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1997 HILBERG LECTURE

Allan A. Ryan, Jr., former Director of the Office of Special Investigations in the United States Department of Justice, gave the sixth annual Raul Hilberg Lecture on the evening of November 5, 1997. "Investigating and Prosecuting Nazi War Criminals" was a departure from previous Hilberg lectures which featured academic historians of the Holocaust. Ryan is a lawyer, currently the University Attorney of Harvard University and adjunct professor at the Boston College Law School. As the first Director of the Office of Special Investigations beginning in 1979, his role was not to write the history of the Holocaust, but rather to find and bring to justice the many perpetrators of the Holocaust who were able to immigrate to the United States after World War II.

On both a personal and professional level, Mr. Ryan was a most fitting speaker for the Hilberg lecture series. His work in prosecuting Nazi war criminals in this country brought him into a close working relationship with Raul Hilberg. Knowing little about the Holocaust at the beginning of his tenure at the Office of Special Investigations, how was he to understand and judge the evidence he would gather and use against the perpetrators without a firm grounding in Holocaust history? Ryan relied on Professor Hilberg's *Destruction of the European Jews*, and on Professor Hilberg himself as an expert witness in many of his cases. His initial comments on the evening of the lecture were a tribute not only to Raul Hilberg's scholarship on the Holocaust, but to his role in bringing war criminals to justice decades after the end of the Second World War.

The focus of Mr. Ryan's remarks was American immigration policy for displaced persons in the immediate post-war years. He addressed the troubling question of why so many war criminals were able to immigrate to the United States with little difficulty after the war. Despite the opening of the various camps in Germany and elsewhere in central and eastern Europe in the last months and weeks of the war, and the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials immediately thereafter, American public opinion and the U.S. government remained largely uninformed about and uninterested in the nature and process of the 'final solution'. Survivors wanted to forget their ordeals and begin new lives rather than talk about the past and bring their tormentors to justice. Thousands of Nazi collaborators from the countries of eastern Europe ended up in the DP camps along with their Jewish victims. They easily passed themselves off as victims of war, as Christian anti-communists who were fleeing the Red Army. These included Poles, Lithuanians, Ukrainians, Latvians, Estonians and ethnic Germans whom the U.S. government considered persecuted refugees from communism and potential allies in an emerging struggle with the Soviet Union. These 'refugees', particularly those from the Baltic states, were given preference over surviving Jews in the formulation of U.S. emergency immigration laws such as the Displaced Persons Act of 1948 during the immediate post-war period. Finally, lingering anti-Semitism in the U.S. Congress contributed to a preference for Christians from the Baltic states over the remnants of European Jewry.

Summer Institute 1998

Holocaust Studies is pleased to offer again this summer The Holocaust and Holocaust Education. This 3 credit course will be held Mon.-Fri., June 22-26 from 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m. in 101 Kalkin. There will be two evening public lectures as well. The course is offered through the Dept. of Education, with cross-listings under General Literature and International Studies.

The seminar is designed to provide a comprehensive introduction to the Holocaust and to issues related to teaching about the Holocaust in Vermont schools. Programs include presentations by scholars, authors, Holocaust survivors and liberators, and workshops by teachers experienced in Holocaust education. Discussions focus on teaching strategies, ideas, and curricular resources.

This year's evening speakers are: Prof. Peter Hoffmann, an expert on the German resistance and author of a book on Stauffenberg; and Steven Rogers of the Office of Special Investigations in Washington, who is involved in tracking Nazi war criminals and who is an expert on the Swiss banking scandal.

To register, contact Continuing Education, U.V.M., P.O. Box 54055, 322 So. Prospect St., Burlington, VT 05405, Tel. (802) 656-2085. Website at uvmce.uvm.edu:443/

Ryan estimates that at least 10,000 Nazi collaborators were granted entry into the United States in the years following 1945. Their stories about their wartime experiences were subjected to little or no scrutiny; the task of identifying Nazis among the more than a million displaced persons was difficult in any case, and deepening anti-communism and distrust of the Soviet Union dampened any inclination to delve into their past. The perpetrators were able to settle in the United States, and to lead quiet and usually productive lives for more than a generation, with no questions asked about their war-time activities.

It was not until the late 1970s that Americans and their government began to demonstrate some interest in the Holocaust, in the presence of significant numbers of war criminals in this country, and in the role of the U.S. government in allowing them to enter the United States after the war. Historians had begun to examine the documentary evidence, and to write the first significant histories of the Third Reich only a decade before. Although Professor Hilberg's *The Destruction of the European Jews* was published as early as 1961, there were initial difficulties in finding a publisher for the manuscript, and the book did not initially spark a lot of interest in that aspect of the history of the Third Reich. Professional historians of the Nazi era tended to expend relatively little effort on Nazi Jewish policy and the Holocaust in their scholarly studies of German history between 1933 and 1945. Only in the 1970s did scholars really begin to focus on the Holocaust itself, providing the necessary context for other changes that would in turn help to stimulate some popular interest in the Holocaust.

It was also during the 1970s that the new, post-World War II generation came of age in this country and in Germany, with an interest in learning about what had happened and how it could have happened. In particular, Allan Ryan discussed the children of survivors who asked these same questions of their parents, prompting many survivors for the first time since their liberation to speak out and write about their experiences during the Holocaust. In this context, the survivors identified many perpetrators, some of whom had been living in the United States since the end of the war. It was also at this time that the flawed but effective television series on the Holocaust played to an enormous audience, first in the United States and then in Europe.


Allan Ryan

In 1979, the U.S. Congress established the Office of Special Investigations in the Department of Justice. It represented a decision by the American government to right the wrongs of the past by prosecuting the war criminals it had allowed to immigrate and settle in this country more than a generation ago. The work of the OSI since then has been remarkable: some 1,500 investigations have been opened, with formal charges brought against 103 persons. There are hundreds of investigations going on today, with sixteen cases pending. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the consequent opening of Soviet and other east European archives have provided additional evidence to help the OSI identify war criminals. Moreover, the work of the OSI in this country has stimulated similar efforts against Nazi war criminals in other countries such as Canada and Australia.

Allan Ryan had no personal or professional connection to the Holocaust before his appointment as Director of the OSI in 1979. But the Holocaust has obviously had a profound impact on him and on his understanding and practice of the law since then. He talked of the well-known indifference of the rest of the world to the Jews and their plight between 1933 and 1945, and the not so well-known indifference of the U.S. government to surviving Jews in the DP camps immediately after the war. In his closing remarks, Ryan articulated his fear that we have learned little from the past, that we are responding to the sufferings of others in Rwanda and Bosnia, for example, with the same indifference that was shown to the fate of the Jews in Europe before and during the Holocaust. In a world in which the law very often has little to do with justice, Allan Ryan reminded the audience that it should, and that without justice there can be no peace.

Francis R. Nicosia
St. Michael's College, Vermont

THOUGHTS ON REMEMBERING THE HOLOCAUST

by J. Alan Moore

Why remember the Holocaust? The clarity or distortion with which we remember the past determines our current sense of reality, and thereby memory determines our prospects for making sense of our life. We want to remember for the obvious reason that, as with the past, the future is unlikely to escape history. The weight of history exercises a specific effect which we cannot escape, for we cannot unbind ourselves from the conditions that put us where we are. As Lucy Davidowicz has written, "the present is a relic of the past, a historical deposit left by the wash of time."

Whose memory? Remembering any morally significant event is an act of commitment. This conception has an ancient precedent. In the celebration of Passover there is the requirement of the recitation of the history of the Exodus from Egypt—the ritual storytelling formalized in the Seder. Why, I used to wonder, this unusual manner of recital in which there are only speakers and no audience, where no one listens, where each person is responsible for recounting the story? Not mainly, it seems, as a means of collective learning or exchange, but to enable each reciter, everyone present, to tell her- or himself. It is one thing to hear or to read an account related by someone else; the act is quite different for the person who recites the story, who speaks and hears the events in his own voice. Even then, of course, the narrator does not create the event; but his voice takes on the shape of the subject, much as a hand does with its grasp. The voice becomes the expression of its subject, not its source.

We don't know what form future efforts to account for the Nazi genocide will take, but there can be no uncertainty about the outcome if these efforts to retell the story should cease. Moreover, the act of understanding cannot be carried out vicariously; each must remember for him or herself, and thus the retelling is always, for each person, begun anew.

The proposal that American Jews should tell the story of the genocide lies in the fact that for most of them it was no more than chance, the impulse of an ancestor who had seen a map, that they, too were not among the actual victims. As with a traveler who is accidentally detained and, so, misses a plane which crashes, the arbitrariness of such survival marks their own history as contingent and improbable.

Was a Jewish person supposed to be able to integrate the fact that she and her entire circle of family and friends was being willed out of existence for the crime of being born? The effort to imagine this seems hardly slighter now, fifty years after it actually happened. That the Jew today knows it happened still leaves open the matter of moral knowledge, that is, the matter of deciding just how to live in light of that possibility. This reckoning, too, must be done by each Jew anew.

As a gentile remembering the Holocaust, however, I cannot argue with the same conviction for a gesture of identification with the Jews as we recount the event. If we learn anything from the history of ethics, it is that the status of moral agents is determined by their own places in history; people act always as individuals and always and only in the context they know. The individual agency that is the condition of moral consciousness cannot be imposed from the outside; no one acts or speaks in moral terms as a moral consciousness. In the Holocaust, the lines were drawn around a particular people as a group. Whatever direction our reflections on the Holocaust take, they cannot ignore this first fact. The older I get, the closer I move towards the Jewish tradition and to Judaism. But I remain aware that it is not my tradition. Jewish history is not my history. Thus, history imposes on me a different sort of obligation regarding knowledge of the Holocaust.

It is clear that in one sense everyone alive now shares in the aftermath of the Holocaust. The reality of the Holocaust is a new premise of the life of all of us. The Holocaust has happened, and the prospect of genocide is now inevitable and common. Its history includes everyone in its future.

Even granting the breadth of this consequence, however, it was not as human beings but as Jews that the victims were slaughtered; and it was not as human beings by an assertion of their own supposed Aryan destiny that the Nazis acted. We have to take history at its word—and, here, that word is not 'mankind.'

In addition to the Jews and the Nazis, the deeds of the rescuers, too, confirm the claim that moral significance attaches to individuals acting within a particular history that defines the quality of their circumstances and hence the range of their options. Every Jew who survived the war outside the camps, ghettos, and partisan bands survived because they were saved by people willing to put themselves, and often their families, at incredible risk, for no tangible benefit. Moreover, every gentile who saved Jews was supported by a conspiracy of others who were willing to assist, or at least to keep silent. Seeing that people needed help, gentiles to whom Jewish identity often was hardly less alien than it was to the Nazis themselves nevertheless pronounced that identity as part of their own. But the wonderful acts of the rescuers involve a kind of joining or coming together that affirms the underlying difference between them and the people they saved. It is just because of this joining that the acts of the rescuers are recognized as having a special moral and practical significance. They acted as if understanding that joining in the identity of another was the only way to preserve their own. But even this reflects rather than conflates the difference among them.

Remembering does not have one clear meaning. The past does not carry its own interpretation in its hands. The dead tell no tales. It is false to think that history teaches something. There are no lessons, as such, in history. There is no lesson in the history of the Holocaust. History does not teach. Instead, people learn.

What we learn from the past is determined by the questions we put to it. The questions we ask are our questions, and they address our concerns, our interests. A question prefigures the dimension of responses that will count as intelligible to the questioner. Good questions lead mostly to other questions. In *Night*, Eli Wiesel writes, "every question possesses a power that does not lie in the answer." Good questions tend not to lead to definitive or terminating answers.

But many people disagree. They see lessons in history. One very common one is the lesson about man's-inhumanity-to-man. In following this line of reasoning, they tend to flatten out the Holocaust through a process of universalization. They say things like "what was done at Auschwitz was nothing unusual: it was but a case of man's-inhumanity-to-man in wartime" (Arnold Toynbee). Thus it comes widely to seem that the true Holocaust criminal was not one particular regime, but "man," as such; that the victim was not one particular people, but, once again, "man." To hold otherwise, they argue, is to exhibit a parochial point of view.

Liberally-minded people seem especially prone to this kind of thinking. With their laudable concern about injustice around the world, they struggle for ways to make the Holocaust relevant to our time. The sort of person I have in mind is the one who upon hearing a reference to the Holocaust soon shifts the focus of conversation to a 'higher' plane, to a more inclusive level. They imagine, in doing this, that they are now addressing the 'real' significance of the Holocaust. Now, it would not likely occur to them to do this regarding the brutal murder of a single child on the street. Whatever other kind of significance that murder may seem to suggest, it surely would not displace in their minds the moral enormity of that single horror. But regarding the murder of one and a half million children, most of whom were torn from their families, shot, clubbed to death, thrown alive into the furnaces, or allowed to die of neglect and hunger, alone, their attention shifts to a larger significance which they locate in the way that mass-murder connects to other arenas of society or history. In these two situations, the murder of the child on the street and the Holocaust, we notice the extreme asymmetry of where the primary significance of the two events is seen to lie.

To be sure, historians universalize. But universalization of the above-mentioned kind is not history, but its opposite. It is an homogenization of the sort of distinctions that provide a credible historical perspective and, thereby, make understanding possible. Not all are guilty of trivialization or missing the point who, upon hearing of the Holocaust, immediately start talking about children in Hiroshima or Cambodia or Bosnia. To think about these children in relation to what we've learned from the Holocaust is right and fitting so long as one recognizes that the subject is being changed.

But more to the point, I think, is the fact that the tendency to universalize about human peril is linked not so much to the need for categorization as it is to the seriousness with which one regards the suffering in question. That is, the more one identifies with the suffering, the more concrete it will seem, and the less will be one's tendency to universalize or abstract it. Conversely, the less inclined one is to take personally (which is to say seriously) the situation of the suffering person, the more inclined one may be to universalize on it. The less real it seems, the more amenable to abstraction the event tends to become.

Vivid history can help spark moral development. Nothing makes this more evident to us than the study of the Holocaust. We remember that history is the creation of memory, and that, as has often been written, in a land without memory, everything is possible.

Saul Friedländer: 1997 Visiting Raul Hilberg Scholar

In early November Holocaust Studies at the University of Vermont was privileged to host as its first Visiting Raul Hilberg Scholar, Saul Friedländer, our 1995 Hilberg Lecturer. Friedländer is Professor of History and International Relations at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and Professor of History at UCLA. In addition to participating in Jonathan Huener's German and Holocaust history courses and David Serase's Holocaust literature course, Professor Friedländer gave a public lecture on November 3 entitled "Writing the History of the Shoah: Some Old/New Dilemmas." He opened the lecture with homage to his on-going dialogue with Professor Hilberg (present in the audience) on history, memory, and the problematics of the representation of the Holocaust and the formation of historical consciousness. As Jonathan Huener mentioned in his introduction to the lecture, Friedländer, in his latest work *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, is at the forefront of new directions in Holocaust historiography which emphasize the necessity of the intersection of memory and history. Like Lawrence Langer, Friedländer is concerned not only with the event of the Holocaust, that is, its history, but how to remember the Holocaust, especially given the approaching juncture at which the witnesses are no longer on site. Like Langer, Friedländer is cautious about memory and its power, its non-neutrality, and its ability to serve a number of individual and collective agendas. Friedländer is particularly concerned with what he has referred to in his writings as "deep memory" and its elusiveness with respect to assigning "meaning," and with the distractions of our search for redemptive closure in the face of (the memory of) the Holocaust.

Friedländer in his lecture addressed the issues of denial, latency, and repression, both individual and collective, which had at first prevented an awareness of the core of Nazism, epitomizing the problem faced by Professor Hilberg in what had been his initially solitary quest for retrieving how the Holocaust occurred. Using the examples of France and Germany, Friedländer traced the generational component of a subsequent growing coming-to-terms with the Holocaust instigated by a confrontation between the youth of the 1960s and their parents. He used the example of the *Historikerstreit*, the conflict between German historians in the 1980s, to show how eruptions of "uncontrolled memory" informed this debate, constituting a "coming back of the repressed," which Friedländer regards as his central metaphor.

Echoing Jean-Francois Lyotard, Friedländer gropes with the indeterminateness and opaqueness of the Holocaust (even in the best historical renditions), noting that Auschwitz has become emblematic of what is often referred to as our postmodern condition. Given that there is no longer a totalizing historical discourse about the twentieth century, especially in the light of the break-up of the USSR, Friedländer calls for the individualization of memory, that is, the inclusion of personal narratives. This can help counter the prevailing status of the memory of the Holocaust in a void which compromises our effort to place the events in a comprehensible, "positivist" framework. In this vein, Friedländer suggests that Holocaust memorials, museums, and rituals of commemoration represent a search for an anchor and a compensation for this void.

What, then, is the historian to do, a question raised at the end of lecture by UVM Professor of History Pat Hutton, who wondered how historians are to deal with the "free floating" quality of memory. Friedländer remains hopeful, insistent that the "problem" about history and the indeterminacy of the Holocaust need not be a hindrance, that the "mythic memory" of the victims need not be an obstacle of "rational" historiography. In our search to place the Holocaust in context, Friedländer urges, we need to be as concrete and empirical as possible, but also willing to confront "the challenge of memory," even if doing so also challenges the linear yearnings of traditional historical narrative. As the dead become more and more of an abstraction, the role of the historian, Friedländer emphasizes, is to respect the victims and include their stories, in conjunction with meticulous scholarship *à la* Raul Hilberg. As the events of the Holocaust begin to recede from immediate consciousness, Professor Friedländer forges a path to possible interpretive and representational advance, without, however succumbing to our own redemptive needs for closure in the face of what will become the ever increasingly distant memory of the Holocaust. This is the challenge posed by this most thoughtful scholar who encourages us not to fall into intellectual despair, but to probe the Holocaust with all that we can muster, even as the limits of imagination continue to be tested by the elusiveness of "deep memory."

Carroll Lewin
University of Vermont

Saul Friedländer

Elazar Benyoëtz: An Israeli Writing in German

Wolfgang Mieder
University of Vermont

The Israeli author Elazar Benyoëtz occupies a unique position among aphoristic writers using the German language. He was born in 1937 in Wiener Neustadt (Austria) and emigrated at the last moment in 1939 with his parents to Palestine. Having been raised speaking Hebrew, he started publishing several volumes of poetry in Hebrew. Even though he finished his studies towards becoming a rabbi, he chose a literary career and started to translate the German works of Jews into Hebrew. Due to his deep interest in the Jewish contribution to German culture, he decided in 1963 to go to Germany, where in the following year he founded the important Bibliographia Judaica archive in Berlin. While he collected and studied works of German-Jewish literature, he also perfected his knowledge of the German language before returning to Jerusalem in 1968. Since then he has made a name for himself as an Israeli aphorist writing in German. In recognition of his fifteen volumes of short prose he received the prestigious Adalbert von Chamisso Prize in 1988 which is awarded to foreign authors publishing in German. At that time he was praised in particular for the communicative power of his aphorisms, which deal primarily with cultural, psycholinguistic, and sociopolitical issues as well as German-Jewish concerns during the past two centuries.

The question quite naturally arises why Elazar Benyoëtz as an Israeli author would have decided to write in German after having had considerable success already with his Hebrew poetry. It is clearly his search for a better understanding of German-Jewish relationships after the Holocaust and his keen interest in confronting German readers with Jewish concerns which led him on this courageous path. His aphorisms reflect the divergences and convergences, the crossroads and points of intersection as well as the alienation and approximation of Jews and Germans. As a rabbi Benyoëtz has also a lot to say about the contrasts and similarities of Judaism and Christianity, stressing that the Bible in its German translation was part of the process that took the Jewish element out of the German language and culture. One of his goals as an engaged author is to reintroduce this Jewish culture into the German language and society, and he does this in the spirit of a positive ambassador. Language and basic human communication are seen as mediators between the perpetrators and victims of the Holocaust. Improved and critical communication can lead to a new understanding despite all contradictions and misunderstanding.

It is interesting to note that Benyoëtz goes so far as to state that the Yiddish language might be particularly useful in bringing about a new German-Jewish symbiosis. According to Benyoëtz, Germans and Jews could build a new future together not by stressing Germanness or Jewishness but by concentrating on their common cultural heritage which is so richly expressed in the Yiddish language (see *Scheideweg*, 142). Even though there is today a small revival in Germany in the interest in Yiddish, it is doubtful that this language can be revived to play the cross-cultural and international role it once occupied. Nevertheless, the interest in and study of Yiddish and German-Jewish literature will without doubt establish an invaluable spiritual and intellectual bridge. By paying more attention to how Germans and Jews communicate with each other, a better understanding and a more humane treatment of one another might just be possible.

Language and human behavior go hand in hand in Benyoëtz' world view. He is especially interested in making people aware of their own thoughts, prejudices, and feelings. He wants to guide his readers to an expanded consciousness that in turn will lead to a life filled with responsibility and humaneness. Even a bad conscience can have positive effects, as Benyoëtz states in two poignant aphorisms: "The goodness in humans is their bad conscience" (*Scheideweg*, 85) and "A good memory is the cause of a bad conscience" (*Einsätze*, 41). Such texts are meant to make people think in a conscious and responsible way about their actions. Speaking directly to his German audience, Benyoëtz points to the irresponsible suppression of the horrors of the Holocaust by discrediting the Biblical proverbial expression "To wash one's hands in innocence" (Psalms 26:6 and 73:13): "They saw nothing, they knew nothing - and yet: in order to bathe in innocence, did they have to make soap out of us?" (*Scheideweg*, 131). A second text dealing with German anti-Semitism and prejudice indicates once again the author's aggressive unmasking of the perpetrators: "Unlike all other people the Germans have forfeited their right to have prejudices. Since Auschwitz all prejudices against Germans are true - even lies" (*Scheideweg*, 131). And Benyoëtz also points to how the annihilation process of the Jewish population has dehumanized the German language and its long cultural history: "Our grieving language: It wasn't she who lost the war, even though she was reduced to the level of *Mein Kampf*. And she had promised to be healing. The German language has every reason to grieve and knows it" (*Filigranit*, 116).

An author with such an accusatory voice will by nature lean towards the role of admonisher and advisor. Quite fittingly the name "Benyoëtz" can be rendered as the "son of the advisor". Yet Benyoëtz does not reduce his "wisdom" to simple rules of virtuous conduct couched in traditional proverbs. In fact, he opposes proverbial wisdom in his short aphorisms by questioning such formulaic statements as expressions of uncritical rigidity. He wants to make people aware of the importance and power of language. By making them conscious of what they say and what is being said, he hopes to lead them to a more open, honest, and responsible life. He is thus not a pessimist and certainly not a satirist without a vision for a better future. While he criticizes human behavior and social institutions, he searches for the true purpose of life: "To live perfectly is to let one's best abilities become possible" (*Filigranit*, 123).

There is no doubt that Elazar Benyoëtz has mastered the German language and that he has become a voice to be reckoned with in Germany. He has made the language of the murderers of his ancestors the language of his choice, and it is this linguistic freedom that he himself credits at least in part as the basis of his literary art: "As long as the German language does not control me I can master it; as long as it only fascinates me my thoughts are in free movement; but if it were to become my jail then breaking out would be the only thing I could aim for" (*Filigranit*, 119). The German language employed as an expression of literary freedom by an Israeli author from Austria, that is indeed a unique intellectual and humane endeavor worthy of our admiration, recognition, and appreciation.

What follows are a few additional aphorisms in my English translation. The abbreviated sources are listed with complete bibliographical information at the end of these texts:

- An idea which is not worth spilling blood over is not great. An idea which demands the spilling of blood is worth nothing. (*Sahadutha*, 13)
- Whether one wants to be a Jew or not is not at all the question. The only question is how can I stay a Jew in such a way that others would like to be one. (*Sahadutha*, 15)
- It is sad to observe the way Jews try to explain to the Germans that today they should miss them - they are not missed. (*Sahadutha*, 22)
- In one point Jews and Christians are strikingly similar: It is far easier to write about Judaism than to be a Jew. (*Sahadutha*, 26)
- He died at Auschwitz or he was murdered at Auschwitz. It's only a question of the moral point of view. (*Sahadutha*, 43)
- Through memory the dead are demanding our life. (*Worthaltung*, 41)
- Both Rome and Jerusalem can only be reached via Auschwitz today. (*Worthaltung*, 71)
- Antisemitism has as little to do with ideology as with feeling. It is ideologically tinted only where feelings are also tinted. (*Scheideweg*, 22)
- Only Jews can have understanding for antisemitism. (*Scheideweg*, 28)
- Conscience is a question of memory but not for the murderers who tried and continue to try to extinguish all memory. (*Scheideweg*, 38)
- The Germans have understanding for us. I wish they had it for themselves. (*Scheideweg*, 131)
- All doubts are practiced in faith, protected by prejudice, and maintained through error. (*Scheideweg*, 136)
- We are threatened not only by forgetting but also by knowledge leaving us. (*Scheideweg*, 136)
- Hebrew and Auschwitz don't get along well, and that's why I exiled myself into German. (*Scheideweg*, 144)
- Guilt cannot be shared, and that's why one can bear it. (*Scheideweg*, 180)
- Truth lies in the middle: between two people moving towards each other. (*Scheideweg*, 85)

Sources:
Sahadutha. Berlin: Paian Verlag, 1969.
Einsätze. München: Gotthold Müller, 1975.
Worthaltung. Sätze und Gegensätze. München: Carl Hanser, 1977.
Treffpunkt Scheideweg. München: Carl Hanser, 1990.
Filigranit. Ein Buch aus Büchern. Göttingen: Steidl, 1992.

An Inter-generational Dialogue

For the last 3 years UVM has hosted, and Holocaust Studies at the University of Vermont has sponsored, the cultural or scholarly event that is the public component of the Gathering of Holocaust Survivor Families in April. The Gathering, an independent Burlington based group. This past November saw a new cooperative public event arranged by those same two groups. "An Inter-generational Dialogue Among Members of Holocaust Survivor Families." Representatives of the three generations (adult survivors, hidden children, their children, and grandchildren) spoke as a panel before and with the public about their experiences of the Holocaust and its aftermath.

Panel members were Ariana Breitmeyer-Schaal, Katherine Bukane, Michael Bukane, Emil Landau, Yehudi Lindeman, Kris Keese, Fran Pomerantz, and Penny Shtull. Michael Schaal, chair of the Steering Committee for the Gathering, moderated the discussion.

As Schaal explained, "We gather because we are different—not special, just different. We have our own unique experiences...being members of these families. It is valuable and important for us to come together and talk among ourselves about these experiences. However, we have come to realize that it is also important for us to share our experiences with the public. It is our way of providing a different perspective to Holocaust Education."

In his introductory remarks, David Scrase, professor of German and director of Holocaust Studies, said, "This group is challenging you to think about your relationship to historic events unlike any other."

What follows represents two perspectives on the "Intergenerational Dialogue." The material in "Legacies of the Holocaust" appeared in slightly different form in *The UVM Record* and *Vermont Quarterly*. Penny Shtull participated in the panel as a representative of the second and third generations.

Legacies of the Holocaust

Several common experiences emerged during the two-hour session. A penchant for silence was one. "Silence became a central theme in my life," said Michael Bukane. As one of the "hidden children" smuggled out of Lithuania, he learned that speaking could bring danger. That instinct remained with him and other survivors.

Many survivors rarely spoke of their Holocaust experiences, even to their families. Emil Landau, selected by Joseph Mengele to die in Auschwitz at age 18, said, "For 40 years I didn't speak about it....I didn't want my son to carry my baggage *ad infinitum*." Ten years ago his son read *Night*, Eli Wiesel's memoir of the death camps, for a class assignment and began to ask questions. Landau talked to his son's class for three hours, a floodgate of memories opened, and a second career was born. The retired color reproduction expert travels widely, speaking on human rights and the Holocaust. The day after the public forum Landau spoke about his experiences to a group of students from three area high schools. "Be vigilant," he told the students. "Speak out whenever you see injustice."

Panelists also revealed a common belief that "life is a gift" to be lived to its fullest. Children of survivors said they felt guilt for perceived slackness or adolescent complaints, in light of their parents' or grandparents' sacrifices. Kristine Keese, who has a doctorate from Harvard and taught at Brandeis, escaped with her mother from the Warsaw Ghetto. Her friends, she said, think of her as a risk taker, but after the extreme experiences of the war, "it doesn't seem like risk to me—just ordinary life," she said.

The group shared similar views on spirituality and religion. Although panelists identify themselves as Jews on a cultural level, most have rejected organized religions. Yehudi Lindeman's experiences as a hidden child included immersion in Catholicism, the religion of his rescuers. Giving up those beliefs to reestablish his Judaic identity "was wrenching," said the professor of English at McGill University in Montreal. Lindeman thinks of the world now, "not as having one god, but as a battle between forces of light and darkness...We should pitch in on the side of light, to help God as much as we can."

Landau, a quiet and compelling speaker, brought the session to an undisputed close with this comment: "I don't like [the term] Holocaust, and I try not to use it...because the Nazis didn't succeed. We won—at a terrible cost of six million lives....We're here."

A Painful Past

Penny Shtull, Trinity College

I was taken aback when asked to be a participant in the Inter-Generational Dialogue of Holocaust Survivor Families. What could I say about the experience of being a child and grandchild of survivors? I had never really explored my relationship to an event that claimed the lives of my greatgrandparents, aunts, uncles, and numerous relatives. Moreover, my family's experience of the Holocaust was a topic that was not readily discussed at home. I was always aware that my family was somehow "different" from those of many of my friends, although I could never articulate what these differences were, and how they had been shaped by the shadow of the Holocaust. By participating in the Inter-Generational Dialogue, I have learned that there are many definitions of being a Holocaust victim and survivor. I also learned that the silent strength and closeness that permeates my family is not uncommon to Holocaust survivors. Nor is the ambivalence to discuss their experiences of sorrow, anger, guilt, and fear. While some have made the discussion of the Holocaust an integral part of their lives, others, such as my family, have not.

The evening before the panel, my mother spoke to me about her childhood during the Holocaust, especially her fear of being separated from her family. She also told me of my grandfather jumping from a train that was passing his hometown of Zlotchev, close to Lodz (while en route from Russia to Poland at the end of the war), only to discover that his family, friends, and entire community had perished. For a few minutes, the cloud of secrecy was lifted. I wondered whether I should ask my grandfather about this experience. Is it wise to stir up the agonies of the past? Can I endure the pain that surrounds the past of those I love so dearly?

It is my hope that my ongoing participation with the Gathering of Holocaust Survivor Families will provide me with the opportunities to further explore myself in relation to my family's history.

BOOK REVIEWS

Simon Wiesenthal. **The Sunflower: On the Possibilities and Limits of Forgiveness.** With a Symposium edited by Harry James Cargas and Bonny V. Fetterman. Revised and expanded edition. New York: Schocken Books, 1997. Cloth. $24.00. ISBN 0-8052-415-0.

What would you do if you were a prisoner in a concentration camp and a dying Nazi soldier asked your forgiveness for an atrocity he had committed? Simon Wiesenthal's response was silence. However, he was troubled by his choice. When he asked the advice of his fellow prisoners, their responses varied. Because he was not the one sinned against, he could not offer forgiveness. Not to be able to forgive is in itself unforgivable. One said forgiveness was not to be thought of under current circumstances, adding, "If the world comes to its senses again, inhabited by people who look on each other as human beings, then there will be plenty of time to discuss forgiveness."

When *The Sunflower* was first published almost thirty years ago, it included Wiesenthal's story and a symposium of thirty-two responses to the story by eminent people. All the contributors to the original symposium belonged to the Judeo-Christian tradition. Many of them had experienced life under the Nazi regime. One, the writer Luise Rinser, had even undergone a experience similar to Wiesenthal's, being asked after the war for forgiveness by the woman who denounced her to the Nazis.

The responses to the moral issues raised by Wiesenthal's story varied widely, but can generally be divided into two groups, reflecting the positions held by Simon's fellow prisoners. Either forgiveness is the supreme moral imperative, or only the sinned against has the right to grant forgiveness. Evan Fleischner disentangles the religious traditions behind these two schools of thought in an insightful essay in the current volume.

The revised and expanded symposium includes ten of the original responses, among them those by Primo Levi and Cynthia Ozick. Edward H. Flannery revised his response significantly. Contributions by Jean Améry, Cardinal Franz König, and Albert Speer appear in English for the first time. In addition, contributions from Sven Alkalaj, ambassador of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Smial Balić, the Dalai Lama, Dith Pran, and Harry Wu add to the variety of perspectives from which to ponder the effectiveness of repentance and the limits of forgiveness.

Edward Flannery's revised response is telling. Originally he wrote: "I find it impossible to defend [Simon's refusal to grant the soldier Karl forgiveness], and I must be satisfied with understanding it without approving it." Flannery now writes: "I can well understand Simon's refusal, but I find it impossible to defend it. I do not arrive at such a position easily. For anyone who holds allegiance to our Judeo-Christian heritage and who has any sense of the horrors of the Shoah and of the savagery of its Nazi perpetrators cannot come easily to a decision on Simon's painful dilemma." Flannery's basic response has not changed, but he now recognizes complexities in the situation he did not perceive 30 years ago.

While each essay adds insight to the reader's understanding of forgiveness, the responses from those with personal experience of genocide offer unique insights into the question "What

would I do?" Dith Pran, survivor of the Cambodian killing fields, distinguishes between the Khmer Rouge leadership whom he can never forgive, and the ordinary soldiers whom he can. He is certain that if Cambodian solders did not follow orders to kill, they and their families would have been executed. Pran is apparently unaware that the situation was different in Nazi Germany. Nazi soldiers who refused to participate in atrocities seldom faced any consequences other than transfer to another unit.

Harry Wu describes his denunciation and persecution as an "enemy of the revolution," as well as his years of imprisonment in China. For Wu, "it is inconceivable...to believe that anyone in the People's Republic of China would ask for such forgiveness as the Nazi soldier did to that Jewish prisoner. [...] There was no value put on a human's life because, quite simply, the leaders of the country placed no value on human life." What surprised Wu were random acts of kindness and humane treatment. The question for him remains, how did a few men manage to retain their humanity in the face of an inhuman (and inhumane) society.

Pran's and Wu's responses underscore the uniqueness of the Holocaust, even while they sadly confirm man's continued inhumanity toward man, expressed in its most extreme form as genocide. The dilemma Simon faced fifty years ago is unfortunately still timely. Genocide is an all too likely consequence when one group of people denies another group membership in the family of man. How then to proceed? As Nechama Tec writes in her essay, "as human beings we ought to anticipate the consequences of our actions and take personal responsibility for them." Her words hold true, whether we put ourselves in the position of Karl, the Nazi soldier, or Simon, the Jewish concentration camp inmate.

Schocken Books is to be commended for reissuing and expanding *The Sunflower*. As the many responses prove, there is no easy answer to the question, "What would I do?" The question will continue to be timely until we recognize the humanity of every individual. Until that day, *The Sunflower* should be read by every high school and college student, and every adult.

Katherine Quimby Johnson

Saul Friedländer speaking with Raul Hilberg before his lecture.

Jack Pomerantz and Lyric Wallwork Winik. **Run East: Flight from the Holocaust.** Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997. Cloth $26.95 (estimated). ISBN: 0-252-02325-0.

Personal accounts by Holocaust survivors describing their experiences as they fought against all odds to preserve their own lives and often the lives of family and friends are always of interest and often fascinating and illuminating. Some, like Eli Wiesel's *Night* or Primo Levi's *Survival in Auschwitz* have deservedly achieved classic status for their literary qualities as well as for their historical and human interest. *Fragments,* by Binjamin Wilkomirski, is one of the most recent such memoirs. We are now fast reaching a point where new accounts of survival will cease.

The ways one person was able to survive were many and varied, and depended on geographic and social factors as well as basic questions of, among others, age, sex, and character. Luck, of course, was essential. *Run East* is a gripping account of the remarkable adventure of Jack Pomerantz (or Yankel Pomeranice, as he was born during a Polish pogrom in 1918).

Pomerantz survived by escaping from Poland and out of the huge European theater of war into those eastern reaches where there was, to be sure, no direct military action or conflict, but nevertheless still clear threats and dangers. After he had initially "run east" away from the German army's advance through Poland in 1939, his path to liberation and ultimate safety took him via Brest-Litovsk into the Ukraine and thence to Saratov on the Volga, not far from Stalingrad. He worked on a Soviet collective in Saratov until the German army's presence at Stalingrad sent him still further east, namely to Tashkent. Here he worked in a military factory finishing the wooden tops of sewing machines and assuaging his constant hunger through extra revenue from pilfering and smuggling. "Capitalist activities" obliged him to flee from the NKVD first to another Uzbek collective not far from Tashkent and then to Alma-Ata. Here he met friends from his home town of Radzyń and learned that his brother Moshe was still alive. Rounded up by Soviet guards, Pomerantz was sent to Siberia. After many adventures, changes of identity, a marriage, and many close calls, Jack Pomerantz wound up in a Polish uniform, fighting the retreating Germans. After a number of years living in Austria, he emigrated to the United States.

These adventurous years are described by Lyric Wallwork Winik, who recorded hours of narration and interviews with Pomerantz. *Run East* is an effective, readable, and informative account of a remarkable story of survival. I recommend it highly.

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HOLOCAUST STUDIES
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT

Livia Bitton-Jackson. **I Have Lived a Thousand Years: Growing up in the Holocaust.** New York: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 1997. 224 p. Cloth $17.00. ISBN 0-689-81022-9.

The outline of the story is familiar: incremental loss of freedom and possessions at the hands of local authorities, in this case Hungarian; a forced move to the ghetto, transport to Auschwitz; forced labor; separation from family members; the chance encounters and risks taken that made survival possible.

Livia Bitton-Jackson, author of *Elli: Coming of Age in the Holocaust*, has retold her story, addressing it specifically to the third generation, in hopes that the young will believe in the reality of the Holocaust and prevent its recurrence. The division of this work into thirty short, titled chapters accompanied by a chronicle of family events, highlights of Holocaust chronology, and a glossary of foreign terms helps make the work accessible to its intended audience.

But brevity and structural simplicity are secondary to the effectiveness with which Bitton-Jackson, born Elli L. Friedman, draws the reader into her story. She begins by depicting herself as a typical thirteen year old, complete with a crush on an older boy, a strained relationship with her mother, and ambitions for the future. Elli is prone to the usual adolescent outbursts of extreme emotion and language: she'd rather die than have her classmates see her wearing a yellow star, and when she must give up her precious, unridden bicycle, she screams, "Let them kill me, I was not going to let them take my new bike!"

Compare that reaction with Elli's response to her father's departure for a Hungarian forced labor camp. The evening before she is too overwhelmed by emotion to express any of the thoughts that run through her mind. She asks to be woken in the morning, but wakes herself only in time to see her father's silhouette as the transport moves away from the ghetto. The resulting hysterics result from pure grief and loss: "I know what I wanted to tell my father in the moments of parting, and I was robbed of those moments." Her father died in Bergen-Belsen, two weeks before it was liberated.

The loss of her father is great, because he had been Elli's chief support in the face of her mother's criticism. It is her father who tells her "...ambition is sometimes more important than ability. You can sometimes accomplish more with ambition than ability." As her story opens, Elli's ambition is to be a poet. She saves her cherished notebook of poems from the flames that destroy all the papers in the ghetto, only to realize that in the face of the systematic degradation of her people, her few pages mean nothing. From that moment Elli's ambition is directed toward survival.

As they move from Auschwitz to the work camp Plaszow, and back to Auschwitz, the relationship between Elli and her mother changes. Each enables the other to survive, whether through encouragement, bullying, or decisive action. Elli's intense desire not to be separated from her mother leads her to take risks, including one that removes her from transport to the gas chamber and sends them both on a work detail to Augsburg, where they receive humane treatment. By the time they return to their home village of Samorin, Elli's mother accepts her as an equal. For her part, Elli has learned that there is more to mothering than cuddling and tenderness.

The language Bitton-Jackson uses is concrete and concise. She is a master in the use of telling details, from the sound of thousands shivering during *Zählappell* to the sight of red corpses in a green cornfield after their transport from Auschwitz is strafed by an American plane. Her description of Elli's reaction to the sight of menstrual blood on the legs of the girl next to her carefully blends normal emotions—embarrassment, relief that she's not the one in this position—with those peculiar to the situation—"She might even get shot for bleeding. Does menstruation constitute sabotage?" This precision of language gives Elli's story immediacy and is the source of its power.

The spare language precisely describes life in the camps, from unexpected meetings with cousins, and the reunion with her brother in Mühldorf/Waldlager, to the casual or deliberate brutality of the guards, and the small acts of kindness on the part of strangers (a machinist in Augsburg slips her scraps of blank paper for her writing).

Occasional lapses into the abstract, such as the description of the new arrivals to Auschwitz as "an army of robots animated by the hysterics of survival," are noticeable for their rarity. The language is even almost adequate to convey the incomprehensibility of the Holocaust. Older inmates tell the new arrivals that the smoke comes from burning bodies. Undergoing punishment, Elli watches the children of Lodz march in the direction of the crematoria. But it is only after she returns to Samorin with her mother and brother that she realizes the magnitude of the destruction. Of Samorin's five hundred Jews, thirty-two youths and four adults returned. After the family sits shiva for her father, she writes, "Now we know all the others are not coming home either."

The story only falters at the end, as Elli's description of her arrival in America with her mother and brother dissolves into cliches. But these are minor quibbles about an otherwise masterful work.

The publisher recommends this book for ages 12 and up. I'm not sure how many twelve-year-olds I would give this book to, but I highly recommend it for anyone high school age or above. Elli's story is an unforgettable contribution to the literature of the Holocaust for young people.

Katherine Quimby Johnson

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