitic, and ultimately genocidal, measures.

Deutsch recalls the Nazi invasion as immediately followed by constraints on the lives of Jews, including prohibition on the use of public transit, a strict curfew, and the enforced visibility of the yellow star (29). Thus, as in Schiff's memoir, Deutsch testifies to the Nazis' prompt reorganization of public space to both identify and exclude Jews. The Nazi imposition of highly regulated public roles extends into private space as well by way of repeated, invasive searches and the eventual appropriation of Deutsch's family's apartment (29). Nazi power can thus be seen to effect a controlling organization of space based on location and visibility:

Jews are definitionally excluded from public discourse and marked for repressive treatment, but the effectiveness of these measures requires the Jewish population to be identified and identifiable, and geographical space to be thoroughly mapped for effective bureaucratic control. This desire for impossible totality (and also perhaps the notorious lack of consistency across what Bessel calls the "haphazard administrative structures of the Third Reich" (67) leads to Nazi laws being put into effect in contradictory ways. When the authorities demand that Deutsch and her family surrender their apartment, they are given conflicting orders to obey. Having been given "specific instructions" to pack, move, and surrender their keys at a "specific address" within a few days (29), they are the next day presented, by different soldiers, with equally urgent orders to leave immediately (30). The arbitrary and contradictory nature of Nazi rule places them in multiple jeopardy, and they are forced to find interstices, gaps in the system that will allow them to escape its mutually exclusive demands. In responding to these orders, Deutsch, her husband Leon, and their family exploit the Nazi focus on visibility and localization to make hasty arrangements for lodging and to move their possessions. They defy the Nazi ban on Jews using public transit, protecting themselves by hiding Leon, who "looked Jewish" (31). Deutsch also defies the requirement to wear the star of David marking her as a Jew while she ferries their possessions to safe keeping (31). They thus risk disobeying the general laws that identify and constrain them on categorical terms in the interest of mitigating the effects of orders specific to them. By this tactic of evading the domain of visible difference, they are able to actively

fulfil and subvert the demands made of them by the Nazi system—a system that is not exclusively comprised of Nazis: Deutsch also describes her husband and brother's hiding from the agents of the Jewish Council who "came to take men to work in the camps" (34). Her narrative suggests that space is mapped and ordered by the bureaucratic totality of Nazi power in an attempt to render its victims visible and locatable; being subject to this oppressive power is a matter of being seen and found. Tim Cole argues that "Territoriality—the exercise of power through the control of space— [...] clearly played a key role in Nazi efforts to exert control over Europe's 'Jews'" (81), and that such control was exerted by circumscribing clearly delineated territories that were thereby subject to policing (82). Deutsch and her family ultimately survive the war because they make a concerted effort to hide from their oppressors' regulation and organization of place. That there remain opportunities for invisibility and secrecy is a consequence of the inevitably partial nature of mapping and regulation; hiding from overwhelming totalitarian power, however, requires its victims to actively seek and create places of refuge.

The Nazi orchestration of urban space as an instrument of control reaches its ultimate intensity with the formation of ghettos. When rumours begin to circulate that a a ghetto is to be created in "the largest town in the area" (37), Deutsch and Leon escape from this threat by leaving for the less densely populated and controlled countryside. They have the opportunity to trade one threat for another when they accept a position providing medical care for a rural region stricken with an outbreak of typhus and typhoid fever (38). They thus leave the realm of

populous, regulated, and clearly defined urban place to take up residence in the more diffuse rural world. This offers them an escape for a time from the centres of Nazi power and attention. As the Nazi regime solidifies its hold over the region and is increasingly successful in its control of the Jewish population, however, their position becomes once again more conspicuous and so more vulnerable: "We were the only Jews left within a very large area. The slightest sound or knock on the door terrified us" (55). They are repeatedly forced to flee their home for days on end as a result of incursions by local police, Gestapo, or overly curious antisemitic neighbours (45-50), and they take advantage of the unconstrained rural geography to hide in fields and outbuildings as required. When it becomes clear that large-scale Jewish confinement, and so more organized and determined repression, is likely, Deutsch and Leon begin to arrange a more secure hiding place for themselves. In so doing, they move still further away from the cartographic determination of place names and relationships, and into a world of increasingly tenuous locations, leaving the relative stability of their rural house for a series of ever more remote and marginal spaces.

Their first hiding place is in the middle of a farmer's field, where they are visually screened by the abundant crops (62) and hidden from routine discovery by the formless openness of the fields, which are not regularly traversed by passers-by. They thus trade the remote but relatively organized space of the village for a place of less differentiated openness. Unfortunately, a peasant searching for an escaped cow happens across their encampment and raises an alarm, forcing them to move to

another marginal place, the small attic of a night watchman's house (65). If they are at risk from intentional discovery in the known spaces of city and village, they remain at the mercy of random chance in unmapped space. This experience leads them to hiding places increasingly remote from their urban experience, but less subject to happenstance; in order to evade both intentional and random discovery, they must be "located," capable of being found—but only by trusted allies. They accordingly move from the rural periphery to the periphery of the rural: they hide in a farmhouse attic, then a barn attic, and eventually an earthen cave. The bunker where they ultimately wait out the German occupation is a sort of non-place, a hole dug into a hillside accessible from a potato cold-storage cave and ventilated via a chicken coop (70). The trajectory of their escape thus spans the spectrum of place from cosmopolitan urban centres to a nameless, placeless hole in the ground.

As they push their experience of place further out into the cartographic margins, they are delivered from the threatening strictures of the Nazi threat, but are so delivered into a threatening ambiguity of situation and corresponding diminution of agency. In a series of experiences that recall Deutsch's childhood memory of hiding from the pogrom, she encounters accidental, environmental risks as a consequence of reordering place to evade human ones. They are forced to flee an attic bolt-hole under precarious circumstances when the roof catches fire (65-66). The placeless hole that proves to be their most effective and final refuge also demonstrates the pervasive danger that seems to unite Deutsch's experiences of place: the earthen roof partially collapses on them (75), and later, as they are

leaving the bunker for the last time, the recently reinforced structure caves in completely, very nearly trapping Leon (82). The possibility of accidental death is a far cry from the certainty of murder by the SS or Gestapo, but escaping from the latter delivers Deutsch consistently into danger from the former. This impossibility of procuring definitive safety is reflected in the contradictions she presents with respect to hiding with their daughter, Eva. The narrative portrays their multiple and contradictory strategies with respect to hiding a child: she is left with relatives (38) but then taken along for fear of being separated (39); she is described as able "to stay in any strange place alone" (51), yet she proves inconsolable—and thus unhideable—when they leave her with friends (55). The dependant immaturity of their child affects their ability to take action, and reflects the inherent limits on taking action with respect to place, given that place in turn determines possible actions.

As adults, Deutsch and Leon are capable of making decisions, of claiming the capacity to relocate themselves within and with respect to space. The increasing difficulty of hiding, and the extent of their vulnerability to the threat hanging over them, leads them to utterly rely on others as arbiters of place, as architects of their increasingly less tenuous places "outside" of place. Once Deutsch and Leon leave their village medical practise for the countryside, they reach the limit of their capacity to locate or create spaces of safety. They ultimately become, in resorting to hiding in attics and basements, utterly dependent on supporters who act as their surrogates. The peasants and the local village mayor are motivated by a

combination of morality and greed to feed and shelter the family; they take genuine risks to shelter the fugitives, and Deutsch tempers her descriptions of their remunerative interests (68, 72, 74) with recognition of their dangerous efforts (73, 75). In enclosed and remote spaces, the family is deprived not only of freedom of movement to flee or forage, but also of access to information that would allow them to judge the sufficiency of their refuge. They are repeatedly moved on account of accidents such as a house fire (65-66) but also because their hosts decide that their presence has become an unmanageable risk (61-62, 64). With their escape from determined place, then, comes a corresponding loss of autonomous agency. Their final period of hiding in an earthen bunker occurs under very trying conditions, and they repeatedly experience long periods of time without external contact, light, or food. During such times they lose track of time and hide in complete silence and darkness (76, 79), and are fundamentally displaced into profoundly isolating contact with only their hunger and fear. They remain entombed for one long period during what is soon revealed to be the German retreat; when Krawczuk, the farmer hiding them, is safely able to visit them, he "took a single stone out of the entrance to the bunker and asked us if we were still alive" (80). They come close to death as a result of enclosure and starvation, and survive only because of Krawczuk's willingness to provide for them. Thus, having escaped from the threat of location, they discover a loss of place that both threatens and enables their survival.

The end of the war allows them to return from this abyss to the common world of situated intersubjectivity. The fear and the danger that were so powerfully

omnipresent during their years of hiding lose some but not all of their intensity: "Though we were not living in constant fear, as before, we were still uneasy and did not know what to expect" (85). Deutsch describes their return to life in a house that is officially their own with understated melancholy and relief that reflects the ambivalent experience of freedom: "We were glad to be in our own place again and to live in peace and quiet, though the pain from the loss of our loved ones stayed with us. After years of being without soap and hot water, we were finally able to clean ourselves up; it felt wonderful" (87). Unfortunately, the chaotic political climate of post-war Europe and the imposition of Soviet communism on the annexed region of Poland bring on increasing danger as time passes. Leon works as a doctor for the Russian army, making Deutsch fear for his safety on two fronts: the risk of kidnapping posed by various partisan groups (91-92) and the danger of being conscripted by the Soviets to fight those same groups (91, 97). They decide to return to "Poland proper" (93) by way of a registration process intended to repatriate Poles under Soviet control. Their decision to leave proves to be a troubling choice, as they discover mid-journey that returning Jews are often killed by antisemitic Poles (100). Their stay in Katowice is punctuated with official and unofficial persecution and abuse, including police harassment and Leon's being arrested and detained for no apparent reason. Neither Deutsch nor her husband can admit to being doctors because "several Jewish doctors had been murdered in their Katowice offices by the Polish underground" (104). They are thus forced once again into a threatened relationship with place, and eke out an alienated and precarious existence in the

interstices of urban life: Leon spends much of his time at home, hiding in their apartment as though it were a bunker, while Deutsch supports them by travelling to and from the countryside, buying and selling clothing (104). They thus find themselves unwelcome in the shared urban place of citizenship and community. Their sense of satisfaction at being "home" after the defeat of the Germans, then, is experienced largely relative to the disorientation and discomfort of life in hiding; as Polish Jews in the post-war era, they find both Soviet-occupied Poland and Poland itself fundamentally inhospitable.

After considerable time and effort, Deutsch succeeds in arranging their emigration to Canada. They arrive in Halifax early in 1948 and proceed directly to Montreal (122-123). *Mina's Story* is unusual in the world of Holocaust memoirs for her extensive narration of her post-war and post-emigration experiences; Draper notes that Deutsch's memoir is distinctive because "Survivors often focus their writing and oral testimonies on the years of direct persecution" (179). Whereas Schiff's memoir, for instance, ends with her arrival in Israel, Deutsch's experiences after arriving in Canada occupy more than a quarter of the length of her text. The final chapters of *Mina's Story* cover forty years of her life in Canada, focusing primarily on the challenges she and Leon face, including the relatively subtle spectre of Canadian antisemitism (149, 156) and Leon's protracted struggle with cancer (150-153, 157-162). Threading through the challenges and disappointments of her experience, however, are the successes of her daughter and her grandchildren, whose minor triumphs (such as working as a camp counsellor [146],

and acting in *Oklahoma* [165]) Deutsch mentions with the pride of a doting grandparent. She ends her story by cataloguing the academic achievements of her children and grandchildren, right down to quoting from her grandson's high school report card (168). Thus, despite wondering at times "if we had made a mistake by emigrating to Canada instead of Israel" (155), Deutsch defines the success of her choice by the success of her descendants, and declares that "my grandchildren are the most important part of my life" (168). Her experience of Canada as a land of opportunity is thus ultimately vicarious, and she sets aside her own painful experiences and doubts in the face of the success of her progeny, offering their everyday triumphs as palliation for the pain of the past.

The narrative of Deutsch's life in Canada is interesting in part for its continuity with the difficulties of her experiences in Europe. She and Leon struggle to learn English and acquire the necessary accreditation to practise medicine under Canadian law. They approach this task with a tremendous sense of urgency that leads them to move from city to city in search of advantageous work and study opportunities as they arrange their professional lives. Over a few short years they take up residences as widely flung as Regina, Montreal, and Saint John. Because Deutsch tends to understatement in narrating her emotional reactions, these travels and challenges are told in much the same tone as are their experiences in Poland, where the challenges they faced were considerably more threatening, and the consequences of their decisions altogether more dire. Indeed, her presentation of their experiences in Canada hybridize the two notions of place that dominate

Deutsch's European narrative: her tendency to abstraction and her sense of situatedness as risk. Their travels and pursuits in the Canadian context are thus fraught with seemingly disproportionate portent, even as they are described with a sense of abstraction similar to Deutsch's childhood experience of the world: Regina, Saint John, and Montreal are present in the narrative only according to the relative opportunities they offer, but these opportunities are pursued with a life-and-death insistence on the slight advantages offered by one location over another. That this strategy takes on a different referential function, and is seemingly inflected by her wartime experience of place as risk, suggests that its abstraction is not complete; naming owes its coherence to self-referential systematicity, but this system exists with reference in turn to structures of meaning that determine the nature of the relationships that distribute and define names in the first place.

Schiff and Raab both ultimately emigrate to Canada as well, but neither dwells on the experience to the same degree as does Deutsch. Schiff's narrative ends with her redemptive arrival in Israel, and mentions Canada only in the Epilogue, where it is described as "a truly free country of boundless opportunities" (187). In this, it seems to have much in common with Israel, as both are distinguished from "the Communist police state of Czechoslovakia" (187). Like Deutsch, she evaluates her new home according to the experience of her children, who were "privileged to grow up free" (187). The details of their decision to leave Israel and come to Canada remain mysterious, and the two countries seem relevant to her narrative only

insofar as they offer similar freedoms of place and person when placed against the violent backdrop of her European past. This lack of specificity—especially in a text notable for its attention to nuanced details of history and place—and its relegation to the epilogue suggests that these places themselves are less important than their qualities *vis-à-vis* the trajectory of her experience of displacement. Her story treats the narration of place and displacement differently than do the memoirs of Raab and Deutsch, in that her text attempts to confine the violent loss of place she experiences under Nazi rule to that period of time alone. She frames her family's suffering between memories of her childhood (which are presented as independent of her later memories of tragedy) and her insistent return to happiness as a result of her pregnancy (163) and emigration (185-186). Whatever the reason for her second emigration, Israel and Canada are together understood in terms of a fundamental openness of place and possibility that justifies the redemptive and somewhat ahistorical note of resolution, affirmation, and closure on which her memoir ends.

Raab's narrative, on the other hand, is structured by the fact that she travels back and forth between Hungary and Canada in an iterative spatial interaction that reflects her non-linear sense of time: "the past holds the present out of reach, and [...] I am still not free" (1). Neither Deutsch's nor Raab's memoirs offer the constrained linearity of displacement seen in *Theresienstadt*, because neither experiences a definitive end to their loss of place. Raab's present Canadian existence offers her a comparative contrast to Hungary, both as she remembers it and as she experiences it upon her return, which multiplies her sense of alienation

(161, 163, 173). Nevertheless, she presents a narrative fragment of present time early in her memoir that suggests repose in the much the same spirit as her opening idyll in "The Window": "I am sitting at home in Toronto, on the second floor of my house. I look out into the backyard, at the garden, the neighbouring fences, the friendly roofs, the back windows, the slightly moving trees" (13). Raab is alone here, unlike her earlier portrayal of watching the landscape in the company of her father, but she is alone in a similarly peaceful vantage that presents her with an entwined social and physical environment reflective of peaceful communal dwelling. Much later, she pays explicit homage to her adopted home:

> I will feel forever grateful to Toronto, to Ontario, to Canada, but first and foremost to all the "WASPs" who laid the foundations to create this city. I am thankful for their stable culture and their principles, for their unconfusing, solid outlook, for their puritan, rational traditions. Their sense of security and strength allowed me time to relax, to ease my way into the country's true nature, and to feel as close to being "at home" as I could hope to be. (159)

For Raab, the state of being at home is perpetually unresolved. Her residence in Canada seemingly both permits her the comfort and strength for reflective meditation on her past and further displaces her from her increasingly distant Hungarian sense of place and self, complicating her already impossible desire for connection with lost time and place. Her presentation of Canada—and more specifically Toronto—as an "uncomplicated" and "rational" product of "WASP"

values appropriates wholesale various stock elements from traditional Canadian cultural mythology and ignores the antisemitism also characteristic of Canadian "WASP" culture (as Irving Abella and Harold Troper's *None is too Many* and Franklin Bialystok's *Delayed Impact* both explore at length). This moment thus relies on idealized, semi-colonial claims that render this present moment already imagined and nostalgic. Raab's narrating present thus asserts that her present involves a situated space of possibility whose basis is new-world national mythology understood in contrast with the fragmentation of the old world. This strategy erases deep and violent post-colonial histories of difference as well as Canada's role as a bystander, deaf to Europe's Jews during the war. Both moments of peace and place in Raab's text, then, are rendered problematic: her own memories of childhood are the spur of her agonized displacement, and her claims about the present day displace the vexed identity of the new world in favour of its putative difference from her fraught European history.

For each woman, the narration of place is overwhelmingly determined by the violence of Nazi intervention. Their various socio-economic and national senses of situated identity all take on a remarkable consistency in terms of their common oppression by Nazi antisemitism. That they experience such a common divergence from their various situations does not, clearly, allow them a community in displacement. These memoirs, taken together, suggest that any determination of place as meaningful is both partial and teleological. When Holocaust survivors retrospectively narrate the geography and agency involved in their experiences,

they must negotiate between genres of place, chronotopes of experience, and narrative variously understood. The nature of this coordination and the nature of their experiences are intimately related, and differences between them reveal possible differends of place. Schiff, for instance, represents the Nazi transformation of place as an aberration, an alteration from the quotidian situatedness that was the case before the war begins and is reasserted after it ends. Her confidence that this is the case is problematic, however, insofar as she must assert an arbitrary equivalence (according to what measure?) between the State of Israel and the Holocaust. Moreover, her triangular narrative path of complication, crisis, and denouement is troubled in its necessary distinction between "before" and "after" by the disturbing continuity of gendered partiality at the very nadir of her loss. Deutsch, on the other hand, presents the past as redeemed in the contingent particularity of her children and grandchildren growing up in Canada. She thus reclaims a sense of place on the basis of immediate difference rather than theoretical identity: rather than an abstract equivalence cancelling a metaphysical debt, as in Schiff, Deutsch's hope for the present and the future involves her in treating place as a matter of historicized possibility. Deutsch's narrative of emigration emphasizes her orientation to the future as a laborious, practical matter of overcoming day-to-day obstacles. These notions of situated subjectivity seemingly share no common ground: Deutsch offers her sense of place as a matter of materially contingent futurity, whereas Schiff presents it as speculative achievement of the past. And Raab's text offers yet another perspective poised between these two as a result of her sense of alienation

from subjective identification in time. Her experience of lost place has deprived her of the future as a matter of possible achievement, of the past as a conclusive memory, and of the present as the narrative moment articulating new possibilities on the basis of realized ones, resulting in her inconclusive anxiety about the possibility of ever being definitively at home.

Notes

1. Martin Gilbert notes that the Nazis developed a series of increasingly onerous restrictions on the Jewish population in the years following their initial definition and repression under the auspices of the Nuremberg Laws (50-56). These laws were emulated by allies of Nazi Germany (Gilbert 55-56, 79), and were promptly imposed on each region the Nazis conquered, beginning with Austria (Gilbert 58; Bessel 80). Bessel notes that the Nuremberg Laws "provided a legal framework for discrimination, persecution, expropriation, and, eventually, murder" (77); this "framework" may explain the largely consistent pattern by which Jews were ostracized and attacked in regions annexed by or affiliated with the Nazi state.

2. The figure of the musselman has been adduced by many as exemplifying the horror or the distinctiveness of the Nazi concentration camps. Primo Levi

presents one of the most-cited descriptions and assessments in *The Drowned and the Saved*: "their death had begun before that of their body. Weeks and months before being snuffed out, they had already lost the ability to observe, to remember, to compare and express themselves" (84). Wolfgang Sofsky discusses the musselman at length in *The Order of Terror*, arguing that "The *Musselmänner* confuted the collective conceptions of death in civil society. They died anonymous, nameless deaths. Their fate was a mass fate" (204), and concluding that this state represents the failure of our usual binary distinction between the living and the dead, that the "*Musselmänner* embodied a creeping death, a sequence and transition, not a point in time. [...] No taboo could liberate society from the ambivalence of this threshold state" (205). And Giorgio Agamben has recently, in *Remnants of Auschwitz*, taken the figure of the musselman as paradigmatic not only of the camps, but of the nature of testimony and post-Holocaust ethics. (And has been criticised for so doing [cf. Levi and Rothberg 28-34].)

3. It has been long recognized that sexuality and sexual violence are especially difficult for survivors to address: Joan Ringelheim, for instance, recalls her astonishment over a female survivor's sudden revelation that she was raped, and suggests that the gendered shame attendant on any such experience adds an additional dimension to the already difficult task of testifying to Holocaust experiences ("Split" 341-344). Sexual aspects of survivor

narratives are seemingly also subject to self-censorship or suppression out of anxiety that readers might take prurient interest: the 1960 and 1982 English editions of Elie Wiesel's *Night*, for instance, present a conspicuously redacted scene during the prisoners' transport to Auschwitz. The earlier edition notes that the young "gave way openly to instinct, taking advantage of the darkness to copulate in our midst" (33), whereas in the later edition they "flirt" (21). Susan Suleiman reports that Wiesel redacted the text after receiving complaints, and claims to have thereby rendered his recount more accurate, and true to the sensual ambiguity of his original Yiddish text (555-556). Problematically, his memoir *Tous les fleuves vent à la mer* claims that his use of the explicit French term "s'accouplaient" in *La Nuit* (45) may have been a matter of "misplaced shame" over his own arousal—an admission missing from the English version of *All Rivers Run to the Sea* (Suleiman 555). A similar sense of propriety may guide Ruth Bondy in her observation that "[s]ome books on Theresienstadt, especially those published in the United States, suggest that the prisoners were preoccupied by sex" and her claim, on the basis of her experience of internment there, that this preoccupation was not the case (320). Both Vera Schiff and Joan Ringelheim, on the other hand, describe overt sexual activity in the ghetto, but neither ascribes it the erotic nature implied by Bondy's denial, and insist instead on its strategic and coercive nature. Ringelheim quotes a survivor of Theresienstadt:

> [The] Judenrat [was] running [the ghetto and the Jewish men] *used*

> it. And did they *use* it. *Did* they use it. That was how you survived as a woman—through the male. I was done in by one. I suppose I didn't sleep high enough, to put it bluntly. Because in that society, that was the only way you could survive. ("Women" 376)

Concerns over propriety in presenting the sexualized aspects of power and violence in experiences of the Holocaust make attending to the sexual specificity of survivors' experiences all the more problematic. This is to suggest that, even in the face of the abominable prospect of "Holocaust pornography" (cf. Rosenfeld, "Fascination" 59-60), the suppression of sexuality altogether fails to serve the need for accurate and meaningful presentation of the events and circumstances of the destruction, which encompassed the victims and survivors in their fullest breadth and depth as human beings, including their sexual desires and sexual vulnerabilities.

4. Schiff also portrays another such figure of problematic medical authority: Dr. Epstein, a pediatrician and survivor of Auschwitz. After the war, "[t]here were many of us, the young mothers, who placed their trust in Prof. Epstein, for we had no grandmothers or other senior relatives who could guide us or offer help" (165). In retrospect she realizes that "he was a uniquely poor choice" (165) who was haunted by the tragic deaths of his family, was "bitter and harsh" (166), and extolled a rigorous, strict, and arbitrary regimen of

feeding and child care unresponsive to the particular needs of infant or mother. Masculine authority thus entered into the vacuum left by the genocidal interruption of traditional inter-generational female relationships, and did so with classically austere, instrumental rationality.

Chapter Five
Meaning

Holocaust survivors face tremendous problems attempting to communicate their experiences to others. A nearly unanimous example of this is the indifference and hostility that met survivors' attempts to tell their stories in the decades immediately following the war.[1] They continue to face the problem of communicating their understanding of the meaning or the quality of an experience that is far beyond the normal bounds of existence.[2] These boundaries constrain the possibilities of testimony, and survivors tend to be acutely aware of the degree to which communicative expression fails in the face of their experiences; as Maurice Blanchot notes, "We read books on Auschwitz. The wish of all, in the camps, the last wish: know what happened, do not forget, and at the same time you will never know" (*Writing* 82). Failed or impossible communication is a standard trope in both Holocaust literature and its critical analysis. Many canonical memoirs (Elie Wiesel's *Night* and Robert Antelme's *The Human Race*, for example) involve explicit anguish over the limits of expression or the impossibility of explanation, and the critical literature has taken this up as perhaps the defining characteristic of Holocaust writing (note such titles as *Between Witness and Testimony: The Holocaust and the Limits of Representation, Probing the Limits of Representation, The Holocaust and the Text: Speaking the Unspeakable*, and so forth). This anxiety is thus both staged and read as a representational strategy that directs readerly attention to losses

beyond words, to the multiple differends of historical and personal suffering that exceed and motivate the expression of particular sorrows.

Berel Lang argues, in the face of so much insistence that the Holocaust is unrepresentable, that "the Holocaust *is* speakable, *has* been spoken, *will be* spoken (certainly here), and most of all, *ought* to be" ("Holocaust" 18). The limits of meaning are of pressing and immediate concern to survivors who are forced onto the scene of representation to present the terrible immediacy of their memories and experiences to distant or critical audiences and with respect to recognized and recognizable modes of narration and understanding. Overcoming such tragic differends requires taking a representational stand with respect to existing canons of meaning, pursuing a strategy of expression that takes such limits into account as both a challenge to be overcome and as the very framework within which communication must occur. In rising to this challenge, the memoirs *Witness to Horror* by Ann Kazimirski and *I Wish it Were Fiction* by Elsa Thon take very different narrative trajectories, but each situates itself with respect to canonical modes of understanding, and each takes advantage of the multi-glossal nature of narrative to pit generic norms against one another in idiomatic response to the difficulties and pressures of testifying to survival.

The sense that representation is futile, or at least partial, arises in part because of the inherently partial and contested nature of meaning in general. Jean-François Lyotard suggests that the meaning of any given utterance is a matter not only of its own discourse genre and phrase regimen, but of the phrases and genres

that take it as a referent or otherwise link on to it: "Reality is not a matter of the absolute eyewitness, but a matter of the future. [...] What is absolutely required [...] is the contingency of the future. By this, not only the contingency of 'events' should be understood but also the contingency of sense" (*Differend* 53). This contingency of the future leads Lyotard to claim that history is written in the future anterior as what "will have happened" (e.g., *Postmodern Explained* 15). That a text may have been written as a certain genre of narrative, for instance, is a judgement ultimately made by readers, but on the basis of the performance of the text itself. In this sense there are readerly as well as authorial genres, and what we call meaning arises in the interaction of the two. Robert Eaglestone describes this situation:

> Thus, genre—with all its signs, both textual and extra- or meta-textual—is not just a way of writing; it is a way of reading, too, or rather where reading and writing meet. Genre is the context of a work that, as it were, both frames it and makes it comprehensible 'externally' and gives it shape 'internally.' ("Not" 37)

Both authorial inventiveness and readerly interpretation take place in contexts determined in advance by hermeneutic genres that offer at least heuristic, and sometimes coercive, direction to the determination of expressive meaning.

Laurence Kirmayer notes that there are "many possible situations of retelling" of Holocaust memories, and offers as specific examples conversations with doctors and psychotherapists, "courtroom depositions," and "videotaped testimonies to be stored in official archives" (178). His examples divide the

manifold possibilities of retelling into three canonical situations: therapeutic, legal, and historical. Each of these cases involves a powerful institutional determination of meaning that is oriented toward a goal: recovery, judgement, memorialization. In a similar vein, Dori Laub differentiates between the therapeutic and the historical understanding of truthfulness in testimony, noting that historians approach the memory-texts of survivors in search of reliable, verifiable attention to events, locations, and people, whereas a psychotherapist may approach the same text in search of metaphors and displacements that attest to the survivor's individual relationship to the experience rather than the literal facts of the matter (Felman and Laub 59-60). These analyses suggest that certain hermeneutic modes are dominant in determining what memoirs mean—or what they will have meant. Kirmayer notes that "even where retelling does not—and may never—occur, there is a 'virtual space,' a potential social context of retelling that influences the most private reconstructions of memory" (178). More pointedly, Martin Butovsky and Kurt Jonasshon claim that "there is a strong compulsion to shape one's personal story in conformity with traditional precepts" (153). Memoirists, especially those whose experiences are beyond the pale in their violence and suffering, may have goals that are poorly served by these canonical genres. Leigh Gilmore notes that "conventions about truth-telling, salutary though they are, can be inimical to the ways in which some writers bring trauma stories into language" (3). This partiality leads to important concerns about meanings and experiences that are therefore suppressed as inexpressible, produced as unimaginable, by common constraints on

coherence of expression. Or, as Paul Antze and Michael Lambek argue, "[w]here legal and diagnostic categories have become the only legitimate terms in which to remember suffering, then it becomes important to ask what has been forgotten" (xxiv).

Lyotard has observed that an instance of silence, of failed or absent communication, results from the suppression of one or more of the four instances situated by a phrase: the addressor, addressee, sense, or referent (*Differend* §26-27). Different discourse genres attend to or ignore the various pragmatic positions according to the stakes they pursue. Problems of evidence and witnessing are attributed by Holocaust deniers, for instance, exclusively to the referent: they claim that the absence of acceptable evidence demonstrates the nonexistence of the referent, and conclude that the events did not take place. Such arguments tend to be fraught with gross epistemological errors in how they define and assess evidence (as Lyotard notes with respect to Faurisson [*Differend* §2]), but they also pass silently over the possibilities implied by the other three positions of discourse: that the addressor is unable or unwilling to speak, that the addressee is unwilling or unable to listen, or that there is a problem in assigning a sense to the referent. The canonical interpretive genres can thus be approached by way of the four instances presented by a phrase. The sense and the referent, for instance, are given over to legal and historical determination as matters for cognitive validation. The desire of survivors to bear witness necessarily involves them in the standards that define historical truth. As James Young notes, "writers and readers of Holocaust narrative

have long insisted that it literally deliver documentary evidence of specific events, that it come not to stand for the destruction, or merely point toward it, but that it be received as testimonial proof of the events that it embodies" (*Writing* 10). Testimony must thus "prove" the objective actuality of its content "before" it presents it as a subjective experience. The limited ability of the historical and therapeutic modes to support notions of culpability and blame also demands that survivor testimony—which often seeks to blame the perpetrators as well as to commemorate the victims—take into account legal expectations of evidence and argument, and all the more so when the survivor (as in the case of Kazimirski) has been involved in legal proceedings as a witness. Young notes that there is a direct connection between the legal and the realistic-historical modes: "if concrete action was to be taken in response to these atrocities, concrete evidence needed to be delivered to the world" (*Writing* 17). His description marks the difference between the legal and historical genres as the difference between action and evidence. The legal genre exists to determine guilt and impose punishment. In so doing, it makes use of the historical mode by way of admitting and considering evidence, but the elaboration of historical truth is explicitly not its goal.

If the historical and legal modes take special interest in the referent, the traumatic or therapeutic genre turns its attention to the addressor. This attention is found in the other genres to the extent that a witness is assessed as reliable or not—a distinction that may rest on psychological judgement in terms of "fitness to testify." Jacques Derrida notes that should a legal witness insist on the idiomatic

uniqueness of her perspective and knowledge, her discourse is excluded from the realm of legal interest as symptomatic of personal pathology ("Demeure" 41). These genres (law and therapy) are thus mutually defined in terms of the exclusive extent of their authoritative domains. Survivor-witnesses are of course intimately familiar with the devastating psychological consequences of incarceration, violence, and the threat of death. Some well-known survivor-authors, such as Bruno Bettelheim and Viktor Frankl, devoted professional careers to elaborating the psychological impact of survival. Moreover, in many—if not most—cases, the drive to testify comes not from abstract desire to provide historical or legal evidence, but from the pressure of anguish and insupportable grief that demands expression. The therapeutic genre, like the legal and historical genres, takes up testimony as evidence, but as evidence to the nature of the addressor herself, and it does so, in a professional context, in order to effect some change in the experience and expression of the addressor.

There remains the matter of the addressee: the marked or unmarked instance that "receives" a phrase. Little attention is paid to the addressee, especially by the genres discussed so far: they have traditionally suppressed this aspect of linkage in the name of objectivity or authority. Very few critics and historians (such as Shoshana Felman and Dominic LaCapra) with an interest in psychoanalytic thought have turned their attention to the effects and affects involved in responding to narratives of violence and suffering. Dori Laub argues that the addressee is often of the utmost importance to survivors who attest to their experiences; they are often primarily interested in participating, by way of testimony, in dialogic recognition

denied them by the violence of genocide: "the survivor survives only as an impossible 'I,' absolutely without any feeling of a 'thou' who could be addressed" (803). The neglected addressee instance is thus of immediate importance from the perspective of witnesses; it is also significant in the context of Lyotard's ethical ideas insofar as his understanding of ethics privileges the addressee as the unique and unavoidable recipient of the obligation involved in responsibility: "The question is to know whether, when one hears something that might resemble a call, one is held to be held by it. [...] One must find oneself placed in the position of addressee for a prescription" (*Differend* 107). Holocaust memoirs imply such a demand in the sheer weight of manifest injustice they recount; nevertheless, the reception of such a demand is profoundly uncertain in the face of both such overwhelming injustice and in the displacement of individual responsiveness by collective or abstract good intentions, as exemplified by the now-tragic phrase "Never again!" Giorgio Agamben refers sardonically to the "powerlessness of men, who continue to cry 'May that never happen again!' when it is clear that 'that' is, by now, everywhere" (20). This response is troubling not only because of its historically patent futility, but because it defers responsibility as a matter of impersonal and ambiguous futurity divorced from the particularity of the past that evoked it. This turn away from immediate responsibility characterizes the displacement of the addressee by attention to such matters as referentiality, jurisprudence, and pathology. Perhaps if anything is "forgotten" in testimony, as Antze and Lambek imply, it is the weight of individual responsiveness and responsibility for meaning

that cannot be forsworn, and it is perhaps in the name of that uniqueness, that remainder, that survivors seek to express meanings beyond the instituted bounds of fact, guilt, and trauma.

The primary canonical modes of understanding the notion of testimony are thus the historical, with its focus on documentary and explanatory narratives about past events; the legal, which uses testimony to judge the relevance of the law to a given event and to impose the material power of state sanctions; and the therapeutic, which seeks to explore or relieve the anguish expressed in testimony, and which operates by means of eliciting and transforming testimony itself. Each mode confronts Holocaust survivors with a generic aporia: be heard and be recognized, but on terms heterogeneous to the nature of your experience. Of these genres, historiography has the most clearly epistemological goals. Both law and therapy overtly seek some end other than knowledge, whereas the historian seeks to present a narrative that is first and foremost a true account of past events. This interest in objective truth has traditionally implied a suspicion of testimonial partiality: "historians have long disregarded the voices of witnesses as hopelessly compromised by their subjective stance vis-à-vis events" (Young, "Towards" 24). Steve Buckler points out that there are always reservations regarding the relationship between the partiality of individual memory and the general context of historical understanding:

> Recollection solicits a past constituted by a series of historically unmediated experiences encapsulating the standpoint of the

> participant. There is no guarantee that the participant gains, *as* a participant, an adequate grasp upon events, and certainly not in a sense that would satisfy our historical interest. (3)

The history in which we so take interest is understood by Buckler as an explanatory narrative that situates past events in relation to one another across a relatively broad geographical and temporal scope. Dominic LaCapra similarly defines history as seeking "to develop not only a professionally validated public record of past events but also a critically tested, empirically accurate, accessible memory of significant events which becomes part of the public sphere" ("Holocaust" 215). These definitions present the task of the historian as an undeniably necessary endeavour; they become problematic, however, in the requirement for generic recognizability and general accessibility, which, in tandem with the canonicity implied by professional imprimatur and the naive demand for verisimilitude in popular-cultural versions of historical understanding, present victims of violence with an at-times coercive restriction on the expression of their experiences. Gilmore argues, for instance, that "trauma names an unprecedented experience" (19) and suggests that autobiographical narratives of trauma are constrained by the common "anxiety about truth-telling" and "preference for the literal and verifiable, even in the presence of some ambivalence about those criteria" (3).

Holocaust survivors are faced with an extreme version of the general dilemmas that problematize the relationship between singular attestation and verification. Clearly no single participant in an event involving millions or even

hundreds of people has sufficient perspective to address the event as a whole. Peter Haidu, describing Raul Hilberg's analysis of the perspectivism inherent in historiographic sources, notes that "the Jewish sources [...] tell of particular experiences, but without grasping the larger process in which they were involved" (280). These general difficulties were compounded for Holocaust survivors by the context of deliberate deceptiveness in which the genocide took place. The Nazi extermination effort was accompanied by well-known distortions of language and behaviour intended to mask the murderous extent of their intentions from their victims, from the outside world, and to some degree from themselves as perpetrators of atrocity.[3] Abraham Bomba's account of Treblinka in Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* reveals that in some cases the deception lasted through the very doors of the gas chambers (113-114). Perhaps most injurious of all the deceptive effects that masked the enormous scale of the Nazi genocide was its similarity, seen in local context, to its antisemitic historical precedents. Young notes that in each community the Nazis overran, the initial wave of violence resembled the horrible but nevertheless familiar *pogroms* that European Jews had suffered but endured for centuries (*Writing* 94). The Nazi threat, seen from this perspective, was thus malevolent but recognizable, a risk that could be managed by the age-old endurance that ensured survival in the past. This response was poorly matched to the scope of the Nazi conquest and the categorical nature of their antisemitism. Individual perspectives from within the events of the Holocaust thus suffer not only the usual burden of subjective partiality, but the added difficulties arising from the violent,

deceptive, and unprecedented nature of the events.

The norms of historiography are necessary to the construction of shared public discourse about the past, but their hegemony in terms of expectations of realism and verisimilitude can present individual survivors with dilemmas of expression. Gilmore notes that "[w]hen judgement constrains the self-representation, disallows or stigmatizes the inventiveness necessary to live to tell the story, or simply views the autobiographer as raw material for a verdict, then writers do well to structure the grounds for an alternative hearing" (145). Norms of historical narration, though contested (and especially so in the context of the Holocaust), can provide examples of just such a verdict.[4] This aporia can be a result of commonly held notions of verisimilitude and intelligibility, but it can be seen in the professional literature as well. A striking example of this is Brana Gurewitsch's edited collection of women's oral testimonies *Mothers, Sisters, Resisters*. A massive apparatus of notes surrounds these testimonies, and both the process of questioning that elicited these texts and the occasionally disjointed temporality of the interviewees' responses has been edited out, explicitly in the interest of clarity of description (xx). Gurewitsch claims that this extensive editorial intervention was undertaken to "facilitate the full description of each episode" (xx) and that, having been approved by the woman in question, manages to "preserve the voice of the interviewee" (xxi). Despite these—quite problematic—claims to equivalence and consent, the status of these texts as transparently historical source material has thus been to no small degree dictated and produced by an editorial process that has, in

the process of rendering them as evidence for historical generality, deprived them of their narrative specificity. Lawrence Langer notes that memory and testimony elicited and shaped by interviewers produce structures of meaning and dwell on events that are explicitly the product of the interaction, and often reflect the interests of the interviewer (*Holocaust* 28, 58-64). This partiality reflects the fact that, in all instances of testimony, written or oral, the form that narratives take is essential rather than extraneous to their meaning, which cannot thereby be reduced to a series of events or facts.

Marrus argues that attention to particularity is characteristic of the study of history (18). Breadth of scale and generality of inference are also characteristic of the genre, however, and so imply its transcendent relation to individual stories. As Lyotard, Blanchot, and others argue, such a loss of uniqueness is at play in the simplest act of speech; some historians have recognized that, *a fortiori*, large-scale historical explanation tends to erase individual lived experiences.[5] This aspect of the relationship between testimony and history can be seen in survivor memoirs themselves, in that they rely on the contexts provided by Holocaust historiography even as they find them inadequate. Elisabeth Raab, for instance, feels compelled to write "her" story in full acknowledgement that the facts of the Holocaust are "common knowledge" (1). Indeed, commonly-understood history of the Holocaust and World War II is often assumed as the background to memoirs of survival; as Egan and Helms note, many memoirists recognize that "stories like their own already exist and are well known; they even build on information in other stories"

(31). This seeming wealth of historical information is nevertheless insufficient in the eyes of the memoirist because it does not present the particularities of her story. Historical background is often implied or assumed as a condition of a memoir's plausibility but is simultaneously inadequate as an expression of what the memoirist finds meaningful in the events of the past. This tension between individual text and widely known cultural context is illustrated in a more extreme form by LaCapra's critical description of the process of historical canonization, which "requires that the critical or even potentially transformative—non canonical or anticanonical—dimensions of texts and other artifacts be repressed or radically downplayed" (*Representing* 6). By this means historical judgement admits texts that suit its cognitive validation schema but also commonly held causal and explanatory narrative themes. Individual memoirs that pursue a testimonial project with non-documentary goals pose problems of interpretation and so validity for canonical norms. But memoirs that follow these norms too closely attenuate the perspectival certainty of the autobiographical mode in insisting on their own transparently general or exemplary nature.[6]

The generic norms of history respond to testimony with an eye to situating events, names, times, and places under what Lyotard terms the cognitive regimen. It shares this interest with the legal genre, which similarly relies on the evidence of testimony to pursue its goals. Giorgio Agamben argues that, whereas the goal of the historical genre is a truthful explanatory and documentary articulation of the past, the legal genre is distinguished by its disinterest in matters of truth (18). The

historical and the legal genres both involve judgement, however. Legal judgement compares the case at hand with the general template set forth by the law in order to effect a determination of guilt or innocence. Historical investigation also comes to a judgement, but of the truth or falsehood of a particular narrative (whose substance is also determined by evidence evaluated according to standard criteria). The legal mode is explicit in its interests (via closely defined jurisdictions) and its exclusiveness (via rules of evidence and procedure). The legal genre is also explicitly indebted to the individual witness, whose unique presence in the courtroom becomes Derrida's paradigm of testimony in "Demeure." Agamben notes, however, that the legal etymology of "testimony" has historically referred to two types of witnessing: that of the *terstis*, a third party to a conflict, and that of the *superstite*, who experienced the events under consideration (17). These perspectives bear different relations to the facts under examination by the legal tribunal in that the relative objectivity of the *terstis* is privileged in determining legal judgement. Moreover, the legal process itself is neither intended nor structured to decide on the truth of the matter at hand; the legal tribunal exists only to render a judgement of guilt or innocence: "once Law has produced its *res judicata* it cannot go any further" (Agamben 18). This essential heterogeneity is alienating for the *superstites* because their defining experience of the events is one of certainty, of ineluctable memory, and as such is a matter of truth ultimately irrelevant to the stakes of litigation.

> A non-juridical element of truth exists such that the *quaestio facti* can never be reduced to the *quaestio iuris*. This is precisely what concerns

> the survivor: everything that places a human action beyond the law, radically withdrawing it from the Trial. (Agamben 17)

As Derrida argues, the authority of the witness rests on her certainty, her memory, and her uniqueness, an authority that is normalized to the stakes of the legal genre, in which certainty in matters of fact is of contingent relevance to judgements of guilt or innocence, which remain matters of law.

The witness is therefore often caught between genres, so to speak, in cases where she seeks both the recognition of fact and causality that are matters of history and the adjudication and punishment that are matters of legality. The legal genre and the historical genre share an interest in chains of causality, but it is the legal genre that invokes the coercive apparatus of the state to effect punishment and redress. The relative freedom of the historical genre to conjoin matters of fact and matters of causality is a subjective freedom that can hold perpetrators responsible only in abstraction. Causality in historical analysis, moreover, is more enthymeme than syllogism, as it is necessarily a matter of argument and opinion (Kren 6-7). Historical discourse may be public or scholarly, and although it aspires to completion, it remains—thankfully—subject to disagreement, re-articulation, re-interpretation. It therefore lacks both the decisiveness and the repercussions of legal recourse. The ambiguities of legal argument are swept aside by the binarism of judgement; such judgements are subject to appeal, but the process of appeal is inherently finite and final, subject as it is to judgement in turn. And in contrast to the moral and causal evaluation of historical discourse, legal judgement results in

materially coercive punishment. Witnesses experience a certainty of experience and injustice that demands action of similar certainty, and in theory, a legal declaration of guilt mirrors this absolute demand. In practice, however, the legal genre explicitly attenuates the certainty of the individual witness in pursuing its goals, which are heterogeneous to that of the witness. Thus, one often sees the dual demand that the facts of the matter and the attribution of guilt be understood and believed conjoined in survivor testimony, which thereby finds itself alienated from the hegemonic means of validating both its epistemological and moral claims.[7]

Laub and Kirmayer both distinguish between historical and therapeutic modes of interpreting survivor testimony. The therapeutic genre includes narratives understood as arising out of the experience of trauma as well as narratives that arise in explicitly therapeutic contexts. That is, the therapeutic narrative may arise at any point in the survivor's experience of the psychological impact of their experience, and may partake of traumatized repetition more so than therapeutic working-through. The common thread in this genre is an understanding of testimonial expression with respect to the addressor: as symptomatic, in the first case, and healing, in the second. In Judith Herman's presentation of the therapeutic process, the goal of narrative remembrance is to transform the "traumatic memory, so that it can be integrated into the survivor's life story" (175). This, the second of Herman's three stages of therapeutic recovery, requires the laborious telling and re-telling of the traumatic events, complete with affective responses, with the ultimate goal of integrating them into a sense of overall autobiographical cohesion that

allows the survivor to relegate the traumatic events to the past and so face the present and future (195). Despite the very real and important goal of recovery from tremendous mental distress, this mode of witnessing is devoted to homogenizing and naturalizing narrative effects that are in some ways at odds with the drive to bear witness. Although attenuating the fragmentation of time and memory that is intrinsic and perhaps even definitional for traumatized consciousness is essential to a survivor's recovery from a mental-health perspective, such a homogenized narrative diverges sharply from the nature of the experience as it was impressed upon the survivor at the time, and it is often the fragmented, chaotic, and overwhelming—in short, traumatizing—aspects of their past that survivors seek to express in bearing witness to the events and their impact. Young notes that "upon entering narrative, violent events necessarily reenter the continuum, are totalized by it, and thus seem to lose their 'violent' quality" (*Writing* 15). Survivors experiencing both traumatic symptoms and the drive to bear witness may find themselves caught between a mimetic narrative mode that emphasizes the fragmented horror of the past and a healing one that orders and integrates that suffering into the context of a life story.

Both the historical and therapeutic perspectives on narrativity insist that narrative bring moral and aesthetic structure to the events they situate in time. Susan Brison and Judith Herman both insist on the central role of narrative in therapeutic recovery from trauma, and both note that its role is to integrate discordant and disruptive memories into a structured, causal relationship linking

past, present, and future. Buckler makes a similar claim for historical narration. In Buckler's understanding of historiography, the narratives of history situate events in familiarizing contexts productive of and reflecting common identity. He asserts that the Holocaust is problematic from a historical point of view for reasons strongly analogous with the stakes of Brison and Herman's treatment of trauma: the Holocaust proves indigestible for the assumptions of an ideal historical communal subject because it challenges foundational elements by which cosmopolitan modernity recognizes itself (12). A problem that arises *vis-à-vis* these uses of narrative is its lack of intrinsic characteristics; narrative is a mode of discourse that can rely on structures of formal coherence and reinforce traditional norms or challenge the status of such norms. Mikhail Bakhtin's analyses of discourse in the novel, for instance, reveal that narrative involves the citational and intertextual capacity to incorporate a vast diversity of expression—any sign system or structuring principle can take some place in narrative (294). Any given novel or story can enact transformational juxtaposition and citational commentary involving other sign systems because individual works are capable of producing their own ordering principles. This understanding of narrative has its roots in the deconstructive notion that iterability and fictionality are in fact the general case and that genres of discourse such as those under consideration here maintain their homogeneity by policing regions of textual expression for standards of propriety that are stipulated rather than a priori. That meaning takes place in contexts that cannot, in principle, be wholly determined (Derrida, "Signature" *passim*), means

that writing, perhaps especially novelistic or narrative writing, enacts the possibility of resistance to coercive generic norms precisely because, although it can be deployed in an organizing manner, it need not do so along familiar or canonical lines, nor can the meaning of its expression, however organized, be wholly determined.[8]

The hermeneutic modes of history, law, and therapy cite and comprehend testimonial texts according to the stakes defining each genre, and based on the constraints they impose. Some theoretical approaches to testimony are more restrictive than others. Derrida's definition of testimony, for instance, is very narrowly judicial—excluding, for example, what may be at stake in the therapeutic mode. Lambek and Antze argue that "the chronotopes of therapy and of juridical evidence are quite distinct" and that we "cannot grasp the meaning of memories without attending to their chronotopic frames" (xviii). As Bahktin has shown, chronotopes take not only distinct canonical forms, but idiomatic ones as well (252). To some extent, survivors who publish memoirs do so in an individuating effort that distinguishes the particularities of their story from the homogenizing generality of the cognitively based genres that interpret them. As Derrida's and Laub's observations imply, these genres define themselves by mutual exclusion, in so doing mapping fields of authority that cover much of the field of testimonial expression. The authorial role claimed by survivors who chose to write for the undetermined audience of the book-buying public is considerably different from the instrumental role they might play, say, providing source material for historical

study. They cast their stories out onto unknown waters where interpretive freedom is the rule. They must not only, then, tell their story, but structure that story to convey its meaning, and in the telling and the structuring, define the kind of meaning it has.

That there are different kinds of meaning and genres of truth has been a common interest of postmodernist and feminist thinking. Feminist studies in epistemology, for instance, have argued that all knowledge is situated knowledge, that facts are known in contexts that include issues as broad as subjectivity and epistemology itself (cf. Lennon and Whitford, Alcoff and Potter). Feminism and postmodernism share a suspicion of what Donna Harraway calls the "god trick" of a detached investigator producing temporally, spatially, and socially universal results (189). Asking what these authors claim to know and what significations they attempt to communicate will therefore involve consideration of their particular situations as well as the narrative means they use to describe their experiences. Both Kazimirski and Thon, for instance, display a gendered response to adversity and to the narrative means of constructing meaning. The narratives and meanings they present are quite distinct, however, with very different relationships to canonical hermeneutic modes. Kazimirski, influenced by her experience as a trial witness, attempts to provide documentary factuality in the mode of subjective certainty, an anxious effort that is influenced by her claiming an identity as a storyteller in the tradition of her grandfathers and standing as a witness in her husband's stead. She thus attempts to speak across chasms of testimonial role and

gendered identity, with mixed results. Thon's memoir, on the other hand, is more private, less teleological, and more concerned with the anxious relationship between the genres that determine factuality and their fictive literary others.

Kazimirski's *Witness to Horror* was written in anguished response to the acquittal of accused SS Gebitskomissar Wilhelm Westerheide, at whose 1982 trial Kazimirski acted as a witness for the prosecution. She opens her book by recounting her dismay at hearing about the verdict in 1990: "NOT GUILTY. NOT GUILTY. To understand how I felt you must read the following pages. And then you too will feel as I felt. And you will understand why that phone call left me in such a devastated condition" (i). The verdict and her reaction to it become a central motive for her to tell her story: "To have this man be declared innocent was a terrible blow to me, and made me feel absolutely powerless in the face of justice. I decided that the least I could do was tell my story of what had really happened" (157). In this moment, Kazimirski suffers a wrong and becomes a victim, in Lyotard's sense: "The victim does not have the legal means to bear witness to the wrong done him or her" (*Differend* 30). Her memoir seeks to present a countervailing story set against the official innocence of the Nazi official she believes to be responsible for the murder of the inhabitants of the Vladimir-Volynski ghetto. Further to this factual and historical goal is an affective one: to have the reader participate in her dismay over this injustice. She seeks to transcend and critique the limits of the legal genre, which failed her, by appealing to a more general sense of justice that she lays out for

her readers. Kazimirski uses her memoir to place her testimonial evidence before a literary tribunal—to, in effect, put legal justice itself on trial by presenting to the undetermined audience of her memoirs "what had really happened." She thus calls upon her readers to witness her presentation of the truth, in a mode Lyotard describes as seeking to inspire obligation on the part of the addressee: "The avenger is a justice-maker, the request (the cry) is addressed to him or her (the addressee) as to a judge" (*Differend* 30). She thus turns from the institutional realm of legal power to the multiglossal expressiveness of textuality in search of an idiom that will produce effects corresponding to her sense of being wronged. This effort thus takes place in an adversarial relationship with the genre of legal justice that nonetheless mimics its forms and goals. By attempting to exact textual vengeance by way of affecting her addressees, Kazimirski's memoir seeks out an alternative idiom or genre, a genre that might be called the "ethical" genre (to employ Lyotard's understanding of this term) because it seeks first and foremost to elicit responsive attention on the part of the audience, but does not, ultimately, define the nature of that response or a standard for its own fulfilment.

The final chapter of Kazimirski's original memoir (she added subsequent material in the second edition) deals with her experiences witnessing at war-crimes trials. In 1971 she attended a trial of *Einsatzkommando* members to which her husband had been called to testify: "The German government believed that Henry, who worked in the dental clinic and had contact with numerous German officials, would be an excellent witness. They did not consider me a witness at all" (111).

Henry's interactions with the Nazi hierarchy put him in a privileged position to give evidence regarding their stated plans and so their responsibility for the murder of the ghetto inhabitants. Kazimirski, who had no such contact with Nazi officers, does not have the immediate experience that would lead to her acting as a witness for the court. Despite her lack of first-hand experience with the Nazi officers on trial and her corresponding lack of status as a "witness," she is called to the stand after Henry's testimony in order to corroborate his statements. "To verify whether he had told the truth, they asked him for permission to call me to the box. They wanted corroboration of Henry's testimony. They asked me if I agreed. I agreed because all the details were still fresh in my mind" (111–112). She is called, unexpectedly, as a secondary, supportive witness for her husband. She mentions that she had not been in the court room when he testified (112), so her ability to agree with him both adds to his plausibility and suggests that she possesses equivalent knowledge by proxy of the matters at hand. She therefore introduces a problematic rift into the very notion of first-person testimonial certainty upon which her text relies.

This first trial, which resulted in a guilty verdict and the imprisoning of the defendants, raised many questions about the origin of the orders for the killings. "We said that we believed—we didn't have written proof—that the man in charge was SS Gebitskomissar Westerheide" (113). Henry testified that another doctor reported to him that Westerheide had bragged about his efficient and humane methods of killing Jews. Kazimirski notes that "This information was important

because then they knew that Westerheide organized the whole thing" (113). Henry died before Westerheide was brought to trial some ten years later in 1982, and Kazimirski, after a preliminary enquiry held at the German consulate in Montreal, was brought as a witness in his stead. Her goal in attending this trial was to confront Westerheide as an avenging survivor: "He would have to listen and hear how the world is informed about his terrible deeds, and this information would come from me, one of his victims who got away" (116). This desire for one-on-one confrontation is frustrated from the beginning, however, by the formal apparatus of the legal proceedings. Kazimirski's account of the trial foregrounds the aggressive defence mounted by Westerheide's attorneys, who cross-examine her on the details of her testimony (118-119). She describes the three *Aktions* that decimated the ghetto's inhabitants, but is unable to provide much detail about the first two because she was only present in the ghetto for the third. Her knowledge about Westerheide's involvement is based on the fact "that he used to come to Dr. Hecker's dental clinic and Henry used to tell me exactly what he had said" and the occasion when, hiding in the attic of the clinic, she saw him enter the ghetto during the first *Aktion* (119). She is able to support her account of that event by correctly identifying photographs of buildings and people (120). A large portion of the account of the trial is taken up with Kazimirski's impassioned closing statement, in which she calls on the court to avenge the fate of the murdered Jews of Vladimir-Volynski by not allowing the perpetrators to escape blame. She concludes her account of the trial by describing an unflattering encounter with the judge, and by

declaring that she, untutored in law, could have handled the prosecution more effectively herself. There is no account of others' testimony or the extent of the case against the defendants. That Westerheide was not convicted, Kazimirski's description of the trial suggests, is due to a flawed system incapable or uninterested in punishing the guilty rather than by any weakness in the case—such as her own unfortunately vicarious knowledge of key events and relationships.

Kazimirski thus approaches the trial with a desire for vengeful confrontation based on her own certainty about the events and Westerheide's guilt. Her performance in the trial setting is consistent with this intimately personal perspective: she relies on her recollection of Henry's description of his knowledge and her repeated ability to identify Westerheide in person (117) and in photographs (120). Her plea to hold Westerheide individually accountable asserts an ethos of responsibility and guilt that disregards the critically-tested plausibility at stake in the legal proceedings contextualizing her statement. This situation is precisely the conflict Lyotard identifies as characteristic of "vengeance":

> The law reserves the right authority to establish the crime, to pronounce the verdict and to determine the punishment before the tribunal which has heard the two parties expressing themselves in the same language, that of the law. The justice which the victim calls upon against the justice of the tribunal cannot be uttered in the genre of juridical or forensic discourse. (*Differend* 30)

Kazimirski appears in such a trial setting, but expresses herself in an idiom alien to

its goals. The failure of legal judgement to carry out her desire for justice is underscored by her assertion of the effectiveness of her trial testimony; she repeatedly makes reference to the impact her story has on the audience: people cover their faces and weep (119), some sob amidst the general silence (122). Kazimirski thus approaches the trial with intentions alien to its genre, and performs a role and assesses her performance according to the standards of this goal, which is denied her from the beginning by the generality and strictures of the legal context.

The wrong she experiences in this conflict of genres suggests the paradoxical structural seeds of her memoir. The legalistic demand for evidential certainty provides, in conjunction with her sense of insistent personal injustice, the organizing principles for her writing. Throughout *Witness to Horror,* Kazimirski emphasizes the phenomenal and experiential certainty of what she experienced, and in so doing claims the unique authority of the eyewitness who testifies to her experience. With this gesture, however, Kazimirski is caught in the double bind of testimony. She wishes to establish the facts beyond all doubt, but the idiomatic nature of individual testimony means that it cannot in principle validate the certainties it expresses. She therefore resorts to additional strategies to support the truth of her assertions. Chief among these are tokens of successful transmission of meaning (much as she notes the emotional reactions of the audience during her courtroom appearance) and frequent shifts in narrative point of view to deploy historical objectivity within the testimonial narrating perspective, the presence of

which, however, interrupts that personal idiom. Perhaps more problematic still is the ongoing assumption, implied in Kazimirski's report of the trials, that she is in possession of testimonial knowledge equivalent to or substitutable for that of her husband. This strategy, which generalizes the idiomatic nature of testimonial experience, paradoxically denies the very testimonial authority of the witness that she otherwise relies on to carry her point.

Much of Kazimirski's memoir emphasizes the incontestable immediacy of her experience, and does so with an eye to the demands of the legal context that failed her. She, her mother, and her husband escape the extermination of the larger ghetto by hiding in the attic of the dental clinic in which Henry worked. The tiny window in the attic "did not open but provided light and a full view of the ghetto's gate" (48). This situation of the window is repeatedly emphasized: "it faced the ghetto exactly, and the gebittkomissariat was in full view" (49). It is from this vantage point that Kazimirski insists on witnessing the mass murder of her fellow Jews. "I pulled Henry away and said 'Let me see what's going on' And I saw a sight straight from hell, a sight that burned itself into my memories" (50). The subsequent pages describing the violence in the ghetto continue to foreground Kazimirski's presence as a witness with verbs indicating that she heard and saw what she describes. Having witnessed the first *Aktion* from a distance, she emphasizes her presence as an observer whose first-person exposure to the events gives her testimony its urgency and legitimacy. Much later, during the third and final *Aktion*, Kazimirski and Henry are trapped in the ghetto, and are forced into a

frantic escape attempt. She presents this experience in a still more immersive manner, with reference to horrors of touch as well as sight and sound: "Those who had tried to escape before us and failed lay on the ground; their blood and guts littered the white snow and stained our feet. I was stepping on bone fragments which felt like big splinters. I felt the warm, quavering bodies with my legs, but I had no time to think [...]" (79). In each case she presents her experience with sensory reference to the murder and suffering around her and explicitly focalized with respect her situation as an observer and participant. She retains this focus on perceptual immediacy once they escape to the attic hideout where they wait in fear and hunger; a sip of stolen coffee remains with her still: "I can still taste that coffee; I have the taste in my mouth" (84). Her memoir thus attests to her experience by emphasizing her vantage point, her presence as a locus of sensory experience whose individual specificity lends her recount undeniable forcefulness. Her reference to the continued vividness of such sensory memory (she "can still taste" the coffee) links the distant moment of witnessing with the present moment of testimony, and implicitly extends this sense of certainty from her phenomenal memory to her propositional narrative.

The vividness and immediacy of this testimonial style are occasionally combined with details drawn from a more general, historicized, point of view:

> 18,000 innocent people who had been alive at the beginning of that day were now a jumbled tangled mass of corpses in the pits at Piatydnie. The area which our little window overlooked was covered

> with torn articles of clothing, blood, pieces of human bones, and human waste. (52)

Here the number of the dead and the site of their execution and burial are anachronistic, *post facto* data that are grafted onto the horrifying immediacy of the scene. She often supplies such interpretive overview and assessment to accompany moments of individual suffering (e.g., 75). She focuses with particular intensity on the figure of Westerheide when he inspects the murderous chaos, and she accompanies her observations with supporting details that assure both their phenomenal specificity and historical accuracy:

> He was in a resplendent uniform, wearing his high polished leather boots; he was surrounded by many soldiers. He looked like he knew exactly what was going on—the annihilation of 18,000 innocent human beings. My husband and I had seen him before so we recognized him immediately. He was only about 22 feet away from our window when he came into the ghetto; it was 10 minutes after 12 noon. (51)

Here she includes details that situate the moment in time and place according to conspicuously precise measurements; this strategy adds an element of cognitive verifiability to the first-person immediacy of the moment. Events are amenable to the cognitive validation demanded by the historical and legal genres only if they can be fixed in common systems of reference: Lyotard notes that systems of spatial, temporal, and nosomatic reference attempt to map idiomatic experience into

verifiable, conventional coordinates (*Differend* 39-40). Kazimirski thus not only introduces an objective standard of measurement into her subjective account, but does so seemingly as a result of her experience of cross-examination—which she experienced during Westerheide's trial, during which the defence repeatedly asked about her distance from the witnessed events (118)—to provide precisely the objective generality that cognitive genres demand of individual recollection. These objective, quantitative elements strike a discordant rhetorical note, however, inasmuch as they arise with numerical precision amidst horrifying violence.

Kazimirski seeks to attest to both the vivid specificity of her experience and the general context in which her experience arose. She accordingly deploys both the subjective certainty of the first-person testimonial perspective and interpolates information drawn from anachronistic objective knowledge. In effect, Kazimirski places her testimonial evidence before the tribunal of the literary audience in a mixed mode combining immediate reportage and contextual support made possible by narrative heteroglossia. The total effect is to present Westerheide's guilt as just as much a matter of certainty as her remembered experiences. Her memoir first mentions him as the source of the information that her father and brother were killed (39). He is next referenced in connection with Hecker, the dentist with whom her husband Henry worked just outside the ghetto: "Hecker was a close friend of the Gebittskommissar Wilhelm Westerheide, who was in charge of the whole area" (43). A few pages later, as they prepare to escape the first *Aktion* by hiding in the attic of the clinic, Hecker is described as "a good friend of the Gebittskommissar,

Westerheide, the man who is planning the 'aktion'" (49). During the violence of the next day, she sees Westerheide inspect the proceedings (51-52). She follows this description with an anachronistic interpellation in which she asserts that she "learned later" that Westerheide was dissatisfied with the extent of the extermination because it interfered with his profiteering and graft, and that she "heard that" he and his mistress lived in luxury after the war (52). These passages and her observation, quoted above, that "he looked like he knew exactly what he was doing," treat his authority and culpability as a given, and, in the case of his postwar life, expand on the injustice of his escape from punishment with information presented without any provenance that might support its plausibility. Informational provenance is scant in Kazimirski's writing, except for information she obtained from Henry. This general lack of attribution illustrates her appropriative transformation of the historical mode: the various interpolations of facts, figures, and events that she did not witness partake of the rhetoric of historiography without its method, and so appear to provide external support for her individual perceptions, but remain caught within the overall mode of testimony as assertion rather than proof.

Kazimirski's memoir is a relatively closed text, in the sense that it is largely polemical in intent, structure, and rhetoric, and intended to guide its reader through determined steps to reach a defined goal.[9] This goal is affective, historical, and moral: she asserts the historical truth of her memories, a corresponding criminality on the part of Westerheide, and demands outrage on the part of her

readers. As such, *Witness to Horror* resists the uncertainties and confusion characterizing traumatic narratives, and exhibits instead a chronotope carefully ordered in terms of agency: the narrative largely comprises descriptive episodes linked together by explicit causation, by the choices and decisions they take. She and Henry remain active in their own survival, and (largely thanks to Henry's privileged profession) the horrible events that unfold offer them opportunities to act rather than simply fall victim to overwhelming tragedy. This context of factual necessity and personal choice is consistent with her intended indictment of the perpetrators, whose actions under such circumstances remain comprehensible and attributable. The structure of her story, then, affirms the primacy of human will and desire in the most desperate circumstances, an approach that excludes personal trauma or historical contingency as a part of her recollected experience.

Of course, and as trauma theory insists, the traumatic nature of her violent experience seeps through regardless. Kazimirski affirms that she is haunted by certain memories, and that she has a vivid, almost experiential relationship to certain moments and experiences even years later. These moments in the text, which are suggestive of the repetition-compulsion and atemporal displacement of post-traumatic stress syndrome (Brison 19), become for Kazimirski further proof of veracity in the immediacy and insistence they bring to her descriptions. She notes that "I still wake up at night screaming at the sight of my *Mame*'s blood gushing from her neck and dripping on the white snow" (173), a description that passes from her ongoing traumatized horror to an exact physical description of the

remembered event without pause. This description is, however, displaced from the event of her mother's murder in the narrative by nearly a hundred pages, and was added to the text only in the second edition. Although she is able to describe her sorrowful response to witnessing the murder (85), she turns immediately away from her mother's death to her vanished family and to her mother's previous injunction to "Tell them, tell them what they have done to us!" (86). In responding to this obligation, Kazimirski focuses on the on the experiential certainty of these recollected facts as further evidence of the accuracy of her testimony, so displacing any epistemological concerns regarding the effects of trauma on her remembering and storytelling. She thus incorporates the unavoidably traumatic aspects of such remembering into her text, but deploys them in putative service of a factual certainty they might otherwise render suspect.

Her use of narrative to effect her distinctive, hybrid goals has its roots in her childhood experience of hearing stories and her adult experience of using them as educational tools. She, her siblings, and her cousins were frequently entertained by older relatives telling religious fables and then quizzing them about the moral of the stories. She recalls those stories and their lessons about perseverance and hardship as sustaining her through her later experiences of loss and misery (9). Kazimirski's memory of stories told by her *Zaideh* foregrounds their role as exemplary: traditional stories teaching traditional moral lessons. In this experience, narrative leads the reader to draw a simple conclusion from the details of the story in the form of a moral. Walter Benjamin describes such traditional storytelling as

drawing utilitarian conclusions from lived experience: "it contains, openly or covertly, something useful. The usefulness may, on one case, consist in a moral; in another, some practical advice; in a third, a proverb or maxim" (86). In Benjamin's estimation, modernity has displaced such storytelling because of the increasingly incommunicable nature of experience (his example is the trench warfare of World War I). Kazimirski illustrates her ability as a traditional storyteller with the story of Schlomo (a finch she and her second husband found and fed, and which eventually returned to visit them, bringing a mate) that she told her students when she taught ESL in Montreal. *Witness to Horror*, however, is striking in its difference from this model of storytelling. As Kazimirski takes over the storyteller's role with respect to her experiences, the nature of her narrative diverges from the direct moral simplicity of the traditional story. Indeed, when she summarizes her goals at the beginning of "Bearing Witness," a chapter added in the second edition of the text, her goals begin with testifying to the real story of Westerheide's involvement in the ghetto massacres (157), but move on to the considerably more complex goals of witnessing in the place of the dead (including her mother and husband) and of mourning their deaths by so witnessing (158), goals not easily described in terms of the simple moral modality of traditional stories, and to which binary judgements of fulfilment or failure may not be relevant.

Given the uncertain hybrid she creates, in which objective claims float ungrounded in the otherwise immediate testimonial content of the narrative, and given the complexity of her increasingly various and abstract goals, Kazimirski

ultimately attempts—again in the mode of evidential certainty—to demonstrate that she has succeeded in the role of witnessing that her survival and her mother's command forced upon her. A large portion of her recent witnessing takes the form of speaking with school children, and has included acting as a guide and chaperon with the March of the Living. In keeping with her overriding attention to evidence, the book concludes with support for her sense that she has made a difference as a witness. The final pages include letters of appreciation from some of the young adults she accompanied on the March of the Living in 1997 (181-183), photos from the same trip (184-185), and a Montreal *Gazette* story about a *Yom Ha Shoah* speech she gave for grade five and six students (186-187). These documents support Kazimirski's sense that she has reached an audience and seek to confirm the redemptive trajectory of the book from failed legal to successful literary and public testimony.

Elsa Thon's memoir, *I Wish It Were Fiction: Memories 1939–1945*, strikes a sharp contrast to *Witness to Horror* in its narrative structure and epistemological goals. Thon introduces her memoir with reflections on the act of writing her memories. The preface sets out her motivation in almost classically traumatic terms: "All these are my personal matters, which I kept to myself for a half-century. Suddenly I reached the point where I could no longer contain the compressed weight of pain inside me. I poured out onto paper the facts of those five years" (1). She presents this telling as painful, rather than healing or therapeutic, and as

arising out of an internal sense of necessity. Unlike Kazimirski, whose personal interest in writing takes on an explicitly public purpose, Thon's memoir remains a relatively private document that is organized according to the logic of her memories and without explicit narrative teleology. As such, it is a more "open" text than *Witness to Horror*, and this openness poses anxious problems for Thon insofar as openness is associated with literary or fictive writing, the perennial other of cognitively true modes of discourse. Her memoir thus enacts a variation of the resistant "ethical" genre by insisting on the partiality of literalness, and deploys disordering poetic effects that impede addressees' capacity to refuse interpretive responsibility by relegating her text to dispassionate interpretive paradigms.

No narrative, however private, is without genre or generality, of course. Thon identifies her memoir as "in a way, a history of this period" (1); she is, however, conscious of a gap between her idiomatic, individual perspective and the collective goals of history. Thon suggests that the particularity of her own story is relevant to larger contexts as an example or as a model: "this is my story, which I hope in some way may illustrate the struggle of one person in the cruel war, a page in the history of mankind" (1). This exemplary status leads her to employ some of the characteristics of traditional historiography while recognizing that they are not entirely appropriate to her effort: she attempts to present the events "in chronological order" and "as accurately as I could," but avoids "giving details of time and date. Because we had no newspapers, calendars, or clocks, I have had to rely on my memory of the season, or whether it was day or night when something

happened" (1). She thus accepts some of the characteristics of the historical mode—accuracy and chronology—but does so as secondary to setting forth her memories. Thon thus appears to recognize both the hegemony of historiography and its limitations in her case. She thus marks the differences between her individual storytelling and the demands of historical discourse even as she attempts to adhere to its mode and seeks to demonstrate the relevance of her particular story to its generality. Her attempt to bridge the gap between singular experience and general knowledge leads her to present her story as an example that might illustrate the general context. As was the case with Raab's *And Peace Never Came*, however, Thon's efforts to tell "my story" result in rhetorical strategies that suggest that its meaning inheres in its particularity more so than its representativeness and that the "facts of those five years" are not necessarily matters of historical factuality.

Perhaps as a means of reconciling or at least acknowledging the challenge of registering her individual experience with respect to historiographic generality, Thon separates her chapters with poems reflecting on themes drawn from or relevant to her experiences. Thon's "dust-jacket" biography concludes with the statement that "She uses a narrative form to give continuity to this work. In her poems she emphasizes the controversy that worsened the cruelty of war." The poems do not clearly carry out this stated goal, however. They are inconsistent in style and in implied or explicit addressee: a couple are elegiac poems in a public style ("On Remembrance Day," "For the Heroes of the Warsaw Uprising") but the remainder are personal lyrics that seem to personalize and displace some of the

emotional content elided in the prose narrative. The issues and events to which they respond involve betrayal and the complicity of some victims of Nazi oppression with their tormentors, and it is perhaps these especially troubling aspects of Thon's experience that are meant by the reference to "controversy" in her biography. The presence of these poems, for whatever implied or explicit reason, interrupts some of the historiographic intent of Thon's writing and introduces an explicitly literary element into the relationship between testimony and history. The poems are traditionally lyric in their focus on personal emotional response rather than narration of external events (cf. Cuddon 514-515), and so partake of a recognizably literary mode of writing that is implicitly at odds with the notion that the text is "a history of the period" (Thon 1). They are, moreover, almost all written in nonce forms, and so instantiate one of the defining characteristics of artistic as opposed to instrumental writing: they are structured according to an author's sense of the internal necessity of the work.[10] Thon, then, places prosaic and poetic approaches side by side, and in so doing announces their mutual necessity to her testimonial effort. That the poems are present, and in the form they take, suggests that there is something intrinsically literary about her witnessing, even as she announces its historical relevance. This is a surprising rhetorical move, given the "fear of the literary" that typically characterizes Holocaust writing: as Sara Horowitz observes, "the word 'fiction' as a synonym for 'lies' poses it antithetically to truth and reflects negatively on the expressive possibilities of a particular literary form when applied to the world of actual events" (*Voicing* 1); Blanchot similarly describes literature as

"spurned by history" ("Literature" 57). The distinction between the two has accordingly been characterized by the explicit canonization of textual strategies emphasizing historiographic propriety and its cognitive range of meanings. Kalí Tal notes, for instance, that influential critic Terence Des Pres defined a very restrictive set of representational norms intended to define the proper sort of verisimilitude by which to represent the Holocaust, and did so as a matter of political and moral suspicion (31-32). Horowitz defends writers of Holocaust fiction from such suspicion by noting that, "while diminishing the historical authenticity of their work, fictionality frees them from adhering to a certain kind of exactitude or fidelity, in order to attain a different kind of exactitude" (*Voicing* 2). Thon, a Holocaust survivor employing the form of a memoir, is clearly not writing fiction in this strong sense. She nevertheless introduces and stresses a "literary" element in her writing that may also free her from certain sorts of "exactitude or fidelity" to non-fictional standards that, as we have seen, idiomatic remembrance cannot in principle attain.

Further elements of the paratext support and maintain the ambivalent relationship between memory-text and literary writing. Thon chooses her epigraphs from literature (Shakespeare and Oscar Wilde), but they are quotations about memory and existence: "How sharp is the pang / of this remembrance!" and "The ugly and the stupid have the best of it in this world [...] If they know nothing of victory, they are at least spared the knowledge of defeat" (v). She thus introduces self-evidently literary elements that nevertheless take as their subject the affective

power of memory and the relationship between knowledge and historical being, thus crossing the "literary" with the "real" in a context where such crossing might be seen as problematic. She follows these epigraphs with a short, explicitly fictional glimpse at history in the form of two "imaginary" entries from her grandmother's diary, the first describing her anguish over the loss of four sons in wartime, and the second a daughter-in-law who names her children to commemorate their grandmothers (vi). Thon thus introduces her book of memories with literary perspectives on truthful and painful remembrance, and then imagines her grandmother's emotional reaction to events she insists "are true" (vi). These elements of the text as well as the interplay between prose and poetry seem to insist that imaginative and factual writing, rather than being epistemological opposites, complement one another in witnessing to the past. Indeed, *I Wish It Were Fiction: Memories, 1939-1945* emphasizes its preoccupation with literary and factual writing in its very title, which acts to both raise the fictive spectre and lay it to rest, although the opposition between "fiction" and "memories" is less clear-cut once one recognizes, in the words of Young, that "fictiveness does not involve disputes about facts, but the inevitable variance in perceiving and representing these facts" (*Writing* 32).

Thon's text is structured throughout by strategies of asyndeton and juxtaposition. It begins by way of a series of apparently unrelated paratexts (including the title, epigraph, and imagined diary) whose contiguity is suggestive of possible meanings. There is a poem marking almost every chapter division. Her

chapters, moreover, are highly episodic in structure. Each chapter deals with a specific period of time, and comprises episodes that appear to be arranged in chronological order but are rarely explicitly connected with one another. Each episode is separated typographically—by a blank line—from preceding and subsequent episodes. The sections are not divided consistently according to time and place. They appear, rather, to be impressionistic gatherings of related memories and fragments of narrative, and almost universally begin with sudden, vaguely temporal transitions from the previous episode. The transitions between sections in the "Plaszow" chapter, for instance, are: "One day [...]," "Somehow [...]," "My first job in Plaszow [...]," "After a few months [...]," "One late afternoon [...]," "We were given many tasks [...]," and "Once, I had [...]." The fragments remain juxtaposed, strung together by a chronology that is often unspecified, and often confused, as in the first chapter, by the interjection of summarizing observations amidst detailed narrative. Moreover, the content and internal structure of each fragment is often seemingly random. The opening section of the "Leipzig" chapter, for instance, recounts Thon's arrival in Leipzig and transfer to Ravensbrück, compares Ravensbrück to Skarżysko-Kamienna and describes her work in the machine shop under a relatively benevolent foreman (113-115), and so offers what might be called an introduction to her experience at the camp. The second section, however, goes on to describe constant surveillance by the female SS guards, an episode of lesbian sexual predation quashed by the camp commander, and an air raid during which the prisoners hide in a cellar full of coffins (115). There is no

clearly organizing principle to the collection of these various fragments of memory except for the idiomatic nature of Thon's recollection. *I Wish It Were Fiction* is organized as a series of loosely narrativized memories rather than a cohesive, novelistic narrative in a structured historical mode. This ambiguity allows Thon's text to simultaneously reflect the disorienting chaos of her immediate experiences and the fact that these episodic moments involved an overall trajectory of changing conditions and the passage of time. By pursuing episodic logic and the loose temporality provided by persistent but inexact scales of measurement (such as changes of season), Thon both attests to the limits of strictly novelized narration in an extreme context and provides a structure wherein generic or organizing effects are minimized without giving way to incoherent randomness. *I Wish It Were Fiction* consistently juxtaposes and hybridizes contradictory elements, such as literature and history or causation and confusion, to give the mystery of individual responsiveness meaningful form.

The text alternates in narrative time between highly-compressed summary and detailed presentation, and in breadth of perspective between first-person testimonial description and generalized historical and cultural background. The interjection of these general paragraphs into the immediate story has an ambivalent effect; whereas the general information contextualizes the events, its interjection cuts into the structure of the narrative and makes it unclear if the narrative is temporally continuous or not. For example, Thon opens the first chapter with an episode beginning "It was midday" (3). The next episode presents a contextualizing

summary of Jewish youth culture in Pruszków. The presence of this description makes it unclear whether the third section, beginning "It was a sunny day [...]" and recounting the Nazi invasion of Poland (4), takes place on the same or another day in "September 1939" (the title of this first chapter). Similar excurses take place throughout the text, making the chronology more difficult to interpret than the disclaimer in her Preface suggests. The narrative is thus clarified in the dimension of general significance at the expense of ambivalent temporal precision. This ambiguity makes the interpolated clarifications problematic, however, insofar as the distinction and relationship between story and context require a coherent and well-bounded story to so contextualize. In *I Wish it Were Fiction*, however, the juxtapositional structure of the text demands active interpretive engagement throughout. As Derrida argues, commenting on J. Hillis Miller's writings on the grammatical figure of anacoluthon, structural interruptions in a narrative or a sentence inevitably problematize its interpretation ("Le Parjure" *passim*, esp. 196). Thon thus simultaneously claims a historicized background for her tale but holds the specificity of her memories in reserve: the general situation and the specific case are relevant to one another, but their relationship remains to a large extent undetermined. Such suggestive juxtaposition is characteristic of modern notions of literary writing: Roland Barthes, for instance, identifies the notion of textual "seams" or "edges" where heterogeneous regimens of discourse come into contact as characteristic of entropic texts that pursue a "layering of significance" interested in

the play of language itself (9-12). Such writing, which evokes readerly responsibility for its meaning, is "intransitive" and resists mandated significations (Barthes 52, 38-39). The heterogeneous and asyndetonic—literary—structure of Thon's memory-text, then, precludes the sort of instrumental narrative teleology at work in *Witness to Horror* by cultivating the inherent instability of juxtaposition and episodic transition. At the same time, however, its overall chronology and the laconic nature of its prose keep it tied to the implied representational goals of a memory-text.

Thon's goals, however, are less documentary than analytic: her narrative is preoccupied with assessing *why* the events transpired. Kazimirski is also interested in why events happened, but only to the extent that she can hold Westerheide responsible for the murder of her community; her questions about cause and motivation are answered in advance by Westerheide's guilt. Thon's version of this enquiry is more broadly historical and metaphysical. Kren notes that "as soon as the historical task has shifted from describing what happened to providing an explanation of why it has happened, one *necessarily* enters the realm of the subjective" (6). He is discussing the approach of professional historians who seek causes in prior events and contemporary contexts, but his observation also serves to illustrate the different approaches Kazimirski and Thon take to structuring their respective narratives. Whereas Kazimirski's narrative links events in a structure of consistency and intentionality, Thon examines each relatively fortunate detail of her experience as perhaps the decisive yet random moment that allowed her to live. She thereby emphasizes the momentary, instantaneous nature of precarious

individual being. The overall trajectory of her story may be one of unlikely survival in the face of exceptional threats, but her attention to the importance of each minute detail maintains a narrative focus on particularity. The "why" she seeks is a distributed one, a matter of instants and accidents: her story is not one of "survival" writ large, but episodic good fortune writ small.

The overall lack of determined causality structuring *I Wish it Were Fiction* is accompanied, perhaps paradoxically, by a narrative focus on fate and destiny. Thon's interest in motivation and causation is understood via the impersonality of "fate," and is mirrored in her emphasis on the relative futility and potency of human agency. This can be clearly seen in the first chapter, which begins on a note of boundless optimism over future possibilities. Her acceptance into a Warsaw university leaves Thon "overwhelmed by the magnitude of this opportunity" (3). She goes on to describe her hometown of Pruszków, where she enjoys a rich Jewish cultural milieu and a relatively cosmopolitan lack of antisemitism: the obstacle that is overcome to allow her to attend school is not religious or racist (as one might expect) but the fact that she is not a citizen of Warsaw. This abundance of possibility is dramatically cut short by the German invasion, an event that has been hanging over the happiness of the opening pages by virtue of the chapter subtitle: "September 1939." The invasion and occupation of Poland bring with them a drastic series of changes in freedom and agency. Shortly after the invasion, Thon's family treks to Warsaw to participate in defending the capital, an effort that

unbeknownst to them has been rendered futile by the nature of modern warfare: "it wasn't 1914; it was 1939. Technology had replaced old-fashioned combat as the barbaric means of degrading and destroying human lives" (4). The effectiveness of individual activity has been terribly curtailed in this transition from the remnants of individual heroism left in the wake of World War I to a bleak vision of debased humanity displaced by mechanical homogeneity. As the family returns disappointed from Warsaw, Thon describes the occupying forces,"all the same height," marching in triumph toward the capital (4). With the invasion, then, comes a new futility in fighting the implacable and anonymous forces of modernity, forces that seemingly attenuate the value and capacity of individual agency.

The German occupation leads immediately to antisemitic laws, measures, and incidents in which Jews are subject to increasing strictures and escalating violence. Thon's employer's father, a well-known photographer, is beaten on the street: despite his reputation, "he wasn't exempt from the pattern of general harassment of Jews" (5). This harassment restricts Thon and her family to smaller and smaller fields of action and activity. She is forced to perform her work developing and retouching photographs in her employer's bedroom for fear of being discovered in the shop (4), and she is confronted and threatened by an antisemitic former schoolmate while at the municipal library (5). Eventually these scattered personal injustices are replaced by wholesale oppression, and the whole Jewish community is resettled into a ghetto (6). Thon's narrative examines the intentional structure of their struggle rather than its material hardship, to which she merely

alludes by mentioning that "Dark memories remain of the miserable life of war" (6). When her mother falls ill, they consult a doctor and manage to make the vegetable soup that he prescribes. Thon herself insists on cooking despite her total lack of domestic culinary experience. She thus remains an active agent, but her capacity for effective action shrinks proportionately to the increasing magnitude of the threat they face. Thus, in the next episode, the family barricades their door against rampaging bandits whose entry into the house is forestalled only when one of them recognizes Thon's father—a fortunate escape given the attenuated influence of prewar social relations between the Jews and their neighbours. This meagre resistance to violent depredation is followed immediately by the deportation of the community to the Warsaw ghetto. Her father's response is one of impotent fury: to thwart the opportunists exemplified by the burglars of the night before, he "destroyed everything that was left of our belongings and, in a rage, poured naphtha over the provisions in the basement" (7). Freedom of choice, in a few scant pages, has been transformed from an experience of life-changing possibility to nugatory helplessness, and Thon's relative inattention to the literal details of their life in the ghetto, offers this focus on ethics and agency as the implicit focus of her text.

The deportees' diminution of agency involves a temporal contraction in their experience of subjectivity: the future becomes something for which they can no longer plan. Much later in Thon's story, she presents a telling example of how her concentrationary experiences affect her relationship to temporality and to

structures of knowledge. When she and her fellow prisoners are sent on a forced march from Leipzig further into Germany, they are unable to assimilate the notion that the approaching Russian front means an impending end to the war: "We had too many years of suffering to expect that we might ever be liberated. No one could imagine that the war would ever end. We had no idea what was going on" (119). Not only did future planning in general become impossible or irrelevant to the grim present existence of the prisoners, but events that mark the possible end of their captivity are seemingly unintelligible to them. This debilitating loss of futurity or temporal continuity is reflected in the structure of Thon's text. Its episodic nature attenuates both causal-temporal contiguity and logical generalization: Thon's explorations remain intent on each event in and of itself rather than in connecting them logically or synthetically. Her amazement, for instance, that Jewish police and *kapos* were actively cruel and authoritarian even in the absence of their Nazi masters is a fresh astonishment and disappointment each of the several times it occurs (e.g., 96, 98, 106). Thon thus identifies each betrayal as a distinctive crime, a matter each time of fresh pain and guilt, and refuses to relegate these repeated actions to the bloodless abstraction of a regrettable general trend.

Whereas Kazimirski consistently directs her detailed descriptions toward the general goal of vengeful accusation, Thon's descriptions remain somewhat aimless, given that her narrative insists on their particularity and contextualizes them in ambivalent terms. The memoirs thus differ in structure and overall narrative teleology, in that *Witness to Horror* exhibits a highly motivated, polemical structure

predicated on recuperating failed legal testimony in successful public witnessing, but *I Wish It Were Fiction* begins in the prewar world of youthful possibility and ends with a bleak vision of post-liberation freedom without even the retrogressive "negative *Bildungsroman*" structure some critics have identified as characteristic of Holocaust memoirs (Rosenfeld, *Double* 29). Toward the end of her book, Thon introduces a reflection on the genre of the story she is telling and the impact of her suffering on what it means to tell the story of a life: "Before the war, I suppose my story might have been about youth and romance. During the war there was no room for romance" (119). She goes on to note that "Love, if it ever came at all, was a surprise" (119). This passage is a *non sequitur* in two senses: Thon does not otherwise break frame as a narrator to reflect on the process of writing; and her preoccupation here with love and romance is at odds with the narrative content of the text. It is connected thematically only to the poem "Seasons in Two Lives" that appears on the preceding page (and which separates her account of working in Ravensbrück in "Leipzig" from her account of the desperate last days of the war in "Forced March, Germany"). This poem addresses the tragic case of lovers in wartime whose romance is blighted by separation and violence. What makes this theme so surprising both in the poem and in the introductory paragraphs of the following chapter is the general absence of romantic interest from the text. Thon discusses one extremely vague relationship of affectionate attachment (during her time of hiding in Kraków), but her story of hiding and eventual imprisonment in a number of internment and work camps foregrounds instead her feminine vulnerability

to male sexual predation, and reports some near escapes on her part from lascivious and violent men. The final chapters of the text involve her deeply ambivalent relationship with an unnamed Russian tank commander whom she clearly fears and mistrusts even as she is grateful to him for his assistance. These moments when the text mourns the loss of romantic attachment that never was may indicate some untold tragedy that Thon excluded from her story. More generally, they operate at the level of the autobiographical genre; regardless of some literal love affair, Thon's experience of life as a Jew under Nazi control precluded the experience of everyday human relations, including sexual and romantic love experienced and understood on traditional terms. Whereas her memoirs attest to her experiences, Thon here breaks frame to note that there were experiences categorically excluded from her youthful world. Some memoirists, such as Vera Schiff, include transformed versions of loving and erotic relationships as they could be and were experienced under similarly unfortunate conditions. Thon's sideways look at these possibilities on generic terms as negative, as foreclosed, suggests that the literal experience of such connections is so thoroughly narrativized that whatever versions of them she may have witnessed or experienced remain incomprehensible in retrospect. She thus offers her story not as an alternative genre, as a negative image of a traditional life narrative, but as the generalized failure of the generic expectations that pervade both lives lived and lives told.

Romance, of course, is not only a possible theme for storytelling, but a structural principle that traditionally involves star-crossed or otherwise frustrated

lovers overcoming obstacles to result in a contented and blissful union (Cuddon 758-762, 767; Bakhtin 88-90). In a transformative acknowledgement of her exclusion from this romantic genre, Thon ends her text with a marriage, but a marriage devoid of the joy and fulfilment characteristic of a comedy or romance. The wedding itself is almost surreal in its absurdity:

> A few months later, the *Lagerverwaltung* in Feldafing arranged a date at City Hall for three couples to marry at the same ceremony. We all signed for each other as witnesses. None of us could understand the judge's legal German vocabulary, but we signed anyway. (151)

The absurdity arises not only because of their incomprehension of the ceremonial vows, but because it is not at all clear from the text whom she marries, although one might infer that it is the same tank commander with whom she has such an ambivalently grateful and suspicious relationship, and whom she accompanied to Germany in the previous chapter. The surreal, comic narrative tone continues after the wedding, with the concluding prose text in the book: "When we left City Hall, we celebrated our marriages by throwing snowballs at each other. There was no hurry to go home, since nobody was waiting for us. The rooms were cold and there was nothing to eat" (151). The final sections of Thon's text, then, explicitly recognize that the traditional romantic storyline has been denied her, and present the version of romance that was available for her to experience—an incomprehensible marriage to an uncertain groom followed by hunger and loneliness rather than a celebratory meal with family and friends. The overall

trajectory of the text remains as fragmented as its internal structures. It begins in hope and ends in despair, but no temporal or logical trajectory connects the two, which remain matters of contingent fact. The bizarre irony of her marriage conveys a sense of how different her memoir is from "normal" life stories that follow recognized and recognizable narrative patterns. *I Wish It Were Fiction* displays instead a fragmented disunity that reflects the destructuring effect of Thon's experiences on the patterns of her experience and memory.

Thon's memoir both begins and ends with images of freedom of sorts, but it begins with a hopeful freedom involving significant choices supported by a loving community and ends with the ashen freedom of isolated choices between equivalently meaningless options. The final words in the text belong to its last poem, "A Recount of Life," which presents a meditation on finishing a book such as *I Wish it Were Fiction*, in which a life begun in hope comes to a point of "No more expectation, / No dreams at all" (152). The reader in this poem is offered only the literal ending of the text as a conclusion to the dark passage from hope to defeat: "It's the final step: / Depart [...] / Closing the book I read The End" (152). The poem thereby suggests that the overall narrative descent from family and hope to bleak loneliness is not so much a structure of meaning as merely where the story ends; the reader is directed to simply finish reading and put down the book. As a highly idiomatic and literary expression of fragmented memory, *I Wish It Were Fiction* has none of the simple didactic assurance of *Witness to Horror*'s persuasive goal. Nor does it seem to offer Thon the relief of therapeutic retelling. At the

beginning of the chapter "Betrayal," Thon reasserts her anguish over the broken trust of simple human community that is her most consistent source of sorrow: "My anger grows with the years, instead of diminishing. I have so much bitterness inside me, no amount of time can heal the wounds, carved deep by indelible memories of human degradation" (85). Her testimonial effort, then, arises from the pressure of internal anguish and takes the form of idiomatically fragmented memory that presents the events as "facts" (1), but without seeking the cognitive validation of the historical mode; addresses causality, but in the hypothetical mode of impersonal fate acting on instantaneous events; and arises out of and reflects traumatized subjectivity, but not in a healing re-telling that reinstates familiar genres. *I Wish It Were Fiction*, then, pursues highly literary representational strategies in a structurally mimetic attempt to reflect and assess the nature of Thon's experience; its literary elements and style reflect its under-determined goals and its emphasis on episodic being as a matter of testimonial and interpretive responsibility.

The cover art chosen for each of these memoirs reflects the nature of the meaning pursued therein. Kazimirski's *Witness to Horror* displays a photo of her husband's *Ausweis* partially overlapped by (and therefore partly "behind") stylized barbed wire. Given the status accorded photographs and documents as the epitome of referential and historical evidence, a photo of a document serves to double the impression of documentary validity. Presenting the realistic image of the pass implicitly corroborates her story, and accompanying it with the dramatic

accouterments of barbed wire and her title reflects her desire not only to communicate the facts of the matter but her sense of horror and dismay. Thon's *I Wish It Were Fiction*, on the other hand, presents an expressionistic pastel or charcoal drawing by the author that is evocative of drifting smoke or clouds. Not directly representative of anything, Thon's cover is suggestive both of a distorted sky scape and, given the historical context of her story, the drifting smoke from crematoria ovens. It is therefore evocative rather than representational, but it evokes simultaneously the traumatic distortion of experience that Thon's memories convey and a reference to the crematory nadir of the experience of survival. It is thus, like her writing, both artistic and devoted to the testimonial presentation of the facts of the matter, and exploits the capacity of art to produce meaning by means of idiomatic structures of representation. Kazimirski, on the other hand, ambitiously seeks to overcome the uncertain status of individual testimony by citing and incorporating the validating methods of history and law, an effort that paradoxically relies on the very idiomatic, literary partiality that she so insistently attempts to overcome.

Both *I Wish It Were Fiction* and *Witness to Horror* illustrate the aporias that face writers whose goals cut across established genres of meaningful expression. Holocaust survivors face particular difficulties in expressing their memories and their understanding of those memories. The sheer scale and extent of the violence, for instance, both problematize its representation as a coherent whole and render traditional methods of cognitive validation difficult, if not impossible. Moreover,

the extremity of the experience intervenes between the memories of the survivors and the socially conditioned cognitive schema of almost any audience, disrupting the shared basis of verisimilitude that allows unlikely events to be received as possible. It is perhaps in defence of the addressee that distressing and horrifying narratives such as those told by Holocaust survivors are considered historical, legal, or therapeutic matters and so made a matter of abstraction or pathology distant from the testimonial instant. Responding to such memoirs thereby becomes a matter of considering the truth of the events, the guilt of the perpetrators, or the psyche of the survivor, strategies in which the responsibility of the addressor is conspicuously avoided. Nevertheless, Young notes that "historical understanding of [the Holocaust] remains altogether impossible without taking into account the voices of the victims" ("Toward" 39); the memoirs by Kazimirski and Thon illustrate the efforts of such voices to resist and appropriate the methods of cognitive understanding to produce forms that fulfil their sense of responsibility to the past precisely by breaking with forms that relieve addressees of their own responsibilities. "Remember!" is a call to respond to the Holocaust that strikes a sharp contrast with the empty futurity of "Never again" in that "Remember" is addressed to the present moment as a matter of individual attentiveness to the past. As Dorota Glowacka argues, linking on to the phrase "Remember!" is a precarious endeavour, but a necessary one (*passim*). It does not imply even a realm of action (as does the implication of political will in "never again"), and so leaves the nature and the effects of remembrance as a matter of the ambiguous obligation of the

addressee.

The drive to bear witness, which is often understood in traumatic terms as "survivor mission" or an expression of "survivor guilt" can be seen as an ongoing attempt to disrupt generalizing and distancing gestures and so to return the responsibility for historical injustice to the immediacy of the present moment. Survivors who find themselves in an aporetic relationship with the dominant modes of public discourse about traumatic events thus turn to what I have called the "ethical" genre of resistance and invention. Calling this strategy a "genre" is, strictly, a misnomer, insofar as its methods are undetermined, and may include hybridity, miming, and citation of other genres in the interest of evoking readerly responsibility (although this notion completes the scheme by which the addressor, addressee, sense, and referent are distinctively foregrounded by varying genres). Blanchot argues that "Knowing events as facts, individual moments relatable to larger concepts leaves them open to forgetting, closes down their singularity and their demand" (*Writing* 82). The memoirs by Kazimirski and Thon both suggest that bearing witness involves perpetuating this singularity, this demand. Each asserts the particularity not only of her experience, but of its meaning, and does so with respect to the canonical genres whose abstract generality proves inadequate to the task of setting the story before an audience thereby held responsible for this meaning.

Notes

1. Many survivor narratives make reference to this phenomenon, which is described by Franklin Bialystok (80-84, 86-88) and Paula Draper ("Canadian" 49-50), who address Jewish and gentile attitudes toward Holocaust survivors in Canada. William Helmreich avers a similar response in the United States (751), and Dina Porat discusses the somewhat different but nonetheless problematic situation in Israel (*passim*).

2. Martin Gilbert notes that many survivors approached the prospect of post-war life with the explicit sense that their wartime experience would be inherently incomprehensible to others (816). Perhaps the most famous statements on this ongoing sense of incommunicability come from Elie Wiesel. His essay "Why I Write," for instance, presents a sustained meditation on the futility yet necessity of expression:

> No, I do not understand. And if I write, it is to warn the reader that he will not understand either. "You will not understand, you will never understand," were the words heard everywhere in the kingdom of night. I can only echo them.
>
> An admission of impotence and guilt? I do not know. All I know is that Treblinka and Auschwitz cannot be told. And yet I have tried. God knows I have tried. (18)

3. Berel Lang, for instance, details the linguistic euphemisms and circumlocutions used by the Nazis to refer to the details of mass murder (*Act* 82ff). Martin Gilbert refers repeatedly to the deceptive practices of Nazi authorities, who, for instance fostered belief that murder victims were merely deported to labour camps (192, 240), and instituted a fictitious post-card delivery program in the Lodz ghetto to permit the imprisoned Jews a false sense of connection with the outside world (245).

4. Back-to-back chapters in the Postone and Santner's edited volume *Catastrophe and Meaning* offer widely divergent perspectives on how Nazi Germany and the Holocaust can and should be addressed by historians. Dan Diner, in "The Destruction of Narrativity: The Holocaust in Historical Discourse," argues that neither of the two most common paradigms of explanation applied to the sweep of modern European history—the political conflict of institutionalized power, and ideological conflicts that crossed national lines—are relevant to the Holocaust (67-72). Moreover, he suggests, the Holocaust is subject to very different interpretations according to how Nazi power and the destruction of the Jews are periodized and contextualized (77-78). (Diner's book *Beyond the Conceivable* examines at considerable detail the situatedness and partiality of knowledge about the Holocaust.) Moishe Postone, however, in "The Holocaust and the Trajectory

of the Twentieth Century," argues that the Holocaust can be integrated into the history of the century if described on a sufficiently "deep structural level" (82). His approach relies on highly theorized notions of repression/denial and transformations of capital and time wrought by modern capitalism. Historiography cannot thus be described as characterized by a common perspective on Nazism or the Holocaust.

5. For example, works such as *The Face of Battle* by John Keegan (London: Penguin, 1978), *Firing Line* by Richard Holmes (London: Pimlico, 1985), and *On Killing* by Lt. Col. Dave Grossman (Boston: Little, Brown, 1995) have explicitly departed from the dominant modes of military history (focusing on generalship and large-scale analyses of strategy and logistics) to attempt to grasp the experience of the individual soldier in combat. Even such small-scale, sympathetic studies based (in the case of Holmes and Grossman) on the frequently-cited testimony of soldiers, however, synthetically subordinate the experience of the individual to generalizations about individuals.

6. Examples of this include the memoirs by Elisabeth Leitner, whose rewriting of her first book *Fragments of Isabella* (New York: Crowell, 1978) as *Saving the Fragments* (New York: New American Library, 1985) emphasizes temporal ordering and causality in the latter over the powerfully imagistic terror and

confusion of the former. Etta Fuchs Berk's *Chosen: A Holocaust Memoir* (Fredericton, NB: Goose Lane, 1992), co-written with Gilbert Allardyce, interleaves her precisely situated and dated experiences with extensively cited historical explanations: the total effect is to render her story as an example of historical generality.

7. It should be noted that the legal arena is all the more problematic so if we consider the real practice of law, and not merely a theoretical description of its goals and procedures; Donald Bloxham discusses at length the degree to which matters of political expedience and national mythology have intervened in legal attempts to grapple with genocide (398-401), and which further attenuate the capacity of the legal arena to do justice to survivors' demands for representation and justice.

8. This is not to suggest that memoirists invent their texts in the manner of writers of fiction. Harold Rosen notes both that "[e]very serious commentator now agrees that autobiography is in a special sense a kind of fiction" (13) but also that autobiographical texts are distinctive in presenting "the relationship of the writer to the moment of composing the text and the experience it is attempting to recall. [Their] substance is the writer's life and his/her reflections on it, however transformed, distorted, censored or reconstructed" (8). Given the centrality of recollection, then, textual

expressiveness remains inherently mobile with respect to the strategic use of expectation and familiarity. Studies of autobiography have passed from demanding the canonical or ideal forms of life writing to illustrating the vast diversity and meta-awareness of form in the representation of lives (Egan, *Mirror* 3, 14-15; Gilmore 1-3). This suggests that memoirs can be—and are—written that are devoted to real events without being devoted to demonstrating, or even addressing, their reality.

9. This notion of the "closed" text comes from Umberto Eco, who argues that closed texts "apparently aim at pulling the reader along a predetermined path, carefully displaying their effects so as to arouse pity or fear [...]. They seem to be structured according to an inflexible project" (8).

10. I borrow the term "nonce form" from Paul Fussell's rather thorough treatment of poetic formalism in *Poetic Meter and Poetic Form*. It refers to a form "invented for a single poetic occasion" as opposed to a "fixed form" that "has been used many times before" (127).

Chapter Six
Mourning

Death of great magnitude is shocking in no small part because such magnitude is incomprehensible in and of itself. Six million deaths share an incoherence of scale with any measurement enumerated in millions. With Holocaust literature and testimony we see both an affirmation of this magnitude—that events occurred on a scale so large as to be grasped only in conceptual generality—and narrative individuation that lends this same scale another mode of horror: realization that this vast number, so weakly grasped in cognitive abstraction, is the accumulated sum of individual realities, particular histories, and personal sufferings. Thinking about the Holocaust thus demands a doubly difficult task, and perhaps a doubly impossible one: to think the enormous, to recognize a historical totality whose vast scale tends to abstraction; and to think the particular, the minutely individual whose microcosmic richness tends in its own way to infinity as well. The problems attendant on thinking about and representing suffering and survival in the Holocaust are further exacerbated by the cognitive challenge of thinking about death. Phillipe Lacoue-Labarthe argues that the historical distinctiveness of the Holocaust lies in the fact that the Nazi attempt to eradicate the Jews reified the darkest aspects of the essence of the West—valorization of the Idea, definition of homogeneity by the exclusion of the anomalous, and the problem-solving

application of technology—in an amalgam of murderous intent in which Jews were condemned to death *in toto* on unprecedentedly categorical and ontological grounds (*Heidegger* 35–37). Jean-François Lyotard argues, similarly, that Nazi antisemitism treated racial purity as an absolute legitimation for existence; under this schema the impure need not be judged or sentenced to death at all, as they *a priori* have no right to live (*Differend* §159). An ethos of absolute lethality thus enveloped all the victims of Nazi violence, and those who survived did so in the face of an absolute death sentence uttered about, but not to, them as intended victims.

According to Lyotard, the Nazi death threat intervened decisively between the SS and the Jewish deportees and forbids the formation of a "we" that might unite them in a common perspective on the events that involved them (*Differend* §157, §160). The malevolent depth of this distinction indicates that both death and discourse take effect with respect to notions of community and commonality (as Derrida notes in *Aporias*, cultures and groups can be distinguished by their varying notions of death [24]). In pursuing what Lyotard calls the Aryan myth, Nazism abrogated to itself the capacity to "die well," a trope that gathers individuals into a collective identity defined by a mythic past and future that provide a justification of individual death in the promised continuity of the communal whole. This racial and mythical sense of community denatures death, displaces its threat, by appropriating it as a necessary and noble sacrificial gesture made by one for the good of an all that is defined by such sacrifice. This narrative rewrites loss as gain because individual deaths are transformed into mythic, collective, eternal life. The

substitution of gain for death involves "the exchange of the finite for the infinite, of the *eschaton* for the *telos*: the *Die in order not to die*", and thereby transforms death from a passage to the unknown into a cyclical, recuperative, "beautiful death" (*Differend* 100).

It is apparent that this definition of community relies on a conceptual overcoming of individuality, including the peculiar, unique relationship with death that is the experience of mortality itself, and on a fulfilment of death's seemingly immediate loss in the glory of a promised future. Furthermore, the recuperative wholeness implied in the notion of the "beautiful death" bears a non-accidental relationship to the mythical specularity of phallogocentrism: gendered and mortal identity are both put into motion with respect to abstraction that erases differential particularity in the interest of a conceptual generality that will come to pass only in the future to come. Gender, discourse, and death are thus commonly characterized by an intransigent confrontation of difference and identity that has traditionally been constrained, mediated, and determined by standards of ratiocinative homogeneity, standards that nonetheless remain troubled by the iterative and instantaneous effects of difference, performativity, and loss. The memoirs *Witness to Horror* by Anne Kazimirski and *Death by Design* by Ruth Bindefeld Neray enact the challenge of representing the enigma of individual death by means of the generality of text, and provide examples that suggest any memorialization, any attempt to speak for the dead, involves a mourning that is ultimately both impossible and necessary, both demanded and prohibited, by the entwined natures of death and

textuality.

The categorical nature of the Nazi death sentence suggests that thinking about the Holocaust requires a confrontation with the general resistance that death poses to thought, and with the cognitive and descriptive issues at stake in considering mass death as at once overwhelmingly general and utterly particular. Considerations of generality and particularity in mortality come into play in the thinking of Martin Heidegger, whose analysis of death in *Being and Time* has proved pervasively influential for modern philosophy. "Every contemporary thinker," writes Emmanuel Levinas, owes a debt to Heidegger, even if it is "a debt he often owes to his regret" (*God* 8). Heidegger sets forth his notion of death late in *Being and Time*, and he does so in an attempt to ground his various descriptions of *Dasein* in a primordial unity. *Dasein* is Heidegger's term for a kind of being whose essential concern is the question of Being itself, as experienced in an ongoing openness, a questioning, about the nature of its own being: "Da-sein is a being that does not simply occur among other beings. Rather, it is ontically distinguished by the fact that in its being it is concerned *about* its very being" (Heidegger 10). *Dasein*, then, is characterized by its experience of existence as a matter of possibility, involving a self-reflective capacity for deciding what it will be; this is a kind of being instantiated by humanity but not identical to being human (although that distinction is at the very least exceedingly fine).

Levinas explains that it is the orientation of *Dasein* to death in what Heidegger calls being-toward-death that unites, and indeed gives rise to, the various

characteristics of *Dasein* (*God* 38-41). *Dasein* is structured according to the principle of Care, or the unavoidable responsibility for the fact of being, experienced in angst and expressed in the general necessity of making decisions and taking action. This means that its attention to itself as possibility involves relationships that are oriented toward the past ("Da-sein always is as 'what' it already was. Whether explicitly or not, it *is* its past." [Heidegger 179]), the present ("The world of Dasein is a *with-world*. Being-in is *being-with* others" [Heidegger 112]) and the future (*Dasein* is the projected unfolding of its possibilities; Heidegger calls this "the *being-ahead-of-itself* of Dasein" [179]). Dasein experiences Care because of "thrown-ness," the state of existing in (having been "thrown into") a world that predates and exceeds the individual. In short, Heidegger understands *Dasein* as arising within ineluctable temporal and intentional relationships ("thrown-ness") with extant social and material reality ("facticity"), other beings of various sorts ("*Mitsein*"), and via the unfolding possibilities that are characteristic of its mode of being, which is defined primarily by its capacity to become, to actualize its manifold possibilities. For such a being, death is the possibility of impossibility, the cessation of all possibility, the end of potentiality itself. Death unites the elements characteristic of *Dasein* (and, Heidegger argues, gives rise to them) in its implacable necessity and in the pressure mortality exerts on the experience of time.

Heidegger ultimately presents death as a possibility or experience belonging uniquely to each individual, so much so that the uniqueness of individuality can be seen as a function of the utter mineness of my death. Under this description, my

experience of death as always imminent yet never present—an experience that can only be anticipatory, cannot be cognitive, and takes effect affectively as anxiety—is the only meaningful access we have to the notion of death. On this basis Heidegger asserts that our experience of others' deaths is always inadequate. For witnesses or mourners, "the real having-come-to-an-end of the deceased is precisely *not* experienced" (222). In mourning, the living enact a continued being-with the deceased; it is on the terms of *this* world, however, that the mourners accompany the dead. Heidegger thus argues that each human being "must itself actually take dying upon itself. Insofar as it 'is,' death is always essentially my own. [...] In dying, it becomes clear that death is ontologically constituted by mineness and existence" (223). Thus, despite the necessity of Dasein's orientation to the world in thrownness, facticity, and *Mitsein*, its utter solitude in confronting death is the primordial ground of its unique capacity to be so situated in intersubjective and objective reality. Death, then, in the Heideggerian formulation, is uniqueness itself, both the source and guarantor of my phenomenological solitude and the impossible possibility whose necessity impels me into an experience of time that it will ultimately cut short.

Heidegger's analytic of death stresses ontological self-awareness and individual emotional states, in so doing dismissing the relevance of witnessing (and thus both survival and mourning) to understanding the nature of death, which is seen as a wholly individual, temporalizing relationship to Being. Levinas, on the contrary, asserts the importance of our experience of others' deaths, and claims that

we know about death—to the extent that this can be said—in large part by means of observation and by listening to or reading others' words (*God* 8). He thus begins his analysis of death with a more traditionally phenomenological description than one finds in Heidegger: "Death is the disappearance in beings of those expressive movements that made them appear as living, those movements that are always *responses*. [...] Death is the *no-response*" (*God* 9). This observation is linked with the representation of death in language as key to understanding expressiveness itself, because the change wrought by death involves the transformation of an expressive human being into a mute biological entity:

> Dying, when understood from language and the observation of the other man dying, names a halting of these movements and the reduction of someone to something decomposable—an immobilization. There is not a transformation, but annihilation, the end of a being, the stopping of those movements that were so many signs. (*God* 9)

Thus, seen phenomenally, death is vicariously experienced as the failure of expressivity itself. And human being, according to Levinas, is most fundamentally this very expressiveness. Knowing another as a human being means knowing them as expressive:

> It is by way of this expressiveness in his behaviour—which dresses the biological being and denudes him beyond all nudity: to the point of making of him a face—that someone expresses himself, an other than

> I, different from me, an other who expresses himself to the point of being nonindifferent to me. (*God* 11)

My relationship to the other is one of expressiveness, of being singled out, of being the designated addressee of this power of signification. Experiencing another as expressive thus uniquely individuates me as called upon to respond to, as *responsible for*, this other.

Expressiveness is here understood as significatory power in general—a spontaneity that maintains the other's distance as different, as "other than I," and yet "nonindifferent" insofar as I experience myself through this demand. Levinas argues that,

> The "me" only surfaces in its uniqueness in responding for the other in a responsibility from which there is no flight, in a responsibility from which I could not be free. The "me" is an identity of oneself that would come about by way of the impossibility of letting oneself be replaced—a duty beyond all debt—and thus a patience whose passivity no assumption or taking upon oneself could deny. (*God* 20)

The experience of individuation, in which I am me, is thus structured as an abyssal gap or debt whose infinitude results from my uniqueness, which arises in this moment of responsiveness and responsibility. According to Levinas, subjectivity is pervasively constituted on the basis of such responsibility, but it is given to affective awareness with special forcefulness or acuity in our experience of the death of others: "In every death is shown the nearness of the neighbour, and the

responsibility of the survivor, in the form of a responsibility that the approach of proximity moves or agitates" (*God* 17). My experience of death is thus both dramatic (because enacted in this proximate encounter with externality) and intimate (because the affect of such a proximate death partakes of the radical passivity of my responsible individuation). "Death—as the death of the other—cannot be separated from this dramatic character: it is emotion *par excellence*, affection or being affected *par excellence*" (Levinas, *God* 9). This effect—this affect—is not cognitive in character: Levinas adduces the example of Socrates' death in the *Phaedo* to illustrate the heterogeneity between the philosopher's reasoned quietude and the excessive emotions displayed by his friends and family. (Socrates' responses —rebuking his friends and disciples [Plato 117e] and dismissing the women and children [Plato 116b]—set a powerful philosophical precedent for both the transcendent conception of death and its gendered particularity.)

This recognition that death signifies in non-cognitive and intrinsically excessive ways leads Levinas to be critical of Heidegger's narrow construal of the nature of death: "The meaning of death is from the beginning interpreted as the end of being-in-the-world, as annihilation. The enigma is erased from the phenomenon" (*God* 36). The mystery of death is erased in Heidegger, Levinas claims, because "ontology, the comprehension of being and nothingness, remains the source of all meaning" (*God* 36). In contrast to this suspiciously tidy understanding of death, Levinas describes human death as intractably mysterious, as "the ambiguity of a departure without a return, but also a scandal [...] of no-

response and of my responsibility. This is a departure to which I can assign no place of welcome; an exclusion that is other than negation" (*God* 37). Levinas here illustrates a range of meanings and natures that death, as fundamental enigma, is capable of accumulating and sustaining. He argues that the most common understanding of death as nugatory loss—which Heidegger unconsciously imports into his analysis in the fear of not being and the desire for continuance that structures *Dasein* by way of angst—is derived from the attitude of the murderer: "the *negative* character (annihilation)" that we associate with death "is inscribed in hatred or the desire for murder. It is in the relation with the other that we think death in its negativity" (*God* 8-9). To approach the question of death as a matter of destructive loss is to internalize the goal of murderous hatred to do away with its object, and to mistakenly regard human death as a passage to nothingness in a destruction without remainder.

Levinas thus restates death not as an ominous externality but as a constitutive enigma that structures—and threatens—the expressive experience characteristic of being human. Similarly, Maurice Blanchot describes death and discourse as intimately and necessarily entwined in a connection that he elaborates via the interlinking of particularity and abstraction involved in describing and thinking about mortality. Blanchot, like Levinas, is suspicious of totalizing and negative notions of death, and notes that such an approach to negativity in general (as operating without remainder) is always already involved in a relationship with death that can be thought otherwise. He notes that conceptuality, the basis of

metaphysical thought and language, operates by means of a specific relationship with death. His presentation of ratiocinative abstraction deals with the Hegelian notion that abstraction is always at work in language and naming, and that it discards the passing and the inessential in favour of the abiding and the true (cf. Hegel 60-66). Whereas Hegel insists that truth, and so value, are found precisely in this escape from contingency, Blanchot insists on paying attention to what is lost when concepts arise phoenix-like from the the loss of material particularity:

> All our language—and therein lies its divine nature—is arranged to reveal in what "is" not what disappears, but what always subsists, and in this disappearance takes form: meaning, the idea, the universal. [...] The name is stable and it stabilizes, but it allows the unique instant already vanished to escape; just as the word, always general, has always already failed to capture what it names. (*Infinite* 34)

Key to this observation is not only the matter of disappearance (the disappearance of matter), but the notion that abstraction is both what survives this passage into nothingness and the passage itself. Conceptual abstraction is negation already understood as a redemptive passage to eternity that sets aside the loss of the particular as mere contingent nonsense. Blanchot links this notion of negation to the nature of death; his essay "The Great Refusal" presents an imagined assemblage of sages gathered next to the decomposing remains of Lazarus. A first insists on the virtue of naming, comprehending, and so passing beyond the immediate "cadaverous reality" in order to "by this understanding, pronounce the *Lazare veni*

foras through which death will become a principle, the terrible force in which the life that bears it must maintain itself in order to master it and find there the accomplishment of its mastery" (*Infinite* 35). This approach equates death with negativity, with the passage from particular to the universal that is the power of conceptual abstraction. Blanchot argues that,

> the force of the concept does not reside in refusing the negation that is proper to death, but on the contrary in having introduced it into thought so that, through negation, every fixed form of thought should disappear and always become other than itself. (*Infinite* 35)

Conceptuality in language, then, involves "speaking precisely in the name of this nothingness that dissolves all things, it being the becoming speech of death itself and yet interiorizing this death, purifying it perhaps, in order to reduce it to the unyielding work of the negative" (*Infinite* 35). Blanchot's phrase "purifying it, perhaps," although grammatically subordinate, is central to his criticism of the purity and totality of this process of abstraction and elevation, especially considered *vis-à-vis* the question of death.

Beside the corpse of Lazarus, another sage points out that the power of cognitive abstraction deployed by the previous thinker relies on a notion of loss and passage drawn from death itself:

> But which death? That death comprehended, deprived of itself, become pure privative essence, pure negation [...]. But how can one not sense that in this veritable death, the death without truth has

> entirely slipped away: what in death is irreducible to the true, to all disclosure, what never reveals itself, hides, or appears?
>
> (Blanchot, *Infinite* 36)

This thinker draws attention to the simple fact that "what 'is' has in effect disappeared: something was there that is there no longer" (36) and that discarding this "something" is in effect to beg the question, to deploy death as pure negativity in order to understand death as the purity of negation. Death is thus bifurcated, deployed by the first sage as "death become the moment of truth" in distinction from the "death without truth" of the second. Blanchot argues that through dialectic abstraction,

> mind and language have succeeded in making a power of this death; but at what price? By idealizing it. What in fact is it now? No longer an immediate dissolution in which everything disappears without thought, but the infamous death that is the beginning of the life of the mind. (*Infinite* 35)

This what Blanchot calls the "great refusal": "the refusal to stop beside the enigma that is the strangeness of this particular end" (*Infinite* 35).

Luce Irigaray shares Blanchot's suspicion of metaphysical transcendence, and identifies the traditional onto-theological notion of death as deploying its enigma to support a coercive transcendence:

> Man always remains beneath the project God has for him. At least in this lower life, separated from the "other" by that impenetrable

> paraphragm, death. Obviously, no mortal will gaze upon death as he experiences it at the very moment of dying. He will still not know whether or not "the entrance to another existence" corresponds to the desire to appropriate the "other side" of representation which constitutes his "interiority" but remains outside the field of his perspective. (*Speculum* 339)

In this analysis of Plato, Irigaray presents death as a final secret that anchors the system of representation by holding divinity in reserve as a guarantor of its coherence. In transforming the affective excess, the cognitive enigma, of death into such a systematizing power, materiality in general must be subordinated to transcendental ideation:

> Progress flags at the limit of this existence, it ends on the border of death, in the expectation of entering or exiting on the other side. [...] But, to get past it, to go beyond it, there remains a leap that one will not simply make in one's lifetime and that one cannot make in reverse [...] after death. And if they promise you the sublimation of that threshold, in the form of immortality, it is on the condition of trans-forming your "body" into "soul." (Irigaray, *Speculum* 341)

This transubstantiation parallels the speculative elevation of particular death to universal meaning, and is analogous to the masculine elevation of form over the femininity of matter (cf. Butler, *Bodies* 31-32). These operations' claims to totality are challenged, however, by the messy emotional remainder of grief. That in theory

the body becomes soul and death becomes negativity still leaves us with the problem of mourning, of somehow managing—negating—death in fact. As the example of Socrates shows, death as truth, as the life of the mind, remains faced with grief, with the excess and cessation involved in death as unknowable passage or no-response.

Irigaray notes that Hegel's gendered distinction between the masculine public sphere and the feminine private sphere is a distinction predicated on these two deaths. Blood relatives, specifically women as the guardians of familial identity, have the "duty to ensure burial for the dead, thus changing a natural phenomenon into a spiritual act" (*Speculum* 214). Irigaray describes the sublation of death in Hegelian speculation as a function of the guardianship of women, whose care for the burial of the dead allows the dead (man), returned to the private sphere of the family, to be united with the undifferentiated ancestral earth in a death that is thereby negated as negative.

> Man is still subject to (natural) death, of course, but what matters is to make a movement of the mind out of this accident that befalls the single individual and, in its raw state, drives consciousness out of its own country, cutting off that return to the self which allows it to become self-consciousness. (*Speculum* 215)

The capacity for man to overcome death as unmitigated loss by means of active service in the name of the polis requires woman to return his remains to the ancestral tomb/womb, which "reunites him with undying, elemental individuality"

(*Speculum* 215). In this way, abstract masculine identity triumphs over both the particularity of mortality by relegating the bodily detritus of death to the feminine sphere, and femininity to a mediating role that is not itself permitted to partake in death or its overcoming. Irigaray thus yokes the universalizing movement of the concept with the role of gender difference in Hegelian dialectics and identifies sexual difference as at the root of both speculative negativity and its transformation of individual death in to "beautiful" death.

Irigaray identifies the traditions of patriarchal cognition (her term is phallogocentrism) as "a male culture, which, in giving itself death as its sole horizon, oppresses the female" (*I Love* 25). Masculinity recognizes only one boundary to its generality, and so subordinates all other otherness to variations of sameness. "Woman," Irigaray argues, has consistently figured in the metaphorics of philosophy as

> the reserve of "sensuality" for the elevation of intelligence, she is the matter used for the imprint of forms, gage of possible regression into naive perception, the representative representing negativity (death), dark continent of dreams and fantasies [...]. (*Speculum* 141)

Irigaray's work has laboriously traced the insistent logic of these images from Plato through Levinas.[1] She sees in psychoanalytic thought an especially conspicuous case of "Woman" figured as "the representative representing negativity." Death appears in psychoanalytic thought by way of castration, which is symbolized for man by woman: "In this proliferating desire of the same, death will be the only

representative of an outside, of a heterogeneity, of an other: woman will assume the function of representing death" (Irigaray, *Speculum* 27). This rendering of woman as representative of death allows man a two-fold triumph over it: he takes pleasure in intercourse, in proximity with the horror of her absent genitals; and he assures himself of the continuing economy of adequation by means of procreation (Irigaray, *Speculum* 27). Assuming this representative function, however, is not to suggest that woman simply stands in as a metaphor for the unthinkable. The feminine also offers—in its function of domestic nourishment and replenishment—a paradoxical warding-off of death and a prolongation of dying. "To being still the restoring, nourishing mother who prolongs the work of death by sustaining it; death makes a detour through the revitalizing female-maternal" (Irigaray, *Speculum* 53). Woman thus sustains the particularity of man in life, prolonging the dying that is the experience of mortal being even as she represents the death whose imminence she wards off. Eternal paradox of possibility and threat, women are not permitted a relation to death as mortal beings; femininity does not die in the manner of masculine mortality. Rather, woman represents both the sanctioned mourning that is required to sublate the loss of death and the primordial mourning continuously at work in the very act of sustaining life.

Masculinity, then, both erases and depends upon femininity in the name of its aspiration to conceptual and political totality. The masculine is nevertheless mortal—perhaps all the more so because the horizon of death is the only transcendence that phallogocentrism recognizes, which positions it as an

annihilating absolute. Death and transcendence are thus united in a threatening negativity that must be overcome for phallogocentrism to retain its aspiration to totality. The threatening negative is therefore redeployed as theological certainty or the abstracting power of cognition itself to recoup its threatening loss, to sublate individual risk as a passage to eternity. Death thus re-inscribed as a power or a capacity is a death that anchors the system and remains available to it as a threat. The threat of death and the capacity to die effect subjectification; one is recognizably human if one is mortal, if one exists in relation to death as horizon—but then, as human, one is subject to the threat of death deployed as a political tool. Phallocratic thought, like patriarchal politics, is founded on the threat of death as well as the enigma of death: "All those who persist in following the dictates of individualism must be taught by the government to fear a master: death" (Irigaray, *Speculum* 215). Lyotard shares this critical perspective on the coercive and conceptual role of death in the determination of gender, as seen in his commentary on the Chinese legend of General Sun-Tsu training women to be soldiers:

> What is pertinent for distinguishing the sexes is the relation to death: a body that can die, whatever its sexual anatomy, is masculine; a body that does not know that it must disappear is feminine. Men teach women of death, the impossible, the presence of absence. ("One" 112)

If patriarchy takes or gives itself death as its sole limit, then it thereby reduces all differences (sexual differences, for instance) to the opposition death/life, within which the living are comprehended according to a phallogocentric scheme.

Femininity as such is thus incapable of taking place on the scene of representation defining human being as mortal. She remains its mournful exterior as individual domesticity necessary to the operation of system in that she sustains man in his dying and in his death, without ever taking a place or dying a death that is her own.

Traditional notions of bereavement and mourning rely simultaneously on a belief that we immortalize the lost one—the other lives on in our memory—and a recognition that they are indeed irremediably gone—they so live on because they are lost to our presence. Jacques Derrida refers to mourning as "facing up to a loss, in the sense of keeping within oneself that whose death one must endure" (*Gift* 9). Derrida insists that the function of mourning is not limited to the relatively infrequent confrontation with literal death; our experience of living others and our experience of ourselves is predicated on this structure of loss:

> Already installed in the narcissistic structure, the other so marks the self of the relationship to self, so conditions it that the being "in us" of bereaved memory becomes the *coming* of the other, a coming of the other. And even, however terrifying this thought may be, the first coming of the other. (*Mémoires* 22)

The differential nature of selfhood means that we are never simply ourselves. Selfhood comes to pass in our relationship with the other, a relationship which is implicitly and essentially the possibility of bereavement and mourning: "the self appears to itself only in this bereaved allegory, in this hallucinatory prosopopoeia—and even before the death of the other *actually* happens, as we say, in 'reality'"

(Derrida, *Mémoires* 28-29). Formal, grief-stricken, and ritualized expressions of mourning are therefore late on the scene, as is the literal death they commemorate. Our deaths not only accompany our selves in an egoistic turning toward an impossible future, but give rise to the very possibility of that ego by imposing a primordial mourning for the mortal other. Mourning is thus another name for that ancient displacement to which the "I" responds always too late. We are dispossessed by a mourning that offers us experience as compromised in advance. In that sense, mourning is akin to language, an affinity made manifest in considering the question of how one can speak of death.

The primordial and singular nature of death might lead one to expect that the alternative to rational categorization or linguistic sufficiency is a kind of amazed silence, a terrible awe of the sort sometimes called the "negative sublime" (LaCapra, *History* 2n3, "Holocaust" 214). Blanchot wonders, however, whether there might be another way of phrasing this dilemma:

> [Is there] another way of putting these questions into play without reducing them to the form to which we are bound by the obligation to choose between a dialectical speech (that refuses the immediate in order to rely solely on the mediating force) and a vision (a speech of vision, also visionary, that speaks only insofar as one sees [...]).
>
> (*Infinite* 38)

The pressing question becomes: "how can I, in my speech, recapture this prior presence that I must exclude in order to speak, in order to speak it?" (Blanchot,

Infinite 36). To stop and recognize the resolute nature of this loss is to forgo the mastery of truthful abstraction. In contrast to this masterful relationship with death, Blanchot offers the impossible experience of suffering:

> Suffering is suffering when one can no longer suffer it, and because of this non-power, cannot cease suffering it [.... T]he mark of such a movement is that, by the fact that we experience it, it escapes our power to undergo it; thus it is not beyond the trial of experience, but rather that trial from which we can no longer escape. (*Infinite* 44-45)

Suffering and death are thus implacable displacements of the power of the intentional and masterful self. Blanchot also consistently identifies these same qualities as characteristic of language: we are given over to and constituted within language as a primordial and enduring system whose signifying capacity represents mortality itself insofar as the legibility of a text is impersonal, independent of its author, and so always already a memorial to absence. Blanchot argues that text is fundamentally anonymous, separated from its author, and entrusted to the undetermined future; texts are deprived of the context of their authorship, of any vital connection to the scene of their production, simply by virtue of their being written and read: the writer "exists only in his work, but the work only exists when it has become this public, alien reality, made and unmade by colliding with other realities" ("Literature" 26). There is an inherent disproportion between authorial and readerly roles, a disproportion that is effected by the differential, rhetorical opacity of the text. In writing, then, one effects a gesture whose meaning as an

impersonal matter of legibility, a mechanism of signification that operates in the absence, the death, of the author:

> Therefore it is accurate to say that when I speak, death speaks in me. My speech is a warning that at this very moment death is loose in the world, that it has suddenly appeared between me, as I speak, and the being I address: it is there between us as the distance that separates us but this distance is also what keeps us from being separated, because it is the condition for all understanding. Death alone allows me to grasp what I want to attain; it exists in words as the only way they can have meaning. ("Literature" 43)

My speaking of death is thus simultaneously an impossible and a necessary task; I can neither experience nor address my own death, let alone the death of another, yet in writing my death is ceaselessly at work.

Mourning in the sense of overcoming the particularity of mortal loss is a fantasm of representation, a function of its sexed partiality. This fantasm is supported by the metaphorics of death as it appears on the scene of representation as pure negativity or a passage to eternity. Woman is figured in representation, according to a similar logic, as man's specular other, and she offers rational phallogocentrism an outlet for the irrational enigma of death. Woman, in short, stands surrogate for the underlying enigma of death which can then, purified of its mystery, offer phallogocentrism its onto-theological cornerstone. Insofar as representation dominates the field of discursive legibility, speaking of death

otherwise involves a recognition of otherness beyond the binary confrontation of subjectivity and death via writing that registers their intertwining, as well as its own necessary complicity as enigmatic and memorial. The deconstructive mortality that circulates in the differential structure of language suggests that some form of "mourning in the feminine" remains an always-open possibility in iterative refusal of closure and definitive abstraction, in attending to the traces that necessarily remain in death's wake.

The memoirs of Kazimirski and Neray both seek to bear witness to the multitude of deaths that each woman survived. Each memoir enacts its textual expression of remembrance and mourning devoted not simply to individual deaths but to the part of each in a cataclysm that claimed millions. Kazimirski and Neray have very different experiences of this violence: Kazimirski witnessed the murder of her community in large-scale, *Einsatzkommando* executions, whereas Neray, interned at Auschwitz, witnessed the coordinated efforts of trains, gas chambers, and crematoria consume thousands of lives every day. They thus offer variant and variable perspectives on the nature of death and its demands on the living, the survivor, the witness. In both cases, however, the scale and the suffering involved in these deaths fractures the representational surfaces of their respective attempts to recount these events, and stages the challenge of singularity in their relationship, as women, to the iterability of language, tradition, and intelligibility.

The first deaths Kazimirski mentions in her story are presented in

perfunctory asides that avoid lingering over the details of each in favour of its simple factuality. An early example of this can be seen when her extended family is dealing with the privations of life under Russian occupation. Seemingly to account for his absence in the narrative of her family's efforts to feed themselves, she adds a parenthetical note about her maternal grandfather: "(By that time my mother's father, Leib, had died a natural death.)" (21). Another passing reference both elaborates on the fate of her family and exemplifies this laconic narrative voice: in discussing the large number of refugees who left Russian-occupied Poland for Russia proper, Kazimirski notes that many of them "probably survived the war. My father, however, was killed, as was almost all of his family. Those refugees were the smart ones—they didn't want to take chances" (22). This anachronistic reference to the coming death of her father seems, despite her prompt claim to understanding his perspective (24), deeply critical of his decision to wait out the occupation in that the future deaths of his family are summarized as a consequence of his refusal to leave. And yet another intimate death is also recounted in a similarly distanced manner: Kazimirski's cousin Motel is not allowed to hide with her when the Germans begin their mass murder, and he is found and killed in the basement of Kazimirski's apartment where she suggested he hide; her recount of this loss ends with the summary and assessment "They executed him immediately—another life wasted" (47). These three examples present death in a most attenuated form, as an impersonal narrative event among others, and do so despite the social and emotional proximity of these deaths to Kazimirski herself. She thus holds these

deaths at a distance, in reserve, as a matter of merely referential fact.

Each remains somehow unsettling, however. Even offered within the narrative fabric as homogeneous with its procession of events, each interrupts the simple continuity it proffers. The single word "natural" distinguishes the death of her mother's father as unusual in its very normalcy, and offers it up—in exemplifying the expected rhythms of birth and death—as something noteworthy. The parenthetical reference may merely note his passing, but it inflects the nature of his death to foreshadow a grim future family history of death that is nostalgic for such normal mortality. Unlike the foregoing aside, the death of her father's family irrupts anachronistically into the narrative to underscore the momentous nature of the Russian occupation as a window of opportunity that her family and many others did not take. It is offered in illustration of the fate that the refugees escaped.[2] Kazimirski's assertion that "almost all of *his* family was killed" employs a masculine possessive pronoun that alienates her from the deaths to which she refers; surely her father's family is also her own? That "his" family was not utterly annihilated is due in part to Kazimirski's own survival, but she survived to recognize in retrospect a moment when escape was possible (but not, as her description emphasizes, guaranteed). Guilt and anger thus seem to meet in a friction between two impossible desires: to comprehend his decision in its ineluctable historical uniqueness and to hold him accountable for its unforeseeable consequences. The story of Motel's death, on the other hand, is chronologically contiguous, but calls forth an unsettled attempt to respond to such a death. Her conclusion to the story of

his end ("another life wasted") is so general a moral to draw from a death—any death—that it stands in sharp distinction to the tragic particularity of his murder. These examples suggest that death, even death presented in absolute concision, and even in passing, resists assimilation as an event among others, and that intransigent excess attends this passage such that its connotations are never simple or pure.

In *Witness to Horror*, some deaths evoke unthematized possibilities that exceed the rhetoric of brevity and reserve; others are presented with explicit affect, although Kazimirski's recognition of grief and mourning is at times as laconic as her passing factuality. When her teacher Kizel is killed by an exploding bomb, for instance, she reports simply that she was "devastated" by his death: "I discovered that he had been killed in a ditch by a bomb while he was running for shelter. I was devastated by that" (26). Her laconic description and reaction foreground his death understood as bare fact, but even this short description presents the "fact" of a death that, like all deaths, is not a matter of loss pure and simple: it is accompanied by violence and pathos, by its distinctive place in the multitude of possible deaths. The Heideggerian position on mortality sets aside such contextual meanings in favour of the purity and priority of ontological passage to nothingness. But in so doing, and in defining death as other than mute biological cessation, such a perspective on death nevertheless demands that meaning enter the picture. It is precisely because of the relationship of death to life as an ongoing narrative of possibility that it is distinguished by both Heidegger and Levinas from mere ending, from the unremarkable facticity of perishing. Kizel's death is at once many

kinds of death: the death of a scholar, the death of a civilian in an era of air power and total war, the death of the object of a young woman's adoration, the death of a man whose desperate efforts to survive imminent danger tragically failed him, and many more, no doubt. For all that, of course, the brute fact of his death remains; we can gather with the sages around his body and abstract from or wonder at its wounded presence, but this corpse in a ditch remains an ineluctable testament to the mystery of the unique loss that is this particular death. The wounds and the situation of Kizel's body are intrinsically narrative, they bring abstraction to life in a crossing of ideality and materiality. The ambiguously generic and inclusive reference in Kazimirski's being "devastated by that" thus reflects the sheaf of meanings gathered around the fact of Kizel's death, a gathering that is characteristic of death in general, were "death in general" a meaningful phrase.

Kazimirski reserves more effusive expression of sorrow for the deaths closest to her. Her reflection on the deaths of her father and brother exhibits the paradoxical presence/absence of the dead in the logic of mourning: "Abba and Benny were taken from me forever. They were wrenched from life by the Nazi beasts, but they live in my heart and thoughts. I miss them every day of my life" (34). Her difficulty in mourning them is compounded by her secondhand and fragmented knowledge of the nature of their murders as well as the violent and tragic conditions under which they died. She has only a very partial sense of how her father and brother died, and is tormented by not knowing:

> Did my father see how they killed his son? The question has always

> haunted me. The wondering is a big pain by itself. Were they tortured? Were they separated? They were so close. Did they ever see each other before they died? What were their last moments like? I have a deep need to know. What were their last thoughts? This is something I always think about. (33–34)

In this monologue she passes from an imagined witnessing by proxy ("Did my father see") to her own worried ignorance about their fate. She passes as well from emotionally charged details about whether the men were able to face the same gruesome fate together to questions that remain unanswerable under any conditions ("their last thoughts"). She is led to similar questions when, upon visiting Auschwitz many years later, she is confronted with evidence of the many children who were killed there: "I wondered how these children had gone to their death. Were they crying? Were they simply traumatized into silence? Can one possibly imagine how their parents felt?" (165). These moments suggest that mourning, or at least grief, is in part a matter of knowledge. The desire to know as much as possible about the final moments of the deceased reflects at least two desires. On the one hand, the extreme violence and injustice of these deaths demands a great deal of mourners insofar as one mourns not merely the passage of the deceased but also the fact that they were deprived of a natural death. The details of their deaths are therefore relevant to mourners who want to know exactly what sort of death the dying suffered. Moreover, in the absence of physical remains, mourners (and especially so in the context of the Holocaust) are entrusted not with physical but

narrative remains. Such remains are subject to the demand for closure implicit in traditional modes of narration that offer decisive conclusions, that insist a story "says all it has to say in saying it" (Blanchot, qtd. in Kofman 16). Levinas summarizes Heidegger's position on death as a consummating moment that concludes a life that can thereafter be considered a totality:

> In everyday time, the unity of the "me" appears only when the time of each life has flowed by: *Dasein* [would be] total only in its necrology: "Changed by eternity into his true Self," totality would be fulfilled at the very moment when a person ceases to be a person. (*God* 31)

For such a synthesis to aspire to totality, to encompass the whole without remainder, it must take place "after" the end. Such a desire for conclusive synthesis thus pushes the understanding to come as close as possible to that finality in the hopes of grasping some essential truth about the end, and so the promised whole. Kazimirski thus, in her grief, enacts the traditional conceptualization described by Blanchot, wherein death becomes a matter of knowledge. Both the insistence of this movement and its limits are reflected in her questions, insofar as they are directed toward both knowable, shared, material details and the forever-inaccessible immediacy of her murdered family's last experiences.

Kazimirski has a very different response to the killings she witnesses herself, and her narrative presents the details of her witnessing to the exclusion of her affective response. She is transfixed by the sight of the first massacre in the ghetto, and relates in considerable detail the atrocities she sees from her attic window.

When the Germans begin mass killings in Vladimir-Volynski, it is out of sight of the ghetto inhabitants, and so Kazimirski can report only on the fact that "on August 20th, 1000 Jews were forced to dig their own graves at Piatdynie (just outside Vladimir Volynski) and they were then shot" (43-45). Her descriptions of the first ghetto massacre (51-53) and the follow-up operations to collect and kill the remnants (53-54, 55-56), on the other hand, focus on the horrific details of the victims' terror and helpless misery at the hands of their murderers. Kazimirski repeatedly notes the presence of spilled blood—on the ground, on faces, on clothes. The overall impression during both the massacre and the follow-up sweeps through the ghetto is one of violent physical suffering whose remains are the "torn articles of clothing, blood, pieces of human bones and human waste" they see from the window (52). Kazimirski continues to foreground the shedding of blood and the sheer physical trauma of violent death in her descriptions of the second (67-68) and third pogroms (78-79). The dead are present in their brutally ruptured physiology as living beings suddenly become macabre objects of pity and fear. Kazimirski's description of her mother's death also foregrounds the physiology of violent death, and presents the murder of the prisoners as a transformation of human stance and agency into mute, gravity-bound, dead flesh:

> Then I heard the rat-a-tat-tat of machine gun fire and saw the prisoners hit in their necks and backs. Their bodies collapsed like bags of potatoes and their blood spattered the wall and the snow on the ground. My beautiful mama was dead, her long auburn hair

covered with a thick mass of blood. (85)

These expressive portrayals of suffering are some of the most vivid and moving moments in Kazimirski's writing. Her perspective on the deaths of those friends and relatives is one of awed insistence on the brutality of their violent ends, a brutality and insistence that foreclose the possibility of conclusive mourning. Shirley Neuman notes that autobiographical writing in general minimizes or suppresses representations of the body (293). She connects this generic trend to the Platonic division by which the "corporeal functions as the binary opposite by which the spiritual is understood"; this has been a conspicuously gendered division, one that has claimed spirituality and intellect for men, and that thus doubly alienates women from writing autobiographical texts that take their bodies into account (293-294). Following Neuman, then, when Kazimirski insists on the bodily presence of the remains of her mother, and of the abject physical traces left after the murder of her community, she is insisting not only on the textual presence of the corporeal, but the textual presence of the marginalized materiality of women's bodies and the bloody remains of the murdered. The specific physicality of this abject materiality cuts across the masculine abstraction of mourning understood as a mechanism of spiritual transcendence.

Sidonie Smith suggests that the normative value of men's bodies means that women, in order to write autobiographical texts, have traditionally been required to "make sure their body had been neutralized before, in both senses of the word, their text" (272). This neutralization offered a women writer a double jeopardy: to erase

her body in assuming an abstractly masculine autobiographical "I," or to insist on her distinctive corporeality and therefore the constricting objectification of her body as feminine, as "aligned socially within the matrices of reproduction and nurturing" (Smith 272). Kazimirski's recount of her mother's death insists on her corporeality and her femininity: her mother is "beautiful" and Kazimirski pays specific attention to the juxtaposition of the long hair that denotes her gendered identity with the blood that denotes her violent murder. Kazimirski singles out the body of her mother in its material specificity against the anonymous background of the other prisoners, in so doing resisting the generalizing and gendered abstraction that might transform her ruptured and female body into pure, neuter spirit. In Plato's *Phaedo*, Socrates speaks eagerly of shedding the contaminating presence of the bodily prison that contains the purity of the soul (80d, 81b), in a classically hierarchic transformation of individual materiality into abstract meaning. Lyotard critically contrasts the nature of "Auschwitz death" with such a Platonic "beautiful death," a death capable of being recuperated by narrative into an ongoing eternal life (*Differend* §153). This trope, characteristic of the phallogocentric approach to mourning, is rejected by Kazimirski's insistent attention to flesh and blood that will not be rendered abstract. Her attention to the tragic fate of the bodies of the murdered is a refusal of such sublation that does not offer an alternative, some eternity other than the stark repetition of these deaths in their bodily particularity.

Witnessing and grief come together when Kazimirski sees the murder of her mother and reacts out of a primal extremity of sorrow: "I wanted to die with her.

[...] I screamed like a wounded animal" (85). She is forcibly silenced by Henry and another man in their attic hideaway "for fear my screams might endanger everyone's life by attracting soldiers" (85). Her grief is an excessive function of the moment; it does not calculate matters of risk or plan for the future, and thus illustrates the insistent and excessive immediacy of death as a matter of responsive, pre-cognitive individuation. Her initial, uncontrollable vocalization gives way to a remembered, comprehending dismay over the fact that the Nazis have now murdered her entire extended family: "God, I thought, what had happened to us?" (85). When Kazimirski awakes from her exhausted sleep, it is to discover that her mother's friend Ciupa, whose intervention brought her and her husband into hiding, has died: "When I awoke, Ciupa had died and we had nothing to cover her body with—not even a sheet. Somebody recited the El Moley Rachamim (Prayer for the Dead). People's waste accumulated in the corner and the stench grew unbearable" (86). They make an attempt to respond to Ciupa's death in culturally traditional ways, but must content themselves with prayer due to their dire straits. The extremity of their current context exerts itself both in the lack of simple amenities such as a shroud, but also in the startling, staccato narrative juxtaposition of death, prayer, and the stench of excrement. Thus, religious ritual arises in the very moment of loss, effecting a reassertion of tradition in the face of the discontinuous excess of death. But this ritual, so strikingly contextualized in their agonizing present, also partakes of a series of confusing ambiguities that make its status as a traditional ritual uncertain. It is unclear who speaks the prayer;

moreover, given the immediate proximity of the deaths of Kazimirski's mother and her fellow prisoners, and the ambiguously temporalized death of Ciupa, it is also unclear whose death it mourns. Moreover, the *El Moley Rachamim* is not a traditional deathbed prayer, but is instead usually reserved for funerary and interment rituals; the prayer usually recited at the moment of death is *Barukh Dayyan ha-Emet* (Kayser 1426). Ritual, even along traditional lines, thus arises in the moment and with respect to the moment. Under extreme conditions of loss, these survivors respond with a ritual bricolage drawn from a reservoir of traditional practise but enacted as a newly contextualized, responsive performance.

Culturally specific mourning can thus take nonce forms, such as the ceremony Kazimirski describes as concluding the European leg of the March of the Living tour she accompanied in 1997. The ritual, held at Birkenau, involved lighting yizkor candles, and "[s]everal people spoke on behalf of the millions of victims and prayed in their names" (170). So ending this section of the journey allowed the participants—young and old—to conclude their exposure to the dismaying evidence of the destruction with a ritual of mourning intended in no small part to restore their religious faith: "Seeing the evidence of the Holocaust [...] was a reality shock for almost all of the children and the adults. [...] And many of them cried and questioned G-d's mercy. Then at the ceremony after the March, there was an opportunity to truly grieve for the dead" (Kazimirski 170). The March of the Living responds to doubt with hymn and prayer to assert religious homogeneity in the face of individuating despair. Ritualized grieving along

traditional lines is offered as a ceremonial response to doubt and as a reassertion of religious community as a matter of ritual and repetition: "Perhaps that is the purpose of ritual—continuity without explanation" (Bernhard 95). As a new version of traditional forms, this rite seeks to respond to the the challenge posed by Holocaust remembrance in ways consonant with traditional practice. The divisions between the young people are returned, by way of ritualized mourning, to a sense of community thereby organized with respect to death, and specifically the manifold and anonymous nature of "Auschwitz death," which the tradition thereby attempts to incorporate with innovative rituals of mourning that nevertheless reference traditional practice in reasserting continuity and commonality.

Kazimirski does not seem to participate in this "true" grieving, however, as it is not until the end of her travels with the March of the Living that she is finally able to mourn her lost family: "We prayed at the *Kotel Amaravi* (the remains of the western wall of the old Temple in Jerusalem), and for the first time, after fifty-two years, I said *kaddish* for my mother, father, and brother who were killed by the Nazis" (173). Kazimirski suggests that this moment of mourning was delayed by the lack of discrete, known burial sites for her murdered family: "I had pinned my hopes on finding one identifiable grave where I could mourn, because so many of our relatives were buried in mass graves or incinerated" (164). She recalls that despite knowing *how* her father and brother were killed she does not know *where* they were buried; similarly, despite vivid memories of witnessing her mother's murder, she does not have a traditional resting place, as her body was burned in a

mass grave: "A raging fire consumed the corpses and my mother's ashes were scattered by the wind. I have no grave to go to, a place where I can thank that brave woman who gave me life" (92). Without a burial site, "There had been nowhere for me to recite the *kaddish* for my family until now, at the *Kotel Amaravi*" (173). This symbolic location is "the most sacred spot in Jewish religious and national consciousness and tradition by virtue of its proximity to the Western Wall of the Holy of Holies in the Temple, from which, according to numerous sources, the Divine Presence never departed" (Markus 1). The Western Wall is also famous as the so-called Wailing Wall because "it became a center of mourning over the destruction of the Temple and Israel's exile [...] and the hope for its restoration" (Auerbach 469). Kazimirski's place of mourning is thus rigorously traditional, situated as it is at the site of the foundational trauma of the Jewish diaspora. But her desire to find a place to say Kaddish evokes the first of many slippages in her use of this traditional ritual prayer because the Kaddish is a time-bound prayer and is not intrinsically or culturally tied to place. In fact, travellers in mourning are expected to appear in a local *shul* to fulfil their obligation wherever they may be. The conditions of Kazimirski's personal version of this mourning, however, are spatial more so than temporal. It is relevant to note that in Jewish tradition, women are not obligated to observe time-bound commandments such as saying Kaddish (Lankin 626). Kazimirski thus remains within the traditionally gendered nature of traditional practise, on the one hand, by spatializing its demands, but also breaks with tradition at the same time by so transforming a traditionally time-bound—and

masculine—observance. In her narrative of remembrance and mourning, therefore, Kazimirski takes up an ongoing negotiation with tradition in order to discover a mode of mourning that can respond to the gendered particularity of her experience. The heteroglot nature of narrative text offers her the citational and metaphorical opportunity to incorporate the tradition and use it to mourn otherwise.

Kazimirski begins *Witness to Horror* by noting that the difficult exertion involved in remembering "that horrendous, nazi-dominated world which I had so narrowly escaped" (i) is made possible by a sense of obligation to mourn:

> I owe it to all those I loved and knew, and all the others who rest with them in forgotten mass graves. They have no monument and survivors to say Kaddish (the Hebrew memorial prayer) for them. I feel that my memoirs will be a form of Kaddish for them. (i)

The text of her book, then, is figured as replacement for missing survivors and monuments, whose absence burdens her with responsibility for mourning the dead. Later on in the text, she says that her reasons for writing the book include a desire to speak "in the name of those who cannot speak for themselves and offer the book as a form of *kaddish* for them" (158). She in effect offers her book as a mourning for mourning; she says Kaddish in and for the absence of Kaddish, in the name of and on behalf of the dead. When Kazimirski makes her claim, she inserts a definition of the Kaddish in parentheses, presumably because she hopes her book will be read far and wide, and not only by observant and knowledgeable Jews. In describing the Kaddish as a "memorial prayer" however, she offers a very partial translation of its

function and nature, and casts it in a light more consonant with her memorial and educational goals than its traditional ritual role.

The Mourner's Kaddish is one of four versions of the prayer, which is a benediction traditionally recited after a reading from the scriptures; as such, versions of the Kaddish appear often in Jewish liturgy (cf. Rothkoff *passim*; Wieseltier 28-29). The Mourner's Kaddish is traditionally spoken only in the presence of a *minyan* of ten men; in many cases all the mourners in a congregation stand and recite the prayer simultaneously, but in some, the prayer is led by one mourner as the other mourners stand in silence. The requirement for a *minyan* means that the Kaddish is an intrinsically social prayer: as Steve Sandbank argues, "the essence of the *Kaddish* is public sanctification" (8). The Mourner's Kaddish is also a repeated ritual: "Jewish Law requires that the Kaddish be recited during the eleven months following the death of a loved one by prescribed mourners, and on each anniversary of the death" (Sandbank 10). That the prayer makes no reference to death has been explained both with reference to the mourners, whose attention is turned to exaltation and away from grief, and with reference to the deceased, whose passage through the trials of divine judgement is said to be eased by praise offered in their names. Sandbank's reference to "prescribed mourners" indicates that this is also a ritual whose participants are defined by tradition: one is required to say Kaddish for a deceased parent, child, brother, or in-law; only men who have passed their *Bar Mitzvah* are obligated to say Kaddish, although younger men may recite it for a parent; and in recent years "most religious authorities allow a daughter to say

Kaddish, although she is under no religious obligation to do so" (Sandbank 10).

So, when Kazimirski asserts that her memoirs will stand as a Kaddish for the dead, is she using the name of the prayer as a secularized metaphor, or does she mean to imply that a literary commemoration can enact some function similar to ritual mourning? What might it mean for a text to act "as a Kaddish"? Once "saying Kaddish" is freed from religious performativity, what remains characteristic of it? And the Kaddish is uniquely performative, especially when considered as a "memorial prayer." This is because its liturgical role excludes any reference to the deceased for whom one prays; saying Kaddish offers explicit memorialization only insofar as embodied in the presence of the mourners who undertake the ritual and stand amongst the congregation as living referents to the dead for whom they mourn. The mourner literally stands as a memorial for the deceased in a performance that identifies the mourner, the deceased, and the act of ritual mourning; this identity is reflected in the idiom by which "a son, in Yiddish, is often called 'a *Kaddish*'" (Avenary 661). This performative memorial role, moreover, is an unsubstitutable responsibility, according to the fundamental Talmudic doctrine that "someone who is not required to perform a certain obligation cannot perform this obligation for someone else" (Wieseltier 47). The key exception to this rule *vis-à-vis* the Kaddish is when a parent dies without a son; under such circumstances Kaddish may be said on behalf of the deceased by another man designated for this role as mourner by proxy.

At first glance, then, Kazimirski's claim for her memoir to somehow "be" a

Kaddish is absurd, given the strictly bound meaning of this liturgical, ritual prayer. The Kaddish, however, has been understood in a variety of ways through the centuries. Wieseltier presents a suggestive reading of the redemptive, protective role of the Kaddish that connects it with the custodial role of the present in the preservation of memory and tradition:

> The son's redemption of the dead father, the dead father's protection by the son: is this not an allegory for the power of the present over the past? For the past is at the mercy of the present. The present can condemn the past to oblivion or obscurity. Whatever happens to the past will happen to it posthumously. (144)

He goes on to observe that "The difference between the living and the dead is the difference between the remembered and the forgotten" (469). As a metaphor, then, the Kaddish is memorialization itself, the act of holding on to the past. The responsibility of the memoirist is thus intrinsically akin to the responsibility of the mourner, the survivor whose continued existence renders her responsible for the memory of the deceased. The Kaddish is therefore not a purely formal act of ritual performance, but an act whose custodial role is essentially connected to the concepts of mourning, in maintaining a paradoxical presence of absence, and language, in its iterative impersonality.

Kazimirski's transformation of memoir into prayer or prayer into memoir takes advantage of the allegorical capacity of language to cite and refer to itself in sometimes startling ways. Linguistic meaning, as Derrida has argued, is a matter of

difference and repetition that prevents the foreclosure of meaning in principle: "This is my starting point: no meaning can be determined out of context, but no context permits saturation. What I am referring to here is not richness of substance, semantic fertility, but rather structure: the structure of the remnant or of iteration" ("Living On" 81). Iterability implies both persistent legibility and an intrinsic self-difference, especially in terms of repetition and temporality. Rituals such as saying Kaddish have an abiding relationship to such iterability in time: "The evanescence of human life is the reason for human ceremony. Since things pass, things must be repeated. Only the eternal can dispense with repetition" (Wieseltier 69). The Kaddish is iterability itself, repeated in its anonymous sameness thrice daily for a year and then yearly until the death of the mourner passes the responsibility for its repetition to the next generation. The Kaddish is thus an abyssal palimpsest of mourning, and illustrates the nature of tradition as an ancient impersonality in which the individual takes his or her place; ritual pre-exists the observant participant much as language pre-exists the speaker or writer who comes to take a place that has been prepared for them in and by this primordiality. Into the post-Holocaust void, the vast silence of the dead without descendants and without mourners to perform the rite of mourning, Kazimirski offers a memorialization whose textual relationship to iterability allows her to claim it as an act of mourning in the name of traditional mourning whose role and strictures make its observance both pressingly necessary and impossible.

Kazimirski expands still further on her desire to offer her memoir as

Kaddish; she notes that she also writes in order to inform the public, to educate the young, and in do doing improve the world to come. And she describes this act of building a better world as "the best form of *kaddish* [...] for all those we lost during those terrible years" (180). This recalls a traditional supplement to ritual mourning: that the bereaved may honour the dead with acts of kindness and charity performed in the memory of the dead. Such acts are not, however, substitutes for the requirement to say Kaddish as a distinct and specific ritual act. Obedience is another such alternative yet traditional mode of mourning. Wieseltier quotes Abraham Horowitz, a seventeenth century rabbi, on alternative methods of posthumous service to the dead: "The father should command his sons to fulfil a specific commandment [after his death] and if they fulfil it it is more highly regarded than the Kaddish. And since this is the case, the father is not without recourse if he has a daughter" (177). Horowitz's valuation of this obedience is at odds with the mainstream of tradition, which holds it more worthy to fulfil acts commanded by law than those not so commanded, but it nevertheless indicates a relationship between Kaddish and another mode of mourning: the performance of good deeds whose honour accrues to the deceased. And, as Horowitz's final sentence indicates, this is all the more relevant if the mourner is a woman and so traditionally excluded from saying Kaddish (an exclusion that has been loosened to some degree in recent times) by a combination of factors: modesty (Wieseltier 185, 560), lack of means owing to subordination in marriage (Wieseltier 252), and their traditional exemption from positive, time-bound commandments (Lankin 626).

Wieseltier, for instance, cites a nineteenth-century text forbidding women from saying Kaddish and enjoining them to mourn instead by the scrupulous observance of the prayers and rituals in which they can take part (185). *Witness to Horror* presents the unusual case where a daughter is instructed to mourn: Kazimirski's mother orders her to live and to tell the story of their suffering: "You must live and tell the world how we suffered and how we died" (76). She recognizes her fidelity to this demand when she declares that telling her story "would mean that I was keeping faith with my mother and all the others who had implored me to 'tell the world'" (125). By speaking in their names, Kazimirski presents herself as keeping faith with the deceased in fulfilling her obligation to them. Wieseltier also cites a late medieval commentator who suggests that "the kaddish is not a prayer for something. It is a proof of something" (420). The dutiful act of the mourner is not, in this view, a ritual whose goal is to effect a magical intercession on behalf of the dead, but is rather a rite that offers performative evidence that the deceased gave rise to a faithful member of the tradition: "The kaddish is not a prayer for the dead. It is an achievement of the dead" (Wieseltier 421). Kazimirski thus intervenes on the scene of mourning in a manner that is both rigorously traditional and that unsettles the tradition. Jewish tradition allows for a variety of expressions of mourning, but the best known and the most highly regarded is the Kaddish. In claiming this term for her memorial and educational goals, Kazimirski both situates herself within the tradition of gendered mourning and signals its rupture owing to the catastrophic destruction of the community it served. Her appropriation of

tradition unites the custodial and iterative nature of the Kaddish with the custodial and iterative effects of textual memorialization. Whereas the Kaddish seeks to affect the afterlife—a goal Wieseltier describes as "language allegedly acting on cosmology" (133)—Kazimirski's memoir and her educational efforts seek to have linguistic effect on the present in nurturing a future that will be a responsible custodian of its past.

Kazimirski's attempt to say Kaddish in narrative doubles the gendered identification at play in this traditionally masculine mourning ritual because, in describing her childhood years, she identifies story-telling as a masculine task. She recalls a childhood full of stories told as moral *exempla* by her maternal and paternal grandfathers, and notes that this experience of storytelling was formative for her sense of both morality and narrative (6, 8-13). Kazimirski steps into this implicitly masculine speaking and teaching role in part to speak on behalf of her husband, who "had planned to write the story and had started to do research for it before he died in 1976" (158). She thus tells his story by proxy much as she sought to present the substance of his testimony at the trial of Westerheide; she thereby enacts what Agamben considers the testimonial gesture par excellence: "the value of testimony lies essentially in what it lacks; at its center it contains something that cannot be borne witness to" (34). She testifies in his stead because his death entrusted her with his narrative burden and she, in writing her text of vengeance and accusation, seeks to fulfil the responsibility that this burden entails. The juxtaposition of their heterogeneous subjective perspectives, and her avowal of

certainty by proxy that seeks to unite them, indicates—attests to—the gulf between her phenomenal position and that of her husband, a gulf that is a matter of existential particularity or gendered mortality, and that is essential to the paradoxical expressive certainty of first-person witnessing. If witnessing is always a matter of testifying by proxy, then the expressive effort can only be mournful, can only register again the gulf and the loss at the heart of testimony even as it seeks to bridge that abyss with narrativity.

Kazimirski's textual effort is a mournful one insofar as she seeks to preserve the narrative remains of her husband's testimony in the face of his absence, and it takes the hybrid form it does as a direct result of this problematic attempt to produce successful mourning as successful testimony. She speaks on Henry's behalf (120, 158) in order to overcome the fact of his death, in order to carry out his testimonial mission and thereby transform his death from loss into achievement. Her attention to the requirements of legal interrogation and epistemology reflect Henry's desire to "research" his story, preparatory work that he never completed. She thus enacts, in a masculine role, and on behalf of her husband, a mode of witness that claims orthodoxy of epistemological and religious authority but does so by means of textual citation and heterogeneity—disruptive slippages from strict phallogocentric certainty. Kazimirski thus deploys her strategies in a manner that disrupts traditional genres, but in the interest of serving rigorously traditional goals. Her version of what might be called "mourning in the feminine" is thus ultimately pursued as an expression of traditional gender identity; her pragmatic

use of the irruptions that threaten the secure conceptuality of gendered roles and traditions of mourning thus minimize their radicality, and offer her efforts as a return of the community in the face of its loss.

That mourning and testimony involve gendered responsibility is a central notion in Ruth Bindefeld Neray's memoir *Death by Design*, which follows a tragic narrative trajectory from her childhood experience of cosmopolitan freedom to her internment in Auschwitz and difficult adjustment to post-war life. She describes her family life growing up in Paris in terms of comfort and security that were the product of her parents' and grandparents' hard work and emigration. She notes that her family is from Poland, although she grew up in France. Her grandparents left Poland for Germany because of "frequent pogroms" (9). This history of imminent danger is transformed by means of her family's repeated emigration (from Germany to Holland, Belgium, and finally France) and her father's professional success into a life of relative comfort and security in Paris. Antisemitism is rarely experienced by the Bindefeld children in their "protected childhood" (9) and, when it is, an antisemitic taunt leaves Neray "bewildered" because she "didn't know what it meant" (10). By 1939, her "father had integrated very well into French society and was proud to say that we belonged to the bourgeoisie" (11). Their family has thus moved over the short course of a generation from a situation of possibly mortal danger to a seemingly cosmopolitan world of security and opportunity.

Neray presents the Bindefeld children as growing up in a protected world of

relative insularity from want and danger. Even with the advent of war and the sudden transformation of their family life by the "fear in the air" (11), they surmount the chaos and sudden threat of the German occupation and escape to Marseilles where "Life was going to be normal again" (17). Neray spends two pleasant years in Marseilles seemingly disconnected from the effects of Vichy rule: "I was completely unaware of what was going on" (17). She describes antisemitism as nevertheless gradually encroaching on her idyll by way of the growing tension her parents exhibit (17), the sudden intrusion of physical violence when her father is attacked on the street (17-18), and the political transformation that results when Germany suddenly occupies Vichy France in 1942 (18). The family once again escapes, this time to Grenoble, which was under Italian rule. Here, ever-increasing pressure on their precarious existence prohibits the comfort and ignorance she has heretofore enjoyed: "The feeling at home was of imminent catastrophe" (19). Their fear is of the increasing frequency of arrests, and the family decides to split up "in order to diminish the risk of being arrested '*en bloc*'" (20). The family thus sacrifices any remnant of normalcy in favour of managing the risks they face, risks that are conspicuously presented in terms of "arrest" rather than the violence that arrest by the Gestapo implies.

Neray and her sister arrange work in textile manufacturing and residence in a student hostel outside Grenoble. In this new context of transient accommodation and political repression, everyone around them "seemed to lead mysterious lives," and "No one asked any questions" (21). Their status as undocumented aliens leaves

them isolated and vulnerable to mere curiosity ("Denunciation was a customary practice" [18]), a risk that seems attenuated in this atmosphere of discretion, although familiar faces often disappear for unknown reasons (21). Neray once again describes herself as unaware of the seriousness of the risks they face: "we did not truly realize the danger we were in.[...] We acted as if everything was just fine. Nobody ever mentioned arrest, torture, death, but they were on everybody's mind" (21). And shortly thereafter, the Nazis intensify their repression of the resistance, "rounding up people and killing them without mercy" (23). Death, then, only appears in the narrative as an explicit threat once their family's situation becomes so precarious that Neray and her sister are sent out to fend for themselves. Despite this rhetorical shift, Neray seemingly has only a vague sense of the consequences of any failure to successfully dissimulate her alien background.

It is at this time that a man claiming to be a captain in their brother Freddie's resistance group appears at their residence to tell Neray and her sister about his death in battle. The circumstances of life in hiding complicate their response to his news. As the messenger is a stranger to them, they are unable to simply trust his story, and so can be sure neither of the fact nor the nature of Freddie's death. Moreover, the omnipresence of Nazi collaborators means they are forced to conceal any signs of distress from both this messenger and their peers, even when they receive word about a recent battle that seems to corroborate the news, because they "didn't know who was watching" (24). Under these circumstances, the threat of death prohibits mourning; acknowledging their

relationship to Freddy and his to the resistance might doom the sisters. Mourning is thus displaced from its usual role as a process of affective differentiation in which death and the dead are exteriorized, and operates instead in an infectious mode: Freddie's death implies their own. This implication is a truism in the abstract, and one that may be said to inspire mourning in general, but here the immanence of death manifests itself in constant surveillance such that any demonstration of grief becomes a matter of immediate peril. They are caught in an emotional and epistemological double bind: their lack of knowledge regarding his death is a painful ambiguity, but any expression of grief (such as investigating its truth or circumstances) may lead to denunciation and their own deaths.

The prohibition that declares Jews nonexistent in effect prohibits their grief and their mourning. There is a pragmatic dimension to this prohibition, in that grief may uncover kinship relations whose secrecy is necessary to survival in hiding, but, more generally, Jewish grief was negated by the Nazi edict at the same instant it did away with Jewish life. Judith Butler argues that prohibitions against mourning involve standards of intelligibility and propriety as definitional attainments of humanness (*Antigone's* 81). The Nazi death sentence insists, then, that Jews are not to die in a significant, existential sense, but rather are simply to disappear, to be no longer alive, to die without dying and so without mourning—and not merely as a matter of fact insofar as the totality of the destruction will result in no survivors and thus no one to mourn. The sisters are thus caught in a situation remarkably similar to what Butler describes as Antigone's dilemma: "How

does one grieve from within the presumption of criminality, from within the presumption that one's acts are invariably and fatally criminal?" (*Antigone's* 79). Antigone too faces a threat of death by acknowledging her fidelity to a murdered brother, a resistance fighter, the rebellious Polynices. Neray and her sister, like Kazimirski, are entrusted not with their brother's body, but with a narrative of his demise. They are nevertheless positioned in a traditional sense as handmaidens of familial memory, and are obliged to bear, to bury, his narrative remains. Once their visitor's report is confirmed, this knowledge becomes a responsibility to pass the news along, and Neray's sister undertakes the dangerous trip to inform their parents. "It was not easy, nor was it safe to travel by train, as the Germans were screening people everywhere. However, it had to be done" (25). The responsibility they bear because of his death leads her to risk her own life. Although nothing in the fugitive life of Neray and her sister is free of risk, their responsibility for their brother's death compounds the danger they already face.

This relationship of gendered responsibility is further emphasized by the ordering of Neray's narrative: only after the SS arrive to arrest her (25) does she note that she and her sister "were playing a small role in the resistance by transporting identification cards" (26). And, in fact, this activity proves of secondary or no interest to the Gestapo as well, who interrogate her instead about the whereabouts of her family (28). Her arrest marks a sudden transition into a world of violence explicitly directed against Jewishness: Neray is detained along with a nun whose background gave her "one-fifth Jewish blood" (29). With her

arrest, then, Neray experiences a transition from participating in the subversive agency of hiding and resistance to a world of subjugated oppression, categorical visibility, and foreshortened mortality. She encounters arbitrary personal violence when she is interrogated by Nazi officers (28, 31-32), but it is her eventual deportation by cattle car to Auschwitz that brings her into immediate contact with the mass death characteristic of the concentrationary world:

> some people, particularly the old ones, the sick, the babies, had not been able to overcome the terrible journey. They fell on the floor and were trampled. At first we heard the cries of the babies, then more faintly, and then they became silent. We stacked the dead in a corner. (38)

Neray's story displays a dual narrative perspective on this horror. The journey is first introduced with a summary whose pathos and inadequacy reflects her initial naivety: "It was horrible" (37). She almost immediately shifts to the jaded perspective of an experienced prisoner when she notes that the deaths in the train car meant that the survivors "had more room to move" (38). This transition from dismay that paralyses language to a sense of death as a matter of spatiality and opportunity exemplifies the phenomenology of death under concentrationary conditions, and foreshadows the terrible pragmatism that displaces mourning under the experience of death as lived existence.

Induction into the camp leaves her with "a terrible sense of finality" emblematized by the number "75912" and the triangle permanently tattooed on her

arm (45). The induction process has changed the deportees into prisoners: "The metamorphosis was complete. From human beings we had been transformed into an army of miserable fools without any rights. I could barely recognize my companions" (45). Her entrance into the camp, however, presents her with evidence that their metamorphosis is not in fact complete: "I could see what had become of the women [...]. They had emaciated faces, with two cheekbones sticking out, and large haggard eyes with no expression left. [...] It was their eyes that shook me the most, dead and hopeless, beyond all suffering" (45-46). These desperate and doomed women are portrayed with a terrifying lack of expressiveness in their faces. The signicative fact of the human face (which Levinas privileges as defining responsible uniqueness and the nature of death) has here been replaced with a biological vivacity signifying nothing—except perhaps the radical transformation of expressiveness and death under conditions where human being is reduced to a core of need.

Neray is confronted almost immediately with the impersonal and extreme nature of death in Auschwitz. The terror of her journey gives way to hunger (46); hunger, sated by ersatz soup, then gives way to a desire for knowledge, and she asks a fellow prisoner what has become of her fellow deportees (47). The response she receives is delivered with a disturbing disjunction in expressiveness: "She laughed as if it were a good joke. Her eyes were not smiling" (47). This response is disjoint both in terms of the unexpected genre of its response and in the division of this woman's expression from itself; that Neray's question can be received as humorous

and that humour can be so deathly is a product of camp experiences that strike at the very heart of the expressiveness characteristic of human being. A contrasting interchange takes place when a friend of a man with whom Neray was infatuated in Grenoble arrives in the camp, seemingly ignorant of the fate of her aunt, from whom she was separated during ramp selection. Not yet dispossessed to the extent of her early camp acquaintance, Neray chooses not to speak: "If she didn't know, then it was best not to say anything, and if she knew..." (66). The gap between her and the newcomer is such that she cannot respond with a meaningful utterance, but it is not yet so wide that she is stripped of her sense of the propriety of expression. Neither the traditional "great refusal" of comforting conceptual abstraction nor the disturbingly uncaring lack of affect of camp discourse are available to her as a response; she thus experiences a differend at the most radical level, responsiveness to the imminence of death. In the face of this differend, she remains silently unable to inhabit a phrase universe that would relate her, the new arrivals, and the inherent denial of mourning implied by the death-in-life of the camp.

The deathful context of life in the camps transformed all human relations. Neray meets and makes a few friends over the course of her fight for survival, and discovers that friendship under camp conditions involved unusually exigent responsibilities: "We tried not to be late for our rendez-vous, as it might have meant something terribly wrong like a beating or a sudden and unexpected order for the gas chamber" (67). The constitutive and primordial role of mourning that Derrida describes as involved in the displaced coherence of selfhood from the first advent of

an other (*Mémoires* 22) is here laid bare by the nature of camp existence, in which expressive responsibility is a matter of responsibility as mortality. Despite this common pressure on their experience of life and death, there remain fundamental differences between these women's perspectives on death and futurity. Neray and her friend Lise, for instance, differ in their capacity to envision survival. Lise had a vivid revelatory experience upon arrival, and her "religious fervour [...] gave her the strength to survive her ordeal" (68). For Neray, however, the gruesome immediacy of the camp precludes the optimism of transcendence:

> I wished I could believe I would be saved, and survive too. But somehow I couldn't. All I could see was the screaming of the SS, the terrible beatings of prisoners, the daily deaths, the crematoria. How could I escape death which was all around me? (69)

She sees herself and her fellow prisoners as utterly circumscribed by deathly necessity; the pervasive life-in-death of the camp places its stamp on time, place, and agency, presenting a nugatory inevitability that overwhelms individual hope. She describes hearing the camp orchestra playing as the prisoners assemble to march to their labour assignments as an experience of "marching to our death to the sweet music of Mozart" (58). Death is here reified in every element of camp existence; no longer a transcendent notion of negation nor a discrete particularity, death has come to dominate the crossing of the material and the ideal that is the phenomenality of experience itself. Under these conditions, death as the inevitable end of possibility is resituated as the single result of all contingency, all possibility.

With few exceptions, then, Neray presents her death from camp conditions as matter of certainty, as inevitable as the passage of time.

In her experience of life-in-death in Auschwitz, Neray foregrounds the towering presence of the crematoria chimneys and their unceasing task of erasing the physical remains of the murdered:

> Each day seemed to roll to the next with no end and no future but death. The chimney was there to prove it, spewing its dark smoke without intermission. Convoys kept increasing in numbers. A foul odour had entered my nose, my mouth, my mind. The smell of burnt flesh and bones was everywhere, the smell of a slaughterhouse. It was the smell of our companions who disappeared at the end of their journey into the grey sky, lost for ever. I thought it would be my turn, sometime, soon. I could not escape it. (65)

Mass killing with gas has an anonymity that is underscored by the burning of the victims' remains. Death *en masse* by unyielding mechanical means gives way to the utter destruction of bodily remains that would otherwise offer mute attestation to death as abyssal "no-response." When the physical remains of the murdered dead are disposed of in such a way, the deceased are "lost forever" and death is figured as annihilation par excellence, a nugatory loss without even a remainder of the loss to be grasped after the fact. The bodies of the dead are thus subjected to a fate that is the physical analogue of Jewish death as seen from the Nazi perspective. Under this description, which Lyotard calls the "Aryan" myth, Jews do not exist: they are not

addressees or addressors in the legitimating racial phrase that defines human beings. Accordingly, they do not "die," and the mechanized nature of their murder and disposal under camp conditions reifies this reduction of death to mere disappearance and tries to negate their death as death by literally turning it into simple negation, a loss without remains. But the bodies do not vanish utterly without remainder; their vaporous fate pervades Neray's physical experience of the camp such that she describes the slaughterhouse smell as permeating her "mind" as well as her flesh and clothes: "the lasting smell of burnt flesh stayed with us, burning and tainting our mind and spirit" (52). In this description, the crematorium smoke causes a sympathetic transmission of the fate of the murdered ones; it "burns" the survivors in turn.

Neray's sense of the imminence of death is derived at times from the violence she sees, from the endless flow of deportees to the gas chambers and crematoria (70-71), and at other times by the immanence of her physical transformation: "When would it be my turn? By now I was so thin I wondered how my body could hold together. One of these days, I thought, my limbs will detach and fly away at the slightest touch, break and fall apart" (71). This vision of disintegration suggests a disinterested perspective on death belied by her fearful attention to Mengele as the decisive author of her hypothetical death (71). Much later she again observes her impending dissolution, but with uncaring detachment: "My mind and body were light, very light. Two bones for arms, two bones for legs, a hollow pelvis; I didn't know what kept all this together" (96). The principle of

cohesion she experiences is mystifying to her—it is not an experience of the self as a coherent ego. Neray responds to the challenge that camp life poses to physical and emotional endurance with increasingly severe dissociation: during an early roll call she goes "far, far away in a place where no one could reach me, no one could hurt me" (49). This escape takes on a more desperate edge at time goes on: "Don't look, don't listen, try not to feel. My legs barely support me; never mind. I don't have a body any more. Just a mind, a soul" (57). Her insistent pursuit of disembodied abstraction itself gives way to an impersonal displacement of consciousness:

> And then the roll call again at the end of the day. Another two or three hours of waiting in the bone-chilling, bitter cold, waiting to become non-existent, waiting for the whistle to pull us each out of our nearly-unconscious state. (60)

She repeatedly experiences an increasingly intense "non-existence" of both mind and body that leaves her sustained only by an anonymous and impersonal sense of being. Sarah Kofman, quoting Blanchot, argues that the situation of abject need "turn[s] 'reason' into consciousness," meaning that the misery of absolute destitution "relates me no longer to myself or my self-satisfaction, but to human existence pure and simple, lived as lack at the level of need" (61). In such moments Thon's sense of the materiality of her body falls away, but so does her sense of herself as immaterial mind. Extended confrontation with the death sentence challenges both materialist and idealist definitions of the human condition. What remains is a non-conceptual responsiveness, an instant of utter displacement, the

affective responsiveness that is the mortal core of subjective possibility. Omnipresent death thus remains the enigma *par excellence*, affective excess *par excellence*, and Neray's concentrationary existence confronts her with mourning experienced in constitutive displacement, in the undetermined "is it happening?" of passing instants comprehended on positive or idealized terms only in retrospect (cf. Lyotard, "Discussions" 197, *Differend* §131).

One day after work, lost in thought, Neray is severely beaten by an SS woman for failing to make way. In the midst of the attack, she experiences a sudden calm, a "strange feeling of complete serenity. I had given myself permission to die. It overwhelmed me" (75). She suffers this assault as she is attempting to "remind myself who I was, where I come from, trying to find myself [...] or what was left of such a person" (74). Savagely beaten at the nadir of despair, at a moment of disjuncture wherein she has become a displaced memory of herself, she has a sudden moment of "serenity" that leaves her "full of sorrow" (76). Kofman argues that there always remains a reserve of absolute vulnerability that represents a radical limit to oppressive power (67). Thus, from within the extremity of suffering, Neray discovers the slippage inherent in a threatened death that is neither mere biological cessation, nor murderous negativity, but an irreducible and infinite passivity. Death understood as a horizon thus itself has a horizon; in the impersonal trace of responsive destitution death reaches the limit of its power. Beyond this limit, however, lies the incoherence of a voice wondering whether "such a person" as itself ever existed. It is only a self displaced from itself that can find a sort of

peace in the passion of infinite vulnerability, as Ann Smock's description of Blanchot's understanding of death suggests:

> Who dies? Not I, not you, *personne*: for death is something fatal that happens to the possibility of dying. When it comes, it comes annihilating all ability and first of all the ability to suffer it, the capacity to die. When it is time to die there is no one who can; he who can is dead already, leaving no one. (7)

Irrationally bolstered by this revelatory event, Neray commits sabotage (by deliberately weakening the braided ropes the prisoners produce) in a moment of reckless desire to resist her captors. Caught by her supervisor and confronted with the camp commander, her bravado gives way to overwhelming physical terror as she urinates in fear of the totality of his power over her (79): "I don't think I will ever forget the sheer terror I felt as I stood there, facing my death" (80). Reprieved, she is subsequently diligent in her labour, and is confused about why she took such a risk: "Why would I risk my life already so threatened? What did I want to prove? These were agonizing questions with no answers. All I knew is that I was not ready to put my life on the line again, willingly" (80). She speculates in retrospect that having given herself permission to die allowed her to disregard the usual cautions, to "go beyond all reasonable limits, beyond all fear" (80). These back-to-back episodes of threatened death illustrate, however, the radical uniqueness of even such an extreme relationship with death. Describing death as a limit or a horizon thus misrepresents its ever-singular instantiation. The lack of fear she experiences and

returns to in explanation does not preclude an experience of overwhelming terror during a second moment of near-certain death.

Neray's dissociative distance from an enduring grasp of herself as a self contributes to her sense of having survived her own death. During the death march that takes her from Poland to Germany, Neray's abject state and the extreme conditions drive her into a barely conscious and animate state of dissociated misery: "One wondered if one was dead or alive, in that kind of state where nothing any more is clear" (93). That she survives this ordeal is due to the intervention of an unknown "someone" who shakes her awake after the first night on the road (88) and an elderly German soldier who touchingly encourages her to continue toward the bitter end (91). These others offer her a futurity that she is no longer capable of projecting or inhabiting as a matter of individual autonomy:

> The belief that death was waiting for me at any moment was so rooted in me that the concept of living was odd, obscure, frightening. [...] I belonged to the dead, the ones I left behind, the millions of people who died and vanished in smoke in the sky. (102)

Her escape from Nazi power returns her to a world unbounded by barbed wire and the all-encompassing death threat of radical antisemitism, but her identification with her desperate moments of loss leave her unable to relate to the everyday relationship of life and death. Her experience of destitution revealed the far side of death understood as a threat, as a power. But displacing death also displaces the organizing coherence of social subjectivity which, as Derrida and Irigaray argue, is

defined with respect to experiences and meanings of death and mourning. Back in Paris, she finds it "strange [...] to think that they had lived all that time a normal life while I died a million deaths" (108). And having "experienced" death—or the displacement of all experience that is characteristic of death—she finds to her dismay that she does not know "what life meant to me" (101). Levinas argues that death takes effect as affective excess, as an insistent mystery in the form of a question that does not presuppose its answer. Neray's uncomprehending amazement reflects the fundamental incompletion of narrative or conceptual ordering of such an enigma. She states that "with time" she "understood the meanings of my life's stirring experience" (116), but her final pages fall into fragments as she tries to conclude her story, to draw conclusions from her experience—and so that meaning remains unexpressed.

She is conscious early on of the challenge her experience poses to testimony, wondering,

> What could I say? Should I speak about the horrors which filled my head, or should I try and remember my life as it was before, oh! so long ago that it seemed unreal.
>
> Where did I come from?
>
> I was an orphan, born in Auschwitz. Before that, I was somebody else, a happy child, an innocent. Now I was someone else, someone entirely new, born out of fear and despair. Someone I didn't know. (104)

The difficulty she presents here is not only that of telling the "horrors," but of relating at all to living beings born of parents and defining themselves *vis-à-vis* projected futures. Human being is characterized by debt; one cannot come into being with an egoistic fiat, with an unencumbered freedom from ancestors and precedents. As Lyotard notes, "we are born before being born to ourselves. We are born from others, but also to others" ("Mainmise" 2). Neray here presents the terrifying image of having been born out of "fear and danger," a child of Auschwitz. This implies a notion of identity that displaces both the gendered norms of familial belonging and the phallogocentric understanding of death as transcendent negativity. Her presentation of macabre parentage is all the more troubling in that her actual parents survived the war, and she is reunited with them soon after it ends. Neray's reunion with her parents is described as the "beginning of a long and painful liberation" (113); it is also the moment when her self-descriptions turn to a sense of having survived her own death, of being a child of the camp rather than her own flesh and blood mother and father. Her alternative formulation of her experience of being a child "born in Auschwitz" is that she has been, and remains, dead: "I had died many times, and in some ways I was still dead" (113). To be dead is to be an other to oneself, to no longer be an "I." Derrida argues that the power of ipseity is a matter of memory and mourning: "We are only ourselves from the perspective of this knowledge that is older than ourselves; and this is why I say that we begin by *recalling* this to ourselves: we come to ourselves through this memory of *possible* mourning" (*Mémoires* 34). Neray presents herself as wholly bound by a past

of death, and suggests that her past is a product of death itself. She therefore has no memory that is not a matter of mourning—except that such an undifferentiated history of death offers no respite from mourning insofar as death would be returned to death *ad infinitum*. Telling her own story is in effect to pursue the terrible goal of mourning her own fate, of staging her experience as perpetual mourning, of placing her memorialization into the hands of literary uncertainty, and in so doing to register again her dying.

Drawing conclusions about her experience of death proves impossible for Neray, despite her claim that she can. She is unable to make sense of the experience of living death, of experiencing a life whose intimacy with death was so absolute that the limits between them are no longer what they once were. As Kofman argues, following Blanchot, extreme suffering affects narrativity in principle: "About Auschwitz and after Auschwitz no story is possible, if by story one means: to tell a story of events which makes sense" (14).[3] Neray's description of life in Auschwitz emphasizes death as ubiquitous and therefore meaningless, unremarkable:

> Death had become our most intimate friend [....] Every morning piles of corpses were aligned in front of the barrack waiting for the cart to pass and collect its daily macabre round. It was simple routine and we didn't pay much attention. (73)

Under such circumstances, as Edith Wyschogrod argues, meaning and signification are organized exclusively with respect to death ("Concentration" 335). Neray's narrative also notes this pervasive semiotic reorganization: "It was not a good sign.

Nothing was a good sign" (81). When Neray describes, in the final pages of her story, her good fortune as a parent, she notes the strange coincidence that both her children were born on or near significant anniversaries: the date of her deportation "to [her] death" and her birthday (118). She does not, however, draw redemptive conclusions from this synchronicity, nor does she allow this reference to her children to represent recuperative historical or personal transcendence. As she says, "it was not that simple" (118). Despite her happiness over the birth of her own children, she immediately visualizes the sight of "the little children I saw marching to their death" when she sees "children walking in the street" (118), and therefore, unlike authors such as Mina Deutsch or Kazimirski, does not describe the arrival of a new generation in unadulterated terms of hope or renewal. She refuses the traditional imagery of maternity as fulfilment, as enabling a symbolic mastery over death on phallic terms, and thus ends her story with a portrayal of her survival that attests to the continued extremity of her experience, of her still-unmasterable relationship to life and death. In so doing she underscores the difference between herself as a survivor and the readers who will approach her story with paternity, maternity, and a sense of their own future. Her goal in affirming this separation, in underscoring the resonating horror of her experience is to insist on an alienation that demands responsiveness: "I am not looking for pity, but recognition" (114). This demand explicitly refuses the speculative elevation of death into a principle, and insists instead on attention to particularity, on an abiding or enduring of the presence of her suffering without the intervention of even pity as a mechanism by

which her experiences can be overcome. She thus identifies death as an experience that resists phallic generalities, and offers an insistence on responsiveness, on the patience proximity to suffering, as a model of 'mourning in the feminine.'

When Neray gestures toward literal mourning it is with the knowledge that such mourning will never be complete:

> And one day Monique did not come to work. She just vanished, faded away.
>
> *"Adieu, Monique."*
>
> But she always stays stubbornly in my heart and in a safe corner of my soul. (82)

The image of fading away is contrasted with Monique's ongoing claim to memory; in death she remains insistently other, an internalized displacement of the same that is structured precisely by this invasive alterity, and Neray can respond only with the gesture of "Adieu," a farewell offered to and in the name of the other. In death, the other resists any totalization of memory and thus appears as other, "and as other for us, [...] since death constitutes and makes manifest the limits of a *me* or an *us* who are obliged to harbour something that is greater and other than them; something *outside of them within them*" (Derrida, *Mémoires* 34). Neray thus presents her memoir as a project of impossible mourning for her own experience of death in life in Auschwitz. She does so in a narrative incorporating alienating extremes of physical and mental suffering that refuse to be assimilated to the living world of coherent mortal subjectivity. She summarizes her position as an orphan who

survived her own death in being born in Auschwitz, a terrifying genealogy incoherent from the point of view of the masculine, phallocratic goal of mourning as an overcoming of death. Such mourning is made possible by the specular identification of femininity and death in an image of death that can thereby be subordinated and controlled. Death understood as dispossessing vulnerability (on the terms of Levinas or Derrida, say) is irreducibly at work at the core of all subjectivity and therefore cannot be excluded as a transcendent exteriority without remainder. Neray undergoes the limit experience of subjectivity deprived of futurity and possibility, a paradoxical coming of death before dying that leaves her with only incommunicable, bare instants of repeated confrontation with mortality. Her experience has the effect of underscoring the radical alterity at work in intersubjective difference, in the unique relations each of us has not only with our own death, but with each instant of our own death, which cannot be understood in general, even as a generality specific to a single subject. Death is the paradox of repeated uniqueness, an iterative impossible possible whose repetitions are impossible to collect as a genre. The obligation to mourn arises in each case as a function of this uniqueness, a uniqueness that will forever prevent mourning from simply being achieved.

Death is seen by both Kazimirski and Neray, then, as a primordial experience of exteriority, and whose overwhelming affective power is destabilizing and unpredictable. The work of mourning called for by this displacement thus

arises in a moment of unique obligation, but also in negotiation with forms of mourning that constitute culture and community. Despite Derrida's observation that cultures are defined, bounded, by their understanding of death as a boundary (*Aporias* 24), the singularity of one's responsibility makes relating to such a communal whole problematic. The individuation involved in our (non) relation with death is experienced in our idiomatic solitude as responsibility, and Lyotard argues that such "Obligation cannot engender a universal history, nor even a particular community" (*Differend* §235). In responding to the obligation to mourn, both Kazimirski and Neray attest to the intransigence of death and the persistence of mourning with respect to vexed figurations of community.

Kazimirski offers a narrativized memorial in the name of a traditional ritual genre. Her claim pushes the established liturgical bounds of the mourner's prayer in an appropriative strategy that claims space within the tradition for the radical threat to tradition posed by the catastrophic loss of whole generations. Her claim cites the cultural tradition under which women were permitted to offer the fulfilment of obligations to the dead as an alternative to Kaddish but offers this commemoration in the name of Kaddish itself. The notion of a memoir as Kaddish is also made possible by the loss of the communities for whom she writes. These dead have no descendants; although the Nazi genocide did not achieve its ultimate goal, the all-but complete destruction of Jewish culture in Central and Eastern Europe effectively eliminated the community upon which the iterative performativity of Kaddish depends (cf. Bauer, *History* 334-336). She thus pursues an

ambivalently secularized yet traditional rewriting of ritual mourning; the extremity of her loss is revealed in part by the desperate hybridity of her effort. She writes and teaches in a community separated from the world of her childhood by an absent genealogy of murdered generations whose absence interrupts the inherited performance of ritual mourning. She thereby exceeds and accepts the discursive limits of her ethnic and religious community, uniting this contradiction by way of narrative, the intrinsic heterogeneity of which permits such citational transformation: "There is a privileging of narrative in the assembling of the diverse. It is a genre that seems to admit all others" (Lyotard, *Differend* §230). Kazimirski's use of narrative retains as its focus the traditional goal of mourning—managing and assigning meaning to death—even as it registers the particular horrors of death that resist such ideation. Lyotard notes that, in contrast to narrative phrases, the phrase of obligation characterizes ethical responsibility by singling out its addressee in the experience of a demand; narratives such as *Witness to Horror* attenuate this interpellation in favour of explanatory recuperation. Kazimirski's effort, however, registers—alongside this recuperative desire to mourn, to say Kaddish, within and for cultural and religious norms—the insistent and disruptive demand of mourning as grief, and death as enigma, that motivates and forecloses such structures of closure with the obligation to attend to the intransigent particularity of loss.

Neray also narrates the story of her life, but her experiences have radically transformed the primordial certainty of her relationship with her death. This transgression affects the narrativity, the thematic coherence of her story by

presenting survival as a matter of having died. She witnessed the ultimate ends of whole communities of Jews, and in so doing experienced a community—Auschwitz-Birkenau—defined not by an understanding of death, but an incoherent experience of it. This is a community whose common thread is the uncommon distinctiveness of a threat that defines the human, but that was experienced in a terrible commonality that displaced her ability to die, to mourn, and to remember herself as a living being. This displaces death from being a necessary yet impossible futurity to being a necessary yet impossible past. The camp context created, in an astonishing inversion of everyday life, a community of the dead, joined in their isolating experience of suffering. This vision is a refusal of the notion of the "beautiful death" that offers future recuperation of mortal loss thereby denied its immediate finality, and rather than making any claim to the possibility or the successful completion of mourning, calls out—in the mode of obligation, of the Lyotardian demand to "Listen!"—for "recognition." Its insistence on the solitude of Neray's limit experience also entails a notion of bare commonality that refutes the totality of the Aryan myth that denies Jews death, mourning, and community. The death-world of Auschwitz was inhabited by prisoners commonly alienated from communal certainties and narratives. This "community (of those) without community" (Kofman 70) indicates the always-already displaced vulnerability of isolated subjectivity: we are, each of us, subject to the individuating threat of death because we have already experienced the death of the other in the structure of mourning that displaces and produces the unique instant of ipseity. Neray's limit

experience, then, brings her to the heart of mournful subjectivity, an experience of traumatic loss that precludes a recuperating narrative of successful mourning, and that is expressed as rather a call for recognition, a demand for mere listening.

Ultimately both these memoirs delineate and transgress the boundaries of community and commonality in ways consonant with the destruction of community to which they respond. Mourning and death are thus understood as a matter of intelligibility and community that arise in an experience of singular responsibility whose obligation cannot be fulfilled. Coercive and gendered erasures of difference produce a differend at the heart of mourning analogous to the differend found between every instance of singular obligation and a communal whole that would assure the abstraction of the loss, the surpassing of death for the greater good of all. Kofman argues, with respect to Robert Antelme, that "the abject dispossession suffered by the deportees signifies the indestructibility of alterity, its absolute character" and transforms ethics and community "by establishing the possibility of a new kind of 'we,'" (73). This new "we" is predicated on

> two affirmations, each as tenacious as the other: against the division desired by the Nazis, the affirmation of unity; against the will to anonymity and indistinction, the affirmation of singularity and incompatibility of choices. Indissolubly. Without "the unity of all this"—of these enormous differences and these similarities—being in any way explainable. (Kofman 72)

Recuperative mourning, which Lyotard calls the "beautiful death," seeks the

creation of a cohesive "we" in the face of death's mortal challenge to each "I"; Irigaray's critical analysis of this political operation notes the gendered partiality of its distribution of humanness and community in the patriarchal displacement of elements associated with the feminine; Kofman's analysis suggests that the limit experiences of Holocaust survivors reveals a traumatic notion of plurality that operates in the absence of positive commonality. Kazimirski and Neray present narratives variously unsettled by a mourning that threatens or displaces thematic or generic unity, and so stage the return of obligation and responsibility in responding to the singular call of overwhelming tragedy.

Notes

1. She is far from alone in this observation. Gayatri Spivak, for instance, begins her discussion of femininity and deconstruction with this observation:

> a certain metaphor of woman has produced (rather than merely illustrated) a discourse that we are obliged "historically" to call the discourse of man. Given the accepted charge of the notions of production and constitution, one might reformulate this: the discourse of man is in the metaphor of woman. (169)

2. It should be noted that almost all of the relatively few Polish Jews who survived the war did so by escaping to regions under Soviet control (Bauer,

History 295-6, 334-5).

3. Kofman and Blanchot identify narrative conventions as problematic, but do not thereby repudiate expressiveness or representation as a response to such extremity. Elie Wiesel has made similar claims; his essay "Why I Write" expresses his sense that textual expression is both inadequate and necessary to bear witness, that writing consists to a large measure of insisting on, of inspiring a sense of, this incomprehension. George Steiner also addresses this paradox, with his suggestion that "The world of Auschwitz lies outside speech as it lies outside reason. To speak of the *unspeakable* is to risk the survivance of language as the bearer of humane, rational truth. Words that are saturated with lies or atrocity do not easily resume life" (123). He makes the strong (and contentious) claim that the German language "has most fully embodied and undergone the grammar of the inhuman" (50) and has thus fallen prey to "self-destruction" (104). He is thus suspicious about the capacity of language in general—and German in particular—to articulate meaning in the post-Holocaust world. In a number of essays, he privileges the tendency of language toward silence (26-27, 46), yet also expresses a fear, drawn from Virgil, that in the absence of art we will "perish by silence" (35). Wiesel also insists that silence cannot be the final word, and declares that "It was by seeking, by probing silence, that I began to discover the perils and the power of the word" ("Why" 14).

Chapter Seven
Conclusion

There are difficulties inherent in concluding a study ostensibly devoted to the particular exposition of individual texts. Geoffrey Hartman notes that "It is hard to give up the idea that a *Yizkor* or memorial book will emerge with something of biblical strength, one that could be read and understood by all" ("Book" 319). The deconstructive articulation of *différance* and differend, however, insists that generality and conclusiveness are foreclosed in advance by singularity and responsiveness. Maurice Blanchot offers a relevant observation: "What exceeds the system is the impossibility of its failure, and, likewise, the impossibility of its success" (*Writing* 47). This property, inherent in textual expression generally, assures us—although perhaps not reassures us—that thinking and writing require ongoing attention insofar as there are always traces and remains that demand our continued responsiveness.[1] The inadequacy of representation both inspires and frustrates writing, as generality and particularity are continually intertwined in expression. Blanchot describes the urge to write as a "madness" that remains mad to the extent that its private insistence (or 'uniqueness') is betrayed in public communication (or 'narrativity'):

> Let us suppose that everyone has his private madness. Knowledge without truth would be the labour or the attention of an intense

> singularity analogous to this "private" madness—for everything private is madness to the extent at least that we seek, through it, to communicate. (*Writing* 44)

Blanchot suggests that knowledge is problematic insofar as it withdraws addressees from a relationship of immediacy with the matter at hand, turning them instead toward the impersonality of abstraction: "Knowledge effaces the one who knows" (Blanchot, *Infinite* 25). Following Blanchot, Hartman advocates a certain suspicion of, not "historical meanings as such," but "their overestimation, [...] the confusion that makes the study of history in general—not just of the Holocaust—a source of definitive meanings whose influence could integrate a catastrophic past" ("Holocaust" 237). He emphasizes Blanchot's insistence that literary expressiveness brings about "exteriority" that challenges and precludes such a sense of completion: "Exteriority points to what cannot be internalized; it serves to reject a Hegelian type of meditation in which everything becomes knowable, hence meaningful" ("Holocaust" 238). This notion makes definitiveness of meaning—or conclusion—inherently problematic, and suggests that memoirs thereby hold Holocaust experiences in reserve in presenting them, that the narration of such events aspires to an ethics of proximity rather than the fullness of presence.

The foregoing analyses of Canadian women's testimonial memoirs suggest that the very multiplicity of such writings tends to resist any tendency to "preempt" the Holocaust, by way of over-narrow interpretation, say, or insistence that the Holocaust is inexpressible. The remarkable diversity of experience and expression

discovered in this small group of texts, gathered from the seemingly restrictive group of "Canadian Women's memoirs of the Holocaust written in English" suggests that any theoretical or historical totality constructed on their basis will be haunted by a proliferation of remainders, the manifold senses and meanings so subordinated to the posited concept. Alvin Rosenfeld suggests that it is only possible to grasp a sense of the experience of the Holocaust by accumulating a large number of partial, testimonial perspectives on the whole (*Double* 33), which is thereby understood as a phenomenological and epistemological heuristic unity, susceptible to even radical revision by new expressions, new meanings. This understanding of testimony implies that the process of witnessing is ongoing, because it cannot ever be said to conclusively succeed. For instance, despite the title of her memoir, *I am a Witness*, Mina Rosner is ambivalent about her status. Her foreword identifies "the variety of heroes the war had produced," including ideological leaders who resisted fascism, armed leaders of the resistance, ordinary people who fought to defend their lives and families, and unarmed victims who struggled to live. Those who resisted by way of sheer survival and now "continue that struggle by speaking out against oppression" are witnesses, or "people who speak the truth" (11). She reveals her ambivalent self-assessment with respect to this role when she reports a conversation she had long after the war with a survivor of the Warsaw ghetto: "As I looked at Rubin Moscovitch's face I saw just such a witness. Perhaps he looked back at mine and saw another" (11). Despite having attested to her survival, Rosner is—in the body of her text, at least—unwilling to

simply assert the success of her project in claiming this designation: she is "perhaps" such a witness. Significantly, Rosner identifies becoming a witness not only as a matter of agency, of surviving and testifying, but as a matter of recognition: one becomes a witness in offering testimony to an other, in being recognized as a witness by an other—and thus one never ceases becoming a witness.

Rosner thereby emphasizes testimony as oriented toward others, toward a dialogic relationship between addressees and addressors. Dori Laub argues that memoirists attempt to "reinvent the responsive other" they have lost over the course of their experiences (808). He asserts that massive trauma effects a fundamental schism in survivors' responsive relationship to the world: survivors often cannot locate or connect with the "thou" necessary to subjective wholeness (803). Gilmore similarly argues that memoirs of trauma attempt to find—or to produce—audiences who can hear what they have to say (7, 31). The nature of this sought-after "we" is fragile and contingent, however, insofar as addressor and addressee remain separated by the differend of identification. "We" is not a single commonality; a variety of we's arise, depending on the relationship between the speaker and audience (Lyotard, "Missive" 25). Lyotard describes the modernist goal as the incorporation of all others into an ultimately universal we (Lyotard, "Missive" 25). In his assessment, Auschwitz represents a fundamental fracture in the capacity for such unity, and so for there to be a modernist, universal "subject of history" for whom stories are told and by whom the total story can be fully comprehended (*Differend* §160, §220). Responsibility for this event is thus insistently returned to

"my" responsiveness, which is impelled by my situation as an addressee of testimonial witnessing.

Rosner presents a version of this notion of responsive interpellation together with a sophisticated version of the dual injunction ("Never forget!" and "Never again!") that has become all but clichéd with respect to commemorating and interpreting the Holocaust: she argues that "If we aren't prepared to learn the lessons of history—to combat racism, fascism, and all forms of discrimination—there is no guarantee that another holocaust will not occur" (11). She notes that Nazism and Nazi violence were products of deliberation and choice, not madness or accident, and that the commemoration of past violence is foundational for preventing future injustice. She thereby insists that producing testimony is insufficient as a response to the desire for justice in that testimony can only further this goal if it takes some effect, if it becomes a matter of the future and not merely a representation of the past. Thomas Treize, critiquing the limits of various notions of inexpressibility, identifies a challenge directed at the readers of Holocaust texts: "hardly a word of testimony fails to engage this function [the reassertion of signification in the moment of its failure], if only in the form of an implicit question, or rather two: Are you listening? Can you hear?" (61). Rosner's conjoining of witnessing and historical responsibility similarly implies that testimony comes into being in responsive recognition, even if what is being conveyed is the sheer impossibility of meaningful expression, and so the necessity of an ethics of responsiveness that traces the limits of established genres of meaning.

Many memoirs are offered in the spirit of historical documentation (Butovsky and Jonassohn report, for instance, that many of the memoirs they received involve explicitly historiographic narrative strategies [150-1]); others are conspicuous for their rejection of such norms. The memoirs examined over the course of this study have been seen to engage various canons of legitimation and explanation, including national myths such as Hungary's appropriation of resistance fighters (*And Peace Never Came*) or Canada's self-perception as welcoming and safe (*Mina's Story*), generic forms such as legal argument (*Witness to Horror*), or more fundamental certainties defining recognizable, gendered selfhood (*I Am a Witness, Vanished in Darkness*). They offer examples of narratives that are conventional in ordering and structure (such as Schiff and Kazimirski) and that eschew these norms in the interest of allusion and ambiguity (such as Raab and Thon). Even the more consciously organized and narrativized tellings, however, reveal, in the persistence of seams and contradiction, the resistance of Holocaust memories to assimilation, and so present evidence of intransigent singularity that prohibits narrative closure. Kazimirski cannot, in the final analysis, present self-validating testimony; the disconcerting understatement of Deutsch's memoir implies ongoing trauma rather than its resolution; the resolution of Schiff's sense of lost place is presented in the context of politicized rationality, but rests on troubled sacrificial logic. Schiff, furthermore, recalls that she and other survivors were "convinced that we had endured an experience that defied understanding by other, more fortunate mortals. Who could grasp the impact of the imposed death sentence,

the death of all loved ones, the brutal hunger lasting for many years?" (132). This is a familiar claim on the part of survivors, but this diegetic concern is conspicuous for its difference from her confident, explanatory narrative form, which foregrounds proportion and closure. Her narrative thus offers, in its overall form, a comprehensive and comprehensible meaning that is nonetheless implicitly bounded by the nadir of her experience, which remains inexpressible across the abyss of violence. These women's memoirs, then, reveal that their experiences challenge the sufficiency of the various narrative genres that seek to give them form, and that divergent attitudes toward narrativity arise in their many efforts to grapple with "the" experience of the Holocaust.

Those writers, such as Raab and Thon, who recount their memories in fragmented or self-consciously literary and self-referential forms risk incoherence in the name of writing their memories against the grain of tradition. Leigh Gilmore argues that the constraints implied by the meta-narratives of literary criticism, history, and law tend to exclude experimental or genre-crossing forms from taking a place in public discourse (3, 144-5). She insists that narratives of trauma are often forced to take counter-hegemonic forms in the interest of satisfactory self expression:

> Limit-cases offer [...] offer histories of harm and the individual that differ from legal ones and which are, strictly speaking, inadmissible as testimony. [...] Limit-cases are testimonial projects, but they do not bring forward cases within the protocols of legal testimony. They offer

an alternative; they cannot do otherwise. (146)

Egan similarly notes that narratives foreign to canonical genres are "precarious at best, impervious to to examination, analysis or understanding. At worst, such experience is invalid—incredible, invisible, unreal" (*Mirror* 226). These observations ultimately argue in favour of a multiplicity of possible meanings, in a recognition that the meanings of the Holocaust cannot in principle be foreclosed by given literary-critical or historical bounds. As Zoë Waxman argues, "To avoid preempting the Holocaust, testimonies must not be taken as exhaustive of all Holocaust experiences" ("Unheard" 667). In a later essay she states this point even more strongly: "The Holocaust is not a unified event, but many different events. It is impossible to conflate different survivor stories into a universal Holocaust experience because no such experience exists" ("Testimony" 496). The diversity of perspectives and forms found in this small collection of texts appears to support these critics sense that meaning—even the meaning of as drastic and disastrous an event as the Holocaust—is ultimately manifold.

Eaglestone argues that "testimony texts are a new genre which demands a way of reading that does not consume them through the processes of reading, principally through identification" (*Holocaust* 72). My first two chapters present a kaleidoscopic vision of subjective dissolution, of the failed attempts at closure that structure memoirs written both in acknowledgement of this ruination and in explicit attempts to overcome it. Raab's conflicted and fragmented narrative and Rosner's alienating experience of motherhood, for instance, present significant

obstacles in terms of situating these texts as meaningful in the context of life stories not so marred by overwhelming violence. Readers, then, are faced with problems of identification in the face of such texts, problems that are attenuated reflections of the shattering experienced by the survivors who write them. This faint refraction of experience, however, the resistance that testimony offers to assimilation and comprehension, remains essential to their meaning. The process of identification has been much discussed and remains poorly understood—Eaglestone argues that it is "a literary process" that is "ineliminable and unavoidable" and that "no discourse, even psychoanalysis, seemed to have grasped what happens at its core" (*Holocaust* 324), and suggests that postmodernist philosophy has taken this challenge more seriously than other systems of genres of thought. I argue that postmodernist notions of subjectivity, drawn primarily from Levinas, Irigaray, and Lyotard, allow both the coherence of identity and its ruination to be placed in relation, in the continual mutual interruption that makes identity a matter of ongoing uncertainty. Turning to matters of place (as I do in my third chapter) serves to broaden the problem of identity and identification beyond the seemingly solipsistic bounds of Levinas's and Lyotard's theories, and demonstrates that the poststructuralist take on identification and narrativity has been elaborated not in opposition to the reality of the world, but in our most fundamental experiences of it.

Having situated the problematic abyss of identity and meaning in the violent disruption of the fundamental relations between interiority and exteriority,

between the general and the particular, my turn to variety and constraint in meaning, in chapter four, reflects on survivors' desire to evoke the particular meanings of their memories. Elie Wiesel presents a strong version of this desire, which is both insistent and ambiguous:

> True? What does true mean? One sentence written by a poet may express that truth more than a hundred novels. If it is historic truth that we speak about, then it is one thing. If it is philosophical truth, that is another. If it is metaphysical truth, it is still another. And we do not really know what we are seeking here. We tried to understand: that was the obsession we all had, we wanted to understand.
>
> (Lewis 164)

His statement reflects the genre-bound reality that there are a variety of truths, none of which can clearly satisfy the survivor's insistent and uncertain desire to "understand." The uncompromising pressure of this desire leads Wiesel to the surprising position that he would prefer silence and forgetting to expressions that falsify or trivialize the meaning of the Holocaust:

> if the choice is between a trivialization of the event and nothing, I prefer nothing. If people know nothing, then one day they will know, but if they know this trivialized, cheapened, or distorted version, then they will remember the distorted, trivialized view, and ultimately they falsify memory. (Lewis 158)

Such a stark fear of misprision, of false or inadequate representation, underscores

the close and specific attention to the genre-bound nature of meaning that I have presented as being characteristically poststructuralist. The fracturing of identification is one aspect of this meaning-making, as is the relevant phenomenon of survivors' contradictory or citational use of canonical genres that are bent to the specificity of their memorial needs. These memorial needs are inevitably, given the extent of the mass murder, mournful, and my final chapter's consideration of mourning suggests that even the matter of death, so often understood in undifferentiated and absolute terms, involves matters of narrative partiality. The experience of subjectivity is in fundamental ways an experience of death and mourning, seemingly irreducible experiences that are found to be structured by elements of narrativity and identification rendered problematic and fragmentary in the face of death transformed by genocide.

Readerly responsibility, then, arises because memorial texts both offer and deny the capacity to identify with and in the face of them. Inga Clendinnen argues that a key difference between fictional and historical writing is the matter of responsibility: "With a work of fiction we marvel at the fictioneer's imagination. With real thought and actions presented for our scrutiny we are brought to wonder at ourselves" (172). This notion implies that the reality principle implied by historical or non-fictional writing invites the capacity to identify with the protagonists, to situate ourselves with respect to the events and meanings of the past. By contrast, Eaglestone argues, following Primo Levi, that Holocaust memoirs implicitly and explicitly resist this process of identification, and suggests that the

"radical doubt" they involve "refuses to let the text itself disappear in an act of identification" ("Not" 38, 39) . Together, these contrary assertions suggest that in reading testimonial writing, one encounters an ethical challenge to one's unique responsiveness, one's responsibility for the meaning of the text. Particularity is thus, at the risk of descending into contradictory incoherence, the general case, even when it comes to considering an event such as the Holocaust, defined as it is by mass death: "Every death is its own discrete catastrophe. Within the mass of the only apparently anonymous we must seek and hold the individual situation" (Clendinnen 183). As Levinas argues, responsibility arises in the unique relationship with an other, but justice arises with the presence of another other and in the ineluctable necessity of mediation and judgement demanded by this confrontation with simultaneously multiple responsibilities (*Totality* 212-214). Such judgement means that any notion of justice is always a betrayal to some degree (Derrida, *Gift* 68-69), but also that such justice is a matter of choice for which we remain uniquely accountable. The canonical genres of legitimation intervene, ideally, not to absolve us of our responsibility to these texts and to this past, but as such a third party, contextualizing the uniqueness of responsibility with respect to sociality and justice. This tripartite relationship means that testimony remains, in turn, an endless challenge to the hegemony of public narratives.

If these notions set the postmodern interpretation of memoirs at odds with their use in historical narratives, it is only in the interest of asking, as Robert Eaglestone does: "is the Holocaust just an event in the past, written about by

historians, or is it an event which changes how history is written and understood?" (139). Texts such Stone's *The Historiography of the Holocaust* present the state of the historical art as not only addressing a proliferation of new evidence and explanation, but as conflicted about how these events and evidence are to be narrativized and contextualized. (In another example, Dan Diner's *Beyond the Conceivable* explores conflicting historical meta-narratives in some detail, and examines the very different stories that arise from variant vantage points.) More generally, the realm of historical truth is one truth among many, albeit one that is inevitably and necessarily foregrounded in the case of the Holocaust. My emphasis on the partiality of testimonial meaning, and some memoirs' recusancy in the face of realistic, historical verisimilitude is intended to trace the limits placed on meaning in general by such canons of understanding. Yehuda Bauer notes that testimony is a necessary supplement to history in that it allows us to approach a "vicarious experience" of the past (*History* 44). The notion that the past should become a matter of present experience and not merely of present knowledge is of pressing interest to survivors whose narratives refuse too-easy identification and assimilation by readers accustomed to simple factuality, simple moral tales involving closure that the irruptive force of the Holocaust precludes.

Philosophical musings—such as much of the foregoing—have a tendency to generate their own imperatives, to take on a life of their own. Clendinnen argues that "If we are to see the Gorgon sufficiently steadily to destroy it, we cannot afford to be blinded by reverence or abashed into silence or deflected into a search for

reassuring myths" (182). This includes the reassurance of theoretical erudition as much as comforting reliance on familiar, traditional assumptions about human being, narrative forms, or redemptive versions of mourning. Derrida describes a number of relationships, such as forgiveness, generosity, and friendship, where acting in the name of the spirit of the relationship violates that same spirit: the obligations entailed by friendship, for instance, must not be seen to obligate, or one acts out of duty, and thus not out of friendship (*Aporias* 7-8). Similarly, respecting the expressiveness of a given text must be—surely an impossible task—renewed in the face of each text, as a matter of its peculiar demand, and not as a matter of principle. My readings no doubt fail to rise to this standard, not least because of the ultimately thematic organization of my argument and by any heuristic effects my theoretical interests have—ironically, perhaps—had on my interpretive close reading. (For example, my postmodernist take on the entropic openness of textuality has invited a certain scepticism with respect to narratives—such as those by Kazimirski and Schiff—that posit or claim closure or success for their narratives or their relationships to the traumas of the past.) Regardless, the theoretical niceties that contextualize my readings are thoroughly indebted to the variety of experience and expression I encountered in the memoirs that are the focus of this study. There remain scattered throughout this text, I hope, the traces and remains of my reading as the immediate engagement with a specific text, at a specific time, and by a specific reader.

That these texts were written in Canada has, for the most part, not been

foregrounded as a matter of analysis, although chapter three ("Place") takes up the representation of Canada as the site of the narrating present for Schiff, Raab, and Deutsch. This is contrary to my original intentions, and has resulted because few of the authors make explicit reference to their lives as Canadians; those who do tend to make passing reference to their second (or third, or fourth ...) homeland. This lack of reference to lives they lead in a land they adopted in some cases long after the war is largely consistent with other memoirs by Holocaust survivors, the insistent demand of whose memory pressures them to testify to wartime injustice, a period to which the sufferings of immigrant life may pale in comparison. Butovsky and Jonassohn, for instance, report that even when they explicitly asked Holocaust survivors to comment on their post-war immigrant experience, very few complied: "for the survivors their wartime experience was the sole motive for writing" (148-9). When these Canadian authors do refer to their national situation, however, we see a spectrum of opinion: some, such as Schiff and Raab, offer grateful recognition to Canada as a welcoming refuge; others, such Deutsch, reflect at length on the difficulties they faced as immigrant Jews; and this latter critical perspective occasionally, as in Brewster's *Vanished in Darkness* and Etta Berk's *Chosen*, acknowledges the disturbing extent of antisemitism and Holocaust denial in Canada, describing these as disturbingly familiar experiences that make this a new world insufficiently different from the old. Indeed, both Butovsky and Jonassohn (148) and Franklyn Bialystok (230-236) suggest that the seeming explosion of neo-Nazi activism and Holocaust denial in Canada during the 1980s, most strikingly

publicized by the Zundel and Keegstra trials, was a catalyst to many Canadian survivors to recount their experiences. The relatively thin attention to the post-war years in the texts at hand, however, means that analysis of their "Canadian-ness" remains problematic.

Some areas of general theoretical import have offered themselves over the course of these readings as possible areas for further investigation. The conjunction between trauma theory and Levinasian notions of alienated subjectivity pursued in chapter one, for instance, draws together critical perspectives seldom conjoined, although postmodern thought—especially in the work of Derrida—is often indebted to and interested in matters of psychoanalysis and trauma. Deconstructive notions of the "death of the subject," often naively celebrated as an escape from repressive norms, involve descriptions very similar to the shattering experience of traumatic violence: Levinas and Lingis both, for instance, foreground the tragic agony of solitude as definitional of a subjective uniqueness that is not the self-present wholeness of the ego, traditionally understood (cf. Levinas *Ethics* 49-50; Lingis *Dangerous* 93). The relationship between these two versions of "decentered" being—the inevitably partial and iterative structure of subjectivity and the violently imposed experience of fragmentation—require more articulation. Future work in this area might consider the possibly problematic or untenable distinction between subjective identification experienced as a quotidian trauma and the the violent traumas that challenge the coherence of such subjectivity. Gilmore, for instance, suggests that narratives of crisis and trauma offer a critical re-

contextualizing of the structure of everyday experience, a conclusion that could form the starting point of such an investigation (148). Butler has theorized gender identification along these lines, as a matter of perpetual mourning and melancholia for excluded possibilities in a performance called forth and sustained by threatening violence (cf. *Bodies* 65-67), but I am not familiar with any substantial studies that consider the dual role of trauma as both foundational and fracturing (although Elizabeth Grosz's "The Time of Violence" offers a relevant but introductory comment on the various notions of violence at work in Derrida's texts).

My analyses of the essential role of gender in the testimonial expression of death and mourning likewise require further investigation. Gender and mortality are commonly but independently identified as conceptually necessary aspects of identity, yet their co-implication has not been widely considered: Irigaray's references to this matter are scattered throughout her work; Derrida raises this question in *The Gift of Death*—but drops it, disappointingly (45); Lyotard's "One of the Things at Stake in Women's Struggles" and "Can Thought Go on Without a Body?" are more suggestive than substantive; and Tina Chanter's *Time, Death, and the Feminine* [Stanford: Stanford UP, 2001] looks at these issues on the very specific terms of Levinas's critique of Heidegger's philosophy of being. My argument presents a sheaf of meanings, from productive negativity to utter annihilation, that philosophy has gathered around the phenomenon of death, the contradictory variety of which is a product of what Levinas insists is its unknowable status as

enigma. There is a double sense in which these various meanings deal with death in a gendered manner: conceptuality itself, within which death as literal loss can be refigured as some sort of transcendence, relies on gendered and specular modes of thought to effect that movement, uniting death with femininity as a reserve or image of ambivalence that must be mastered and overcome; furthermore, death intervenes in lived experience as a controlling aspect of gendered identification, distributing the viability of subject positions according to gendered notions of mourning and mortality. My attempt to bring together these theoretical strands remains preliminary, however, and deeply indebted to the immediate context of the memoirs by Kazimirski and Neray where this conceptual dynamic can be seen to play itself out in brutal reality. A more sustained and wide-ranging investigation into the co-implication of the concepts of gender, death, mortality is a necessary labour, especially for those—such as myself—interested in pursuing critical theory and philosophy at the points where deconstruction and feminism meet.

The demands of focusing on textual particularity have thus produced effects in addition to readings that elaborate these memoirs' diversity of meaning, effects that offer to further nuance some of the central issues the texts raise, and that promise to return the critical task once more to these texts in a hermeneutic circle that reflects the inevitable lack of closure in interpretation and argument. Critical writing that responds to testimonial texts is thus directed toward the unforeseeable future in an iteration of partiality and particularity. Eaglestone argues that the goal of Derridean deconstruction is to "open a reading," which is "to rewrite [a work] in

a way that questions or reframes the framework in which the work appears" ("Derrida" 28). The Holocaust is usually described in terms of its enormity, in terms of the vast geographic scope and human cost of the inferno that produced so very many victims, perpetrators, and bystanders. The attention to details and individuals I am advocating must take place in this context: these stories, like all stories, have their own insistence and demands, but that these voices speak to us from the depths of a cataclysm so unimaginably general makes their particularity all the more insistent, given that so few victims had the opportunity to testify. Literary partiality and historical generality, like feminism and poststructuralism, are necessary to one another in the endless interpretive task of responding to the Holocaust: without a discourse of critical generality, our understanding of its history would be kaleidoscopic and impressionistic, but without attention to the texture of witnesses' testimony, both our grasp of that history and our sense of responsibility for its significance would remain abstract, a matter of the past, instead of a possible future where its meanings can unfold.

Note

1. I have argued elsewhere, on the basis of Lyotard's work, that textual and interpretive undecidability of a postmodern variety both threatens and guarantees meaning insofar as no definitive act of signification or interpretation can put an authoritative—or, more accurately, authoritarian

—end to the play of language, to the ongoing dialogue of intersubjective being (McCullough 155-158). Interpretive or conceptual undecidability is therefore both and neither a matter of anxiety and reassurance, and is the very condition for responsive accountability that is the basis of poststructuralist ethics (cf. Lingis, *Abuses* ix).

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