

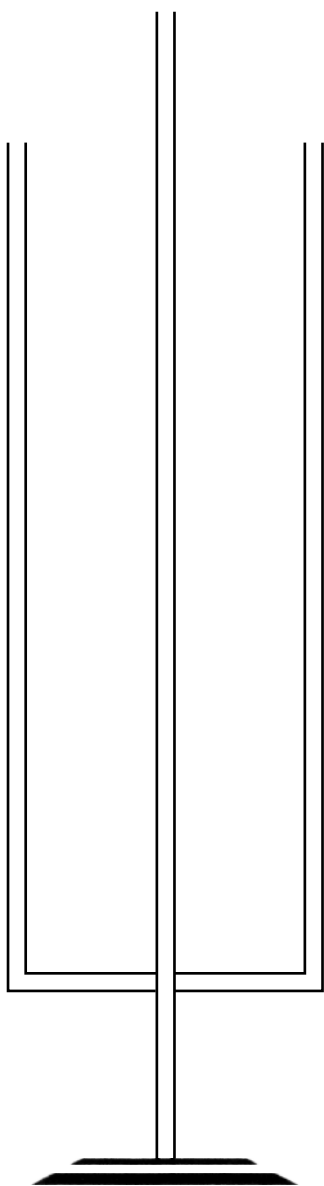
AN INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL FOR HOLOCAUST EDUCATORS • A ROTHMAN FOUNDATION PUBLICATION

PRISM

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In memory of
Henry I. Rothman ז"ל
and
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לחמו מלחמות ה'
*"who lived and fought
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PRISM

AN INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL
FOR HOLOCAUST EDUCATORS

PRISM: An Interdisciplinary Journal for Holocaust Educators is a publication of the Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration at Yeshiva University. It is made possible by a generous grant from the Henry, Bertha, and Edward Rothman Foundation. At present, single issues are complimentary. Multiple copies for classroom use are available at \$10 per copy. Contact Emily Amie Witty at prism@yu.edu to purchase copies.

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Letters to the editors are welcomed.

The content of *PRISM* reflects the opinions of the authors and not necessarily those of the Azrieli Graduate School and Yeshiva University.

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Spring 2010
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A Word from the Editors

“When the historian of the future assembles the black record of our days, he will find two things unbelievable: first, the crime itself; and second, the reaction of the world to that crime” (Weizmann, 1943).



Chaim Weizmann's outraged prediction of March 1, 1943, resonates with the same power and truth today nowhere more strongly than in our classrooms. Students grapple with the enormity of the crimes of the perpetrators; even more so, they struggle to understand the silence of the world in the face of those crimes. Our second issue of *PRISM* is offered with the hope that it will help students examine and find meaning in the complex story of those who remained bystanders during the Holocaust.

Some bystanders made themselves invisible, as our haunting cover painting by the French artist Francine Mayran suggests. Others watched in plain sight, as illustrated by the original works of Israeli printmaker Josh Freedman and American painter Mina Cohen; by the plaintive open letter written by Azrieli student Effie Kleinberg; by the remarkable 1938 narrative “Prelude” by Albert Halper; and by the nuanced and powerful poetry of John Guzlowski, Charles Adès Fishman, William Heyen, and Myra Sklarew. Still other bystander stories are more complex, as Mordecai Paldiel and Efraim Zuroff explain in historically grounded essays that help us examine the bystanders, from new and different perspectives. Paldiel notes that the vast majority of rescuers were first bystanders and posits that certain other neutral bystanders might have also responded favorably if they had been in a position to do so. His thesis is underscored by the luminous poetry of Charles Adès Fishman and by Eric A. Goldman's review of the classroom-friendly film *Pigeon*. Zuroff raises a unique question evoked by his work with *Operation: Last Chance*: Does a perpetrator also become a bystander when he fails to give information today about other perpetrators still living?

This issue offers a wealth of teaching opportunities and differentiated learning. Jud Newborn introduces the story of “The White Rose” with accompanying art by Tennessee students Rose Hatmaker and Jennifer Utz. The poetry of Marjorie Agosín, Laure-Anne Bosselaar, David B. Axelrod, and Liliane Richman urges students to confront and examine the multiple and complex questions evoked by this subject. Would it have been possible to take in the Jews? How do children of bystanders come to terms with their parents' inaction? What effect does such knowledge of passive complicity have on family relationships and on the children's perceptions of themselves? How could the world itself have witnessed these crimes and continued on its natural course? Only the vision and voices of poets can elevate these philosophical questions to an art form and engage the emotions of our students as well as their intellect. Aden Bar-Tura's analysis of “Prelude” and Emily Amie Witty's accompanying teaching guide provide in-depth and varied interpretation and instruction. In three compact essays, Carson Phillips examines the Evian Conference, unpacks the symbolism of paintings by the little-known anti-bystander artist Willy Fick, and shares his hands-on, immediately useful classroom unit of study based on Pnina Rosenberg's detailed analysis of various Berlin sculptures.

Of further interest, educators Patrick Connelly, Steven McMichael, Rochelle Millen, and Daniel Kroll share their views on teaching this subject in Catholic, Lutheran, and Jewish high schools and universities, while Rona Novick provides grounding in research on bystanding and Greg Wegner examines the behavior of elementary school teachers during the Third Reich. Menachem Z. Rosensaft, in three intimate reflections on bystanders, shares, in prose and poetry, his parents' experiences and his responses to them. Moshe Sokolow offers a complex and scholarly examination of Jewish law and tradition on the question of the obligation to intervene; David Engel reviews a new history text by Yitzchak Mais and Michael Berenbaum; and the scattered epigraphs provide creative opportunities for students' research and writing.

The rich and thoughtful submissions herein make this issue a must-read in the classroom. We encourage you to request multiple copies for your students at prism@yu.edu; bulk rates are available.

In our fall 2009 premiere issue, we wrote that we began this journal to address an expressed need from high school, college, and university educators for rigorous, academic, engaging, and classroom-useful materials that raised essential questions, that were grounded in sound history, psychology, and pedagogy, and that were appropriate for a wide variety of disciplines. With pride and humility, we announce that we apparently met this need; our journal has been requested and lauded by readers in 49 states, Puerto Rico, and 36 countries.

KAREN SHAWN, PH.D., is visiting associate professor of Jewish education at the Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration of Yeshiva University and senior fellow of Azrieli's Institute for University-School Partnership. A former public school English teacher, she was middle school assistant principal for secular studies of the Moriah School, a Jewish day school in New Jersey. She taught for a decade at the Yad Vashem Summer Institute for Educators from Abroad and served as the educational consultant for the American Friends of the Ghetto Fighters' House. The founder of the Holocaust Educators' Consortium, an international, interreligious Community of Practice, she has spoken and written extensively on Holocaust education. The author of the widely-used text *The End of Innocence: Anne Frank and the Holocaust* (1992, NY; ADL), her most recent edited volumes are an anthology of Holocaust narratives and an accompanying teacher's guide titled *The Call of Memory: Learning about the Holocaust Through Narrative* (Shawn & Goldfrad, 2008, Teaneck, NJ: Ben Yehuda Press). ■

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I have always been troubled by discussion of "the bystander." After all, who among us has not been a bystander in some way, at some time? I am certain each reader can highlight a personal example. The subject is complicated, complex, and multifaceted. For me, this issue of *PRISM* brings to light some of the conundrums inherent in grappling with understanding the bystander and its meaning for educators today. Theological, historical, sociological, psychological, political, educational, and practical issues are directly and indirectly raised in the fascinating essays and narratives as well as in the art, poetry, and documentary photographs that grace these pages. Notwithstanding the complexity of the issue, I would like to share a personal response. In no way do I suggest that this is the only or best way of responding; it is only my way. I offer it so that you, too, can reflect on your response to the subject explored in this issue of our journal.

I don't want to be a bystander, but I realize it is virtually impossible to stand up and respond to every crisis or even intractable personal encounter. Study of the Holocaust has taught me, above, perhaps, all else, that, in my small way, researching, writing, and teaching about this cataclysmic event in Jewish history is my moral obligation. I feel compelled to teach about the *Shoah* and doing so, at least to my mind, is a way I take action.

When I teach about this event, I, like so many other educators, utilize literature. The importance of integrating literary voice and historical context is a critical aspect of Holocaust education and of this journal. In planning for a workshop a number of years ago, I came across an article titled "I Don't Want to be a Bystander" in the *English Journal* (Meisel, 1982), a piece that proved to be an excellent resource. It illustrates how a high school teacher in New York City helped her students not only develop an understanding of Holocaust literature, but also become moved, as individuals, to "contribute to a more humane world" (p. 40). As these students read Elie Wiesel's (1982) *Night* and other literary works, and viewed related videos in a nine-week unit of study, they turned their attention to the atrocities that had befallen the Cambodians and Vietnamese boat people at that time and were inspired to take action; they initiated a letter campaign. One student explained, "I don't want my kids to say, 'What did *you* do, Mommy?' I don't want to be a bystander." Their teacher concludes: "The fact that any one of them is involved with today's moral issues is proof enough that the unit and the literature worked" (p. 44).

Over the past decade and a half, I have tried to apply the expertise I have developed to teach about the Holocaust to other teachers. I hope that these educators can and will teach others about this period in world and Jewish history and, perhaps, relate the Holocaust to the universality of human suffering and oppression. Teaching and writing about the Holocaust has become, for me, a moral and personal imperative. It is my way of honoring my father, a Holocaust survivor, and those others, living and dead, whose lives were forever defined by this event.

The issue of bystanding also has religious significance. Most fundamentally, I think we are obligated to adhere to the biblical injunction of *Zachor*: to remember. One of the 613 commandments that observant Jews follow is stated in Deuteronomy

25:17-19: "Remember what Amalek did unto you on the way, as you came out of Egypt. ... Do not forget it." The eminent scholar Rabbi Haym Soloveitchik of Brisk teaches that this commandment applies not only to the nation of Amalek, which cannot be definitely identified today with a group of people, but also equally well to any nation that follows in Amalek's footsteps. Nazi cruelty and oppression against Jews certainly qualify as Amalek-like and thus invoke the admonition to "remember." Parenthetically, the injunction to "remember" is stronger than to just merely "not forget." This is true in the sense that the former implies a requirement to act, not merely to recall. Those who "remember" are involved in activities such as planning and attending commemorations, establishing memorials, writing articles/books, making movies, providing oral testimonies, standing up in protest to deniers, decrying atrocities and injustices from all quarters among all people, and teaching about oppression and the moral obligation to act.

Although the Holocaust is now a central part of American awareness, it wasn't always so, and no guarantees can be proffered that ensure future interest. Remaining vigilant and arousing awareness of the Holocaust are all the more necessary. Public outrage and revulsion at the Holocaust are potent weapons in preventing its recurrence. I believe that NATO's reaction to events in Kosovo a number of years ago was possible and ultimately successful because we "remembered." Certainly, we've not always been successful, especially in recent years. Nonetheless, remembering and working to act against injustices are our collective moral imperatives. ■

JEFFREY GLANZ, ED.D., holds the Raine and Stanley Silverstein Chair in Professional Ethics and Values in the Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration at Yeshiva University, where he is a full professor and senior fellow of the Institute for University-School Partnership. Dr. Glanz served as director of the Holocaust Resource Center at Kean University, NJ, and as education editor for the Anti-Defamation League's publication *Dimensions: A Journal of Holocaust Studies*. His works on Holocaust education have appeared in journals such as *The History Teacher*, the *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision*, *Multicultural Education*, and the *Phi Delta Kappan*. His book, *Holocaust Handbook for Teachers: Materials and Strategies for Grades 5–12*, was the principal text in "Teaching the Holocaust," a state-wide in-service course for educators. He and Karen Shawn coordinate The David and Fela Shapell Family Foundation Institute on the Shoah U'Gevurah at Yeshiva University.

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We are proud and honored to present on our covers a painting by the internationally acclaimed French artist Francine Mayran. Our art editor, Pnina Rosenberg, offers an analysis and historical contextualization of this haunting work.

Pnina Rosenberg

About the Cover Painting “L’Exode”: The Invisible Bystanders

all with a common destiny
losing what is dear
leaving behind one’s life
exodus of men,
women, children
in a grey and cold place
without help, without future ...
our eyes are witness
to the unacceptable
to the unbearable
men, women
even children
denounced, deported
carried away to stations
plotted horror
calculated extermination
and no one says a word

FRANCINE MAYRAN (2008), from the exhibition *Passive Witnesses, Guilty Witnesses?* (p. 48)

In June 2008 the artist and psychiatrist Francine Mayran mounted the exhibition *Passive Witnesses, Guilty Witnesses?* at the Regional Council of Alsace, France. In texts that accompany the paintings, the artist comments:

Today, we are hooked to our screens, flooded with information and images coming from all corners of the world: the beating of monks in Burma, the crushed in Tibet, the crimes of Kosovo, the beheaded Tutsis, all the genocides of the world. ... The Iraqis killed in a daily bloodbath of bombings, the deaths in the Twin Towers. ... Some of us remain unaffected, as though it is all fiction. Others are shocked. Either way, life continues, unchanged.

The 28 oil paintings were divided into four sections: “The Atmosphere of the Tragedy”; “The Call to Us, the Witnesses”; “Questioning Humanity”; and “To Pass On.” All raise questions about witnesses and their obligations, unmet during the Holocaust, to speak out against injustice and genocide. Mayran asks, “How can we passively accept these images while we ourselves are direct witnesses?” and continues:

We can’t turn our backs in indifference and resume our lives as before, as though nothing has happened, as though the only way to survive these abhorrent crimes is to erase these lives, erase these deaths. The denial of these crimes, their trivialization is itself part of the violence. It is this indifference, this silence that permitted the Holocaust. How to shake humanity from its trance, from becoming accustomed to and accepting of this violence? (p. 45)

Our cover painting was chosen from the exhibit segment “The Call to Us, the Witnesses.” Titled “L’Exode” (“The Exodus”), it is a large, striking diptych (80 x 200 cm.) portraying in expressive brush strokes a panoramic scene of deportation: a long line of people pacing toward an unseen, unknown destination. The composition is skillfully divided into two parts that together create the whole. The procession of deportees, starting in the left panel of the diptych (here, our front cover), shows a small group of normal, almost-recognizable persons. This group of men and women are depicted in detail; they are properly, even elegantly, dressed with suits, coats, and hats; two hold small suitcases. Yet something is disturbing and grim: Although each figure is clearly defined, the faces are blank and unrecognizable; the men seem to be carrying or wearing *tallesim* (Jewish prayer shawls). In the right panel of the diptych (here, our back cover and inside front and back covers), which continues and completes the left one, the deportees become an anonymous mass, an endless line beyond the borders of the painting. Even this large format cannot depict its entirety; only the limits of the can-

vas dictate an artificial end to this tragic convoy.

Mayran's work reflects a literal as well as metaphoric truth. "I paint only from archival photographs," she explains, "because I want my art to reflect the truth, to be an authentic representation of what happened.¹ I was not there; I cannot imagine it. I must look at photographs for the truth" (2009b, private conversation).

The artistic representation of the deportees' transformation in "*L'Exode*" parallels the Nazi objectives: turning the individual, ordinary, decent Jew into a part of an anonymous mass of non-persons whose only identity will become a serial number, whose destination will be final. This process is hinted at by the portrayal of the faceless persons and gradually progresses and increases all along the wretched human line.

These pathetic souls gradually became invisible: They are depicted in a void—without landscape, urban scenery, or people who witnessed the dehumanization of their neighbors, colleagues, friends. It is as if the procession of uprooted people took place in no-man's land and not in populated cities and villages. Those ordinary citizens, who were part of the society and resembled their neighbors, are now ignored and abandoned by them: Nobody is there to protest, to stand up against what is happening; virtually all turn a blind eye.

The front line is composed of a woman and three men, rendered as if they are going for a walk, posed for a brief moment for the invisible but palpably present audience of onlookers. The bystanders are not literally revealed by the artist; instead, they are evoked by the deportees' gaze. They are (re)created by their absence, their roaring silence, and their deliberate ignorance. Keeping them unseen, the artist condemns them for their appalling indifference. "My work is a revolt," she writes,

criying out to the humanity in us all. It is an appeal for hope: in humankind, in a world that learns from its past so that never, ever again we are witness to such a crime. In the 21st century, if calls are not raised and people do not become indignant and outraged, genocide will be nothing more than banal. The brutality that is a latent part of us could once again devour the world. (Mayran, 2009 a, p. 63)

Another intriguing absence in this group are the children. Does this mean they were exempt from deportation? No, on the contrary: It is estimated that one and a half million children were murdered in the Holocaust. The French context of the Shoah exposes yet another chapter in this Machiavellian, cynical, and diabolical story. Once the German occupiers decided to deport the Jews from France to the East, they did not include children. It was not for any humanitarian reason, of course; it was, rather, that includ-

ing children would have revealed to the French community that the deported Jews were not being sent to labor camps, as the Germans had proclaimed. However, the French President during those years, Pierre Laval, insisted on including children under the age of 16 years in the one-way convoys. His aim was to ensure that "not a single one [Jewish child] is to remain in France" (Marrus & Paxton, 1981, p. 266) and to also pacify public opinion, as people were upset at the dreadful scenes of parents being separated from their offspring.²

Mayran's omission of children from this scene is precisely what evokes their presence. Where are the children? What was their fate? The artist presents the annihilation of the then-present generation together with the extinction of the future generation. Hence, the painting creates an ironic and tragic reversal of the biblical exodus. In the Bible, the current generation ("*Dor Ha'midbar*," the Generation in the Wilderness) of the people of Israel were banned from reaching their destiny, the Promised Land, and doomed to die in the desert due to their misconduct. Only the new generation—those who did not sin—were to inherit their land. The Holocaust "exodus," however, implies clearly that both present and future generations are doomed to die—generations whose only sin was being Jewish.

With equally tragic irony, "*L'Exode*" is also the term given to the flight southward of eight to 10 million French citizens and soldiers during the spring and summer of 1940, following the defeat of France and the advance of the German invasion from the north.³ Uprooted, disoriented men and women, children and the aged, crowded the railways and roads, which were frequently under bombing attacks. They went by car until they ran out of gasoline, then by bicycle, and eventually by foot, dragging goods and mattresses piled on carts and wheelbarrows. It was the biggest single movement of population in Europe since the Dark Ages. After the armistice and the subsequent division of France into the Occupied and the Non-Occupied zones by the Demarcation Line, many of the French refugees regained their homes. Yet two thirds of the Jews, about 70,000, who took part in this exodus could not return due to decrees banning them from crossing the Demarcation Line. Many of those displaced Jews were later interned in French camps from where they were deported to Auschwitz and other Eastern European death camps.

Mayran's educational objective, "to pass on the memory, to bear witness to the witnesses, to become a link in the chain of generations" (2008, p. 9) expressed in her exhibitions and in this painting, correlates to the biblical dictate, "You shall tell your children" (Exodus, 13:8), referring to the remembrance of the exodus from Egypt. To relate the story from one generation to the next so that its protagonists will be kept alive through our memory is a core aspect of Jewish tradition and heritage. The 1940 Exodus was, for many Jews

who had sought refuge in France, only a “dress rehearsal” for their final exodus—deportation and murder. This annihilation was facilitated by a world that preferred to remain ignorant, an accusation so expressively manifested in Mayran’s “*L’Exode*.” The painting makes witnesses of us all. ■

FRANCINE MAYRAN is a psychiatrist, painter, and sculptor. A member of Alsace [France] Independent Artists Association (AIAA), she expresses herself through both color and material with canvases and ceramic sculpture. Her exhibits include *Empreintes du passé, transmissions de mémoire (Prints of the Past, Transmissions of Memory)* at the Alsace-Moselle Memorial in Schirmeck (2010) and *La Shoah et son ombre (The Shoah and its Shadow)* at Karlsruhe (Germany) and at the Global Peace Center in Verdun (2010). Other exhibits are scheduled at the Center of Tolerance Gaon de Vilna in Vilnius and at the Fort of Breendonk in Belgium (2011). The book *La Shoah et son ombre (The Shoah and its Shadow)*, including 70 oil paintings and French poem/texts (translated into both English and German), is available in print by the artist (francine.mayran@gmail.com). To contact the artist, visit her Web site at www.fmayran.com or e-mail francine.mayran@gmail.com

PNINA ROSENBERG, art historian, historian, and art editor of *PRISM*, is a lecturer in the Technion, Israel Institute of Technology; the Haifa University Department of Museology; and the Oranim Academic College, focusing on Jewish art and the memory and legacy of the Holocaust. She has presented papers and published articles and exhibition catalogues on aspects of Holocaust art, contributed to the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* and to *Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia*, and, with Ort World, has created a Web site, “Learning about the Holocaust through Art.” On the editorial board of the *Journal of War and Culture Studies*, University of Westminster, London, and a board member of IC MEMO—International Committee of Memorial Museums (Unesco), she is also a referee in the Righteous among the Nations committee of Yad Vashem. To contact the author, e-mail pninarose@gmail.com

NOTES

1. To see the archival photograph on which the cover painting is based, visit the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) photo archives at <http://www.ushmm.org/research/collections/photo/> and search for photograph number 34082.
2. For more information, see Marrus and Paxton (1981, pp. 263-269).
3. The 1940 Exodus is documented in most publications that deal with France during World War II. It has also been richly portrayed in literature and films. Among the recent publications is Hanna Diamond’s (2007) *Fleeing Hitler: France 1940*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

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"Would it have been possible to take in the Jews?" the poet Marjorie Agosin asks, in the poem that begins our exploration of the bystander during the Holocaust. "It was possible / to accuse / to denounce / to banish," she charges. "Was it possible to be human?"

Marjorie Agosin

*[Would it have been possible
to take in the Jews]*

Would it have been possible to take in the Jews,
the squalid Gypsies?
Was it possible to whisper in their blackened ears
that even in Amsterdam torn asunder
someone loved them,
would rescue them from the chill of death?
Wasn't it possible to take in all the sick
who were waiting for misfortune's trains?
Was it possible to approach with an open heart
the destitute Jewish children?
Was it possible to be human?
Though, yes, it was possible
to accuse,
to denounce,
to banish,
to terrorize the sick, the crippled,
to destroy shops,
smashing windows, fire-bombing.
It was possible
to force them to undress,
with the prophecy of a Star tattooed
on their breasts.

Translated from the Spanish by Richard Schaaf

MARJORIE AGOSIN is the author of almost 40 books, including *At the Threshold of Memory: Selected & New Poems* (White Pine Press, 2003), and she has been honored by the government of Chile with the Gabriella Mistral Medal of Honor for lifetime achievement. Currently, she is the Luella Lameer Slain Professor of Latin American Studies at Wellesley. To contact the poet, e-mail magosin@wellesley.edu

We have chosen the short story "Prelude" for this issue of *PRISM* because it is eminently teachable to students in grades eight through university. It is memorable; it is remarkable in its prescience; and, in its presentation of the bystanders who look on as an innocent Jewish family is attacked by a gang of thugs in 1938 Chicago, it offers an unusual view of the controlling idea of our current theme: "If genocide is to be prevented in the future, we must understand how it happened in the past ... not only in terms of the killers and the killed but also of the bystanders" (Morse, 1967, p. 8).

Albert Halper

Prelude

I was coming home from school, carrying my books by a strap, when I passed Gavin's poolroom and saw the big guys hanging around. They were standing in front near the windows, looking across the street. Gavin's has a kind of thick window curtain up to eye level, so all I saw was their heads. The guys were looking at Mrs. Oliver, who lately has started to get talked about. Standing in her window across the street, Mrs. Oliver was doing her nails. Her nice red hair was hanging loose down her back. She certainly is a nice-looking woman. She comes to my father's newspaper stand on the corner and buys five or six movie magazines a week, also the afternoon papers.

When I passed the poolroom, one or two guys came out.

"Hey, Ike, how's your good-looking sister?" they called, but I didn't turn around. The guys are eighteen or nineteen and haven't ever had a job in their life. "What they need is work," my father is always saying when they bother him too much. "They're not bad; they get that way because there's nothing to do," and he tries to explain the meanness of their ways. But I can't see it like my father. I hate those fellas and I hope every one of them dies under a truck. Every time I come home from school past Lake Street they jab me, and every time my sister Syl comes along they say things. So when one of them, Fred Gooley, calls, "Hey, Ike, how's your sister?" I don't answer. Besides, Ike isn't my name anyway. It's Harry.

I passed along the sidewalk, keeping close to the curb. Someone threw half an apple but it went over my head. When I went a little farther, someone threw a stone. It hit me in the back of the leg and stung me, but it didn't hurt much. I kept a little

toward the middle of the sidewalk because I saw a woman coming the other way and I knew they wouldn't throw.

I came up to the newsstand and put my school books inside.

"Well, Pa," I said, "you can go to Florida now." So my Pa went to "Florida," that is, a chair near the radiator that Nick Pappas lets him use in his restaurant. He has to use Nick's place because our own flat is too far away, almost a quarter-mile off.

I stood around, putting the papers on the stand and making a few sales. The first ten minutes after coming home from school and taking care of the newsstand always excites me. Maybe it's the traffic. The trucks and cars pound along like anything and of course there's the Elevated right up above you, which thunders to beat the band. We have our newsstand right up against a big El post and the stand is a kind of cabin which you enter from the side. But we hardly use it, only in the late morning and around two p.m., when business isn't very rushing. Customers like to see you stand outside over the papers ready for business and not hidden inside where they can't get a look at you at all. Besides, you have to poke your head out and stretch your arm to get the pennies and kids can swipe magazines from the sides, if you don't watch. So we most always stand outside the newsstand, my father, and me, and my sister. Anyhow, I like it. I like everything about selling papers for my father. The fresh air gets me and I like to talk to customers and see the rush when people are let out from work. And the way the news trucks bring all the new editions so we can see the latest headlines, like a bank got held up on the South Side on Sixty-third Street, or the Cubs are

winning their tenth straight and have a good chance to cop the pennant, is exciting.

The only thing I don't like is those guys from Gavin's. But since my father went to the police station to complain, they don't come around so often. My father went to the station a month ago and said the gang was bothering him, and Mr. Fenway, he's the desk sergeant there, said, "Don't worry any more about it, Mr. Silverstein, we'll take care of it. You're a respectable citizen and taxpayer and you're entitled to protection. We'll take care of it." And the next day they sent over a patrolman who stood around almost two hours. The gang from Gavin's saw him and started to go away, but the cop hollered, "Now listen, don't bother this old fella. If you bother him any, I'll have to run some of you in."

And then one of the guys recognized that the cop was Butch, Fred Gooley's cousin. "Listen who's talkin'!" he yells back. "Hey, Fred, they got your cousin Butch takin' care of the Yid." They said a lot of other things until the cop got mad and started after them. They ran faster than lightning, separating into alleys. The cop came back empty-handed and said to my father, "It'll blow over, Mr. Silverstein; they won't give you any more trouble." Then he went up the street, turning into Steuben's bar.

I am standing there hearing the traffic and thinking it over when my little fat old man comes out from Nick's looking like he liked the warm air in Nick's place. My old man's cheeks looked rosy, but his cheeks are that way from high blood pressure and not from good health. "Well, colonel," he says smiling, "I am back on the job." So we stand around, the two of us, taking care of the trade. I hand out change snappy and say thank you after each sale. My old man starts to stamp around in a little while and, though he says nothing, I know he's got pains in his legs again. I look at the weather forecast in all the papers and some of them say flurries of snow and the rest of them say just snow.

"Well, Pa," I tell my old man, "maybe I can go skating tomorrow if it gets cold again."

Then I see my sister coming from high school carrying her briefcase and heading this way. Why the heck doesn't she cross over so she won't have to pass the poolroom, I say to myself; why don't she walk on the other side of the street? But that's not like Sylvia; she's a girl with a hot temper, and when she thinks she is right, you can't tell her a thing. I knew she wouldn't cross the street and then cross back, because

according to her, why, that's giving in. That's telling those hoodlums that you're afraid of their guts. So she doesn't cross over but walks straight on. When she comes by the pool hall, two guys come out and say something to her. She just holds herself tight and goes right on past them both. When she finally comes up, she gives me a poke in the side.

"Hello, you mickey mouse, what mark did you get in your algebra exam?" I told her I got an A, but the truth is I got a C.

"I'll check up on you later," she says to me. "Pa, if he's lying to us we'll fine him ten years!"

My father started to smile and said, "No, Harry is a good boy, two years is enough."

So we stand around kidding and pretty soon, because the wind is coming so sharp up the street, my old man has to "go to Florida" for a while once more. He went into Nick's for some "sunshine," he said, but me and Syl could tell he had the pains again. Anyway, when he was gone we didn't say anything for a while. Then Hartman's furniture factory, which lately has been checking out early, let out, and we were busy making sales to the men. They came up the sidewalk, a couple of hundred, all anxious to get home, so we had to work snappy. But Syl is a fast worker, faster than me, and we took care of the rush all right. Then we stood waiting for the next rush from the Hillman's cocoa factory up the block to start.

We were standing around when something hit me in the head, a half of a rotten apple. It hurt a little. I turned quick but didn't see anybody, but Syl started yelling. She was pointing to a big El post across the street behind which a guy was hiding.

"Come on, show your face," my sister was saying. "Come on, you hero, show your yellow face!" But the guy sneaked away, keeping the post between. Syl turned to me and her face was boiling. "The rats! It's not enough with all the trouble over in Europe; they have to start it here."

Just then our old man came out of Nick's and when he saw Syl's face he asked what was the matter.

"Nothing," she says. "Nothing, I'm just thinking."

But my old man saw the half of a rotten apple on the sidewalk, and at first he didn't say anything but I could see he was worried.

"We just have to stand it," he said, like he was speaking to himself, "we just have to stand it. If we give up the newsstand where else can we go?"

"Why do we have to stand it?" I exploded, almost yelling. "Why do we—"

But Mrs. Oliver just then came up to the stand, so I had to wait on her. Besides, she's a good customer and there's more profit on two or three magazines than from a dozen papers.

"I'll have a copy of *Film Fan*, a copy of *Breezy Stories*, and a copy of *Movie Stars on Parade*," she says. I go and reach for the copies.

"Harry is a nice boy," Mrs. Oliver told my father, patting my arm. "I'm very fond of him."

"Yes, he's not bad," my father answered, smiling. "Only he has a hot temper once in a while."

But who wouldn't have one, that's what I wanted to say! Who wouldn't? Here we stand around minding our own business and the guys won't let us alone. I tell you sometimes it almost drives me crazy. We don't hurt anybody and we're trying to make a living, but they're always picking on us and won't let us alone. It's been going on for a couple of years now, and though my old man says it'll pass with the hard times, I know he's worried because he doesn't believe what he says.

And another thing, what did he mean when he said something two days ago when the fellas from Gavin's passed by and threw a stone at the stand? What did he mean, that's what I wanted to know. Gooley had a paper rolled up with some headlines about Europe on it and he wiggled it at us and my father looked scared. When they were gone my father said something to me, which I been thinking and thinking about. My Pa said we got to watch our step extra careful now because there's no other place besides this country where we can go. We've always been picked on, he said, but we're up against the last wall now, he told me, and we got to be calm because if they start going after us here, there's no other place where we can go. I been thinking and thinking about that, especially the part about the wall. When he said that, his voice sounded funny and I felt like our newsstand was a kind of island and if that went, we'd be under the waves.

"Harry, what are you thinking of?" Mrs. Oliver asked me. "Don't I get any change?" She was laughing.

And then I came down from the clouds and found she had given me two quarters. I gave her a nickel change. She laughed again. "When he looks moody and kind of sore like that, Mr. Silverstein, I think he's cute."

My old man crinkled up his eyes and smiled. "Who can say, Mrs. Oliver? He should only grow up to be a nice young man and a good citizen and a credit to his country. That's all I want."

"I'm sure Harry will." Mrs. Oliver answered,

then talked to Syl a while and admired Syl's new sweater and was about to go away. But another half of a rotten apple came over and splashed against the stand. Some of it splashed against my old man's coat sleeve. Mrs. Oliver turned around and got mad.

"Now you boys leave Mr. Silverstein alone! You've been pestering him long enough! He's a good American citizen who doesn't hurt anybody! You leave him alone!"

"Yah!" yelled Gooley, who ducked behind an El post with two other guys. "Yah! Sez you!"

"You leave him alone!" hollered Mrs. Oliver.

"Don't pay any attention to them," Syl told Mrs. Oliver. "They think they're heroes, but to most people they're just yellow rats."

I could tell by my old man's eyes that he was nervous and wanted to smooth things over, but Syl didn't give him a chance. When she gets started and knows she's in the right, not even the Governor of the State could make her keep quiet.

"Don't pay any attention to them," she said in a cutting voice while my old man looked anxious. "When men hide behind Elevated posts and throw rotten apples at women, you know they're not men but just things that wear pants."

Every word cut like a knife and the guys ducked away. If I or my father would have said it, we would have been nailed with some rotten fruit, but the way Syl has of getting back at those guys makes them feel like yellow dogs. I guess that's why they respect her even though they hate her.

Mrs. Oliver took Syl's side and was about to say something more when Hillman's cocoa factory up the block let out and the men started coming up the street. The 4:45 rush was on and we didn't have time for anything, so Mrs. Oliver left, saying she'd be back when the blue-streak edition of the News would arrive. Me and Syl were busy handing out the papers and making change.

Then the *Times* truck, which was a little late, roared up and dropped a load we were waiting for. I cut the strings and stacked the papers and when my father came over and read the first page, he suddenly looked scared. In his eyes there was that hunted look I had noticed a couple of days ago. I started to look at the first page of the paper while my old man didn't say a word. Nick came to the window and lit his new neon light and waved to us. Then the light started flashing on and off, flashing on the new headlines. It was all about Austria and

how people were fleeing toward the borders and trying to get out of the country before it was too late. My old man grew sick and looked kind of funny and just stood there.

In a little while it was after five and Syl had to go home and make supper.

"I'll be back in an hour," she told me. "Then Pa can go home and rest a bit and me and you can take care of the stand." I said all right.

After she was gone, it seemed kind of lonesome. I couldn't stop thinking about what my father had said about this being our last wall. It got me feeling funny and I didn't want to read the papers any more. I stood there feeling queer, like me and my old man were standing on a little island and the waves were coming up. There was still a lot of traffic and a few people came up for papers, but from my old man's face I could tell he felt the same as me.

But pretty soon some more editions began coming and we had to check and stack them up. More men came out from factories on Walnut Street and we were busy making sales. It got colder than ever and my old man began to stamp again.

"Go into Nick's, Pa," I told him. "I can handle it out here." But he wouldn't do it because just then another factory let out and we were swamped for a while.

"Hi, there, Silverstein," some of the men called to him, "what's the latest news, you king of the press?" They took the papers, kidding him, and hurried up the stairs to the Elevated, reading all about Austria and going home to eat. My father kept staring at the headlines and couldn't take his eyes off the print where it said that soldiers were pouring across the border and mobs were robbing people they hated and spitting on them and making them go down on their hands and knees to scrub the streets. My old man's eyes grew small, like he had the toothache and he shook his head like he was sick.

"Pa, go into Nick's," I told him. He just stood there, sick over what he read.

Then the guys from Gavin's poolroom began passing the stand on their way home to supper after a day of just killing time. At first they looked as if they wouldn't bother us. One or two of them said something mean to us, but my old man and me didn't answer. If you don't answer hoodlums, my father once told me, sometimes they let you alone.

But then it started. The guys who passed by came back and one of them said: "Let's have a little

fun with the Yids." That's how it began. A couple of them took some magazines from the rack and said they wanted to buy a copy and started reading.

In a flash I realized it was all planned out. My father looked kind of worried but stood quiet. There were about eight or nine of them, all big boys around eighteen and nineteen, and for the first time I got scared. It was just after six o'clock and they had picked a time when the newspaper trucks had delivered the fivestar and when all the factories had let out their help and there weren't many people about. Finally one of them smiled at Gooley and said, "Well, this physical culture magazine is mighty instructive, but don't you think we ought to have some of the exercises demonstrated?" Gooley answered, "Sure, why not?"

So the first fella pointed to some pictures in the magazine and wanted me to squat on the sidewalk and do the first exercise. I wouldn't do it. My father put his hand on the fella's arm and said, "Please, please." But the guy pushed my father's hand away.

"We're interested in your son, not you. Go on, squat."

"I won't," I told him.

"Go on," he said. "Do the first exercise so that the boys can learn how to keep fit."

"I won't," I said.

"Go on," he said, "do it."

"I won't."

Then he came over to me smiling, but his face looked nasty.

"Do it. Do it if you know what's good for you."

"Please, boys," said my Pa. "Please go home and eat and don't make trouble. I don't want to have to call the policeman—"

But before I knew it someone got behind me and tripped me so that I fell on one knee. Then another of them pushed me, trying to make me squat. I shoved someone, and then someone hit me, and then I heard someone trying to make them stop. While they held me down on the sidewalk I wiggled and looked up. Mrs. Oliver, who had come for the blue-flash edition, was bawling them out.

"You let him alone! You tramps, you hoodlums, you let him alone!" She came over and tried to help me, but they pushed her away. Then Mrs. Oliver began to yell as two guys twisted my arm and told me to squat.

By this time a few people were passing and Mrs. Oliver called at them to interfere. But the gang were big fellows and there were eight or nine of them,

and the people were afraid.

Then while they had me down on the sidewalk Syl came running up the street.

When she saw what was happening, she began kicking them and yelling, trying to make them let me up. But they didn't pay any attention to her, merely pushing her away.

"Please," my Pa kept saying. "Please let him up; he didn't hurt you. I don't want to call the police—"

Then Syl turned to the people who were watching and yelled at them.

"Why don't you help us? What are you standing there for?" But none of them moved.

Then Syl began to scream: "Listen, why don't you help us? Why don't you make them stop picking on us? We're human beings the same as you!"

But the people just stood there afraid to do a thing. Then while a few guys held me, Gooley and about four others went for the stand, turning it over and musing and stamping on all the newspapers they could find. Syl started to scratch them, so they hit her, then I broke away to help her, and then they started socking me too. My father tried to reach me, but three guys kept him away. Four guys got me down and started kicking me, and all the time my father was begging them to let me up, and Syl was screaming at the people to help. And while I was down, my face was squeezed against some papers on the sidewalk telling about Austria, and I guess I went nuts while they kept hitting me, and I kept seeing the headlines against my nose.

Then someone yelled, "Jiggers, the cops!" and they got off of me right away. Nick had looked out the window and had called the station, and the guys let me up and beat it away fast.

But when the cops came it was too late; the stand was a wreck. The newspapers and magazines were all over the sidewalk.

Then the cops came through the crowd and began asking questions right and left. In the end they wanted to take us to the station to enter a complaint, but Syl wouldn't go. She looked at the crowd watching and she said, "What's the use? All those people standing around and none of them would help!" They were standing all the way to the second El post, and when the cops asked for witnesses none of them except Mrs. Oliver offered to give their names. Then Syl looked at Pa and me and saw our faces and turned to the crowd and began to scream.

"In another few years, you wait! Some of you are

working people, and they'll be marching through the streets and going after you too! They pick on us Jews because we're weak and haven't any country; but after they get us down they'll go after you! And it'll be your fault; you're all cowards, you're afraid to fight back!"

"Listen," one of the cops told my sister, "are you coming to the station or not? We can't hang around here all evening."

Then Syl broke down. "Oh, leave us alone," she told them and began wailing her heart out. "Leave us alone. What good would it do?"

By this time the crowd was bigger, so the cops started telling people to break it up and move on. Nick came out and took my father by the arm into the lunchroom for a drink of hot tea. The people went away slowly and then, as the crowd began to dwindle, it started to snow. When she saw that, Syl started bawling harder than ever and turned her face to me. But I was down on my hands and knees with Mrs. Oliver, trying to save some of the magazines. There was no use going after the newspapers, which were smeared up, torn, and dirty from the gang's feet. But I thought I could save a few, so I picked a couple of them up.

"Oh, leave them be," Syl wept at me. "Leave them be, leave them be!" ■

"Prelude" by Albert Halper ©1938 *Harper's Magazine*. All rights reserved. Reprinted from the August issue by permission.

ALBERT HALPER (1904–1984), the son of Lithuanian Jewish immigrants, was born in Chicago and portrayed the city's working people in many of his novels and short stories. Considered a realist and a naturalist, he was closely associated with the proletarian literature that marked the years of the Depression. His other works include the novels *Union Square* (1933), a Literary Guild selection; *The Foundry* (1934); *Sons of the Fathers* (1940); *The Fourth Horseman of Miami Beach* (1966); and plays, a short story collection, and a memoir, *Good-Bye, Union Square* (1970). This story, originally published in *Harper's Magazine* in July 1938, is reprinted here with the permission of *Harper's Magazine*.

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"In considering the various ways in which Halper's story functions as a prelude," Aden Bar-Tura writes, "perhaps, in its time, [it] furthered the discussion about the need for a Jewish homeland as a possible response to American antisemitism; current history confirms the Jewish state as a haven for Jews threatened by antisemitism worldwide." Bar-Tura's historical analysis provides a different lens through which to view the short story; use it as a companion to Witty's pedagogical guide (pp. 19–24) and Phillips' essay on the Evian Conference (pp. 25–27) for a sound interdisciplinary unit of study.

Aden Bar-Tura

When There Are No Orders To Follow: Albert Halper's "Prelude" and Antisemitism in America

Anywhere else is someone else's land.

—*Melanie Kaye-Kantrowitz*

Albert Halper's short story "Prelude" (pp. 10–14) poses questions about the nature of antisemitism in the United States. Halper's story takes place in Chicago, Illinois, a city that serves as site of many of Halper's works. Here, the placement of "Prelude" in Chicago has a particular resonance. Both the references to the "El" (short for elevated train lines) and the employees of the various factories that support the newsstand draw readers' attention to the fact that this occurs in the United States, in Chicago in particular.

Father Charles Edward Coughlin's antisemitic radio broadcasts were carried on Chicago radio stations in the 1930s. Chicago was a popular destination for a large German-American population that actively participated in German cultural activities. For the most part, the German population in the 1930s was not vocal in its support of Hitler. Even though some individuals, such as Otto Schmidt, warned against Germany's increasing power, many German-Americans preferred to remain quiet after experiencing the anti-German sentiment of World War I.¹ Given Chicago's position as a center for German-American culture, that city would appear to be an area where tensions with the Jewish population would arise.

Despite the story's conspicuous placement in America, the events that were occurring in Europe were never far away. The newspapers sold by the Silversteins report the news of people fleeing Austria; upon reading the news, Mr. Silverstein responds there is no other place other than "this country" (p. 12) to go. While firmly situated in America, the story considers the events in Europe and, at the same time, questions whether these events could happen in the United

States, a place that historically prided itself on openness to and acceptance of foreign newcomers. A reader can view this story in several ways: as a prelude to the destruction of Jewish life in Europe during World War II, as a prelude to rising antisemitism in the United States, and as an example of American literature that presents recognizable aspects of an American immigrant story.

"Prelude" is not a Holocaust story in that it does not depict a scenario of World War II Europe. Instead, this story presents an immigrant family living in the United States before the outbreak of the war. It conjectures about the nature of scapegoats, how gangs get out of control, and how bystanders allow violence to happen to the innocent.

READING "PRELUDE" TODAY

Reading "Prelude" in the twenty-first century is undeniably a different experience than it was in 1938, when it was first published. Halper's story may have been more of a prelude than he imagined it would be. Today's reader can immediately identify events and themes that were unavailable to the 1938 reader. In August 1938, the elevated trains rumbling past the Silversteins' newsstand were not sinister; disclosures about mass transports to concentration camps were not reported until 1941. By contrast, now the roar of the El can be read as a salient prefigurement of the eventual transport of Jews in Poland and Germany. However, this is not to say that Europe was a quiet place at the time. In August 1938, the newsworthy events behind the headlines of "Austria and how the people were fleeing toward the borders and trying to get out of the country before it was too late" (pp. 12–13)

were the *Anschluss* (annexation of Austria) and the ongoing restrictions and elimination of Jewish rights and privileges in Europe.

Germany's annexation of Austria occurred in March 1938, and "Prelude" was published just five months later. The headlines of the events in Austria, as Mr. Silverstein reads about "mobs ... robbing people they hated and spitting on them and making them go down on their hands and knees" (p. 16), could also be the prelude of what was to happen to Harry, forced down on the sidewalk while a group of eight or nine boys wrecked the newsstand [see photos, pp. 22–23].

In its depiction of the harassment of the Silversteins, "Prelude" considers the nature of antisemitism. In contrast to Europe, the United States did not have a state-sanctioned policy of antisemitism. When Mr. Silverstein first approaches the authorities to complain about the harassment by the gang of boys, he is told, "Don't worry any more about it, Mr. Silverstein, we'll take care of it. You're a respectable citizen and taxpayer and you're entitled to protection. We'll take care of it" (p. 11). The official's response acknowledges the Silversteins as citizens entitled to full privileges and protection under the law. This statement clearly reflects the American ideal that all Americans, regardless of background and immigrant status, were to be treated equally before the law and to be protected against harm. The city police department goes as far as to send a policeman to Silverstein's newsstand, and at first, the policeman's presence seems to warn the gang away.

However, the authority of the policeman is eventually undermined. The boys recognize the cop Butch as cousin to one of their own members, Fred Gooley, which suggests that the policeman's own sympathy might be closer to the gang's than to that of the respectable Silversteins. When a gang member taunts the policeman with "Listen who's talkin'!" (p. 11), Halper suggests that "who's talkin'" may once have engaged in the same kind of behavior. Eventually, the policeman shrugs off both the gang and the Silversteins. He advises Mr. Silverstein that "It'll blow over" (p. 11) as he turns to enter a local bar. The official intervention, while seeming to take the complaint seriously, proves itself to be ineffective at best and possibly part of the problem at worst.

In discussions of the Nazi era, reference is often made to the frequent refrains of the Nazi soldiers, namely, that they were just following orders. The orders to Butch, the policeman, were to protect the Silversteins. The question of Nazi officers just following orders becomes less important in the face of ingrained cultural beliefs. The source of the gang's antisemitic behavior was not state-sponsored indoctrination; no Hitler-*Jugend* was in place in the United States. Instead, this behavior could be seen as a reaction to their perception of the powerlessness of the Jewish community, a minority group unsure of its status in a new country.

"Prelude" expands the discussion of possible sources of antisemitic attacks to include not only a system that authorizes them but also the cultural milieu that shrugs off antisemitism as something that will simply pass. Even without a state apparatus in place, this group of boys saw a "little fat old man" (p. 11) and two children as suitable targets. Moreover, as Harry was held down to the ground, both Mrs. Oliver and Syl begged bystanders for assistance. No one intervened on the Silversteins' behalf. When the police began to investigate, no one except Mrs. Oliver offered to be a witness.

The question of following orders is entirely absent here. This story questions fundamental relationships between people and the prejudices held by some. I am reminded of the 1947 film by Elia Kazan, *Gentleman's Agreement*, in which overt antisemitism was never expressed. The film examined the unspoken ways antisemitism was apparent in various venues, such as the workplace and in social situations. "Prelude" is not quite as subtle; the Silversteins had clearly been menaced by the gang for years. However, the same reticence to address the issue is apparent in both the film and this short story, at least among the bystanders. "Prelude" further suggests that latent antisemitism may pose a no-less-potent threat than do state-sponsored laws denying rights to Jews.

"PRELUDE" AS AMERICAN LITERATURE

As a text written by an American author, placed in an American context, how does the narrative function as a piece of American literature? "Prelude" presents two well-established elements of American culture: the story of immigrants adjusting to a new country and the conflict of the individual struggling against a constrictive society. Traditionally, America has been populated by those who left one country behind and settled in a new place. Certainly, the immigrant is part of the story of America, and on some level "Prelude" is an immigrant story.

Although it is unclear whether Harry and his sister Sylvia were born in the United States, Mr. Silverstein's reaction to the news in Europe shows that he understands the implications of the news from Europe as well as the long-standing tradition of Jews being unwelcome in another country. There is no mention of his country of origin; nevertheless, Mr. Silverstein gives the impression that immigration is part of his family's history.

Syl's questioning of Harry's grades in algebra and his need to lie to her, claiming an A instead of the C he really received, reflect a familiar emphasis on the immigrant's drive to succeed. Harry thinks about his father's timid reaction to the gang:

My Pa said we got to watch our step extra careful now because there's no other place besides this country where

we can go. We've always been picked on, he said, but we're up against the last wall now, he told me, and we got to be calm because if they start going after us here, there's no other place where we can go (p. 12).

"We've always been picked on" could possibly refer to the pogroms of Russia and Eastern Europe of the 19th and 20th centuries. In contrast to stories of immigration, such as Israel Zangwill's 1908 play *The Melting Pot*, which celebrates the process of becoming an American through the cultural procedure of the melting pot, the need to blend in for Harry and his father is the result of fear, of feeling that there is no place else to go. Interestingly, when Harry's father expresses his future hopes for Harry to Mrs. Oliver, his explanation is also a reminder of an immigrant drive: "He should only grow up to be a nice young man and a good citizen and a credit to his country. That's all I want" (p. 12).

For the immigrant Silversteins, America is less a new beginning and more of a continuation of the old worry that plagued them in their previous homeland. In this story, the American dream of the immigrant enthusiastically becoming an American citizen is not realized.

Part of the American mythos is respect for individuals who follow the dictates of conscience instead of bowing to societal pressure. "Prelude" is a story of named individuals and identifiable groups. The Silversteins are not fighting a nameless, faceless Nazi machine. The gang that has menaced the Silversteins for more than a year calls Harry by a first name, even if it is not his correct name. The leader of the gang is Fred Gooley, and the policeman is Fred's cousin Butch. Mrs. Oliver is a longstanding customer. All of the witnesses who stood by and watched Harry being beaten knew the Silversteins.

Throughout the story, the work at the newsstand is punctuated by the quitting times of various factories, with conspicuously Jewish-sounding names: Hartman's furniture factory, Hillman's cocoa factory. Several customers knew them well enough to call Mr. Silverstein by name: "Hi, there, Silverstein ... what's the latest news, you king of the press?" (p. 13). Presumably these are the individuals who stood by as the newsstand was being wrecked. Even Nick, who owns the bar where Harry's father sits next to the radiator, is well known to the family. Nick does not physically step in to defend the Silversteins, but at least he calls the police. These named individuals could easily have stood up for the Silversteins.

The American hero of this story is Mrs. Oliver. She is characterized as vaguely problematic; the story hints that her past and her "nice red hair ... hanging loose down her back" have made her fodder for gossip; she has "started to get talked about" (p. 10). She visits the newsstand almost daily, buys movie magazines as well as the newspaper, and flirts

mildly with both Harry and his father, behaviors that may also be somewhat unacceptable. The non-Jewish Mrs. Oliver, who comes to the defense of the Silversteins, might be seen as similar to those European non-Jewish helpers and rescuers of Jews who, by their actions, engaged in behavior that also went against norms of their communities.

Sylvia, Harry's sister, with her refusal to be intimidated (she will not even cross the street to get away from the pool hall where the gang spends most of its time) clearly follows her conscience when stating uncomfortable truths: "When men hide behind Elevated posts and throw rotten apples at women, you know they're not men but just things that wear pants" (p. 12). During the attack on Harry, Syl shouts at the passive bystanders, "Why don't you help us? What are you standing there for?" (p. 14). She screams that Jews are victimized because "we're weak and haven't any country" (p. 14). In 1938, the modern-day state of Israel was not yet in existence.

HALPER'S STORY AS PRELUDE

In considering the various ways in which Halper's story functions as a prelude, finally we should consider that it works as yet another call for the creation of a Jewish state. Perhaps, in its time, Halper's "Prelude" furthered the discussion about the need for a Jewish homeland as a possible response to American antisemitism; current history confirms the Jewish state as a haven for Jews threatened by antisemitism worldwide. Today, the story raises salient issues in a discussion of antisemitism then and now. In contrast to Nazi-occupied Europe, where antisemitism was government-mandated through the reduction of rights and privileges, the antisemitism of government officials in the United States that led to strict and severe limitations on Jewish immigration was covert. Furthermore, even when immigrants are allowed entrance and their rights are protected by law, no government can legislate good will; making newcomers feel at home and welcome cannot be mandated. "Prelude" presents one Jewish family's experience in America; the story considers the possibility that antisemitism is a cultural rather than a legal construct and thus cannot be simply legislated away.

As I sit in Jerusalem, reading of Mr. Silverstein's fear and Sylvia's anguished scream, I wonder if the existence of Israel would have changed Halper's story. Despite the current and ongoing threats to the existence of the Jewish state, the "country of our own" that has existed since 1948, Syl's belief in its necessity as a haven for Jews remains valid. ■

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ADEN BAR-TURA, PH.D., is the managing editor of Bar-Ilan University's interdisciplinary journal *Common Knowledge* and on the editorial board of *PRISM*. Her research interests include anthropological approaches to nineteenth- and twentieth -century American literature and Holocaust texts. To contact the author, e-mail bartura@mail.biu.ac.il

NOTE

Dr. Otto L. Schmidt (1863–1935) was a physician, historian, president of the German American Historical Society of Illinois, and president of the Chicago Historical Society. A letter to *Time* magazine on Monday, May 6, 1929, referred to him as “the leading German-American of the Middle West.”

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"Choices carry consequences, even when the choice is not to act," writes Emily Amie Witty in her pedagogic guide to Albert Halper's "Prelude" (pp. 10–14). She suggests that educators "connect this story with the concurrent historical events in Europe and begin the essential discussion of the ways in which this history might have been different if the Free World of bystanders had come to the aid of the Jews trapped under Nazi rule." Aden Bar-Tura's literary analysis of the story (pp. 15–17) and Carson Phillips's essay on the Evian Conference (pp. 25–27) augment this unit of study.

Emily Amie Witty

Moving Our Students Along the Continuum of Benevolence

Antisemitic taunts, a wrecked newspaper stand, and violence against an innocent Jewish boy named Harry Silverstein characterize Albert Halper's (1938) short story "Prelude" (pp. 10–14). Set in Chicago in 1938, there is a timeless quality to this piece, which challenges us as educators to raise essential questions of responsibility and behavior, moral courage and decision-making, and concern for one another. It challenges students to acknowledge the victim and the marginalized in society and to understand that choices carry consequences, even when the choice is not to act.

As her brother, Harry, is being shoved and beaten by a gang of young men, and her father, the owner of the local newsstand, pleads with them to leave his son alone, Sylvia screams at passersby for help, but to no avail. Mrs. Oliver, a good customer and kind neighbor, intercedes; Nick, from the safety of his local business, summons the police. When they arrive, however, it is too late. The newsstand has been destroyed and Harry is badly hurt.

The plot is straightforward and seems easily teachable, but Halper's eerily prescient story is deceptive in its apparent simplicity. The characters and actions of the victim and the perpetrator are obvious and clearly meant to echo the news events in the papers Mr. Silverstein is selling: the rise of antisemitism in Europe, the *Anschluss*, and the abuse of the Jewish citizens in Germany and Austria. The Silversteins are the victims and the gang members are the perpetrators.

Other characters in the story are conspicuous by their apathy and inaction. Apathy, if ignored, leads to dividing people into groups: those who are similar to "us" and those who are not, the other: "them." In the Holocaust it was a short step from apathy to division to legislating against "them": separating from them; humiliating, ghettoizing, and deporting them; and, ultimately, murdering them.¹ The factory workers in "Prelude" head home after a day's work and stop to buy the paper:

"Hi, there, Silverstein," some of the men called to him, "what's the latest news, you king of the press?" They took the papers, kidding him, and hurried up the stairs to the Elevated, reading all about Austria and going home to eat. (p. 13)

They are indifferent to the events occurring in Europe. Their daily routine remains uninterrupted even as they read "all about Austria." Perhaps, however, we judge them too harshly. Is it possible that some of these factory workers were themselves immigrants or children of immigrants? Were they so eager to assimilate and be seen as American that they could not internalize the troubles of the world they left? Undoubtedly, these workers are bystanders, but how can we indict them when Europe is far away and, after all, what impact can they really have all the way from Chicago?

However, Halper shows us their true nature when Harry is attacked. While Harry is pinned to the ground, Mrs. Oliver calls for the bystanders to help, but nobody comes to his aid. We do not know who these people are, and Halper does not identify them by gender or profession. "But the gang were big fellows, and there were eight or nine of them, and the people were afraid" (pp. 13–14). Are size and number legitimate reasons not to intervene when someone is being victimized? The Nazis were a powerful force in Europe; neutral countries and even the Vatican stood on the sidelines. Had the aggressor been a smaller military force, would people and groups been more likely to voice objections?

Harry has been abused by the gang "for a couple of years" (p. 12); no one interceded even at the beginning. Where was the public outcry at the beginning of Germany's aggression? Where were the outcries in the early 1930s as anti-Jewish legislation was being passed? Where was the voice of the international community during the 1936 Summer Olympics in Berlin? Even as our students identify how the ficti-

tious events in “Prelude” played out in the face of the local bystanders, we must also help them connect this story with the concurrent historical events in Europe and begin the essential discussion of the ways in which this history might have been different if the Free World of bystanders had come to the aid of the Jews trapped under Nazi rule.

UNDERSTANDING THE RISKS TO THE BYSTANDERS

When we consider the broad category of bystanders, it is both honest and necessary to distinguish between those bystanders who, by helping Jews, would have put themselves or their loved ones in harm’s way, and those whose aid would not have brought them harm. People living in Germany in the early 1930s, for example, faced different repercussions for helping Jews than did those in Nazi-occupied Poland after 1939. In the earliest stages of the Holocaust, it was clearly possible to help without risking one’s life, and to properly contextualize the inaction of the bystanders throughout the 12 years and multiple countries devastated by the Holocaust, students need to understand this distinction. Even as late as February 27, 1943, in Berlin, for instance, non-Jewish women, through a week-long nonviolent demonstration, secured the release of their Jewish husbands and “*Mischlinge*” children from deportation. They protested at a local Jewish community center at *Rosenstraße 2–4*, which was used as the holding site. On March 6th Joseph Goebbels, the German Minister of Propaganda, ordered the release of these prisoners at *Rosenstraße* in an effort to prevent further outcry and calm growing international unrest.

A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Historians discussing the *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* categorize the government’s phases of persecution into four stages: (a) social and professional isolation; (b) ghettoization; (c) deportation; and (d) mass murder. Within each of these stages and occupied countries, the risks to both the Jews and their potential rescuers varied. However, the discussion becomes more difficult and, arguably, more important when those with the power to make a difference, to intervene or rescue, choose not to do so despite minimal risk. The bystanders at whom Sylvia screams in “Prelude” could have interceded on behalf of the struggling Harry with minimal, if any, harm to themselves. They chose, however, to do nothing. What can we conclude was the reason for their inaction? Were they indifferent to suffering in general or in particular to the suffering of a Jew? The story offers us opportunities to confront the unsettling motivations of people, including those in government, who did not save the Jews under Nazi occupation; to examine antisemitism and xenophobia during the 1930s in America and in other countries; and to bring into the classroom the complexities of people’s attitudes toward Jews, immigrants, and foreigners.

UNDERSTANDING THE THINKING OF THE BYSTANDER

Why don’t people get involved? What is happening in the minds of bystanders that allows them to remain silent and uninvolved? [See Kleinberg, pp. 64–66—Eds.] How can we encourage our students to act against injustice? Psychologist Ervin Staub (1989) theorizes:

Bystanders can avoid turning against the victims if they identify with the victims, if they help them or resist the system that harms them, if they see the perpetrators as responsible and turn against them. ... However, without support from likeminded others, this is extremely difficult. (p. 42)

Yet, in the story, Mrs. Oliver functions as the single overt helper, confronting the bullies outright; Nick, a nearby shop owner, also earns the title of helper because he summons the police, albeit from the safety of his restaurant. The differences in the manner of, and options for, helping the Silversteins, although beyond the scope of this essay, demand classroom discussion. These two characters could have remained bystanders but became helpers despite the fact that they lacked “support from like-minded others.” They identified with the victims and saw the perpetrators as responsible. What makes some people respond to the pleas for help from another while others remain unmoved or unable to move? [See Paldiel, pp. 105–109—Eds.]

While we must be aware of the dangers of over-identification with any victim group, it is possible to develop an engaging pedagogical approach whereby students empathize with the victims of the Holocaust. Diaries and narratives of adolescents and young adults caught in the maelstrom provide opportunities for students to seek out similarities between themselves and the young Jews living through the events or perhaps just to see the victims as individuals, unlike themselves in some regards but similar in many others. Diaries and narratives bridge the gap between past and present; they humanize the history. The wealth of pre-war photographs of European Jewry in the database of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (www.ushmm.org) allows students to see that European Jews were people who vacationed, enjoyed picnics, and celebrated lifecycle events just as we do.² Teaching about the humanity of the Jews trapped in the Holocaust can help create empathy in the generation we teach, which in turn can lead our students to be upstanders³—those who will not be bystanders.

QUESTIONS FOR THE CLASSROOM

- A. Harry explains that the onlookers did not help him because the attackers “were big ... there were eight or nine of them, and the people were afraid” (pp. 13–14).
 - Do these reasons justify the bystanders’ inaction?

- Mrs. Oliver interceded without repercussions from the gang. Why didn't her actions encourage others to step forward?
 - Mrs. Oliver is named; the bystanders are nameless. Why?
- B. "Then Syl turned to the people who were watching and yelled at them. 'Why don't you help us? What are you standing there for?' But none of them moved" (p. 14).
- What is the significance of the fact that the people were "watching"?
 - Why do you think "none of them moved"?
 - What might the onlookers have been thinking?
 - What might the onlookers in the photos (pp. 22–23) have been thinking?
- C. "In the end they wanted to take us to the station and enter a complaint, but Syl wouldn't go. She looked at the crowd watching and she said, 'What's the use? All those people standing around and none of them would help!' They were standing all the way to the second El post, and when the cops asked for witnesses none of them except Mrs. Oliver offered to give their names" (p. 14).
- Halper uses the verbs "standing and watching" throughout the description of Harry's attack. At what point does a bystander's inaction render him complicit in the persecution of the victim?
- D. "In another few years, you wait! Some of you are working people and they'll be marching through the streets and going after you too! They pick on us Jews because we're weak and haven't any country; but after they get us down they'll go after you! And it'll be your fault; you're all cowards, you're afraid to fight back!" (p. 14)
- Is Sylvia right when she says that they are all "cowards"?
 - Is it cowardly to avoid confrontation when someone else is being victimized?
 - What is Sylvia attempting to teach the bystanders about hatred when she says "after they get us down they'll go after you!"?
 - Compare Sylvia's words with the following: the YouTube clip of "Hangman" by Maurice Ogden http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_ZSS3yxpnFU&feature=related
- E. Harry says, "If you don't answer hoodlums, my father once told me, sometimes they let you alone" (p. 13).
- Has this been your experience?
 - Has this been borne out in history?
- F. Elie Wiesel (2002) said, "Neutrality always helps the killer, not the victim" (Haberma, p. 193).
- In what ways is this truth reflected in "Prelude"? In history?

G. Where Does the Class Stand?

Place a line of masking tape on the floor from one end of the classroom to the other with one end labeled "complicit" and the other "not complicit." Then, ask: Was the United States (or any other Free World or neutral country) complicit in the Holocaust? Students move to stand on the masking tape according to their opinion. Once everyone has chosen a spot, the students explain and justify their literal and figurative position. Thus you "see where the class stands" regarding the bystander.

EXTENDED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

A. Using text

- The politicians at the 1938 Evian Conference [see Phillips, pp. 25–27—Eds.] presented a host of different reasons their countries could not accommodate Jewish refugees. Were their given answers justified? If they believed it, does that make it so? Is there ever a valid reason for refusing to help a group in need? The capacity for a free nation to intercede on behalf of victims stands in stark contrast to the capacity of the individual. Among other wherewithal, nations have military and financial resources at their disposal. How do historians explain the nations' responses to the Jewish refugees in 1938? What were the news reports in countries whose government representatives were at Evian? What can you conclude?

B. Using documentary art

- Download Felix Nussbaum's art *The Refugee*⁴ from http://www1.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/nussbaum/nussbaum_5.asp
- Do not tell the students the title; instead, ask them to title the art and support their thinking with evidence from the work.
- Ask students to identify the images and colors and interpret the symbolism they might represent.
- Using an interactive whiteboard, spotlight specific elements depicted (the long table, the shadow cast by the globe, the hunched man). Ask students to come to the board and write what they think each element could represent.

C. Using documentary photographs

- Photographs offer students of the Holocaust the opportunity to examine primary sources and bear witness to historical events as they were captured in the moment. In the first photograph [Fig. 1], taken after Germany annexed Austria in 1938, Austrian Nazis and local Viennese residents watch as Jews are forced to get on their hands and knees and scrub the pavement. In the second [Fig. 2], Jews are forced to do calisthenics in the blazing sun in Salonika, Greece.



FIG. 1 Austrian Nazis and local residents look on as Jews are forced to get on their hands and knees and scrub the pavement. Tuesday, March 01, 1938–Friday, April 01, 1938
Vienna, Austria
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of National Archives and Records Administration, College Park

In using these photographs to complement the story “Prelude,” raise the following questions:

1. Who do you think took these photographs?
2. For what purpose do you think these photographs were taken?
3. From what angle are the photographs taken?
 - a. Who are the intended subjects of the photographs?
 - b. Who is the intended audience for these photographs?
4. Why do you think the perpetrators chose to humiliate and torment the Jews by making them scrub the streets or do calisthenics?
5. In the story, Harry and Mr. Silverstein read in the Chicago paper that “mobs” were making people “go down on their hands and knees to scrub the streets” (p. 13). In what ways might the Silversteins’ knowledge of this have affected their response to the gang? In what ways might the *bystanders*’ knowledge have affected *their* response?
6. If Harry had done the calisthenics as his tormentors ordered, do you think that would have stopped their abuse of him and his family? Explain. In the photographs, the Jews are forced to obey the Nazis’ command. Did the abuses of the Jews stop as a result of their acquiescence? Explain.
7. Can you see the expressions on the faces of the bystanders and the perpetrators? If so, describe them. What conclusions can you draw?
8. How do you judge the bystanders in the photographs?
9. How do you judge those people who were present at these scenes but not photographed?
10. Is there an onlooker/bystander in all photographs of the Jews during the Holocaust? Explain.

LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE

Staub (1989) writes of the continuum of benevolence and explains, “People can progress not only toward increasing



FIG. 2 German soldiers force a group of Jews to perform calisthenics on Eleftheria (Freedom) Square in Salonika. In the first large scale public action against the Jews of Salonika, General Kurt von Krenzski, the commander of German forces in northern Greece, ordered all adult Jewish men to assemble on Eleftheria (Freedom) Square on the morning of 11 July 1942 to register for work details. Instead of receiving work assignments, however, the nearly 10,000 men were kept standing in the sun for the entire day while German and Italian soldiers humiliated them in front of the non-Jewish population by forcing them to perform calisthenics and other distasteful tasks. Those who collapsed from the heat and exhaustion were beaten by the troops or doused with cold water and again made to stand.

Saturday, July 11, 1942

Salonika, [Macedonia] Greece

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of David Sion

© United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

cruelty or unconcern, but also in the opposite direction, toward increasing helpfulness. As people help others in great need, they can become increasingly committed” (p. 49). Thus, one of our educational goals for a unit on Holocaust education might be to equip students with the critical thinking skills and abilities that will help them not only to reject behavior that marginalizes others but also to move forward on the continuum of benevolence. The questions raised by Halper’s story can help us educate toward activism and raise this generation to speak with the voice of morality as they engage with current events.

Actualizing Staub’s continuum of benevolence and discussing the topic of bystanders will challenge you to pres-

ent these issues without preaching, to resist taking the seemingly easy path and instead provide students with the space and time to question, reflect, react, and respond. As I did, you may find students who support the idea of minding their own business, who are adamantly opposed to getting involved where they “don’t belong.” Our role is to help our students, one at a time, come to the unambiguous conclusion that “injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly” (King, 1963). ■

EMILY AMIE WITTY is Director of Instructional Improvement for the Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York (BJENY) and author of the Holocaust curriculum *It Is My Business: Selected History From 1933–1945* (BJENY, 2005). She is a doctoral candidate at the Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration at Yeshiva University and research assistant for *PRISM*. To contact the author, e-mail ewitty@yu.edu

NOTES

1. For more information on the steps leading to genocide, see http://www.adl.org/education/courtvtv/pyramid_of_hate.pdf
2. See Aimee Young's (2003) lesson at <http://www.ushmm.org/education/foreducators/prodev/beli/2003/young/pdf/lesson.pdf>
3. "Upstanders" is a term used by Facing History and Ourselves.
4. Nussbaum painted this in 1939 after the Evian Conference failed to produce a practical means of rescue or escape for European Jewry. The artist was later deported to the Drancy transit camp in France and from there to Auschwitz, where he was murdered.

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"It is heartbreaking to think of the queues of desperate human beings around our consulates in Vienna and other cities waiting in suspense for what happens at Evian. But the question they underline is not simply humanitarian. ... It is a test of civilization. ... Can America live with itself if it lets Germany get away with this policy of extermination, allows the fanaticism of one man to triumph over reason, refuses to take up this gauge of battle against barbarism?" This essential question, raised by *The New York Times* foreign affairs columnist Anne O'Hare McCormick on July 4, 1938, is a provocative beginning to a study of the Evian Conference.

Carson Phillips

The Evian Conference: A Political Potemkin Village

"Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

—*Emma Lazarus, 1883*

As a case study in the history of humanity, the conference held at Evian-les-Bains, France, from July 6–15, 1938, commonly known as the Evian Conference, provides Holocaust scholars, educators, and students with a paradigm of bystanders, active and passive; and semi-active perpetrators. Examined through the lenses of civics, citizenship, and global responsibility, our understanding of this paradigm shifts as we grapple with issues of morality, ethics, and responsibility. As such, the Conference is a necessary topic for students engaged in a study of the history of the Holocaust and a particularly fascinating one in the context of a literary study of Albert Halper's (1938) short story "Prelude" (pp. 10–14). The Conference is a microcosm of human behavior, responsibility, and interaction and, like "Prelude," raises questions essential for students to explore.

As Emily Witty (2010) notes in her contribution in this volume (pp. 19–24), "Prelude" is deceptively straightforward in its narrative. Similarly, the Evian Conference seems to be—but is not—a straightforward historical event. Thirty-two countries met, at the invitation of the United States, to deliberate on the refugee crisis facing European Jews, specifically those from Germany and Austria. The outcome of the 10-day conference was dismal by any standard of measure. Each country in attendance expressed concern for the refugees, but few offered any tangible solutions to accommodating them. Those who did, such as the Dominican Republic, were motivated by their own political machinations and racist ideology rather than by humanitarian gestures. Chaim

Weizmann (quoted in Abella & Troper, 1986, p. 4) succinctly described the global response: "The world seemed to be divided into two parts: those where Jews could not live, and those where they could not enter."

A close examination of the ill-fated conference reveals that it was orchestrated as an exercise in public relations and political aesthetics. First, the message of the conference locale must be considered. Located on the shores of Lake Geneva, opposite Switzerland, Evian-les-Bains is an idyllic resort town more suited to leisure and recreation activities than to deliberating on a refugee crisis. The resort offered the conference delegates an atmosphere of luxury and contentment that was in direct opposition to the dire situation that confronted the refugees, whose fate they had come to discuss. Many delegates were distracted by the attractions of the resort: its golf course, the gambling casino, summer skiing in Chamonix, and the celebrated stables of the locality (Marrus, 1985, p. 171). Rather than choosing a location free of distractions where delegates and conference observers could delve into the seriousness of the refugee crisis, the organizers chose a venue that offered the exact opposite [Fig. 1].¹

Second, an examination of the conference participants reveals much about the process of inclusion and decision-making. Invitations were issued to 32 governments, yet not a single Jewish organization was given participant status. Tellingly, a conference whose mission was to aid the refugee crisis afflicting European Jewry neglected to invite representatives from Jewish organizations. Rather than empower



FIG. 1: Period postcard of Evian-les-Bains, the site of the 1938 International Conference on Refugees.

Wednesday, June 01, 1938

Evian-les-Bains, [Haute-Savoie] France

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Martin Smith

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Jewish organizations by including them in the process, they were relegated to the margins and assigned “observer” status. Golda Meir, at the time the Jewish observer from Palestine and subsequently prime minister of the State of Israel, was refused permission to speak at the Evian Conference. In her autobiography, Meir (1975) described her immense frustration of being part of a conference that would determine the fate of European Jewry yet not being allowed to participate in the process. She wrote:

I don't know that anyone who didn't live through it can understand what I felt at Evian—a mixture of sorrow, rage, frustration, and horror. I wanted to get up and scream at them, “Don't you know that these so-called numbers are human beings, people who may spend the rest of their lives in concentration camps, or wandering around the world like lepers if you don't let them in?” (p. 158)

The future of Europe's Jews was to be decided without Jewish input, and the outcome was disastrous.

Next, the Evian Conference must be considered as an exercise in aesthetics, initiated to aid the global image of the United States. America had the time-honored reputation as a refuge for the oppressed. Thus, the conference was initiated to protect the image of the United States, not to rescue Jewish refugees attempting to flee the Nazi juggernaut. Throughout the conference, nation after nation offered platitudes

as to why European Jewish refugees could not be accommodated in their countries. The smaller European countries, such as Belgium, Denmark, Sweden, and Switzerland, pointed out their actual physical incapacity to admit a large number of refugees; they were prepared, however, to admit transitory refugees who were to be trained for permanent re-settlement elsewhere. South American countries were disinclined to accept refugees due to domestic issues such as unemployment and international issues such as fear of angering their German trading partners. Canada, a reluctant conference participant from the outset, seemed to reject refugee applicants as a means to press Germany to find its own domestic solution to the refugee crisis. As F. C. Blair, Canada's director of the Immigration Branch of the Department of Mines and Resources, pointed out in confidence to William R. Little, Canada's commissioner of immigration, in

London, “any boycott of refugees would also be welcomed by Canada, because there was not much enthusiasm in many quarters for any increase in Jewish immigration” (Abella & Troper, 1986, p. 28). The conference, doomed from the outset, served much like a Potemkin village. It created the illusion of activity where none existed.

In considering a continuum of responsibility for the bystander nations, I understand the role of most of the Evian Conference participants to be semi-active perpetrators, complicit in the persecution of European Jewry by their refusal to offer sanctuary or to intercede on their behalf. While these countries did not physically commit acts of persecution against European Jewry, their representatives were well aware of the restrictions on, and the acts of terror being committed against, European Jewry, yet they offered neither haven nor intervention. Such knowledge coupled with the decision not to act is tantamount to semi-active participation. By their refusal to act, the nation-participants provided tacit approval of the actions of the Nazi regime. Decisions, even the decision not to respond, carry consequences.

In light of this, it is imperative that we educate students about the complexities situated in the bystander and semi-active participant paradigm. When studying about the Evian Conference, on the surface at least, we encounter countries that express sympathy for the refugees but certainly not the empathy necessary to become actively involved to alleviate their plight. (Students should be familiar with key events of

this period. In 1933, German Jewry had endured a Nazi boycott of their businesses and, in 1935, the introduction of the Nuremberg Racial Laws. In 1936 the Germans took possession of the Rhineland in violation of the Treaty of Versailles, and in March 1938 incorporated Austria into the German Reich.) In failing to respond to the escalating persecution and refugee crisis, not only did the Evian Conference delegates bear complicity in the persecution, but they also sent a message of tacit approval to Nazi Germany.

If we peer beneath this veneer of governmental agency, we can examine how individual citizens and organizations responded to their countries' inaction in the face of the burgeoning refugee crisis. In Canada, church leaders from the United Church, Anglican, Presbyterians, Baptists, and Quakers supported the admission of a "reasonable number of refugees" (Davies & Nefsky, 1998, p. 37) in direct opposition to the position of the government. Thirty-one church notables signed a declaration calling upon the government to take action to assist in the refugee crisis. This group of Canadian ecclesiastics responded with a manifesto declaring that further silence on the part of the churches was impossible. Whether or not the desire to seek conversions from the refugees influenced their desire to offer sanctuary is not known, although it would be reasonable to expect that some of the church leaders would endorse conversion for Jewish refugees. Yet, as active bystanders, such officials worked to promote change within their borders to offer haven to Europe's Jewish refugees. Although the ability to effect such change was minimal, given the intrinsic antisemitism of the period, the actions of such groups can be seen as honorable, complicating our understanding of the bystander and how individual or organizational responses can be in conflict with a country's official position.

In 1938, the Evian Conference provided the illusion of an opportunity of rescue for the persecuted Jews of Europe. There was never any intention or desire to open borders to them. Indeed, as the Jew had suspected but never really believed until Evian, he was on his own. A significant lesson to be learned from the Evian Conference is that apathy, and the choice or decision not to become involved, provides implicit approval for continued persecution. As such, "Prelude" is requisite reading to accompany its study. The combination of history and literature provides a powerful interdisciplinary opportunity to demonstrate the importance of becoming involved in one's community and society, gaining awareness of social injustices, and learning how to become a part of decision-making processes. Empowering students to become involved in the broader aspects of society can serve as an antidote to apathy while promoting justice and inclusivity. It is a lesson that the Evian Conference is aptly suited to teach. ■

CARSON PHILLIPS is an educator with the Sarah and Chaim Neuberger Holocaust Education Centre in Toronto, Canada, and a Ph.D. candidate in Humanities at York University, where he is affiliated with the Canadian Centre for German and European Studies and the Israel and Golda Koschitzky Centre for Jewish Studies. Carson, a member of the *PRISM* editorial board, has interned at the Auschwitz Jewish Center in Oswiecim, Poland, and has presented his research at academic conferences in Austria, Canada, Germany, and the United States. To contact the author, e-mail cphillips@yorku.ca

NOTE

For 12 additional picture postcards of the site at that time as well as photographs of the hotel and the conference participants, go to <http://ushmm.org/research/collections/>. Under the "Research" heading on the left side of the page, click on "photo archives." Select "photographs" from the option bar and then type "Evian-les-Bains" in the search bar.

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The poet John Guzlowski writes, "The primary subject of my poetry is the experience of my parents before, during, and after the Second World War. Like many Catholic Poles, my father, Jan Guzlowski, and my mother, Tekla Hanczarek, were taken into Nazi Germany as slave laborers. They worked in concentration camps and the associated factories and farms until the end of the war. Afterward, they lived in refugee camps in Germany until 1951 when they came to the United States with their two children, my sister and me, as Displaced Persons (DPs).

"My poems give my parents a voice. I felt that I had to tell the stories they would have written if they could. For the last 35 years, I have been writing poems about their lives, and I sometimes think that I am writing not only about their lives but also about the lives of all those forgotten—voiceless refugees, DPs, and survivors—that the last century produced."

John Guzlowski

From "Hunger in the Labor Camps"

4. The Germans

These men belonged to the Germans
the way a mule belonged to the Germans
and the Germans stood watching

their hunger and then their deaths,
watched them as if they were dead trees
in the wind, and waited for them to fall,

and some of the men did. They sank
to their knees like children begging
forgiveness for sins they couldn't recall,

or they failed to rise when the others did
and were left in the wet gray fields
where the Germans watched them

and the Germans stood watching
when the men who were still hungry
came back and lifted the dead men

and carried their thin bones to the barn,
and buried them there before eating the soup
that wouldn't have kept them alive.

The Germans knew a starving man
needed more than soup and more than bread
but still they stood and watched.

JOHN GUZLOWSKI blogs about his parents and their lives at <http://lightning-and-ashes.blogspot.com/>. His poetry has been read on Garrison Keillor's *Writers Almanac*, and his writing has appeared in *Ontario Review*, *Chattahoochee Review*, *Nimrod*, *Margie*, *Exquisite Corpse*, and other journals in the U.S. and Europe. His poems about his Polish parents' experiences in Nazi concentration camps appear in his books *Lightning and Ashes* and *Third Winter of War: Buchenwald*. The latter was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize in poetry. To contact the poet, e-mail jzguzlowski@gmail.com

"The street where I had lived is almost the same," Menachem Z. Rosensaft quotes from his mother's memoirs. "But this street, which used to have only Jewish inhabitants, only Jewish-owned shops, except for one pharmacy, now has no Jews, not one." This reflection offers readers insight into the personal implications of the destruction, the obliteration, of one's family's childhood realities, both for the survivor and her children. The poem that concludes this meditation offers a vivid illustration of the meaning-making we hope to encourage in our students as they realize their place in a world still shadowed by the Holocaust.

Menachem Z. Rosensaft

Sosnowiec Visited

In 1979, my mother returned to Poland for the first time since, 34 years earlier almost to the day, she had been deported from her native city of Sosnowiec, only a few kilometers from Będzin, to Auschwitz-Birkenau. She returned to Poland as a member of President Carter's Commission on the Holocaust. The group traveled to Warsaw, to Treblinka, and to Auschwitz and Birkenau, and then, my mother recalled in her memoirs that she finished writing shortly before her death:

I went to Sosnowiec from Auschwitz, afraid of what I would see and how I would react. New buildings have gone up and highways have been built. Otherwise, geographically and physically, the town remains the same, except in one respect: there are no Jews left. The street where I had lived is almost the same. But this street, which used to have only Jewish inhabitants, only Jewish-owned shops, except for one pharmacy, now has no Jews, not one. I stood before the house I had lived in. I looked up and saw the apartment with its balconies. Unchanged. Here I was born and raised with my brother and sister. Here I spent happy years of childhood and youth with my wonderful parents. Here I was married. As I stood there, I felt I was in a strange town on a strange street in front of a strange house. Nothing was mine, perhaps it had never been mine. (Rosensaft, 2005, pp. 182–183)

Sixteen years later, in 1995, I set foot in Sosnowiec for the first and only time. The few hours I spent there on a dismal, grey, cold, damp autumn afternoon were among the most uncomfortable, the most unpleasant of my life. I felt that I was in an alien, hostile place where I definitely did not belong. I found the building where my mother had lived and tried to visualize her in what had once been her home.

The street was crowded with the city's inhabitants on their way home. Irrationally, I felt as if they were the intruders. They had lived in the same world, breathed the same air, saw the same sunrise as the millions who had been con-

demned to death. Some had watched dispassionately, some with anger, some with fear. They had turned their backs, looked on in silence, turned a deaf ear from across the street or from thousands of miles away. And somewhere, perhaps beyond clouds, perhaps in heaven, perhaps in the darkest shadows of an eternal night, the Master of the Universe looked on as well. They were the witnesses, the bystanders.

Of course, there were the rare exceptions who risked their lives to help. But surrounded by armed German troops and their accomplices and enablers, the vast majority of European Christians stood apart and did nothing, said nothing, while their Jewish neighbors were taken from their homes and deported to be killed.

Every passerby reminded me of the men and women who had silently watched as my mother, her parents, her first husband, and her five-and-a-half-year-old son were marched to the railroad station. I hated every minute I was there. That night, on the train back to Warsaw, I tried to make sense, in a poem, of the anger that had possessed me in what had once been my mother's hometown:

SOSNOWIEC VISITED

light cuts the rain grey
semi-darkness
through curtains
sixty years old

from across the street
that should have been
but never will be
mine

I see shadows move
behind windows where
another family once lived

same rooms
same walls
same bricks
perhaps even the same furniture

here the good church-going citizens
watched and waited
until the non-believers
the non-Poles
were finally taken away,
then they stole
my mother's home
her bed
her clothes
my brother's toys

dead Jew reborn
to refuse to knock on their door
any door
I came to curse
only to find
them cursed already

my final victory: I can leave
even the air tastes bitter

MENACHEM Z. ROSENSAFT is general counsel of the World Jewish Congress, adjunct professor of law at Cornell Law School, and distinguished visiting lecturer at Syracuse University College of Law. The son of survivors of Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen, he is founding chairman of the International Network of Children of Jewish Holocaust Survivors, chairman of the editorial board of the Holocaust Survivors' Memoirs Project, and vice president of the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors and Their Descendants. Rosensaft was president of Park Avenue Synagogue in Manhattan from 2003 to 2008, and he is a past national president of the Labor Zionist Alliance. To contact the author, e-mail mzrosensaft@yahoo.com

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"Where was God during the Holocaust?" Menachem Z. Rosensaft asks this and other questions essential to any teaching of the Holocaust that explores its religious and philosophical implications. His struggle to balance his anger with his faith, illustrated here by his poetry and his reflective prose, serves as a model for classroom discussion on this most personal topic.

Menachem Z. Rosensaft

An Uneasy Silence

PSALM 13, POST-AUSCHWITZ

You hid Your face
ignored Your world
while flesh-fueled flames pierced the sky
ashes not dew covered Your mornings
dying children saw Your back
did not hear Your voice

they trusted in Your faithfulness
even as they entered
Your final sanctuary
even as they inhaled
Your poisoned breath
even as they began
to sleep the sleep of death

You can never restore luster to their eyes
and I no longer wait for Your deliverance

it is too late

Human beings were not the only ones who witnessed the *Shoah* in silence. Where was God during the Holocaust? Martin Buber (1957) wrote about the "eclipse of the light of heaven, eclipse of God," during "the historic hour through which the world is passing" (p. 23). Along the same lines, Talmudist David Weiss Halivni (2007), Professor Emeritus of Classical Jewish Civilization at Columbia University and a Holocaust survivor, believes:

There were two major theological events in Jewish history: Revelation at Sinai and revelation at Auschwitz. The former was a revelation of God's presence, the latter a revelation

of God's absence; the former indicated God's nearness to us, the latter God's distance. At Sinai, God appeared before Israel, addressed us, and gave us instructions; at Auschwitz, God absented Himself from Israel, abandoned us, and handed us over to the enemy. (p. 107)

If one conceives of a supernatural God who controls and directs the universe, Buber and Weiss Halivni could be right. After Auschwitz and Treblinka, how can we believe in or pray to a God who is both omniscient and omnipotent? An omniscient God would have known what was happening on His earth; an omnipotent God would have stopped it. How can we continue to praise a God who could have prevented the Holocaust but failed to do so?

"You have screened Yourself off with a cloud, so that no prayer can pass through," we read in Lamentations. Weiss Halivni declares that "having faced God's absence [during the *Shoah*], we pray for Him to rule over us once again" (p. xi). In response, Rabbi Elliot Cosgrove (2008) explains that his basic problem with Weiss Halivni's theology is the worry "that if God waits too long, God may be altogether too late." Shortly after the end of World War II, the Yiddish poet Shmerke Kaczerginski (1908–1954) expressed a similar concern in his song, "*Zol Shoyn Kumen di Geule*," "May Our Redemption Come Already," in which God is implored to see to it that *Meshiakh*, the Messiah, should not come, as it were, "*a bissele tsu shpet*," "a little bit too late."

In mid-October 1943, during *Sukkot*, my father smuggled a tiny apple into the Birkenau barrack where the inmates had gathered to pray so that the highly respected Rabbi of the Polish town of Zawiercie, known as the *Zawiercier Rov*, could recite the *Kiddush* blessings. Throughout the prayers, my father recalled, the aged Rov stared at the apple, obviously conflicted. At the end of the clandestine service, he picked up the apple and said, in Yiddish, almost to himself, "*In iber dem zol ikh itzt zogn, 've-akhalta ve-savata u-verakhta et Hashem Elohekha ...'*" And over this, I should now say, "And you will eat, and you will be satisfied, and you will bless your God ..." "*Kh'vel nisht essen*," I will not eat, he said, "*veil ikh vel*

nisht zat sein," because I will not be satisfied, "*un ikh vill nisht bentchn*" and I refuse to bentch, to sanctify God. And with that, the *Zawiercier Rov* put down the apple and turned away.

The *Zawiercier Rov* never lost his faith in God. Like the Hasidic master, Levi Itzhak of Berditchev, however, he was profoundly, desperately angry with Him, and this anger caused him to confront God from the innermost depths of his being.

What, however, if God was not with the killers, with the forces that inflicted the Holocaust on humankind? Perhaps Buber and Weiss Halivni, and even the *Zawiercier Rov*, looked for God's power in the wrong place.

Think of the divine power, the spiritual strength, of a mother comforting a frightened child on the way to a gas chamber. If God was present at Auschwitz, it was in that mother, in her words, in her emotions, in the love that kept her from abandoning her child. If God was at Treblinka, it was within Janusz Korczak as he accompanied his children from his Warsaw orphanage to their death. God was within every Jew who told a story or a joke or sang a melody in a death camp barrack to alleviate a friend's agony, or who shared a crust of bread with a friend or a stranger, just as God was within Mordechai Anielewicz and the Jewish men and women who took up arms against the Germans in the Warsaw Ghetto and elsewhere. God permeated every Jew who held a dying parent, or a brother or sister, or a friend, or even a stranger, just as God permeated the Jews who became partisan fighters in the forests of Poland and Belarus. The mystical divine spark that characterizes Jewish faith, the *Shekhina*, was in every Jew who remained human and comforted a fellow human and in every non-Jew who defied the forces of evil by risking his or her life to save a Jew. That divine spark was within my mother as she kept 149 Jewish children alive at Bergen-Belsen from December 1944 until the camp's liberation by British troops on April 15, 1945, just as it was within Raoul Wallenberg and within every Dane who rowed a Jewish neighbor to safety.

Each act of altruistic or selfless heroism, whether physical or spiritual, committed during the *Shoah* was an act of God, the only acts of God in that era. It is for that reason, perhaps only for that reason, that I, for one, can recite the *Kaddish* in memory of my grandparents, my five-and-a-half-year-old brother, my mother's son, my parents' siblings, and the millions of other victims of the Holocaust. ■

MENACHEM Z. ROSENSAFT is general counsel of the World Jewish Congress, adjunct professor of law at Cornell Law School, and distinguished visiting lecturer at Syracuse University College of Law. The son of survivors of Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen, he is founding chairman of the International Network of Children of Jewish Holocaust Survivors, chairman of the editorial board

of the Holocaust Survivors' Memoirs Project, and vice president of the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors and Their Descendants. Rosensaft was president of Park Avenue Synagogue in Manhattan from 2003 to 2008, and he is a past national president of the Labor Zionist Alliance. To contact the author, e-mail mzrosensaft@yahoo.com

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In the final of his three reflective personal essays in these pages (see also pp. 29–30 and 31–32), Menachem Z. Rosensaft describes his parents' experiences during the Holocaust and his attempts to integrate and come to terms with both his parents' suffering and the world's response—and his own—to what happened.

Menachem Z. Rosensaft

Judging the Bystander With a Measure of Humility

On June 22, 1943, my father was taken from the ghetto of his hometown of Będzin in southern Poland to Auschwitz with his wife and her daughter. For some reason, they were not in the usual cattle car but in a passenger train with windows. My father, a superb swimmer, managed to dive out of one of the windows into the Vistula River; he was shot by the Germans in his leg, arm, and head, but he somehow remained alive. A Polish peasant woman, one of the rare helpers, bandaged him and gave him a cap to hide his head wounds. He returned to Będzin, was reunited with my grandfather, and later that day was able to place a telephone call from the ghetto to a Jewish woman from Będzin, who was working in the *Schreibstube*, the main office, at Auschwitz. That is when he discovered that the entire transport, including his wife and her daughter, had been sent directly to the gas chambers, without any selection.

Auschwitz, the place where the technology of mass murder was perfected as never before, was unprecedented, beyond the realm of most imaginations. The very concept of thousands upon thousands upon thousands of men, women, and children annihilated in gas chambers and then burned in crematoria was alien to the civilized psyche. When the Polish resistance fighter Jan Karski (1914–2000), who had twice been inside the Warsaw Ghetto, told United States Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter in 1943 what he had personally seen there and in the concentration camp of Izbica, a sorting station for the Belzec death camp, Frankfurter told Karski that he could not believe him. Asked by the Polish Ambassador to the United States whether he thought that Karski was lying, Frankfurter reportedly said, “Mr. Ambassador, I did not say this young man is lying. I said I am unable to believe him. There is a difference” (Wood & Jankowski, 1994, p. 188).

Yet Auschwitz was very real, very tangible, even accessible. On June 23, 1943, my father, in the Ghetto of Będzin, was able to speak by telephone with the young Jewish woman in Auschwitz who told him that his wife and step-daughter had

been murdered in a Birkenau gas chamber the previous night.

My father never knew the name of the Polish peasant woman who risked her life to help him, but he never ceased to be grateful to her. My parents also recalled with lasting bitterness, however, the Poles who actively betrayed hidden Jews to the Germans, and the thousands who simply did nothing.

After the war, Germans, Poles, Austrians, Hungarians, and all the others inhabitants of Nazi-dominated Europe maintained that they had not known what was happening to European Jewry. This is nonsense. Americans, Canadians, and citizens of Great Britain similarly claimed ignorance. Justice Frankfurter's reaction was not atypical, but that does not make it any more plausible or any less morally ambiguous.

While Americans, including American Jews, did not witness Jews being taken to concentration and death camps, they, too, were aware, often to a surprising degree, of what was happening in Nazi-occupied Europe at the time. Perhaps they did not know all the gruesome details, but they certainly knew enough to warrant at least some acknowledgment. On April 23, 1943, for example, *The New York Times* reported that the German armored cars and tanks “have moved into Warsaw, where the ghetto populace is resisting deportation of the city's remaining 35,000 Jews. The battle was still raging when the Polish exile government in London received its latest news last night” (p. 9). The article went on to lay bare the Germans' intentions:

After Warsaw, the Cracow ghetto is to be liquidated ... deportations having already started. Western Poland has been incorporated into the Reich and Jews there were spared until recently. Now special concentration camps have been established near Lodz, Sosnowiez, and other towns. Polish circles here believe 1,300,000 Polish Jews already have perished under the German occupation. (p. 9)

On June 20, 1943, Jan Ciechanowski, the Polish Ambas-

sador to the United States, was quoted in *The New York Times* as having told a Carnegie Hall rally in memory of the Jews killed in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising that “never in the whole history of mankind have its chronicles registered so continuous, so methodical, so iniquitous, so barbarous, so inhuman a system of cruelty and mass extermination” (p. 34). He was not alone in alerting the American public to the tragic fate of European Jewry. An October 28, 1943, *New York Times* editorial entitled “Supermen at Warsaw” proclaimed that “there is evidence to support the charge that great numbers” of “about 400,000” Jews who had been deported from Warsaw “were foully put to death by the Germans at concentration camps maintained at Treblinka and elsewhere” (p. 22). Another article published prominently on page 3 of *The New York Times* of November 29, 1943, reported that “the Germans had machine-gunned from 50,000 to 80,000 of Kiev’s Jewish men, women and children in late September, 1941” at a “deep ravine northwest of Kiev” called Babi Yar.

In December 1945, my father came to the United States for the first time to represent the *She’erit Hapleitah*, the Surviving Remnant, as the Holocaust survivors referred to themselves, at the first post-war conference of the United Jewish Appeal in Atlantic City. While he was in New York, he met with a group of Jews who had left Będzin before the war. They gave him a copy of the December 1, 1944, issue of a Yiddish publication, *Proletarisher Gedank (Proletarian Thought)*. There, he discovered an article, “On the graves of our fallen heroes and murdered martyrs” (Kenen, 1943, p. 3), containing the names and brief biographies of 17 Polish Jews, including his own. The article described how my father, born into a prominent Hasidic family, had become an activist in the Labor Zionist movement, and how it was feared he had gone to his death:

Three times the Germans deported him from Będzin to an “unknown destination.” The first two times, he succeeded in jumping from the train and smuggling himself back into the Będzin ghetto, so as to continue preparations for an organized resistance. But the German killers captured him again and deported him a third time, and this time he did not return. (pp. 5–6)

It seems that a friend of my father’s had seen the SS take him away and had conveyed the news of his capture to members of the Jewish underground who, in turn, were able to pass this information on to contacts in the United States. My father was hardly a prominent figure in the Jewish world in 1943–1944. The very fact that news of his fate and that of the others listed in the article reached American Jews during the course of the war speaks volumes about what was known—and about the lack of response.

It is easy to be self-righteous, to judge the bystanders

to the Holocaust harshly from a perspective of more than six decades. Would we, though, have been willing to sacrifice ourselves and our families to save a stranger or even a friend? We would like to think so, but there must always be a disturbing hesitation, a doubt. Our assessment, then, of the bystanders must be tempered by a measure of humility.

In the early 1970s, when I worked with Professor Elie Wiesel, my teacher and mentor, at New York’s City College, he asked me to review the monthly bulletins between 1942 and 1945 of one of the preeminent Manhattan Orthodox synagogues in preparation for a lecture he was scheduled to give there. He wanted to know how the facts of the persecution and annihilation of European Jews were reflected there. To our mutual shock, I discovered that not a single event, not a single men’s club meeting or sisterhood fundraiser, not a single Purim or Hanukkah ball, not a single tribute dinner was called off in solidarity with the Jews of Europe. Life was going on normally, and the isolated references to World War II were limited to American military involvement.

Wiesel (1978) wrote in his classic essay “A Plea for the Survivors” that during the years of the Holocaust

in Palestine, as in the United States, life continued as though Auschwitz did not exist. People celebrated *Shabbat*, the Holy Days. There was dancing in the *kibbutzim* in Galilee, there were elaborate affairs in New York. It was business as usual. Not one function was canceled, not one reception postponed. While Mordechai Anielewicz and his comrades fought their lonely battle in the blazing ghetto under siege, while Arthur Zygelbaum committed suicide in London to protest the complacency of the free world, a large New York synagogue invited its members to a banquet featuring a well-known comedian. The slaughterers were slaughtering, the mass graves were overflowing, the factories of Treblinka, Belzec, Majdanek, and Auschwitz were operating at top capacity, while on the other side, Jewish social and intellectual life was flourishing. (pp. 191–192)

I am not suggesting, certainly, that American Jews, or Americans generally, for that matter, were bystanders in the same sense that the term applies to Christian Europeans who could have at least tried to help their Jewish friends and neighbors but failed to do so, whether out of fear, indifference, or antisemitism; and I gratefully acknowledge the thousands of American, British, Canadian, Australian, and Palestinian Jews who served in the Allied armies that liberated the Nazi death and concentration camps. Still, each time any of us go out to dinner after reading about the raging genocide in Darfur, it would behoove us to contemplate whether there is more that we could or should be doing to save the innocent. ■

MENACHEM Z. ROSENSAFT is general counsel of the World Jewish Congress, adjunct professor of law at Cornell Law School, and distinguished visiting lecturer at Syracuse University College of Law. The son of survivors of Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen, he is founding chairman of the International Network of Children of Jewish Holocaust Survivors, chairman of the editorial board of the Holocaust Survivors' Memoirs Project, and vice president of the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors and Their Descendants. Rosensaft was president of Park Avenue Synagogue in Manhattan from 2003 to 2008, and he is a past national president of the Labor Zionist Alliance. To contact the author, e-mail mzrosensaft@yahoo.com

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Menachem Z. Rosensaft raises the question of whether American Jewry, in general, and Orthodox Jewry, in particular, remained aloof to the tragedy unfolding in Europe. To broaden the canvas, Rabbi Dr. Moshe Sokolow, one of our editorial board members, approached Rabbi Haskel Lookstein (1985), author of *Were We our Brothers' Keepers? The Public Response of American Jews to the Holocaust, 1938–1944*. Rabbi Lookstein shared with him a sermon, parts of which are excerpted below, with permission, that he had recently delivered on this question, in which he shares Rosensaft's dismay at the idea that life went on as usual in the Jewish community but also notes one particular exception.

“Judging the Bystander With a Measure of Humility”: A Response to Menachem Z. Rosensaft

“On November 24, 1942, in Washington D.C., Rabbi Stephen S. Wise held a news conference announcing to the world the broad outlines and statistics of Hitler's Final Solution to the Jewish Problem: 2,000,000 dead and 4,000,000 or 5,000,000—depending on one's estimate of the number of Jews under Nazi control—to be murdered. The general press covered the story, sometimes on the front pages. The lead editorial in *The New York Times* on December 2nd of that year described the horrifying details. The Jewish press screamed in pain. But after a few weeks, the suffering of European Jewry no longer dominated the news and was not front and center in the Jewish press, either. More important, American Jewry did not react publicly and/or vigorously. Business went on as usual; rallies were few and far between; the proposals for rescuing those who could be saved were marginalized, and life, more or less, went on. It seemed as though American Jews were fiddling while European Jews were burning.

There were notable exceptions to this pattern. One such exception was a series of concrete proposals presented by three Jewish Theological Seminary students in an article published in the *Reconstructionist Magazine* on March 5, 1943. Some of these proposals were adopted by the Synagogue Council of America. They were designed to raise the consciousness of American Jews to the plight of their brethren.

An example of how my father, z"l, [Rabbi Joseph H. Lookstein] and KJ [Kehilath Jeshurun, Rabbi Joseph Lookstein's synagogue] responded to the call of the Synagogue Council can be found on the front page of the *KJ Bulletin* right after Pesach, 1943:

The Synagogue Council of America decreed a six-week period of mourning for the millions of our brethren slain on the continent of Europe. Rabbi Lookstein announced this fact at the Yizkor services. Black ribbons were distributed to our worshippers, who were asked to wear them during this period. We are asked also to observe a partial fast on Mondays and Thursdays during that period and to donate the monies otherwise spent on food to the United Jewish Appeal. In addition, at the close of the main meal in every home, a special prayer should be recited by all members of the family. A copy of that prayer is enclosed with this Bulletin.

The Synagogue Council also called for a series of rallies in synagogues and churches around the country to be held in late May. ... It was the responsibility of the New York Board of Jewish Ministers, of which my father was then president, to carry out the call of the Synagogue Council of America in New York. ... The convocation planned was devotional in nature consisting of prayer, cantorial selections, biblical responses, and sermons devoted to the theme of the period of mourning and intercession on behalf of the Jewish martyrs. The committee agreed that the place to be selected for the gathering should be an Orthodox Synagogue. Several places were indicated: The West Side Institutional Synagogue, The Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue, Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun (KJ), and The Jewish Center. It was left to the chairman of the committee [Rabbi Ahron Opher] to contact the participants and to arrange for the place. ... Eventually, the event was scheduled at KJ." [from a sermon by Rabbi Haskel Lookstein]

Rabbi Haskel Lookstein believes there is hope that some lessons have been learned from that time. In a 2006 interview with Jeanette Friedman in the *New Jersey Jewish Standard*, he recalled the solidarity of the American Jewish actions and demonstrations on behalf of the Soviet Jews, which made clear

that we can respond and make a difference if we are

really motivated. We have also had massive rallies for Israel, and that proves that if we want to, we can put our parochial interests aside and worry about others. ... There has been a major change [since the 1960s], not so much in power, but in attitude. We have learned to be activists, because, as we saw with Soviet Jewry, activism works. When I spoke to the students [at the Ramaz High School in NYC] about Darfur, I told them that we know from the Soviet Jewry movement that protests and public activity achieve results. Therefore we have no right to sit back with folded arms.

He illustrates this belief with an anecdote reported by Friedman (2006), who writes:

In October 1986 he [Lookstein] received a telephone call inviting him to participate in a meeting on behalf of Soviet Jewry with Secretary of State George Shultz. It was just four days before Yom Kippur, Lookstein's busiest season, so he turned the invitation down. And then he had a flashback to October 6, 1943, when more than 400 American rabbis, who had just two days to prepare for Yom Kippur, took trains down to Washington to try to convince the administration to rescue the Jews of Europe. He changed his mind, accepted the invitation, and heard the secretary tell the group to make as much noise as they could if they wanted their brethren to be free. ■

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Laure-Anne Bosselaar's poetry sears with its vividly honest account of coming to terms with her parents' wartime complicity. "I am often asked," she explains, "why I continue to write about my childhood in post-war Belgium and why I'm so very much involved with denouncing, and thus fighting, antisemitism. My answer ... is always the same: Not writing about it seems out of the question: I believe it's my responsibility, particularly as the daughter of Nazi sympathizers, to keep the memory of what has happened alive."

Laure-Anne Bosselaar

The Feather at Breendonk

I am praying again, God—pale God—
here, between white sky and snow, by the larch
I planted last spring, with one branch broken at the elbow.
I pick it up, wave winter away, I do things like that,
call the bluebirds back, throwing yarn and straw
in the meadow, and they do come, so terribly blue,
their strangled *teoo-teoo*

echoing my prayer *Dieu, Dieu—*
the same *Dieu* who stained the feather I found
in the barbed fields of the Breendonk Concentration Camp
near Antwerp in 1952. My father tried to slap it
out of my hand: *It's filthy.* But I held on to it—
I knew it was an angel's. *They only killed*
a few Jews here, he said, *seven, eight hundred, maybe.*

So I wave their angels away with my feather,
away from my father, away from the terribly blue skies
over the Breendonk Canal, where barges loaded bricks
for Antwerp, where my father loaded ships for Rotterdam,
Bremerhaven and Hamburg—as Antwerp grew,
and the port expanded, and his business
flourished, and all the while he kept repeating:

That's all we needed: a good war ...

Antwerp 1947

From "Seven Fragments on Hearing a Hammer Pounding"

My parents, hoarding
profits from what they call
the good war, are happy:

a million hammers, ten million
nails are needed to rebuild Europe,
and my father sells iron and steel.

One's misery is
another's happiness, he says
as we drive through

Pelican Street and what
had been the Jewish Quarter.
I am five.

(Fifty years later I remember winds blew dust
and ashes through the empty bellies of bombed houses.
Some walls still stood. For no one. Guttled doors
and windows were like screaming mouths caught in brick:
blocks of them. And blocks and blocks of them—)

Father spits out
his cigarette: Nothing's
changed here, only pigeons

and rats instead of Jews.
I don't know that word: *Joden*,
he says in Dutch, *Joden*.

I ask what kind
of animals *Joden* are. My parents
laugh, laugh.

(To think I spoke their tongue before finding mine—
O Gods of Grief, grant me this: some tongues will die,
some tongues must.)

LAURE-ANNE BOSSELAAR is the author of *The Hour Between Dog and Wolf* and *Small Gods of Grief*, which received the Isabella Gardner Prize for Poetry in 2001. She is the editor of four anthologies, including *Outsiders: Poems About Rebels, Exiles and Renegades* and *Never Before: Poems about First Experiences*. She teaches a graduate poetry workshop at Sarah Lawrence College and translates American poetry into French and Flemish poetry into English. With her husband, Kurt Brown, she completed a translation of a book of poems by Flemish poet, critic, and essayist Herman de Coninck (Field Translation Series, 2006). To contact the poet, e-mail laureanne@mac.com

"Art, as the harbinger of social commentary, is a vital component of a flourishing democratic society that values independent voices and critical thinking," writes Carson Phillips. His exploration of the art of Willy Fick offers educators and students an important lens through which to view the responses of those Germans who chose to express their opposition to fascism. Phillips notes that "the need for individual responsibility in nurturing a civil society remains an essential effort." Pair this essay with the examination of modern-day Berlin memorials examined in depth by Pnina Rosenberg (pp. 90–96) and Phillips (pp. 97–104) for a rich and diverse study of art as dissent.

Carson Phillips

Willy Fick: The Metaphoric Language and Art of Dissent

When the community no longer raises objections, there is an end, too, to the suppression of evil passions, and men perpetrate deeds of cruelty, fraud, treachery and barbarity so incompatible with their level of civilization that one would have thought them impossible.

—Sigmund Freud (1964), "Thoughts for the Times on War and Death"

During the National Socialist period in Germany, as art and culture were being forged into expressions of Fascist ideology, dissenting artists voiced objections to the regime in astute and provocative ways. Willy Fick, a politically left-leaning Catholic from Cologne, Germany, expressed his opposition to fascism through a metaphorical use of imagery, shape, and texture in his artwork. If his middle-class upbringing and patriarchal family life made him an unlikely opponent of fascism, his involvement with the Dadaist movement that gave voice to his pacifist stance, his opposition to the military rearmament of Germany, and his reaction to the persecution of German Jewry demanded it.

The Dadaism that captured the imagination of German and European artists in the aftermath of WWI was the genesis for Fick's fusion of artistic styles. A member of the Cologne Dadaist "stupid"¹ group founded in 1920 by him, his sister Angelika Hoerle, Heinrich Hoerle, Franz Seiwert, Anton Räderscheidt, and Marta Hegemann, Fick's provocative style and bold use of color gave his work a unique flair. In an era when dissenting voices became increasingly scarce, Fick critiqued both the fascist re-ordering of all segments of German life and society and the apathy of so many ordinary Germans. His messages were powerful and subversive enough to have the Nazis deem his work *entartete kunst*, "degenerate art."

Much of Fick's work was destroyed in the 1944 bombing of Cologne. However, surviving pieces have been salvaged from reproductions in exhibition catalogues. These images provide Holocaust scholars and educators with another

lens through which to consider the paradigm of bystanders, active bystanders, and individuals who took action on behalf of another or others. For me, Fick is most aptly described as an "anti-bystander," someone who comments upon broad changes in society, reflects upon the values and directions being set by leaders, and attempts to revitalize critical thought in an apathetic or conformist population. This is, admittedly, a slightly different usage of the term than is usual in character or values education programs. In that context, "anti-bystander" is commonly used to describe the motivation of individuals to become active participants in events, whether intervening to prevent a physical act of violence or standing up and taking action on behalf of another. Describing Willy Fick, a pacifist and anti-fascist, as an anti-bystander draws attention to broader conceptual issues affecting society. Aware of what was happening around him, Fick used his talents to rally an apathetic citizenry toward engagement. Consequently, the anti-bystander has the potential to provoke critical thinking and effect positive change before violence actually occurs.

Fick's anti-bystander stance provided social commentary, highlighted broad societal concepts, and attempted to awaken an apathetic populace, much like a biblical prophet's role of conveying messages and warnings to a population straying off course. The following close examination of three of his works reveals an erudite artist who, as the precarious times necessitated, carefully veiled his dissenting opinions through sophisticated artistry.

In "Speaker" (*der Redner*) [Fig. 1], Fick cryptically con-



FIG. 1: Speaker / Redner
Archival Photograph from the Fick-Littlefield Collection.

demns the military build-up of the Luftwaffe by including the sequential letters ABDH. These reference the four-letter *Stammkennzeichen*, factory code, for the Heinkel He111.² This letter coding system, initiated after 1934, identified the manufacturer by the first two letters and the training school by the last two letters. The Heinkel He111 was built in violation of the Treaty of Versailles, and while it was described as a transport aircraft, it was in reality a medium bomber that could swiftly cover medium range distances. It became a standard *Luftwaffe* bomber, and by summer 1939 it would account for nearly 75 percent of the *Luftwaffe* bombing detachments.³ The speaker's arm, raised in a distorted fashion, seems to mimic the fascist salute, while two empty, white-chalked facial profiles pay attention to the speaker's actions. Their mouths, barely open, seem to mimic the minimal opposition to the path National Socialism embarked upon. Fick frequently used partial human forms and silhouettes to represent dehumanization and the negative effect of

living under a totalitarian regime. The masks that lay scattered about on the floor reference the unengaged, apathetic masses, who demonstrate an interest only in seeing what is put in front of them. Fick's dystopian public easily ignores the other facets of their community and the re-ordering process. These partial human beings, these *bystanders*, allow their futures to be dictated by the speaker. Fick's haunting image thus warns of the dangers of a totalitarian regime and the dangers of being a bystander to the events unfolding.

Similarly, "Glass Roof" (*der Glasdach*) [Fig. 2] provides a powerful depiction of the commodification of society under totalitarianism and the fate of individuals outside the realm of Nazi favor. The cyclical symbolism of the chessboard, a favorite technique of Fick's, represents both the unfolding of time and space as well as the ongoing alienation of dissenting voices and victims in German society. It strategically separates the diminutive figure of a man from the creeping, menacing vegetation on the other side of the painting. The critique is veiled, as was necessary for the times. However, the painting nonetheless manages to show the diminutive man melting into the chessboard, as if being erased from his environment. The allusion here is to a future wherein the creeping vegetation will overtake the chessboard and



FIG. 2: Glass Roof / Glasdach
Archival Photograph from the Fick-Littlefield Collection

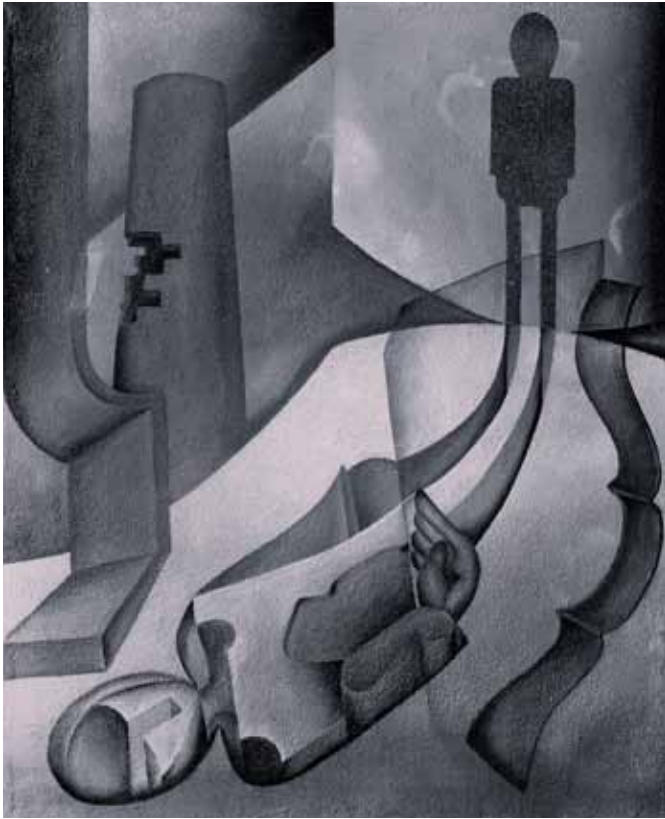


FIG. 3: Morceau
Archival Photograph from the Fick-Littlefield Collection

the solitary figure representing those outside the Nazi societal parameters will disappear, while the bomber ominously roams the sky. Fick's warning of the insidious onslaught of totalitarianism, the erosion of human rights, and the removal of individuals from society eerily foreshadows the future of the German Reich.

Finally, in "Morceau" [Fig. 3], the viewer encounters another haunting portrayal of both society and humanity. The industrial smokestack is fragmented at its center. This can be interpreted as the decay of ethical standards in German industry, which profited from the Nazi rearmament of Germany. Fick reverses the natural order of human being and shadow: The human figure is prostrate while the shadow becomes a tall, solitary figure on the horizon, representing the silencing of opposing voices. Here we encounter Fick's depiction of his new reality where dissent had to be practiced with discretion, in the shadows. These partial beings were Fick's visual metaphor for those who did not dissent or otherwise voice opposition to Nazi policies. As the human figure lies prone on the ground, it is impossible not to notice the resemblance to the fascist salute in the outstretched hand. When the shadows of humanity become the bulwark of ethical standards, ominous times are afoot.

Willy Fick developed his own metaphoric language so that he could continue to express his pacifist and anti-fascist

ideals. Art, as the harbinger of social commentary, is a vital component of a flourishing democratic society that values independent voices and critical thinking. Fick's imagery captured the emotional impact of the tyranny of National Socialism while expressing his objections to the regime. The need for individual responsibility in nurturing a civil society remains an essential effort for the twenty-first century. Speaking out against totalitarianism, antisemitism, and genocide and rejecting the passivity of the bystander continue to be as important for the global community today as when Fick created his art more than 70 years ago. ■

CARSON PHILLIPS is an educator with the Sarah and Chaim Neuberger Holocaust Education Centre in Toronto, Canada, and a Ph.D. candidate in Humanities at York University, where he is affiliated with the Canadian Centre for German and European Studies and the Israel and Golda Koschitzky Centre for Jewish Studies. Carson, a member of the *PRISM* editorial board, has interned at the Auschwitz Jewish Center in Oswiecim, Poland, and has presented his research at academic conferences in Austria, Canada, Germany, and the United States. To contact the author, e-mail cphillips@yorku.ca

NOTES

1. For more information on Fick's involvement with the "stupid" group, refer to Herzogenrath & Tueber (1986).
2. www.luftwaffe-experten.org/stammkennzeichen.html
3. www.waffenhq.de/flugzeuge/he111.html

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Gregory Paul Wegner examines the complex role played by teachers in Nazi Germany and explains, "At the most, Nazi education officials wanted obedient and loyal teachers who unquestioningly embraced the central antisemitic tenants behind the curriculum with ideological fervor. At the very least, what National Socialism occasionally tolerated in schools were the bystanders who, by going through the motions, remained complicit with the regime and less likely to 'rock the boat.'" Wegner makes clear "that the bystander was, first and foremost, complicit."

Gregory Paul Wegner

The Problem of the Bystander and Elementary School Teachers Under the Third Reich

The German noun *Mitläufer* captures a certain political meaning associated with the bystander. The word, which means "fellow traveler" in a formal translation, represented one of the categories used by the Allied denazification tribunals in assessing a German citizen's involvement with the Third Reich. A more direct translation renders it as someone who "runs along with" the regime (Terrell, et al. 1983, p. 463). Both of these levels of political meaning are important in understanding the complex role played by teachers in the body politic of the Third Reich. In this regard, the essay retains a focus on teachers in Germany proper and does not consider teachers in occupied or satellite countries. Although certainly important as a subject of investigation for the history of education or Holocaust studies, casting a net to include teachers outside Germany remains beyond the scope of this writing.

Aristotle once observed in his work *Politics* that any serious attempt to understand the political values of another culture must take into account how that culture schools its young (Book Eight, Part One, 1998, pp. 298–299). In a general sense, teaching about Nazi education and the roles played by teachers within the regime can help students of the Holocaust better understand the ideological ideals that Nazi leaders wanted to pass along to the young. At the same time, one learns that the concept of *bystander*, especially as applied to teachers, is more complex than is often perceived at first glance. The dual layers of meaning associated with the word *Mitläufer* connote both active and passive orientations by the bystander. This was particularly true for elementary and secondary school teachers in Nazi Germany and reminds readers that the profound moral implication of this relationship to the state is that the bystander was, first and foremost,

complicit with the regime (Barnett, 1999, p. 16).

Moreover, there existed profound differences between those teachers who chose to act as bystanders or fellow travelers and those, on the other hand, who took a certain path of resistance. Instructive in this regard is the example of the resister Gertrude Schulze. As a teacher at the elementary school in Berlin-Neu Lichtenberg from 1934–1943, Frau Schulze's experience reflected the great deal of intergenerational tension among teachers regarding professed loyalty to the regime. One of the oldest teachers in her school, Schulze had already spent a good share of her professional life during the Weimar Republic. Refusing to join the Nazi Party and openly disdaining active membership in the National Socialist Teachers Union (NSLB), the veteran teacher was adamant in her opposition to signing the oath of loyalty to Hitler required of teachers and school administrators. Young teachers, she recounted, often greeted their colleagues with the acclamation "Heil Hitler." Older teachers, herself included, often responded with the words "Heil ihn selber!" ("Salute him yourself!") In spite of her decided lack of enthusiasm for Nazi rule, Schulze still enjoyed the confidence of her school master, Herr Wendrig, who himself preserved his position by quickly joining the Socialist Unity Party in East Germany after the war. From Schulz's perspective, the vast majority of teachers from her school, especially those from the younger generation, maintained their role as fellow travelers until the collapse of the Third Reich. They did not speak in opposition to the regime while "following the rules" and thus joined the ranks of the millions who conformed to Nazi rule without question (Wegner, 1988, pp. 248–249). It is from this state of affairs that dictatorships are possible.

The significance of the bystander is also best understood

from the other end of the spectrum regarding activist teachers who remained deeply imbued with Nazi ideology and the call to transform the curriculum along antisemitic lines. Often among the leading voices in the NSLB, these teachers saw in Hitler's Reich and the formation of a racial state a promising direction for Germany's future. Hans Schemm, the original leader of the NSLB, is an excellent example of the strident Nazi activist who saw in antisemitic curriculum reform and racially conscious teachers an important means to transform the youth of Germany. He also was adamant in his opposition against bystander teachers who "stood on the fence" while expecting career advancement. In a speech before a group of educators in Bavaria, the union leader and master teacher articulated one of the most succinct Nazi summations of what it meant to be an educated person: "We don't intend to educate our children into becoming miniature scholars. ... Let us have, rather, ten pounds less knowledge and ten calories more character" (Kahl-Furthmann, 1935, pp. 175–178).

In the recently published memoirs of a former elementary school student from the era of the Third Reich, one learns about an activist teacher from the upper grades in a Catholic school in Solingen who frequently integrated antisemitic invective into his lessons. Ursula Blank-Chiu (2006) recalled the severe religious tone of this teacher's antisemitic hatred in 1934 when he insisted that "Jews condemned Jesus to death—another proof of their viciousness and guilt. That is why they have to wear the yellow star on their sleeves" (p. 79). Placed within a broader context, the author also noted that the local priest openly challenged this and other Nazi attacks on Jews, confrontations not lost on the students or other members of the teaching staff.

Recent research tells us that not all teachers in the Third Reich were hard-core Nazis, although, like all civil servants, teachers were required to take an oath of support for Hitler (Lamberti, 2001, pp. 53–82). That Frau Schulze managed to resist this Nazi legal requirement remains noteworthy as it stood as an exception to the general rule of conformity to the regime. A closer look at the Third Reich and its attempt to nazify the German school system reveals that the process of enforcing ideological conformity was not nearly as monolithic as one might imagine. School textbooks were not fully brought into line with the antisemitic ideological orientation in Nazi schools until 1937, four years after Hitler's rise to power. During the closing years of the Weimar Republic in 1932 and 1933, recruiters from the National Socialist Teachers League (NSLB) reported difficulties in recruiting into the ranks of the union elementary school teachers over age 40, many of whom were liberal Democrats and supporters of the Social Democratic Party (Lamberti, 2001, p. 54). The age difference in political loyalties implicit in this observation proved to be very propitious for later successes by the

Nazis in campaigns to increase union and party membership among both elementary and secondary school educators. A study of Nazi Party membership from before 1933 conducted by Konrad Jarausch and Gerhard Arminger (1989) concluded that the most likely sources of recruitment of National Socialism among teachers were those who were young, Protestant, and small-town dwellers.

An extensive campaign of *Gleichschaltung*, the process of placing all institutions under the full control of the Nazi dictatorship, became part of everyday life for classroom teachers. At the most, Nazi education officials wanted obedient and loyal teachers who unquestioningly embraced the central antisemitic tenants behind the curriculum with ideological fervor. At the very least, what National Socialism occasionally tolerated in schools were the bystanders who, by going through the motions, remained complicit with the regime and less likely to "rock the boat."

The pressure for institutional complicity was enormous. Teachers were expected to join their students at a school-wide *Appell* (roll call and flag-raising) in the school yard each morning before the start of the class day, to raise the flag of the Reich and pledge their allegiance [Fig.1]. The vast majority of elementary school teachers were not trained in antisemitic pedagogy when the Nazis came to power in 1933. The Nazi education ministry planned teacher seminars across Germany to reorient teachers to the major tenets of the racial state. Not surprisingly, Nazi officials discovered that the enthusiasm for integrating antisemitic principles across the curriculum was definitely more evident among younger teachers, many of whom were unemployed during the Great Depression. In one of the first curriculum directives from



FIG. 1: Flag Raising at an Elementary School Pedagogical Training School at Bayreuth, 1940. Photo courtesy of Stadtarchiv Bayreuth



FIG. 2: A Teacher Before an Elementary School Class Pedagogical Training School at Bayreuth, 1940. Photo courtesy of Stadtarchiv Bayreuth

the Nazi Education Ministry, Bernard Rust cited Hitler's *Mein Kampf* in impressing upon teachers the importance of children leaving school with an understanding of blood purity and its importance for themselves and the survivability of the German community (Reich Ministerium für Wissenschaft, Erziehung und Volksbildung, September, 1933).

These early developments are mentioned here to emphasize that teachers had a choice to make if they planned to remain in the profession under the direct rule of a biological and racial state (Bäumer-Schleinkofer, 1995, pp. 18–38). Membership roles in the Nazi Party show the relatively high number of teachers in the organization (Wippermann, 1993, p. 210). As noted earlier, such a development does not assume that all teacher members of the Nazi Party were hard-core ideologues motivated by antisemitic hatred or nationalistic fervor. The role of the teacher as bystander is instructive because of the powerful implications of choosing to say no to the state versus the much safer position of simply remaining silent and thus maintain complicity in “running with the regime.” While not justifying the latter course of action, one notes the significant influences of fear and terror in shaping the political behavior of teachers as well as other members of the populace who chose not to raise moral questions about Nazi policies (Gellately, 2001, pp. 22–26). Like other professionals in German society, teachers were investigated on a regular basis for ideological reliability in instructing future

generations of German youth [Fig. 2].

For some teachers, the pressure to become Nazi activists and strident ideologues became even greater with the growing influence of the Hitler Youth. In some schools, especially on the secondary level, Hitler Youth leaders held more influence over pupils than did classroom teachers. Hitler Youth, for example, did not leave antisemitic ideological training to the main line schools and their teachers. Night classes organized by Hitler Youth on Nazi ideology symbolized a widespread belief among Nazi leaders that many teachers were not loyal or fervent enough in their support of the Nazi state. When taking into account the professions of law, engineering, and teaching, Nazi society as a whole valued lawyers and engineers much more than teachers (Jarausch, 1985, pp. 390–396). Reflecting both the widespread mistrust for teachers in the Nazi power structure and Hitler's own anti-intellectual bent, a series of elite schools came on the scene beginning in

1933. Called the Adolf Hitler Schools, these institutions were intended for the training of future leaders in the Nazi Party. Other elite schools followed including the National Political Learning Institutes (NAPOLAS) organized by the SS for the formation of future SS functionaries and bureaucrats. In these, the bystander was not considered safe enough to teach German youth because of his or her lack of ideological commitment and antisemitic fervor. On the other hand, continued support of bystander teachers in the traditional public school environment was one factor that helped make the Third Reich possible as an ongoing political entity. A bystander may not always be motivated by either strident antisemitism or career advancement. Some, like the teacher educator Paula B. in Victor Klemperer's (2000) important study of Nazi propaganda, became swept up in the emotional appeal of Hitler as savior while embracing without question an abiding faith in the Nazi leader to restore Germany's greatness. That Hitler's politics remained essentially racist and antisemitic was not an issue of importance to her (Klemperer, pp. 103, 118). Most significantly, the bystander lacked the ability or the will to mount a moral challenge to the injustice of the dictatorship and the false premises behind what constituted the “educated person” under the Third Reich, a failure that represented the darkest part of the bystander's legacy.

A bystander teacher from Nazi schools feigning ignorance of the Holocaust and the Jewish question, as was evi-

dent in parts of the denazification process after 1945, could be directly discredited by the documentation of very public events in the Third Reich. The dismissal of all Jewish teachers came in 1933 under the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service. Jewish school children were often subjected to brutalizing behavior in schools, segregation from their peers, and insults from teachers. By November 15, 1938, in the shadow of the Night of the Broken Glass, Jewish children experienced expulsion from German schools by law in the Third Reich. These developments were not secret and hidden from the general population. They remained an important part of a larger process of antisemitic stereotyping, prejudice, and eventual annihilation to which the bystander remained a party.

IMPLICATIONS FOR HOLOCAUST EDUCATION

Examining the role played by the *Mitläufer*, the bystanders, in the teaching profession of Nazi Germany presents educators with significant challenges. With much of the attention in Holocaust education directed toward the perpetrator and the victim, the role of the bystander remained easily overlooked by historians for five decades after Auschwitz. The bystander raises disturbing but essential questions about the nature of citizenship and the potential harm wrought by sheer indifference and silence (Barnett, 1999, pp. 112–113). The questions are vexing, to say the least, and imply a linking of historical and literary perspectives from the Holocaust to ongoing challenges faced in the public square today. What factors support the establishment and growth of the bystander in civic life? How does the position of bystander continue to support and legitimize dictatorships today? To what extent is the practice of the bystander a threat to the health of present-day democracies? In what ways did the United States assume the position of bystander in the Holocaust and what factors explained this position? This latter question remains at the heart of much contemporary debate about the legacy of bystanders and collaborators, a curriculum feature often overlooked in middle and secondary school Holocaust education courses (Morris, 2001, pp. 157–160; Hamerow, 2008, pp. 210–285). Furthermore, when we bring the discussion of the bystander into contemporary concerns, we should challenge student thinking about how and why the United Nations and the United States assumed the role of bystander in the Rwandan genocide of 1994 and at what cost. A speculative question might be in order: What could be the legacy of the bystander for civic life in the twenty-first century? [See “Judging the Bystander with a Measure of Humility: A Response,” in this issue, pp. 35–36.—Eds.]

One could argue, with justification, that German schools and their teachers cannot be held wholly responsible for Auschwitz. What transpired as the most devastating genocide of the twentieth century was made possible by a convergence

of factors including the severe economic dislocation wrought by the Great Depression, profound political instability, the legacy of World War I, and the long- and short-term dynamics of antisemitism (Burleigh, 2000, pp. 27–206). However, schools and their teachers were responsible for helping to create and legitimize the atmosphere of hate and prejudice that led to the mass murder of millions.

Interestingly, the only teacher brought to justice at the Nuremberg Trials was Julius Streicher, a former elementary school teacher and subsequently one of the most virulent antisemitic propagandists of the Third Reich. His weekly antisemitic newspaper, *Der Stürmer*, was used in classrooms across Nazi Germany. Missing from the docket was anyone from the teaching profession who represented the bystanders. Yet the Third Reich needed and was built on both hard-core ideological supporters from among members of the teaching profession and obedient bystanders willing to remain silent and apathetic to the suffering of others. Both kinds of supporters were necessary for the fascist state and its educational edifice to exist.

That our society has learned anything from this historical reality remains highly questionable. Perhaps one of the most important roles for Holocaust education is to raise difficult questions for which easy answers do not exist. How and why teachers became bystanders is one of them.

GREGORY PAUL WEGNER, PH.D., is a professor in the Department of Educational Studies at the University of Wisconsin–La Crosse. Among his recent publications are *Antisemitism and Schooling under the Third Reich* (2002, New York: Routledge) and a study of Nazi propaganda titled “A propagandist of extermination: Johann von Leers and the antisemitic formation of young children in Nazi Germany” in *Paedagogica Historica* (2007) 43: 299–235. The author is western Wisconsin regional coordinator for National History Day, a program of historical research for middle and high school students. To contact the author, e-mail wegner.greg@uwlax.edu ■

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Hans and Sophie Scholl (core members of The White Rose) “are exemplary in defining the very concept of a bystander, in unequivocally rejecting that stance as an option, and in urging their countrymen and women to do the same,” writes Jud Newborn. The art of Rose Hatmaker and Jennifer Utz offers a tribute to these young German anti-bystanders as well as a point of entry for the study of their actions during the Holocaust.

Jud Newborn

“Cast off the Cloak of Indifference!": A Tribute to Hans and Sophie Scholl

We want to cite the fact that since the conquest of Poland, three hundred thousand Jews have been murdered in that country in a bestial manner. Here we see the most terrible crime committed against the dignity of man, a crime that has no counterpart in human history. ... Why tell you these things, since you are fully aware of them? ... Because this touches on a problem that involves us deeply. ... Why are the German people so apathetic in the face of these abominable crimes, crimes so unworthy of the human race? Hardly anyone thinks about that. It is simply accepted as fact and put out of mind. ... Everyone shrugs off this guilt, falling asleep with his conscience at peace. But he cannot shrug it off: Everyone is *guilty, guilty, guilty!* ... It is not too late, however. ... (Leaflet 2 of The White Rose, The German Student Anti-Nazi Resistance Group, June 1942, excerpted and revised from Newborn & Dumbach, 2006, pp. 190–191)

Hans and Sophie Scholl, young German brother and sister activists, were former Hitler Youth leaders who underwent a unique transformation to become tireless anti-Nazis. In Munich, Germany, from June 1942 to February 1943, they issued a staccato burst of six leaflets that they distributed at risk of their lives. These leaflets were filled with extraordinary statements accusing Germans of being bystanders,



FIG. 1: Tribute to “The White Rose,” published with permission of Rose Hatmaker and Jennifer Utz

making them aware of the evils of bystanding, and exhorting them to “cast off the cloak of indifference you have wrapped around you.” (Leaflet 5 of the White Rose, January 1943, Newborn & Dumbach, 2006, p. 199.) “We will not be silent,” they wrote elsewhere. “We are your bad conscience. The White Rose will not leave you in peace!” (Leaflet 4 of the White Rose, June 1942, Newborn & Dumbach, 2006, p. 198.) Since the Scholls were addressing the entire German populace, they are exemplary in defining the very concept of a bystander, in unequivocally rejecting that stance as an option, and in urging their countrymen and women to do the same. This charcoal-transferred print [Fig. 1], by Rose Hatmaker and Jennifer Utz, is a tribute to them.

In creating “Transcendence: Hans and Sophie Scholl Under Hitler,” the artists, then students at Thomas More College in Kentucky, incorporated constantly reiterated images along with backward and upside-down writing. Their source material included text describing the White Rose as well as headlines and phrases excerpted from my article “Echoes of the White Rose: Individual Morality in the Shadow of Hitler’s Holocaust” (1999). Their work, which was inspired by a multimedia dramatic lecture I delivered, “Speaking Truth to Power: Sophie Scholl and the White Rose—Role Models in the Fight for Freedom Today” (Newborn, 2002), explores the enigma of the White Rose identities and their unique journey from hate to bystanding to humanity. The artists write:

Because of our perceived limitations of our medium, our sense of urgency as we worked under pressure to finish our project, and our fear that our audience would not be receptive to our message, our respect and admiration for the Scholls grew daily as we reflected on and tried to comprehend more concretely the secrecy and stress under which the White Rose worked, the enormous challenges they confronted in being heard and accepted, and the sometimes disabling effects of the very real dangers they faced.

Sophie and Hans Scholl were caught by the Nazis on February 18, 1943, after scattering leaflets from an upper gallery in the University of Munich atrium. They were tried and executed five days later, on February 22, 1943. ■

JUD NEWBORN, PH.D., is a historian, lecturer, author, and curator. He served as consultant, senior researcher, and historian for New York’s Museum of Jewish Heritage—A Living Memorial to the Holocaust. He is co-author of *Sophie Scholl and the White Rose* (2006) and presents dramatic multimedia lectures relating their story to the fight for human rights and freedom today. He currently consults as Special Projects Curator for the Cinema Arts Centre of Long Island, NY. To contact the author, visit his Web site at <http://www.judnewborn.com> or e-mail jnewbo@aol.com

ROSE HATMAKER is a substitute teacher in the Boone County, KY, school system. She teaches pencil and charcoal drawing and oil painting to teens and adults. Her work has been shown in such galleries as the Fusion Gallery in Fairfield, KY; the Thomas More Art Gallery in Crestviewhills, KY, where one of her pieces is on permanent display; and the gallery and Web site of Art Beyond Boundaries in Cincinnati, OH. To contact the artist, e-mail rosehatmaker@aol.com

JENNIFER UTZ is an artist pursuing a Master’s degree in education and licensure as a visual specialist from the College of Mount St. Joseph, Cincinnati, OH. To contact the artist, e-mail decojenutz@gmail.com

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David B. Axelrod writes, "While the father and son in my poem are part of the story [poet] Bill Heyen lays out regarding his own father (who worked building DC-3s), the actual aunt who told her story within the poem, pretty much as I retell it, was my German professor. ... 'It smelled like pot roast cooking' is a line I couldn't forget and probably could not even make up! ... The story stunned me. My hope is the poem stands on its own as a troubling answer to certain questions."

David B. Axelrod

The Suffering Cuts Both Ways

A swastika poem for Bill Heyen

The German-American boy,
what could he understand of war or pain—
his father, scraping swastikas off the front door.
The boy was only six. His immigrant father
worked in a defense plant on Long Island
riveting the fuselages of Douglas DC-3s.
What could a boy know of Bergen-Belsen,
Buchenwald? When the news came that Roosevelt
was dead, he cried because he couldn't go
to the picture show his mother promised.
But Hitler, hidden deep within the bunkers
beneath Berlin, stamped and screamed
the gods had sent a sign his Reich
would rise again from ashes and bombed-
out cities.

When the boy was twenty-three
he visited Germany and the family
who'd stayed behind. One older aunt
served tea and strudel which he savored,
but he had to ask her, what was she doing
during the war? How could it have happened?
It was then she dropped the smile—
the fond expression for this brother's son—

and, in a voice like testimony at a trial,
she explained:

Your Uncle Max and I, we had
a camera store. He was alive then.
We had a family and our business.
So I would walk to work, past the train
tracks and the depot and I would hear
moaning, and once I think I saw a hand
sticking out of a boxcar. But it was
the war. That wasn't anybody's business.
What could I do? Only once ... once
I was walking home and the smoke—
you know, the *smoke*—I smelled it,
and I shouldn't say this. It was late,
supper time, and I couldn't help myself
from thinking: it smelled like pot roast cooking.

So very human her response, he finally understood.

DAVID B. AXELROD has published in hundreds of magazines and anthologies, and his work has been translated into 14 languages. He is the recipient of three Fulbright fellowships and was the first official Fulbright poet-in-residence in the People's Republic of China. He also served as Poet Laureate of Suffolk County, Long Island, from 2007–2009. Axelrod's 19th and newest book, *How to Apologize* (Paradise Islands Press, 2009), was a Small Press Review pick of the month. His Web site is www.writersunlimited.org/laureate. To contact the poet, e-mail axelrodthepoet@yahoo.com

Rochelle L. Millen joins Steven McMichael (pp. 67–72) and Patrick Connelly (pp. 73–76) in reflecting on their teaching about the bystander to Christian students, in this case, at Wittenberg, where “the Lutheran affiliation of the university make the German Lutheran Church an ideal focus for discussing the issues relating to the bystander.” Millen’s goals, she writes, include transforming her “students in some way, to help them become more sensitive, better people moved to act when confronted by cruelty, suffering, and wrongdoing. That lofty and challenging aim is most readily brought to cognizance by exploring the position of the bystander.”

Rochelle L. Millen

Reflections on Bystanders: A Pedagogic Paradox

Societies are not made of sticks and stones, but of men [sic] whose individual characters, by turning the scale one way or another, determine the direction of the whole.

—Socrates, in Plato’s *The Republic*, Book Eight

Ben Azzai says: Run to do a minor good deed (*mitzvah kalah*) and flee from wrongdoing (*averah*). A good deed leads to another, while a sin/transgression/wrongdoing leads to another sin/transgression/wrongdoing [my translation].

—*Mishnah Pirkei Avot*, 4:2

It is 1994 and I am in the airport in Frankfurt, Germany. I have just come from New York and am changing planes for the short ride to Berlin, where I will give a paper at a conference titled “Remembering for the Future II” at Humboldt University. It should be exciting to walk the very halls where Hegel taught, but I am, instead, filled with trepidation.

I grew up in a family in which many relatives had been killed by the Nazis in what was then Poland (now Ukraine). I have letters from my mother’s older brother and from her cousin, who had graduated medical school at the Sorbonne and then returned to Poland. They, with their families and the many aunts and uncles and cousins who lived in the vicinity, were gunned down by *Einsatzgruppen* A. The four of us in our family, all born after my parents came to the U.S. in the late 1930s, were carefully inculcated with the rule: Never buy anything made in Germany. And we didn’t.

Should I then, as an academic and as a traditional Jew, walk on German soil, even 49 years later? Should I spend tourist dollars in Germany? Should I acknowledge in my heart that Germany, of the many nations involved in the Holocaust, is the country that stands out in its many efforts toward repentance for its inglorious past? I decided it was time to place my feet on the very soil of the original perpetrators and instigators of the Holocaust, the Germans. I went.

There in the Frankfurt airport, though, walking between terminals among the many travelers, I was seized with an eerie and palpable vision. I broke into a sweat, worked to maintain my composure, and kept on walking. If I were fleeing through this very airport, I thought, and German police were pursuing me—to capture me because I was Jewish—would any of the hundreds of people who trekked by stop to help me hide or resist the pursuers? Would I be an identity emptied of my personhood by some legal proclamation and thus not worthy of such assistance, a human being whose situation did not call out for compassion and moral action? I come from a tradition in which ethical action in the face of evil is required: “You shall not stand idly by the blood of your neighbor,” states Leviticus (19:16). I paused momentarily, trying to see the people around me as persons, not as the collective Germans, and breathed deeply. Then I proceeded to the gate for departure for Berlin. Whenever I think of the bystanders during the *Shoah*, whenever I teach about the bystanders—the many permutations of situations that arose during the tragic and horrible years of Nazism in Europe—I see myself, perspiring and walking, step by step, through the Frankfurt airport.

The Holocaust did not begin with mass murder. It began with a government-sponsored climate of hate and an abun-

dance of discriminatory measures. It tapped into the layer of antisemitism dormant—and sometimes not so dormant—in Western European society, even in the first third of the twentieth century.¹ The climate incrementally worked to arouse the tendency to look askance at those who are not like us, to objectify the Other, and most people went along. In the early 1930s, German professors silently watched as their Jewish colleagues were forcibly removed from their teaching positions; doctors welcomed the opportunity to increase their patient load; judges and lawyers sat by as the judiciary was “cleansed of Jews.” Lovers of Bach ignored the fact that the music of Felix Mendelssohn, who had revived Bach’s *oeuvre* in the nineteenth century, was forbidden because of his Jewish roots; devotees of the composer Kurt Weill, of *The Threepenny Opera* fame, noted not only his disappearance but also the complete absence of his usually substantial musical offerings: He was forced by the Nazis to flee in March, 1933. People acquiesced in the Nazis’ singling out and persecuting Jews for many reasons. It was their public acceptance that emboldened the Nazis toward broader and more aggressive action, and ultimately, the Final Solution.

THE MORAL CONUNDRUM OF THE BYSTANDERS

The epigraphs that begin this essay point to the moral conundrum bystanders pose. As a historical and moral category, bystanders are more “gray” than are perpetrators, victims, and rescuers. They bring to the fore an intricate, tangled, difficult, and complex dilemma. As Socrates wrote in the fifth century BCE, individuals can, and often do, determine the “direction of the whole.” But the converse is also true; the societal framework, its assumptions, attitudes, and aims assist the formation of the individual character. The Mishnah makes a bold statement relating to what would now be called behavioral psychology: The building of character occurs one step at a time, spawning deep roots. When a parent insists a child say “thank you” or welcome a stranger, civility and hospitality begin to become habitual. Both good and bad behavior can become ingrained and integrated into the essential nature of a person.²

This is an issue I present to students in different ways throughout our semester together in Religion 200, “Reflections on the Holocaust: History, Literature, Theology.” In my introduction on the first day of classes, I tell the students that despite my deep belief in liberal arts education, I sometimes ponder what effect my teaching can have.

“After all, “I say, “much of who you are, your habits and tendencies and proclivities, is already formed. Parents are your first teachers; can I challenge and add to all they have already given you? Can your experiences in my classroom be formative and far-reaching?”

Those of us who teach the Holocaust, any of the intertwined aspects of its history, literature, theology, or ethics,

confront the problem of presenting the bystander. It is the aspect of Holocaust studies with which my students, university-level young people at a Lutheran-affiliated school of 2100 students,³ most identify. In the journals students are required to keep, they sometimes raise the troubling question “what would I have done?” and confess the fear that they might have looked away. This is especially so with the committed and more sophisticated Lutheran students who struggle with the positions of the Lutheran Church in Germany in the 1930s and 1940s.

THE ROLE OF THE GERMAN LUTHERAN CHURCH

One venue for confronting the issue of the bystander in my class is through analysis of the role of the German Lutheran Church during 1933–1945. Wittenberg is one of 28 colleges and universities affiliated with the liberal Lutheran movement here in the United States called the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Formed in 1987, the ELCA is an amalgamation of three liberal branches of Lutheranism and stands in opposition to the Missouri-Synod, a large right-wing Lutheran group. About 26 percent of the students at Wittenberg identify themselves as Lutheran; that and the Lutheran affiliation of the university make the German Lutheran Church an ideal focus for discussing the issues relating to the bystander. Thus I introduce my students to excerpts from Martin Luther’s 1523 essay, “That Jesus Christ was Born a Jew,” in which he reaches out to Jews, urging them to convert to the new, more authentic Christianity his changes in doctrine had brought forth, as well as his 1543 diatribe, “Concerning the Jews and Their Lies.” Here his words are dramatically different; he lashes out in vitriolic and venomous language. “What shall we Christians do with this Damned, rejected race of Jews?” he shouts, and continues, “Let me give you my honest advice.”

First, their synagogues ... should be set on fire. ... Secondly, their homes should likewise be broken down and destroyed. ... Thirdly, they should be deprived of their prayer-books and Talmuds, in which such idolatry, lies, cursing, and blasphemy are taught ... everything they possess they stole and robbed from us through their usury. ... God’s rage is so great against them that they only become worse and worse. ... Therefore away with them. (Marcus, 1990, p. 167)

This passage especially causes great consternation and dismay. Most students remain unfamiliar with Luther’s anti-Jewish writings, especially this call for violence, repeatedly used by the Nazis as justification for genocide.

Luther, founder of the modern German language and translator of the Bible into German, was a cultural icon of the German nation; his anti-Jewish diatribes were enthusiasti-

cally adopted by the Nazis in the 1930s. Luther's sentiments and recommendations regarding Jews were incorporated into the statements and writings of Hitler in *Mein Kampf*; of Hitler's Education Minister, Bernard Rust; of Hans Hinkel, who worked with Goebbels in the Ministry of Propaganda; and most notoriously, of Julius Streicher, who even used Luther to defend himself at his trial at Nuremberg. Thus, Luther's influence has resonated over the centuries.

We discuss the lack of outcry within the German Lutheran Church to the increasing marginalization of Jews in Germany between 1933–1939 and the justifications of anti-Jewish measures with various standard antisemitic rationales: Jews, after all, had committed deicide (although the Romans, not the Jews, killed Jesus), rejected Christ, and still carried the burden of Matthew's words in 27:25: "His blood be on us and on our children." Despite the many biblical scholars, Christian theologians, and religion professors who rejected the notion of collective and eternal guilt implied in Matthew, the Nazis were easily able to reclaim the earlier, anti-Jewish interpretation. The German Lutheran Church rarely questioned the racial designations of the propaganda machine and had internalized the notion of Jewish culpability for many social ills. (Millen, 2001)

I also require students to read Leon Stein's (2001) "A Parting at the Cross: The Contrasting National Cultures in Germany and Denmark during the Holocaust." Stein demonstrates how the Lutheran Church in each country was deeply influenced by the civil culture in which it flourished, so much so that the corrosive words of Luther in his 1543 essay simply did not resonate with the Danes. Stein's comparison sharpens the moral conundrum of both the institutional and individual bystander, leading students to ask more nuanced and penetrating questions.

An additional layer of complexity is added to teaching about the bystander by use of the DVD based on Robert P. Ericksen's (1985) book of the same name, *Theologians Under Hitler: Gerhard Kittel, Paul Althaus, and Emanuel Hirsch*. Coauthor of the noted 10-volume *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, (see Kittel & Friedrich, 1985). Kittel was a vociferous antisemite, defending his views even after 1945. One student wrote the following in her journal:

The perversion of the Lutheran Church (I can't think of a better term for it) is hard for me to take in. ... The Barmen Declaration, while it opposed the *Deutsche Christen* [German Christian Movement] was certainly not anti-Nazi. It did not care what happened to Jews. All this document, created by the Confessing Church, was concerned with was a return to a scriptural basis and safety for Jews who had converted to Christianity. ... [Gerhard] Kittel was of special interest to me, because I will probably use his *Theological Dictionary* when I go to seminary. I simply

don't see how I'll ever be able to look at that book without thinking, "This man helped come up with the answer to 'the Jewish question.'" ... It is unbelievable to me that men who dedicated their lives to studying the Bible, especially the Gospels and the life of Christ, could end up being ... ardent Nazis. (journal entry)

In another journal entry, this student commented upon the establishment of the Institute for Study and Eradication of Jewish Influence on German Church Life, which in 1939 published a well-received version of parts of the Christian Bible in a de-judaized form.

"This group," she wrote, "decided to erase Jewish roots from Christianity. This leaves me with a blank stare on my face. How can you erase Jewish roots from Christianity? Jesus was Jewish!" (journal entry).

Toward the conclusion of the section on the German Lutheran church and the issue of bystanders, we discuss the Declaration of the ELCA to the Jewish Community, officially proclaimed on April 18, 1994. This declaration is an extraordinary document, combining a statement of repentance ("We particularly deplore the appropriation of Luther's words by modern antisemites for the teaching of hatred toward Judaism or toward the Jewish people in our day. ... Grieving the complicity of our own tradition within this history of hatred") with the call for action ("We pledge this church to oppose the deadly working of such bigotry. ... Finally, we pray for the continued blessing of the Blessed one upon the increasing cooperation and understanding between Lutheran Christians and the Jewish community" (see Barnett, 1999; Henry, 1988). Unknown to me at the time I was hired to teach Jewish Studies in 1988, the then-president of Wittenberg, Dr. William Kinnison, was among those working on the formulation of this declaration. Creating a position in Jewish Studies in the Department of Religion was clearly related to the movement within the ELCA to deal with the legacy of its German roots.

Most of us are neither victims nor perpetrators but rather bystanders. As bystanders, we remain vigilant against those who espouse hate; we decide how to respond. What would the people in the Frankfurt airport have done that day in 1994 had I been pursued by hooligans or by the Nazi police? What would I have done in their place? I do not wish to explore here the question of how a liberal arts education broadens horizons, develops critical thinking, and challenges the reconfiguration of adolescent concepts. It is clear to me, however, that my task when teaching the Holocaust, especially when focusing upon the bystanders, is to draw each student into the moral quandary faced by onlookers to evil. Whether we analyze the bystanders of Sonderburg, Mauthausen, or the many observers of Polish, Hungarian, Romanian, French, Dutch, Ukrainian, and Russian persecution of

Jews (see Staub, 1989), we confront a blurred category. For the bystander is more than simply physically present and passive in the face of injustice. By silent compliance, the bystander becomes an accessory to crime, a participant in the social structure that brought the crime to actualization. There cannot be neutrality in the face of human suffering, for all experiences change us, sometimes leading to submission, to aversion, or to action. As Vicki Barnett (1999) writes:

The term *bystander* not only identifies a person's status with regard to a particular event, but implies a certain form of behavior, including the decision to become involved or remain uninvolved. ... In other words, bystanders are confronted by a wide range of behavioral options, and they bear some responsibility for what happens. (p. 10)

She continues, "The genocide of the European Jews would have been impossible without the active participation of bystanders to carry it out and the failure of numerous parties to intervene to stop it. The Holocaust did not occur in a vacuum (p. 11).

There is a series of concentric circles of bystander responsibility: the individual, the institutional, and the national/international (Wilson, 1993). Each circle creates its own ethical issues: The lack of an overall statement of condemnation from the Pope during the Holocaust is different from the assistance offered, or not, by individual Catholic nuns and priests. My task is in some measure to actualize the realization that empathy, compassion for the Other, responsibility for one whose face is our mirror-image is the only way to teach goodness. In the same way as instruction in evil can occur, goodness can similarly be taught.

TEACHING GOALS

A goal of my teaching the Holocaust is to transform my students in some way, to help them become more sensitive, better people moved to act when confronted by cruelty, suffering, and wrongdoing. That lofty and challenging aim is most readily brought to cognizance by exploring the position of the bystander. One is forced to deal with subtleties of ethical theory and moral nuance when approaching the ambiguities of the bystander: The train engineer who drove cars of Jews to Auschwitz; the truck driver and cleaning personnel in Mauthausen; the non-medical staff in Hartheim; those who averted their eyes during marches in Sachsenhausen; those who gloated when taking over a Jewish business or moving into a formerly Jewish home. The ethical and moral dilemmas are generally not as apparent and are different in kind as when looking at the perpetrator or sometimes even the rescuer.

I will conclude where I began, in Germany in 1994. Part of the conference in which I participated was an optional

visit to the camp of Sachsenhausen-Oranienberg, approximately 35 kilometers from Berlin. About 300 of us, Holocaust scholars from all over the world, traveled there by chartered buses. Before arriving at the camp, we passed through the town of Sachsenhausen-Oranienberg, a short distance from the camp perimeter. It was around 3:00 p.m., and mothers were walking with animated school-age children adorned with backpacks of all colors. Some of the women carried small paper bags, perhaps holding warm rolls and fresh milk. It was a normal mid-afternoon scene in a small town. This town, though, was nearly adjacent to a concentration/killing camp established in 1936 primarily for political prisoners. In March 1943, a gas chamber and ovens were constructed; were local villagers hired for the project? They had been so hired in Hartheim, which became a killing outpost of both Mauthausen and Dachau and which used local labor for many tasks: secretaries, drivers, janitors. Sachsenhausen contained SS workshops and a plant owned by Heinkel, the aircraft manufacturer. It had a camp kitchen and camp laundry and was surrounded by a tall, stone fence. From 1936–1945, close to 200,000 people passed through Sachsenhausen, from which there were few successful escapes. The death toll from exhaustion, disease, medical experimentation, shooting, and pure brutality was about 30,000, mostly Russian prisoners of war; Jews were often shipped East. The camp contained a huge IBM computer, which was the central organizing feature of all the Nazi-controlled railways throughout Europe.

What did the townspeople do with their knowledge of what went on in their neighborhood, behind that stone fence? They saw; they heard; they smelled. In the town of Mauthausen, citizens in February 1945 assisted the Nazis in hunting down starving prisoners who had managed to escape. The villagers had become "deputized to act as killers" (Horowitz, 1998, p. 413), men, women, and teenage boys. However, the moral identity of some bystanders was not completely eroded or overwhelmed. Some offered a prisoner half a lighted cigarette, a slice of bread, a place to hide, a knowing look of the eyes. Small acts of ordinary, everyday kindness are the stuff of which moral heroism is constructed.

THE PEDAGOGIC PARADOX

The pedagogic paradox posed by the category of bystander is characterized and best represented by the moral ambiguity each of us faces in the moral choices we constantly encounter. Most of us have never had to confront the fierce options faced by the very diverse bystanders in the Holocaust. The paradox is that, as a teacher, I work to bring students to consider situations that elicit conflict—sometimes extreme—and hopefully fire their moral imaginations. As they see themselves among the villagers, the townspeople, the urbanites of Warsaw, they come to envision more clearly the human

reality behind every ethical and moral rule. Creating and discussing struggle as seen in the moral imagination is one way to teach toward goodness. If every student, then, does one more good act than s/he would have done, surely both Socrates and Ben Azzai would agree that, slowly, ever so slowly, the scale may be changing the direction of the whole. ■

ROCHELLE L. MILLEN, PH.D., is Professor of Religion at Wittenberg University in Springfield, Ohio. She is editor of *New Perspectives on the Holocaust: A Guide for Teachers and Scholars* (NY: New York University Press, 1996); author of *Women, Birth, and Death in Jewish Law and Practice* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, January, 2004); and co-editor of *Testimony, Tensions and Tikkun: Reflections on Teaching the Holocaust in Colleges and Universities* (University of Washington Press: 2007). She is co-founder and served as co-chair of the Religion, Holocaust, and Genocide Group of the American Academy of Religion. Millen is a founding participant of the Weinstein International Holocaust Symposium, a member of the Board of the Ohio Council on Holocaust Education, and on the editorial board of the Stephen S. Weinstein Series in Post-Holocaust Studies of the University of Washington Press. To contact the author, e-mail rmillen@wittenberg.edu

NOTES

1. Smith (2008) writes: "Antisemitism had become the common property of ordinary men and women ... as a sentiment, it was sufficiently widespread that it failed to deter in 1933, when the battery of antisemitic legislation began, or ... in 1935 ... or in 1938" (pp. 215–216).
2. There is no intention here to address the nature/nurture issue but merely to note that habituation plays a significant role in the development of ethical and moral behaviors. An excellent example in Holocaust studies is Browning's (1992) analysis.
3. Wittenberg University, founded in 1845, is one of 28 colleges and universities affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, an amalgamation of three liberal Lutheran groups formed in 1987. Of the entire student body, 25 percent are Lutherans, 26 percent Catholic, 1–2 percent Jewish, and the remaining student body probably unaffiliated Protestants.

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Azrieli professor Moshe Sokolow examines the bystander issue by exploring the obligation to intervene through the prism of Jewish law (*Halakhah*) and tradition, posing and responding to three questions: Is a Jew obligated to rescue another Jew? Is a Jew obligated to rescue a non-Jew? Is a non-Jew obligated to rescue a Jew? "It is my sole intention," Professor Sokolow writes, "to share with an audience of educators the mandate to provide our students with the inspiration, willingness, and the means to acquit themselves decently and honorably should they ever be called upon to interpose themselves between others and danger or to mitigate that danger."

Moshe Sokolow

The Obligation to Intervene According to *Halakhah* [Jewish Law] and Tradition

לא תעמד על דם רעך

"Do not stand [idly] by your fellow's blood."

The obligation of a bystander toward someone in danger is divisible into several overlapping categories: before and after the fact; the personal capacity to intervene; availability of external resources; presence and degree of jeopardy to the bystander; and, from a strictly *halakhic* perspective, the religious identities of both the bystander and the endangered party.

I welcome, cautiously, this opportunity to utilize my familiarity with the ethic of intervention to reflect on a historical experience to which it bears only superficial resemblance. As a certified "first responder" in an emergency response system, I have faced this quandary on several occasions, sometimes, as on Sept. 11, at palpable personal risk. At no time, however, have I felt the kind of protracted and paralyzing anxiety and terror that characterize the conditions confronted by bystanders during the Holocaust. It is not my intention here to judge and certainly not to condemn, even by implication. It is my sole intention to share with an audience of educators the mandate to provide our students with the inspiration, willingness, and the means to acquit themselves decently and honorably should they ever be called upon to interpose themselves between others and danger or to mitigate that danger. We shall treat three dimensions of the question of intervention:

- Is a Jew obligated to rescue another Jew?
- Is a Jew obligated to rescue a non-Jew?
- Is a non-Jew obligated to rescue a Jew?

IS A JEW OBLIGATED TO RESCUE ANOTHER JEW?

Talmudic and medieval *halakhic* (legal) traditions mandate intervention as a requirement of the biblical prohibition against standing by idly while someone is in jeopardy.

(a) Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 73a; c. 500 CE)

גופא: מנין לרואה את חברו שהוא טובע בנהר או חיה גוררתו או לסמין באין עליו שהוא חייב להצילו? תלמוד לומר "לא תעמד על דם רעך" והא מהכא נפקא? מהתם נפקא: אבדת גופו מניין – תלמוד לומר והשבתו לו – אי מהתם הוה אמינא: הני מילי – כנפשיה, אבל מטרה ומיגר אגורי – אימא לא. קא משמע לך.

How do we know that one who sees another¹ drowning, or attacked by a wild animal or by armed robbers, is obligated to rescue him? Scripture says: "Do not stand [idly] by your fellow's blood" (Lev. 19:16). Is this the source? Isn't the source [the obligation] to restore lost property, as Scripture says: "[If you encounter another's lost ox or lamb...] return them to him" (Dt. 22:2)? If that were the source, we might say that it only obligates him personally but he would not have to expend financial resources to accomplish it. Conclusion: The source is the former verse [with the concomitant implication that one is obligated to expend financial resources in order to effect a rescue].²

The paramount nature of this obligation is attested to by the following stipulation:

(b) Talmud (*Ketubot* 19a):

אין לך דבר שעומד בפני פיקוח נפש, אלא עבודה כוכבים, וגלוי עריות, ושפיכות דמים בלבד.

Nothing stands in the way of preserving a life, except idolatry, incest/adultery, and murder. Even the sanctity of the Sabbath day is overridden by the requirement to save a life:

(c) Maimonides (*Hilkhot Shabbat* 2:1):

דהויה היא שבת אצל סכנת נפשות כשאר כל המצות. לפיכך הולה שיש בו סכנה עושיין לו כל צרכיו בשבת, על פי רופא אומן של אותו מקום. ספק שהוא צריך לחלל עליו את השבת ספק שאינו צריך;

וכן אם אמר רופא להלל עליו את השבת, ורופא אחר אומר אינו צריך; מהללין עליו את השבת. שפסק נפשות דוחה את השבת. *Shabbat, like all other mitzvot, is suspended if a life is at risk. Therefore, we do whatever is required for someone who is dangerously ill, at the behest of a qualified local physician. If there is a doubt concerning the danger to his condition, or if two physicians disagree whether he requires treatment on Shabbat, we suspend Shabbat on his behalf because [even] doubtful danger suspends Shabbat.*

IS A JEW OBLIGATED TO RESCUE A NON-JEW?

The Talmud addresses the issue of intervention on behalf of a non-Jew via the question of providing assistance to non-Jewish women in childbirth; a common situation, yet one often fraught with mortal jeopardy. The Mishnah (*Avodah Zarah 26a*) rules against intervention on particularistic grounds; the Talmud sanctions it, to avoid creating animosity, but does not make it compulsory.

One Talmudic sage, Rabbi Yosef, distinguishes between a case where payment is ordinarily made for such service and where it is not. Where payment by the non-Jew is ordinarily made, Jewish assistance is permitted because to decline would incur anti-Jewish animosity. Where payment is generally not made, however, the Jew is forbidden to render assistance since his refusal could be attributed to his unwillingness to work in the absence of payment rather than to an anti-idolatrous bias, and, as such, would generate no animosity.

ARE ALL NON-JEWS ALIKE IN THIS REGARD?

The Mishnah designates the non-Jews as *ovedei kokhavim* (idolaters), a term specific to the pagan idol worshippers in whose midst the Jews then lived. The operative question to later authorities, however, was whether the Mishnaic injunction also regulates the relationships between Jews and their monotheistic neighbors, such as Christians and Muslims. While all Jewish authorities regarded Islam as free of any taint of idolatry, some viewed the Christian trinity as suspiciously polytheistic. Maimonides ruled that Christians were considered idolaters,³ while the MEIRI (Rabbi Menachem Meiri, Aragon/Catalonia, 1249–1310) disagreed. In practice, Ashkenazi authorities excluded Christians from the category of idolaters. Rather than rule on whether the trinity, per se, is idolatrous, TOSAFOT (*Avodah Zarah 2a*; twelfth century) assume that contemporary Christians practice their faith out of conformity to cultural tradition more than a religious conviction.

MIPNEI DARKHEI SHALOM: EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCE OR A PRIORI OBLIGATION?

The obverse side of the Talmudic coin of withholding aid from gentiles is the principle of *darkhei shalom*, peaceful relations [literally: “the ways of peace”] (Wurzberger, 1977–1978).

(d) Talmud (*Gittin 61a*):

ת"ר: מפרנסים עניי נכרים [גויים] עם עניי ישראל, ומבקרין חולי נכרים עם חולי ישראל, וקוברין מתי נכרים עם מתי ישראל, מפני דרכי שלום. *We sustain non-Jewish paupers as well as Jewish paupers, we visit the non-Jewish ill as well as the Jewish ill, and we bury non-Jewish dead as well as Jewish dead—on account of peaceful relations.*

The question that arises is whether this statement comprises an *a priori* recommendation or, at best, a *de facto* sanction. In other words, is it commendable to visit non-Jewish sick or merely acceptable? The answer to this question depends on the definition of *darkhei shalom*. Does it mean *to maintain* peaceful relations, i.e., where they already exist, do not do anything to upset them, but if they do not already exist, they need not be created? Or does it mean *to create* peaceful relations even where none have existed heretofore? According to the former definition, visiting the non-Jewish ill is only tolerable, at best; a means of maintaining a status quo (or preventing animosity); whereas, according to the latter definition, it becomes a prescription to be followed in all circumstances.

Halakhic authorities are understandably divided over this question.⁴ Maimonides, for one, seems to take the prescriptive approach, identifying *darkhei shalom* as a “rabbinic injunction,” typically, a way of designating a moral imperative.⁵

(e) Maimonides (*Hilkhot Melakhim 10:12*):

אפילו הגויים—ציוו חכמים לבקר חוליהם, ולקבור מתיהם עם מתי ישראל ולפרנס ענייהם בכלל עניי ישראל, מפני דרכי שלום. הרי נאמר טוב ה' לכל ורחמיו על כל מעשיו ונאמר דרכיה דרכי נועם וכל נתיבותיה שלום

Even with regard to gentiles, our Sages enjoined us to visit their sick, bury their dead as well as Jewish dead, maintain their paupers along with Jewish poor—on account of peaceful relations. To wit: “God is beneficent to all, and His compassion reaches all His creatures” (Psalms 145:9); and: “The ways [of Torah] are pleasant and all her pathways are peaceful” (Proverbs 3:17).⁶

Other, more recent authorities, however, seem to incline more toward the *de facto* position, treating the license to intervene on behalf of Gentiles as tolerable, at best. Their position is epitomized in a responsum by the late Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (1895–1986).

(f) *Iggerot Moshe (Orah Hayyim 79)*:

דלא מתקבל במדינותינו הדחיים שאמר אביי הוא סכנה ממש גם בעצם לגופו ממש מקרובי החולה. וגם אם הוא אינו חושש שתהא סכנה לו בעצמו יש לחוש לאיבה גדולה כל כך מצד אנשי המדינה וגם מהממשלה שיש ודאי לחוש גם לעניני סכנה מתוצאות זה. *The apology stated by Abbaye [i.e., we only desecrate Shabbat for those who observe it] is unacceptable in our countries and constitutes a real danger to the physician's person from the patient's relatives. Even if he assesses no real threat to himself, there are*

grounds to anticipate the potential for such a powerful animosity from the general population, as well as from the authorities, that there is certainly a potential for dangerous consequences.

Rabbi Feinstein effectively removes the decision from the hands of individual physicians and delivers a “class action” ruling that obligates all Jewish physicians to treat non-Jews, but only on account of danger he perceives to the entire Jewish community.

IS A NON-JEW OBLIGATED TO RESCUE A JEW?*

Thus far, we have seen that Jewish law (*halakhah*) stipulates that every Jew, when able, is obliged by the Torah to intervene on behalf of another Jew who is in mortal jeopardy. The Scriptural basis of this obligation, called *piku'ah nefesh* [literally: looking out for a soul], is the verse: “Do not stand [idly] by your fellow's blood” (Leviticus 19:16). Whether a Jew has a comparable obligation to intervene on behalf of a non-Jew is moot,⁸ with passages in the Talmud and subsequent codes of law cited on both sides.⁹

Whether Jewish law would require non-Jews to intervene on behalf of one another or on behalf of Jews is one of those questions that, however it might intrigue us today, was peripheral to the legalists of the classical and medieval periods, who probably could not imagine that their opinions would be solicited by gentiles. Consequently, the resolution to the issue of the obligation of gentile bystanders during the Holocaust will have to be inferred from the evidence of exegetical and ethical literature as well as the explicit testimony of legal sources.

I must note, at the outset, that in the course of recovering and examining these sources, I found a surprisingly large number of them promoting positive relations between Jews and gentiles—under ordinary circumstances, of course. These sources are part of the Judaic heritage no less than sources that appear critical of gentiles and ought to be part of any serious pedagogical consideration of the subject. (Sokolow, 2006).

GENTILES AND NOAHIDE LAW: THE PRECEDENT OF SHEKHEM

The Torah is a particularistic text with pronounced universalistic tendencies. On the one hand, it serves as the foundation document of Judaism, while on the other, it asserts itself as the starting point for all humanity. Fully 20 generations—and nearly two millennia, by its own chronology—elapse between Adam and Abraham, and the generations of the flood and the dispersion (i.e., the Tower of Babel) are judged by God according to general, universal criteria, rather than specifically Jewish ones.¹⁰

Halakhah subsumes universal obligation under the rubric of the seven Noahide laws [*sheva mitzvot benei no'ah*]:¹¹ idolatry, murder, robbery, promiscuity, blasphemy, eating the

flesh of a living creature, and, finally, establishing a judiciary (*dinim*), which obligates a gentile society to enforce and adjudicate the other six laws. This last category may provide a halakhic foundation for the responsibilities of a gentile bystander. Genesis 34 narrates the incident of the rape of Dinah, Jacob's daughter, by the eponymous prince of Shekhem and that city's consequent destruction by her brothers. Their action—albeit challenged by the Patriarch himself—is justified by Maimonides.

(g) Maimonides (*Hilkhot Melakhim* 9:14):

או שראה אחד שעבר על אחת מאלו ולא דנו והרגו—הרי זה ייהרג בסיף. ומפני זה נתחייבו כל שכמ הריגה—שהרי שכמ גזל; והם ראו, וידעו, ולא דנוהו.

[A Noahide] who witnesses a transgression of these [laws] and fails to try the perpetrator and execute him, should be put to the sword. This is why the citizens of Shekhem were condemned to death: [Prince] Shekhem committed robbery [kidnapping]; they witnessed it, knew it, and failed to try him.¹²

On the analogy of Shekhem, we may argue that the failure of gentiles, during the Holocaust, to enforce the universal prohibition against murder constitutes a violation of the Noahide obligation of judicial process. (Arguably, the analogy would also indicate that this failure is itself a capital crime and would subject them, if tried and convicted, to the death penalty.¹³)

In discussing the positions of Maimonides and Nahmanides on the Noahide Code, J. David Bleich (1977) observes: “Man is bound by divinely imposed imperatives which oblige him to be concerned with the needs of his fellow ... such obligations become the responsibility of society at large” (p. 179). A similar argument is actually made by Hannah Arendt (1964), citing Telford Taylor, chief counsel for the prosecution at the Nuremberg trials:

Criminal proceedings, since they are mandatory and thus initiated even if the victim would prefer to forgive and forget, rest on laws whose “essence”—to quote Telford Taylor, writing in *The New York Times Magazine*—“is that a crime is not committed only against the victim but primarily against the community whose law is violated.”

The wrongdoer is brought to justice because his act has disturbed and gravely endangered the community, as a whole, and not because, as in civil suits, damage has been done to individuals who are entitled to reparation. The reparation effected in criminal cases is of an altogether different nature; it is the body politic itself that stands in need of being “repaired,” and it is the general public order that has been thrown out of gear and must be restored, as it were. It is, in other words, the law, not the plaintiff, that must prevail. (p. 261)

OMNICIDE AND THE VALUE OF HUMAN LIFE

The universal responsibility to preserve life is supported by another rabbinic belief: the equality, before God, of all humanity (Sokolow, 1977). In describing the procedures that need to be followed in trying a capital crime, the Mishnah advises the court to administer the following admonition to prospective witnesses:

(h) Mishnah *Sanhedrin* (4:5):

לפיכך נברא אדם יחידי בעולם, ללמוד שכל המאבד נפש אחת, מעלים עליו כאילו איבד עולם מלא; וכל המוקיים נפש אחת, מעלים עליו כאילו קיים עולם מלא.

Therefore man was created individually to instruct us that one who destroys a single life is regarded [by Scripture] as though he destroyed the entire world, while one who sustains a single life is regarded [by Scripture] as though he sustained the entire world.¹⁴

The implication, with regard to the Holocaust, is that a gentile bystander who let even a single person die without intervening on his behalf has abetted omnicide.

MOSES AND “NO-MAN”

A relevant inference regarding intervention can be drawn from the episode concerning Moses and the Egyptian taskmaster:

And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown up, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens; and he saw an Egyptian smiting a Hebrew, one of his brethren. And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he smote the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand (Exodus 2:11-12).

The exegetical question that confronts us here pertains to Moses' looking about prior to slaying the Egyptian. If his intended action was unwarranted, it could be interpreted as his reluctance to commit a crime in the presence of witnesses. If it was justified, however, as we are clearly intended to believe, what was he looking for? A feasible supposition is that he was awaiting another Egyptian's intervention and it was only when that failed to materialize that he acted unilaterally.

This interpretation is borne out by the continuation of the narrative, in which the wicked Hebrew who was beating his fellow remarks to Moses: “Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us? Thinkest thou to kill me, as thou didst kill the Egyptian?” And Moses feared, and said: ‘Surely the thing is known’ (vs.14). Clearly, Moses' earlier actions had been witnessed by Hebrews, so it is unlikely that he had been looking about for them, but for Egyptians.

This supposition is bolstered by the observation that there had, indeed, been at least two earlier interventions on the part of Egyptians: the midwives, who refused to commit infanticide against the Hebrews, and Pharaoh's daughter,

who retrieved the infant Moses from the Nile in direct disobedience of her father's decree.

The implication, once again, in the matter of the Holocaust, is that Jewish resistance was right to have anticipated Gentile assistance in its opposition to the Nazis, and that when such assistance failed to materialize, whatever unilateral action was subsequently taken was justifiable. Concomitantly, the fact that: “God dealt well with the midwives” (Exodus 1:20), adumbrates the establishment of the category of “righteous Gentiles” to acknowledge those bystanders who did intervene.

OBADIAH: COMPLICITY IN GENOCIDE

While continuing to look at likely biblical evidence for precedent, we may take note of a passage in the Book of Obadiah. The prophet appears to be addressing the circumstances surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BCE.¹⁵ While it was the Babylonians who placed the city under siege and eventually destroyed the Temple, Obadiah accuses Edom of complicity as a bystander:

But thou shouldest not have gazed on the day of thy brother in the day of his disaster, neither shouldest thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; neither shouldest thou have spoken proudly in the day of distress. ... Neither shouldest thou have stood in the crossway, to cut off those of his that escape; neither shouldest thou have delivered up those of his that did remain in the day of distress (vss. 12-14).

Just as the Edomites must bear the consequences of their satisfaction at the plight of Israel, not to mention their complicity in preventing the surviving Israelites from escaping their Babylonian captors,¹⁶ so, too, are Europeans guilty not only for handing Jews over to the Nazis and their helpers but also for standing idly by while they were rounded up and deported.

AHAVAT HA-BERI'OT: A MORAL CONTEXT FOR JEWISH-GENTILE INTERACTION

Rabbi Ahron Soloveichik (1991) would oblige a gentile bystander to intervene to prevent the commission of genocide based upon the obligation of *ahavat ha-beri'ot*, to love all mankind as God's creatures:

The obligation to maintain decency and morality within the community extends to the whole human race. ... It is incumbent upon the members of any human community to maintain certain standards of morality, and deter the members of the community from crime and sin. (p. 69)

As formulated by Rabbi Hayyim Vital, a master Kabbalist of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, this general proposition maintains that love is not a quality constrained by

religious affiliation but a universal property to be bestowed upon Jews and gentiles alike:

Know that “love of mankind” applies even to non-Jews for it is incumbent upon one to love all of Mankind created in the Image, as it is said: *haviv ha-adam she-nivra be-tzelem*; Beloved is Man¹⁷ who was created in the image [of God].¹⁸

BYSTANDERS AND THE CATEGORICAL IMPERATIVE

Finally, Rabbi Meir Leibush ben Yehiel Michel Weiser (Malbim, 1809–1879), in his Torah commentary, equates love of another with Kant’s categorical imperative.

(i) Malbim: “Love your fellow¹⁹ as yourself” (*Leviticus* 19:18)²⁰
וכבר בארו הפילוסופים שהחק הראשי שהוא שורש להכמת המדות.
הוא שירצה שכל מה שיעשה יהיה חק כולל. ר”ל שבאם ירצה שיניע
רע לחברו במקום שע”י יקבל הוא תועלת, ימדוד אם רוצה שיהיה זה
חק כולל. שאז יהיה החק הזה לכולם להפסיד להבריהם בשיניע להם
מוזה תועלת. וזה ודאי לא יכון בעיניו שיניע איש אליו הפסד בעבור
תועלת עצמו, וזה ימנע גם הוא מעשות לחברו.

*Philosophers have already explained that the principal rule that is the root of virtue is that one should follow a categorical imperative [hok kollel] in all one’s deeds. That is to say, if one considers doing harm to another for selfish benefit, he should weigh whether he would like this to become a universal principle whereby everyone would cause harm to others for their own selfish benefit. This would surely not meet with his approval, to suffer a loss himself for another’s benefit, and he will refrain from so acting toward another.*²¹

Once we place the obligation to intervene on a universal footing and link it to broad-based humanistic principles, like the categorical imperative, more particularistic concerns seem to fall by the wayside.

ALL HUMAN BEINGS SHARE THE OBLIGATION TO INTERVENE

All human beings, by virtue of their identical creation in “the divine image” and their mutual requirement to desire only the best for one another as they would for themselves, share the obligation to intervene on behalf of one another, particularly to remove the threat of mortal jeopardy that imperils the essential equation of the whole world with even a single life.

One may ask: If Jews share in the universal obligation of *ahavat ha-beri’ot* [love of mankind], why place *piku’ah nefesh* [saving a life] on the ostensibly narrower basis of *ahavat yisrael* [love of a fellow Jew]? Rabbi Soloveichik explains that the love of mankind is governed by reason (his “Logic of the Mind”) and is, therefore, circumscribed by reason. The love of Israel, however, is an emotional love (his “Logic of the Heart”), a blind love that is not restricted by the more limited reach of the intellect.

Alternatively, we may find the answer in the following disagreement between Rabbi Akiva and Ben Azzai as to whether particularism or universalism is the loftier ethos:

With regard to “Love your fellow as yourself,” Rabbi Akiva says: “This is an important principle [*kelal gadol*] in the Torah.” However, Ben Azzai says: “This is the book of the generations of Adam (Genesis 5:1)’ is an even more important principle.”²²

IN SUMMATION

Gentiles are obliged to intervene on behalf of one another and on behalf of Jews as an expression of *ahavat ha-beri’ot* [love of mankind]. Jews are bound to intervene on behalf of gentiles either (essentially) as an expression of *ahavat ha-beri’ot* or (instrumentally) as a form of *darkhei shalom* [the ways of peace]. Jews are bound to intervene on behalf of one another either as a form of the more intellectual *ahavat ha-beri’ot* or as an expression of the more emotional *ahavat-yisrael* [love of fellow Jews] and in fulfillment of the biblical injunction against standing idly by another’s blood. ■

RABBI DR. MOSHE SOKOLOW is the Fanya Gottesfeld Heller Professor of Jewish Education at the Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration and a long-serving member and coordinator of Hatzalah Volunteer Ambulance Corps. A member of the editorial board of *PRISM*, he is the author of *Studies in the Weekly Parashah Based on the Lessons of Nehama Leibowitz* (Jerusalem: Urim, 2008) and editor of *Ten Da’at: A Journal of Jewish Education*, a publication of Yeshiva University. To contact the author, e-mail msokolow@yu.edu

NOTES

1. Literally: his friend.
2. So it is codified by Maimonides (1135-1204): *Hilkhot Rotze’ah* 1:14, who interpolates into the Talmudic passage an explicit financial obligation, while also elaborating on the variety of circumstances in which intervention may be required. A nearly verbatim codification is found in *Shulhan Arukh Hoshen Mishpat* 426:1.
3. Maimonides’ non-recognition of the principle of “animosity” may, likewise, reflect the relatively secure position of Jews under Islam, as compared to that of their coreligionists under Christianity.
4. A comprehensive discussion of the different categorical perceptions of *darkhei shalom* is available in Ravitzky (2006).
5. haCohen A. (1984–1989).
6. Maimonides, here, distinguishes between idolaters, in general, and *ger toshav*, a non-Jew who accepts the seven Noahide laws and agrees to live under Jewish jurisdiction.

- Today, this would have practical applications particularly vis a vis non-Jews living in the State of Israel. A similar “essentialist” position was taken by Rabbi Isser Yehudah Unterman, former Chief Rabbi of Israel: “*Darkhei Shalom* and their Definition” (Hebrew), Kol Torah (Nisan, 5726=1966), reprinted in *Morashah* 1 (1967), pp. 5–10. (Rabbi Unterman was responding to a fabricated rumor that religious Jews had declined to render assistance to a wounded African tourist on Shabbat.)
7. I am grateful to Professor Gerald Blidstein for reading an earlier version of this section. His comments helped me to clarify my objectives in this essay.
 8. The question is, partially, one of Scriptural interpretation. The verse [see source (a)] describes the endangered party as “your fellow” [*re’akha*], which, arguably, could limit it to coreligionists. Cf. n. 19, below.
 9. The provision of medical assistance to non-Jews is summarized by Mintz, 1991.
 10. The former is guilty of violence (Genesis 6:11); the latter, in fearing “lest we be scattered across the face of the whole earth” (Genesis 11:4), stands accused of violating God’s postdiluvian imperative “to be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth” (Genesis 9:1).
 11. Tosefta *Avodah Zarah* 8.4, quoted in BT Sanhedrin (56).
 12. Nahmanides, in his Torah commentary (Genesis 34:13), disputes this contention. A critical facet of his argument is: If the residents of Shekhem were unequivocally guilty, why did Jacob condemn their punishment?
 13. Cf. Or Same’ah on Maimonides Hilkhhot Melakhim (10:1), Responsa Hatam Sofer (section 4 [Even ha-Ezer 2] #125), and Responsa Meshaneh Halakhot (5:244), who argue in mitigation of the death penalty in such cases.
 14. An alternate version of this Mishnah interpolates the word “Jewish” [*Yisrael*] before “life,” intimating that it is the sustenance of Jewish life, particularly, that is of universal value. We have followed the textual judgment of E. E. Urbach (*Tarbitz* 40 [1971], 268-284), who studied these—and related—versions and the fates they suffered at the hands of printers and censors. For a concise summary of the issue, see Sokolow: *op. cit.*, 55-56.
 15. This assumption is supported by the parallels in Jeremiah (49:7 ff.) and by the analogous passage in Psalms 137:7: “Remember, O LORD, against the children of Edom the day of Jerusalem; who said: ‘Raze it, raze it, even to the foundation thereof.’”
 16. A midrash elaborates on this theme and accuses other surrounding nations (Philistines, Phoenicians, and Arabs) of similarly preventing the Israelites from escaping, saying: “Whichever direction the Israelites sought to flee, they handed them over” (Eikha Rabbah 1:56).
 17. The exegetical tradition of the Mishnah [Avot 3:18] presumes that the definite noun *ha’adam* [the man] refers to humanity, while Israel, in particular, is referred to as a common noun *adam* (man). Cf. Tosafot Yom-Tov, ad. loc.
 18. Vital: *Sha’ar ha-Kedushah*, cited by Ahron Soloveichik: *Logic of the Heart, Logic of the Mind* (Jerusalem, 1991), p.70. I prefer to translate the ambiguous term *tzelem Elohim* (Genesis 1:27) as “a divine image,” treating *Elohim* as an adjective rather than a noun. For a more detailed justification of the translation, see Sokolow, 1997.
 19. Hebrew: *re’akha*, the identical term that appears just two verses earlier (Leviticus 19:16) as the source for the obligation to intervene to rescue an endangered coreligionist. Cf. n. 8, above.
 20. As Malbim observes, the verse should be translated: “Love on behalf of your fellow as you would on your own behalf,” thereby equating the verse with Hillel’s famous sanction: “That which is unacceptable to yourself, do not impose on another” (BT Shabbat 31a), and, hence, the connection to Kant.
 21. Malbim, *Ha-Torah ve-ha-Mitzvah*, ad. loc.
 22. Sifra, *Kedoshim* (2:12); PT *Nedarim* (9:4).

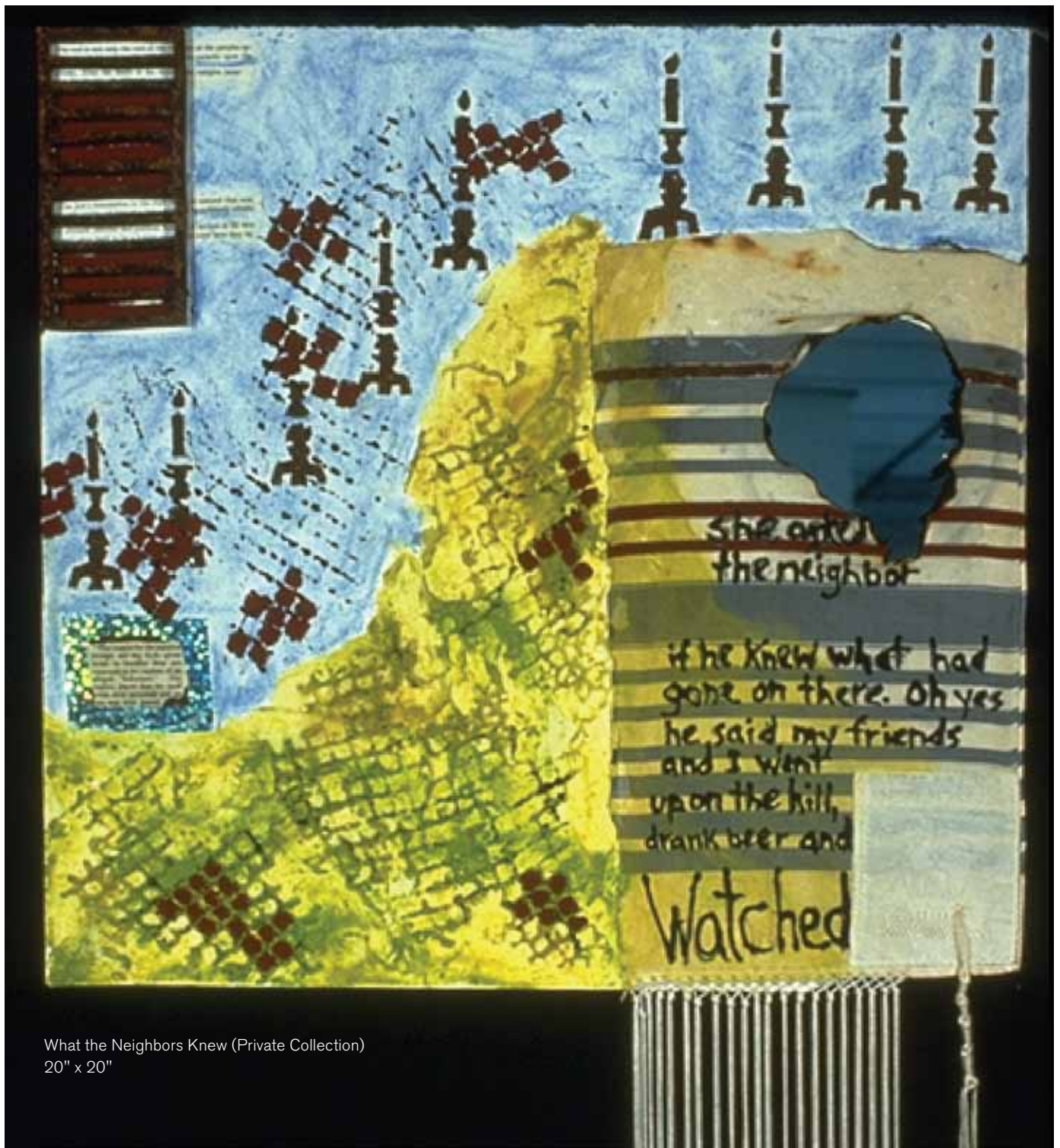
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We welcome this work from artist Mina Cohen, who paints the story of her mother's experiences during and after the Holocaust. This piece is mixed media on canvas and includes a damaged *tallit* (Jewish prayer shawl) and selections from *Mein Kampf*. The text reads: "She asked the neighbor if he knew what had gone on there. 'Oh, yes,' he said, 'my friends and I went up on the hill, drank beer, and watched.'"

Mina Cohen

What the Neighbors Knew



What the Neighbors Knew (Private Collection)
20" x 20"

This painting, completed in 1997, is in response to a visit my mother, survivor Judith Meisel, made to Shtuthof Concentration camp near Danzig, Poland, where she had been interned from 1943 until January 1945. She had always wondered what the people who lived in close proximity to the camp knew and thought about what went on there. She returned to Danzig as part of a documentary film project, and, with the film crew and a translator, she chose a home close to the camp and rang the doorbell. The home owner met her at the door and introduced himself, and my mother realized this man was about her age, in his 60s at the time, which meant he was a teenager during the war.

The man, whose name she can't remember, was born there, and his family has lived in the area for generations. She asked him if he knew what had gone on in the camp, and he was very forthcoming, despite his obvious annoyance at being asked. "Oh, yes," he answered, "my friends and I went up on the hill, drank beer, and watched."

"What were you told about the people inside the camp?" she continued. His response was matter-of-fact.

"We were told they were our enemies, and if we didn't kill them, they would kill us."

Neither surprised nor fazed by his response, she kept going: "And what do you tell your children?" His annoyance returned. "The school takes the children on trips into the camp, now a museum, and tells them what happened there."

"Did you witness the Death March? (My mother was one of the only seven who survived the January 1945 forced march of 1500 people.)

"Yes," he nodded. She kept probing, but he, finally exasperated, said, "Look, you survived, didn't you?" That ended the conversation.

"What the Neighbors Knew" is one of a series of paintings about my mother's experiences during the Holocaust. The series can be seen at <http://www.survivorstory.com>. ■

MINA COHEN is adjunct faculty at College of the Redwoods, Fort Bragg, CA, where she teaches Art History and Art Appreciation. She is a member of Partners Gallery where she exhibits her work. She is the daughter of survivor Judith Meisel. To contact the artist, e-mail mcohen@mcn.org

In this open letter to a bystander, addressed both to an individual and to “the representative of all those who stood on the sidewalk watching,” Azrieli student Effie Kleinberg seeks to understand the thoughts of a witness to the deportation of Kleinberg’s grandfather and the rest of the Polish Jews from Wierzbnik-Starchowice Ghetto to Auschwitz. “It was your eyes and face that stand frozen in my grandfather’s memory, and so it is to you that I address my thoughts,” Kleinberg writes, and he adds, “If you have any response to offer, I welcome it,” as do we all.

Effie Kleinberg

An Open Letter to a Bystander

Dear Bystander,

You must remember the faces of the people. You may not remember the exact day of the deportation, but you bore witness to the scene. You stood on the sidewalk alongside your fellow Polish citizens as the Jews walked by you, most of them never to be seen or heard from again.

There are many perspectives from which one can analyze this event. I have lived with the perspective of my grandparents, Jews who were among those deported on the day you stood and watched. I have sought to understand, both as a tribute to them and to be able to tell my children, their innermost thoughts and feelings as they were led through the streets of their town.


Four years ago I visited Krakow. I remember walking the streets with my group and seeing a very elderly Polish woman. She looked to be well into her 80s, and it struck me that this woman was alive and presumably somewhere in the vicinity of a liquidation during the Holocaust. I wondered: What is she thinking now as she sees young Jews walking down the streets that are soaked with so much Jewish blood? What was she thinking then? How am I supposed to relate to her? Do I know enough to lay blame and lash out against her? Is it possible that she tried to help? These were questions I raised with others, but satisfying answers were not forthcoming. Now I seek to understand your thoughts by asking you directly: you, the bystander, who did just that—you stood by and watched.

What was your perspective that day? Did you feel positive or negative emotions? Did you want to help the Jews, or at least those who had been your neighbors? Did you want to help the Germans? I cannot do justice to your exact thoughts, but I need to try to gain some inkling of your viewpoint on that fateful day of July 31, 1944, when my grandfather was taken from the ghetto in his town of Wierzbnik-Starchowice and deported to Auschwitz. I apologize if my words seem antagonistic, hateful, or demeaning, for that is not their intention; after all, you were only a bystander, and you may have been helpless yourself. Jewish sages teach that we cannot judge another until we have walked a mile in his or her shoes. I am not directing my harsh feelings specifically toward you, but it was your eyes and face that stand frozen in my grandfather’s memory, and so it is to you that I address my thoughts.

I do not view your role in the Holocaust in a vacuum, and I am not comparing you, in character or action, to either those who helped or those who were the perpetrators of the Holocaust. My purpose here is to address you both individually and as the representative of all those who stood on the sidewalk watching as the events my grandfather has described to me unfolded.

Do you even consider yourself a bystander, or did you just find yourself in an inconvenient location at a particular time? Does your mere presence during this event make you a bystander? Are you to blame for not raising your voice in protest? Did you feel paralyzed or afraid? Did you want to turn your face away, not wanting to witness the unfolding tragedy? My grandfather said you did not. What kept you silently watching?

I cannot answer for you, but let me convey what the bystander represents to me by prefacing this with a broader debate that revolves around the concept of neutrality. At first thought, I want to believe that an ideal world is built on the model of neutrality, where no country, people, or individual would lean more in one direction than in the other.



Everyone would have the freedom to be unique and open-minded without being tied to another's agenda. As well, there are great economic and security benefits in not siding with one particular party in a conflict. You and your cohorts are generally not in harm's way; if you are a country, then your citizens can live without fear of being invaded or attacked.

After reflection, however, I concluded that neutrality not only shows weakness in the party displaying this behavior but it also creates a constant tension of being pulled in opposing directions. Neutrality is a weakness. Taking a stand is a strength. Being neutral does not qualify as a valid stand. It is a weakness illustrated by the inability to make a firm decision. In the name of humanity and the value of life, the decision to stay neutral for its own benefit shows a tremendous weakness.

You, the individual bystander, represent the position of neutrality. If you had wished to join the Nazi party or your fellow Poles who assisted and perpetrated murders and untold terrors, I would have understood your taking a stand. In contrast, you could have taken a positive stand and done a righteous act, confronting the most difficult moral dilemma of risking your life to save another no matter who that individual was.

You may protest, saying that you *wanted* to take action, but you feared for your life. I grant you that fear. If your true intentions were good, but your fearfulness overwhelmed your desire to assist, I cannot judge you negatively. But what of all the other possibilities to act that presented themselves before this day? Could you have smuggled a loaf of bread into the ghetto? Offered a night's shelter, a hot meal, a coin, a glass of milk to a fleeing Jew?

And on that day: You could have turned around and walked away, or bowed your head to show empathy, dismay, despair; you could have indicated by a sympathetic expression on your face or in your posture that you objected to this outrage but had no possible way to stop it. Even this would have taken you out of the neutral position, and you would have ceased to be a mere bystander. Instead, you chose to fix your eyes on your Jewish neighbors as they entered the last chapter in their lives. You got the final glimpse of the people of your city before their fateful departure, and you remained, if not gloating, neutral. Neutrality is untenable during the Holocaust.

Did you know where the Jews were being taken? Many of those who were being led were, by that time, aware of what was in store for them. It is hard for me to fathom, then, that the bystanders of the town were not. Surely by 1944 you could not have been ignorant of the events unfolding around you; you must have known what was happening. The Jews were on their way to the factories of death, and you stood there in silence.

What were you thinking as you stood there and watched? Did you look to see neighbors that you recognized? Did you recognize my grandfather? What were the townspeople standing near you saying during this event? Were they silent? Was anyone ashamed? Were you? Did you discuss the scene of terror with your family when you got home? I cannot say what I would have done in your place on the sidewalk, but I wonder: Could I have just stood by?

Have you, in these intervening years, considered your role and felt some guilt for your neutrality, your weak resolve? If your intentions were good, but your will was weak, you have surely been overcome by now with remorse. Yet you have not chosen to write an open letter such as this asking for forgiveness.

You may be aware of the socio-psychological phenomenon known as the bystander effect, in which individuals are less likely to assist when there are others present. The bystander rationalizes that someone else can take care of the situation at hand. I cannot be sure that you were not a victim of this effect—did you, perhaps, think or hope that others would somehow help?—but I can be sure that the lack of initiative taken by all of you left the Jews utterly helpless.

Can you imagine yourself in the shoes of your Jewish neighbors? What would you be feeling? Terrified? Lonely? Abandoned? The countries of the world were not willing to take you in; as you looked to the sidewalk to see that your own neighbors had also turned their backs on you, would you look at them in anguish and want to yell: "If you cared at all, you should have stayed home! At least we could have considered that a silent protest; that would have meant something!" Would your insides have screamed, as my grandfather's did: "The house is burning down, and you just stand there? Where is your humanity?"

I have attempted to walk a mile in your shoes, and I have lent you the shoes of your Jewish neighbors to walk in as well. I know the situation was complex; I know your mind likely flew from thought to thought. For a moment you may

have felt the urge to shout, to cry, or to attempt to help physically, while in the next, astonishment and shock over the unfolding events paralyzed you; in the next, perhaps you were glad to see the Jews go; perhaps, after years of occupation, you felt nothing at all except relief that the Nazis were not deporting you. At least you did not cheer and applaud, as my grandfather remembered others doing. Being a bystander is a complex phenomenon and it is hard for me to put myself in your place at that time, but some parts of life must be examined objectively. No human is deserving of the abuse and murder perpetrated by the Nazi regime. When the house is burning down, you cannot stand by.

In closing, let me share my hope and dream that we should never experience another time where people lose their voices and abandon their abilities to protest. Let us agree now, at least, that we must never again remain silent in the face of evil, that we must be proactive to pre-empt any attempt to subject any of us to a world of tyranny and injustice. If you have any response to offer, I welcome it. ■

*Sincerely,
Effie Kleinberg*

Effie Kleinberg holds a Bachelor of Religious Studies degree from York University in Toronto, Canada. He is currently a rabbinical student at Yeshiva University's Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary and is pursuing a Master of Education degree at YU's Azrieli School of Jewish Education and Administration. Effie's grandparents, Howard and Nancy Kleinberg, are survivors who stand as Effie's inspiration to furthering his studies in learning and teaching about the Holocaust. To contact the author, e-mail effiekleinberg@gmail.com

One of three educators in this issue who present their pedagogical strategies for teaching about the bystander in Christian schools, Father Steven McMichael concludes, "From studying these difficult truths, my students learn that living the Gospel way of life cannot be mere words; instead, such a commitment requires that, as Roman Catholics, we never remain bystanders to social, religious, or ethnic injustices in our contemporary world."

Steven McMichael

Confronting the Roman Catholic Bystander During the Holocaust in a Catholic University Theology Course

"Eugène Cardinal Tisserant [of France] ... begged the Holy Father 'to issue an Encyclical about the individual duty to obey the imperatives of conscience as this is the most vital point of Christianity. ... History may be obliged in time to come to blame the Holy See for a policy accommodated to its own advantage and little more.'"

—*Deborah Lipstadt*

At the University of Saint Thomas in Saint Paul, Minnesota, a coeducational school of some 11,000 students run by the Archdiocese of Saint Paul/Minneapolis, I, a Catholic priest, teach an upper-level elective undergraduate theology course titled "Evil and the Suffering of God." Its main topic is theodicy: God is just and all-powerful, and yet we suffer. As part of the course, I teach about the Holocaust. As difficult as this subject is, the cause for deepest reflection among my 20 or so white, middle-class juniors and seniors is evoked by our exploration of Roman Catholicism in Nazi Germany. In this seminar, we confront and examine the tragic truth that, while there were Roman Catholics and other Christians who helped, sheltered, and rescued Jews and other victims, the majority of Roman Catholics assumed the role of bystander, even as Jews were being isolated, ghettoized, starved, deported, and murdered.

To open this examination, I ask my students, who have had little background on this period of history save for perhaps a reading of Elie Wiesel's *Night* (2006) and a viewing of the film *Schindler's List* (1993) or *Life is Beautiful* (1997), to reflect on three principal questions:

- Given what we understand to be the tenets of our religion, how was it possible to remain a faithful Roman Catholic in Nazi Germany?
- How were the beliefs and practices of Roman Catholics

during this time reflected in their thoughts and actions concerning the Jews?

- Why did so many Roman Catholics remain bystanders at such a critical point in history?

I provide a brief historical perspective of the Roman Catholic Church itself in the context of German society. Roman Catholics, from the time of the Bismarck years (the late 1800s), were trying to establish their German identity as faithful and obedient subjects of the German nation even though they owed religious allegiance to the papacy in Rome. Roman Catholics, who constituted between 35 to 40 percent of the German population, sometimes were extreme in their attempts to demonstrate their loyalty to the State. Scholars call this "hypernationalism" (Lukens, 1999, p. 151).

THE CATHOLICS AND THE NAZI GOVERNMENT

The relationship of Catholics with the Nazi government, however, was complex and problematic. On the one hand, during the Weimar Republic (1918–1933), many Roman Catholics belonged to the political Centre Party, which represented 13.9 percent of the voting population of Germany and was "a moderating and mediating role in Germany's political life" (Conway, 1968, p. 8), opposed politically to the rise of Hitler and the Nazi Party, which was considered extremist by the members of the Centre Party (pp. 17–18).

On the other hand, Catholics shared a number of values with the Nazi Party. They were against the ideas and values of the Enlightenment—individualism, equality, fraternity, and liberty—and against relativism, democracy, atheism, and communism. They respected hierarchical structures of authority. They had a long history of anti-Judaism, both in theology—Roman Catholics taught that Jews were blind, legalistic followers of the Mosaic Law and were dispersed throughout the nations of the world as a provisional punishment for crucifying Jesus—and in practice: They established the Roman (Jewish) Ghettos in Rome and maintained them from 1555–1870.

However, Roman Catholics were opposed to Nazi ideology and policies; many leaders believed that the Church could be the soul of the German State and hold the Nazis in check. Catholics were generally opposed to the Nazis' glorification of the Aryan race and their racial worldview (*weltanschauung*). They rejected claims that the German State was more important than the Church and believed they were to serve ultimately the Kingdom of God, as they stated when they recited the Lord's Prayer a number of times each day. They also knew that the ultimate authority was the pope in Rome and not any head of state. They rejected, therefore, any attempts on the part of the Nazi government to control or interfere with inner-Church matters and especially the Nazi effort to create a German National Church.¹ Catholic Church teaching also upheld the inherent dignity of all human beings, though it is clear that this teaching did not hold sway over Roman Catholics' behavior toward Jews and other victims of the Nazi regime.

In 1932, the German bishops outlawed participation of Roman Catholics in the Nazi Party at their annual meeting in Fulda on August 17–19 (Matheson, 1981, pp. 6–7). However, with the rise of the Nazi government in 1933, that prohibition was rescinded. On July 20, 1933, the Nazi government and the Roman Catholic bishops of Germany signed the Reich Concordat, which aimed to regulate the relations between the Church and the State “in a permanent manner and on a basis acceptable to both parties” (pp. 29–33). It purported to give the Church an official guarantee of its rights, including freedom for its organizations and the rights to maintain Catholic schools and preserve its influence on the education of German Catholic youth. The Concordat also provided that Catholic religious instruction should emphasize the patriotic duties of Christian citizen and an attitude of loyalty toward the Fatherland: “It will be the special concern of religious instruction, as in the case of other subjects, to inculcate a sense of patriotic, civic, and social duty in the spirit of Christian faith and morality” (p. 32).

For Catholics, the major problem in the Concordat was Article 32, which prohibited Roman Catholic clergy from participating in any political party or any activity on behalf

of a political party:

In view of the peculiar situation in Germany and the assurances given by terms of the above concordat of a legislative basis for the rights and freedoms of the Catholic church in the Reich and its provinces, the Holy See will issue regulations to prohibit clergy and members of monastic orders from membership in political parties or activity on behalf of such parties. (Matheson, p. 33)

This clause was invoked by Nazi authorities whenever the German bishops protested unjust actions on the part of the State. For example, when the bishops protested the State's euthanasia program in 1940 and 1941, there were reprisals from the Gestapo against Christian organizations, and the bishops were told that these actions were state matters and not the concern of the Church (Conway, 1968, pp. 254–290; Griech-Polelle, 2002, pp. 59–95).

CLASS DISCUSSION AND ASSIGNMENTS

My students are generally astounded by the complexity of Church–government relations during the Nazi years, surprised that the Church hierarchy was caught in what they considered to be a very difficult bind in 1933.

“Do they accept the legitimate authority of the Nazi government and strike a deal with them (the Concordat), in return for which they would have at least a ratified contract that could be protested in case any of the agreed upon issues were violated, or do they take a stance of protest and risk the dangers of Nazi persecution?” They raise the question and find it a difficult one to answer.

I assign the first four chapters of Doris Bergen's (2003) book *War and Genocide*, which explains Germany's transition from revolution (1933) to routinization (1934–39) as the Nazis moved to centralize and coordinate all power and energy into their cause.

“In 1933,” Bergen writes, “Hitler and his accomplices introduced a process called *Gleichschaltung*, which means ‘coordination,’ literally ‘shifting into the same gear.’ In the name of national unity, new Nazi organizations swallowed up other independent groups and clubs” (p. 65). Roman Catholics were, for the most part, caught up in this coordination process from 1933 to 1937, even though the Church was under attack by the Nazi government and its agencies because it wanted to maintain its independence for the teachings and activities of the Church as guaranteed by the Concordat. As revealed in the 1937 Encyclical of Pope Pius XI, *Mit Brennender Sorge* (“With Deep Anxiety”), the Church did not stand by as the Nazis violated the 1933 Concordat; it objected strongly and publicly. This encyclical was read from the pulpit on Palm Sunday, March 21, 1937, in all the Catholic churches of the Reich. It accused the Nazis of “misconstruing, evading, undermining, and in the end more or

less openly violating the treaty" (*Mit Brennender Sorge*, #5). The encyclical called on the faithful to keep their belief in God pure and incorrupt in the German territories. It was an indictment of Nazi ideology, but it stands as well as an indictment of the Church itself, because the document failed to address the issue of the persecution of the Jews and other victims of the Nazi regime.

We discuss the fact that Pius XI was working on an encyclical dealing with racism and antisemitism, which would have given much guidance to Roman Catholics about the sin of racism in its many forms and encouraged them to oppose it, but it was not completed before his death in 1939 (Coppa, 2003, pp. 61–63). Here, the debate becomes lively. The more traditional Roman Catholic students defend the Church. "It had to take care of its own," they maintain, "and, therefore, it was not in a position to help others." More liberal students take seriously and accept the reality of the challenge to live according to the prophetic tradition and Gospel way of life, which is not about self-interest but about compassion and care for the poor and defenseless. Students conclude, some with despair, that the Church did not live up to its role as a moral agent of social justice.

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC AS BYSTANDER

After providing the religious, social, and political contexts of Roman Catholics living in Nazi Germany and grounding them in the idea that most religious institutions operate implicitly and/or explicitly according to models that articulate goals and objectives through mission statements, I share the classic study by Avery Dulles (1991), which posits that the Roman Catholic Church has operated throughout history according to five different models:

- a) the institutional, or Perfect Society, model;
- b) the Mystical Body of Christ model;
- c) the Sacramental model;
- d) the evangelical, or Herald, model; and
- e) the Servant model.

Our exploration will center on identifying the model(s) under which German Roman Catholics were operating during this time in history. We examine the three possibilities suggested by Church historian Robert Kreig (2004).

The first is the Church as a Perfect Society, which "conceives of the church as a self-sufficient institution that, having been established by Jesus Christ, rests on an authority wholly independent of human societies and their civil governments" (p. 158). This model presents a hierarchical vision of authority; its sole concern is the spiritual well-being of its members. It must lead the faithful to redemption in Jesus Christ. According to Donald Dietrich (1987), "Redemption was a question of saving one's soul and not a moral com-

mitment to the socio-political betterment of mankind" (pp. 19–20). For this reason, Pius XI, Pius XII, most bishops, and most theologians during the Third Reich were resolved not to say or do anything that might provoke Hitler into closing the churches. They prized the Concordat of 1933, which gave a formal assurance that the Reich would allow the parishes to administer the sacraments and to teach Christian faith and morals. As long as the churches were operating, the pope and bishops were fulfilling their duty of making God's grace available to the faithful (Krieg, 2004, pp. 158–159).

The major difficulty of this model, my students conclude, is that it does not give much attention to anyone "outside the fold," especially Jews. Therefore, it was a major contributing factor to Roman Catholics remaining bystanders and was operational at that time.

The second model is the Church as "the Body of Christ." This holds that "the church is not only a hierarchical organization with rules, formal lines of decision-making, and officeholders; it is also an association of people with personal ties to one another, with a sense of themselves as a 'we'" (Krieg, 2004, p. 165). This model highlights the communal nature of the Church, but it envisions the community as exclusively comprising Roman Catholics. A major problem for Roman Catholics was the relationship between the "we" of the church community and the "we"—the Volk—of Nazi ideology.

I ask, "Would a person who subscribed to this model be able to act individually to rescue Jewish victims of the Nazi regime?" Rescue literature shows that, quite often, individuals did act as rescuers based on their religious and/or humanitarian convictions, but this model precludes the rescue of Jews on these grounds and was operational during the Holocaust.

The third model is the Church as a "Moral Advocate" or "Servant." In this model, the Catholic faithful see themselves as moral activists, servants of justice and truth for all people. This model highlights the prophetic call to be servants of all innocent victims, especially those outside the confines of the church community. It focuses the attention of Christians on the Kingdom of God, to which the institutional church is a servant. This model takes seriously Jesus's parable of the last judgment: "Inherit the kingdom prepared for you. ... For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink" (Matthew 25:34–35). It was the paradigm of behavior for individuals who took a strong public stand against the Nazis, such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Alfred Delp, Sophie and Hans Scholl, and Franz Jagerstatter,

[whose] actions were misunderstood and criticized by other Christians, especially by bishops, whose theology of the church did not include social justice. They found little or no basis for their actions in church teachings that

said that since every legitimate government receives its authority from God, it deserves obedience of its citizens. The Christian martyrs under Hitler made religious sense of their actions insofar as they had developed their own theology of Christian life as witnessing to a justice and truth greater than that acknowledged by civil authorities and even by ecclesiastical authorities. (Krieg, p. 163)

“Clearly,” a student concluded, “this is the model that would have saved innocent victims, especially Jews, from the Nazis, had it been operational.” The principal aim of Christian belief and practice, according to this model, is to focus on social justice and to treat directly the issues of poverty, peace, racism, and evil in its many forms. The first two models have as their aim self-preservation, which serves the community that is to be preserved and protected. There is much value in Roman Catholicism relative to protecting its sacramental life and preserving the community that gathers to celebrate these sacraments, but difficult questions need to be asked: How often have these first two models encouraged and justified the role of a bystander in an unjust society? How often have they led to a concern for others outside the circle of the Church? This is not a comfortable discussion for these young people, but they take the moral implications seriously.

CHRISTIAN RESCUE OF JEWS

In her classic study of the Christian rescue of Jews, Nechama Tec (1987) highlights six characteristics of the rescuers. There is no distinct pattern to rescuers but rather a set of interdependent shared characteristics and conditions:

- individuality or separatedness;
- independence or self-reliance;
- a long history of good deeds;
- an inability to see the extraordinary nature of their actions;
- a desire to help without rational consideration; and
- universalistic perceptions that transcend race and ethnicity.

Mordecai Paldiel (1996), another expert on Christian rescue [see his essay in this issue, pp. 105–109—Eds.], also presents characteristics of these rescuers. They were decision-makers, strong-minded enough to break away from standard norms, and not afraid to take responsibility. They obeyed no one but their own conscience and the call of a higher ethic, and they were able to tame fears of apprehension and punishment.

As students explore the Christian rescue of Jews and compare that to the role of the Christian bystander, the one who does nothing to help others, they struggle and reflect.

“I never thought that living a moral and a Christian life was so difficult until I dealt with this part of the course,” one student wrote. “What made some Christians rescue while others stood by?” he and the others wondered, raising an essential research question.

David Gushee (2003), writing on the rescue of Jews by Christians during the Nazi period, highlights, in a chapter titled “Compelled by Faith,” six factors by which Christians in general, not specifically Catholics, felt compelled to rescue Jews and other victims. I ask my students to examine the behavior of Roman Catholics in light of these factors.

The first factor is that Christians who rescued Jews already felt a special religious kinship with them as a people (Christian philosemitism). In September 1938, Pope Pius XI told a group of pilgrims:

Abraham is called our patriarch, our ancestor. Antisemitism is not compatible with the reality of this text; it is a movement which Christians cannot share. No, it is not possible for Christians to take part in antisemitism. We are Semites spiritually. (*The New York Times*, December 12, 1938, p. 1)

This belief, however, was the exception and not the rule in Roman Catholicism. Early Christian theology emphasized the differences rather than the bonds between Christians and Jews—which was reversed at the Second Vatican Council in the document “*Nostra Aetate*”—and thus Roman Catholics did not embrace a theology that would hold that Jews were to be respected since they belonged to the same religious heritage with the Jewish people. Lamentably, the encyclical on racism and antisemitism Pius XI was writing was never published; had it been, it could have moved at least some Roman Catholics away from bystanding and toward advocating for social justice for the Jewish people still living in their midst, as a larger number of Protestant Christians did.

The second factor is the remembered experience of religious persecution: People helped other suffering people because they had not forgotten their own. Because many Roman Catholics saw themselves as victims of the Nazis, this should have evoked a compassionate response to others' suffering, and in some Catholics, it seems, it did; but the vast majority, infused with deep-seated, long-standing anti-Judaism, failed to respond to the plight of the Jews.

The third factor is the incompatibility of Nazism with Christian faith and the ambivalence inherent in this incompatibility. It is significant that no Roman Catholic during this time wrote any document clearly stating this incompatibility (unless one sees *Mit Brennender Sorge* as an exception. A close reading of this text has convinced me that the papal encyclical is a basic refutation of Nazi ideology and policy, and I offer

the text as a research possibility to interested students).

The fourth factor is Christian teaching about the equality and sacredness of every human life. Such teaching was applied at various times during the Nazi era (e.g., to protest the euthanasia program in the early 1940s). Tragically, however, Catholics failed to apply this teaching to Jewish victims of the Nazi regime.

The fifth factor is biblical teaching on compassion and love, including the “Golden Rule,” the Parable of the Good Samaritan, and the Final Judgment in Matthew 25. While these texts were foundational for rescuers in both Protestant and Roman Catholic circles, it appears that they did not motivate the vast majority of Catholics to rescue Jews.

The sixth and final factor is Christian commitment and spirituality, understood as realizing the will of God, being obedient to Him, and accepting His judgment on human actions. This factor appears to have influenced only some Christians to move beyond the role of bystander to that of helper or rescuer.

THE CATHOLIC BYSTANDERS

My students appreciate and are pained by the sharp contrast to the Catholic bystanders in the example of a non-Catholic community, descendants of French Huguenots, who epitomized the servant model of Church. The people of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon in southern France, along with their pastor André Trocmé and his wife, sheltered and thus rescued hundreds of Jews escaping the Nazis (Hallie, 1994). The research of Hallie and others shows that they believed, as a biblical principle, in the dignity, worth, and supreme value of every human life; they saw pacifism as an aggressive and creative strategy for resisting evil and doing good; they recognized the immense power of the “weapons of the Spirit” if unstintingly employed; they believed that God’s love is more powerful than any human force; and their favorite Bible passages for reflection on their moral action were the Good Samaritan and the Sermon on the Mount.

We discuss at length the division that existed in the Christian community. “What would have happened,” I ask, “if all Roman Catholics and the Protestant churches (especially Lutherans) had embraced the Servant model in the 1930s and worked together for a common cause against the Nazi regime? Would this have changed the outcome of those turbulent years?” Since our student body is 50 percent Roman Catholic and 40 percent Lutheran (the other 10 percent are non-Lutheran Protestant students and a small number of Jews and Muslims), this is a challenging and provocative question.

As a final necessary question, I ask, “Now, we live in a world in which we do not have radical differences between us; how do we understand the moral failure of that time and its implications for today?”

My students say that they leave my course with more questions than they had when they entered it. They affirm, however, their commitment to work to avoid the insular and self-serving thinking and actions of the Church of the past. They recognize that the majority of Christians were bystanders during the Nazi regime; that so many of them were Roman Catholics is a strong indictment of the Church as a moral advocate. They acknowledge that too much emphasis was placed on self-preservation and the inner life of the Church and not enough on seeing the Gospel way of life as demanding moral advocacy and being suffering servants. From studying these difficult truths, my students learn that living the Gospel way of life cannot be mere words; instead, such a commitment requires that, as Roman Catholics, we never remain bystanders to social, religious, or ethnic injustices in our contemporary world. ■

STEVEN J. MCMICHAEL, OFM Conv., is an Associate Professor in the Theology Department at the University of Saint Thomas (Saint Paul, Minnesota). His interests include Franciscan studies and interreligious dialogue, especially Jewish–Christian and Muslim–Christian relations. He has published in the area of medieval Jewish–Christian relations, particularly on the writings of Alonso de Espina (d. 1464), and is currently researching and writing on the resurrection of Jesus in medieval theology, preaching, and interreligious polemical literature. His most recent publication is “Friar Alonso de Espina, Prayer, and Medieval Jewish, Muslim, and Christian Polemical Literature” in *Medieval Franciscan Prayer* (2007, Leiden: E. J. Brill). To contact the author, e-mail SJMCMICHAEL@stthomas.edu

NOTE:

This plan was problematic for Roman Catholics since they were primarily excluded from the movement to establish a state church that would be founded on the Evangelical tradition, which represented a theological tradition at odds with Roman Catholicism (remember that the Reformation in the sixteenth century happened primarily in Germany). These differences include the nature and role of the sacraments, the theology of justification, and authority within the Church. Deep-seated prejudice toward one another and the sources of unity among the churches (ritual, ethnicity, the state, and war) that was promoted by the “German Christian” (Glaubensbewegung “Deutsche Christen”) prevented Roman Catholics from unifying under one Reich Church. (Bergen, 1996, pp. 101–118).

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The Aquinas Institute high school teacher Patrick Connelly uses on-line documents, poetry, and art in this interdisciplinary unit of study on the bystander that explores the question “Is bystanding a sin?” Connelly explains, “In a Catholic school setting, I have the freedom—and the obligation”—to examine this concept. Such essential discussion, he continues, “is a critical reminder and supports our moral responsibility to be people of action, people who are not indifferent to the sufferings of others.”

Patrick Connelly

“We Can Form a *Minyan* for Righteousness”: Teaching About the Bystander in a Catholic High School

An integral part of any course of study of the Shoah should be an investigation of the role of the bystander and the underlying reasons for the apathy and indifference of so many. Such study reinforces the mission—to prepare students to be responsible and caring citizens—of The Aquinas Institute, a Basilian high school in Rochester, New York, where I teach. This mission is not unique to my school or to Catholic schools in general; it is a central goal of every school in a democratic society.

In his opening speech at Conference One: Education, Remembrance and Research on the Holocaust, held in Stockholm, Sweden, historian Yehuda Bauer (2000) said:

I come from a people who gave the Ten Commandments to the world. Time has come to strengthen them by three additional ones, which we ought to adopt and commit ourselves to: Thou shall not be a perpetrator; thou shall not be a victim; and thou shall never, but never, be a bystander.

What prompted this esteemed Holocaust scholar to emphasize the role of bystander as the strongest of the three prohibitions?

Bystanders, in many cases, were ordinary individuals, communities, governments, and churches who played it safe. They complied with laws and tried to avoid the terrorizing activities of the Nazi regime. Though some may have been unaware, or chose not to be informed, many were fearful of the consequences action might bring, prompting paralysis. Others were overcome by the threat of being similarly targeted; still others feared putting the lives of family and neighbors in danger. Yet some bystanders were most swayed by their own agendas and biases.

My 10th-grade students, as part of our year-long Holocaust course, read *Night* (Wiesel, 1960) and eagerly participate in profound discussions about the Jews in the camps thrust into situations where inaction becomes a choiceless choice. In one such scene, Wiesel does nothing to defend his father who is beaten shortly after arrival at the camp. One of my students, Stephanie A., responded:

I would not consider his actions to be out of the ordinary, given the context. He realizes that there are boundaries that he cannot cross, not only for his own good, but also for the good of his father and the others around him. ... Fear of ... death, not a lack of love, prevents him from taking any action.

Yet no students, in my experience, have ever judged Elie or any other Jewish victim to be a bystander; they understand well the concept of “choiceless choices” that the Nazis imposed on the Jews. Almost all students, though, do express outrage over the inaction of non-Jewish bystanders in other settings. In learning about the Nuremberg Laws, about Kristallnacht, about the ghettos and the deportations, about the close proximity of some camps to towns, a chorus of “How could so many stand by silently?” always emerges in class discussion.

TEACHING RESOURCES

I use a variety of online resources to address this topic. One is the text of Senator Joseph Lieberman's *Days of Remembrance* (2007) speech, in which he says:

Evil not only threatens us. It tempts us to protect ourselves by going down false and self-deceptive paths by

making someone else's suffering into something foreign, something distant, something that belongs to a world that is separate from our own, something we therefore have no obligation or capacity to do anything about. That is how innocent bystanders become evil's accomplice. That is how so many in the world claimed they did not know that the Nazis were involved not just in conquest but in genocide. That is why we owe it to the millions they murdered, who cannot speak today, to remember this, to learn from it, and to do everything we can to make sure it never happens again.

This year, I used the *Days of Remembrance* speech from President Barack Obama (2009). The President notes the "willingness of those who are neither perpetrators or victims accepting the role of bystander, believing the lie that good people are ever powerless alone, the fiction that we do not have a choice." He continues:

No one can make us into bystanders without our consent. ... If we have the courage to heed that still, small voice within us, we can form a minyan for righteousness that can span a village, even a nation.

Such words resonate with my classes. I ask them to relate the President's remarks to both Holocaust history and situations today. One student, Joseph M., always the serious academic and conscientious worker, writes:

If I were the one asking for help, would I want someone to help me? The answer is yes. So when we learn about injustice, it is our duty to not ignore this call but to answer it by assisting in whatever way we can, because it is always possible that someday we could be on the other side of the fence looking in. ... We have to listen to those who are crying out for help, take them seriously, and offer whatever support is necessary to overcome injustice and evil.

These comments provide the perfect introduction to Pastor Martin Niemöller's (n.d.) well-known and powerful statement:

First they came for the Communists, but I was not a Communist, so I did not speak out. Then they came for the Socialists and the Trade Unionists, but I was neither, so I did not speak out. Then they came for the Jews, but I was not a Jew so I did not speak out. And when they came for me, there was no one left to speak out for me.

Short and poetic, Niemöller's cautionary tale leads us into Holocaust poetry. I use "Teaching the Holocaust Through Poetry," a lesson plan available at <http://www1.yadvashem.org/education/lessonplan/english/poetry.htm>, which suggests that students read W. H. Auden's (1939) poem "Refugee Blues" and identify victims, perpetrators, and bystanders and the factors that led individuals to belong to each group. The lesson suggests as well a consideration of other art forms in relation to the poem, and the site's 1939 photograph of Jews outside a travel agency in Berlin after Kristallnacht as well as the Felix Nussbaum (1939) painting "The Refugee" always elicit remarkable insights. Sophomore Hope W., a quiet, reserved, and sensitive young woman, wrote, "It was because of the poem that I first gave serious thought to the anguish that refugees must have felt in desperately trying to find a new place to live."

"Perpetrators, Collaborators, and Bystanders," Lesson Nine of the multimedia curriculum *Echoes and Reflections* (2006), available at http://www1.yadvashem.org/education/adl/lesson_9.htm, is also an invaluable resource. I have used it to affirm students' responses to the Felix Nussbaum painting and to introduce students to Jan Karski (1914–2000), the non-Jewish Pole who brought reports of the Holocaust to London and Washington in 1942 to no avail. In addition to Karski's story, to illustrate the indifference of nations I assign guided Internet research using the excellent online exhibit at <http://www.ushmm.org/museum/exhibit/online/stlouis/> from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) about the voyage of the U.S.S. St. Louis.

Elie Wiesel's (1999) speech "The Perils of Indifference" addresses the issue of the indifference of our own country and that of much of the rest of the world. Wiesel eloquently explains the lure of the bystander role:

It is so much easier to look away from victims. It is so much easier to avoid such rude interruptions to our work, our dreams, our hopes. It is, after all, awkward, troublesome, to be involved in another person's pain and despair. Yet, for the person who is indifferent, his or her neighbors are of no consequence, and, therefore, their lives are meaningless. Their hidden or even visible anguish is of no interest. Indifference reduces the Other to an abstraction.

My students respond in writing to these speeches and then share their thoughts in small-group discussion. In one such session, the highly intelligent and always outspoken sophomore Sabrina M. drove home Wiesel's point by sharing the following:

Last week, there was a bombing in Mumbai, India. For many, the story might have seemed unimportant, just pictures from some other bombing like we have seen so many times on CNN, but to me it meant great danger to members of my family. Mumbai is where my father's side of the family resides, and I have been there often

and know many people there. So because of a personal connection, I am personally affected by this shocking act of violence. Those victims aren't statistics but people connected to my family. To be more sensitive to other victims, we all have to remember that in similar tragedies, we are personally connected to them as family, as members of the human family.

Wiesel (1999) continues:

Indifference is always the friend of the enemy, for it benefits the aggressor, never his victim, whose pain is magnified when he or she feels forgotten. The political prisoner in his cell, the hungry children, the homeless refugees—not to respond to their plight, not to relieve their solitude by offering them a spark of hope is to exile them from human memory. And in denying their humanity, we betray our own. Indifference, then, is not only a sin; it is a punishment.

IS BYSTANDING A SIN?

In a Catholic school setting, I have the freedom—and the obligation—to address Wiesel's use of the word "sin." Throughout their theology curriculum, students are taught that sin is an offense against reason, truth, and right conscience; it is a failure in genuine love for God and neighbor; it wounds the nature of man and injures human solidarity. Types of sin include those in thought, word, deed, or omission. The Church teaches that we have a responsibility for the sins committed by others when we cooperate in them:

- by participating directly or voluntarily in them;
- by advising, ordering, praising or approving them;
- by not disclosing or hindering them when we have an obligation to do so; and
- by protecting evildoers.¹

This is a critical reminder and supports our moral responsibility to be people of action, people who are not indifferent to the sufferings of others. Adherents of the Catholic faith tradition view bystander inaction as sinful behavior and totally contrary to the Christian call to holiness that believers are challenged to live because of their baptism. Yet, this raises other crucial issues: the role of the Church during the *Shoah* and the long, sad history of Christian antisemitism. In Catholic schools today, we are committed to confronting these subjects honestly and sensitively, guided by the Vatican document "We Remember" (1998) and the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops' document "Catholic Teaching on the Shoah: Implementing the Holy See's 'We Remember'" (Secretariat, 2001).

The Bishops explain:

In the 1998 statement "We Remember," Pope John Paul II called on [Church] members collectively to repent not only for the sins of omission and commission of its members during the *Shoah* but also for the many centuries of negative teachings about Jews and Judaism. ... The instructor should be conscious of the moral imperative to construct a memory of the Shoah that will positively influence the moral formation of students. (pp. 3, 14)

The Bishops add:

In a Catholic setting, students should come to accept and regret that the perpetrators, bystanders, and cowed majority in Europe came from within the Christian community. ... This awareness of past sins should lead to a firm resolve to help build a new future between Catholics and Jews. (pp. 3, 14)

A VISION OF A NEW FUTURE

This vision of a new future is shaped in part by the shining, if few, examples of the Righteous during the Holocaust. These few often declared they had little choice but to do only that which was right, even under dangerous conditions, and that was to protest, resist, and save lives. As Cardinal Keeler (2001) states, "The rescuers were, after all, relatively few islands of light in a continent overwhelmed by the darkness of evil. Still, the rescuers remain crucial models for future generations of Catholics" (p. 11). Discussions of rescuers are a must in a class on the Holocaust, but a careful balance is needed lest their righteousness makes students too comfortable.

Staff director of the Committee on Church Relations at the USHMM Victoria Barnett (1999) states, "We now know that ordinary human beings are capable of doing and tolerating terrible things. We also know that ordinary human beings are capable of protesting courageously against terrible things" (p. 149). One need not fall into the category of bystander when confronted with a situation demanding a moral choice. We look to the stories of the rescuers to find examples of people who had the courage to care and to act. Meghan H., an introverted but independent young student, concurs:

Tend to the needs of the victims, not out of pity but to inspire others to act: One voice, one act can make a difference. One can lead to many. With many raising their voices against injustice, with many looking to help those who are victimized, much can be accomplished, lives can be saved.

When I refer to the exemplary behavior of those rescuers who saved Jews because of the tenets of their Christian faith,

I ask, "Isn't this what we, as Catholics, should expect of one another?" In the Catholic school in which I teach, I hope and pray that the answer that all students will give to that question is a resounding yes—and then display the fortitude to respond through their actions toward others. ■

PATRICK CONNELLY has taught theology at The Aquinas Institute of Rochester, NY, for 26 years. He has studied at Yad Vashem and is a recipient of the 2009 Jewish Labor Committee's Teacher Summer Study Fellowship in Holocaust and Jewish Resistance as well as three National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Summer Seminar grants, the latest to study "Multiple Perspectives on the Holocaust." Connelly, a Museum Teacher Fellow of the USHMM, is the recipient of the Janusz Korczak Teaching Award and the Louis Yavner Award for excellence in Holocaust education. A founding member of the International Holocaust Educators' Consortium, his most recent publication is "Survival and Hope in Sara Nomberg-Przytyk's 'The Camp Blanket'" (Shawn & Goldfrad [Eds.]. [2008]. *The call of memory: Learning about the Holocaust through narrative: A teacher's guide*). To contact the author, e-mail patrickeconnelly@hotmail.com

NOTE

For the full text of Article 8 Sin of Catechism of the Catholic Church, see <http://www.usccb.org/catechism/text/pt3sect1chpt1art8.shtml>

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"Theirs was a gentler need: to watch / unheeded, what the killers had done," writes poet Charles Adès Fishman in this piece that echoes the text of Mina Cohen's painting (p. 62) as well as much of the other poetry in these pages. The softness of Fishman's tone belies the shocking truth of his poem: that many bystanders enjoyed standing and watching.

Charles Adès Fishman

The Voyeurs

They would not touch a Jew's head
in anger or brush with their fingers
the soft skin of a Jewish child.

They were not disposed to wound
or batter with the sadist's weaponry
or slay with a gun. For them,

there had been no fun in murder
nor satisfaction in shattering bone.
Theirs was a gentler need: to watch,

unheeded, what the killers had done,
to take small pleasure from a distance
as bodies fell.

They stood, oh, so meekly, at their place
in hell.

CHARLES ADÈS FISHMAN is poetry editor of *PRISM* and author of several internationally acclaimed books, including *The Death Mazurka*, a 1989 American Library Association Outstanding Book of the Year that was nominated for the 1990 Pulitzer Prize in Poetry, and *Chopin's Piano* (2006), which received the 2007 Paterson Award for Literary Excellence. The revised, second edition of his anthology, *Blood to Remember: American Poets on the Holocaust*, was published by Time Being Books in October 2007. His blog is <http://writingtheholocaust.blogspot.com>, and his most recent collection of poems is *Water under Water*, released by Casa De Snapdragon in December 2009. To contact the poet, e-mail carolus@optimum.net

Daniel Kroll's guide to teaching Hans Peter Richter's *Friedrich* helps students examine the stance of the bystander and offers modern-day scenarios that demand similar exploration. Thoughtful students may conclude that comparisons cannot be made; however, as Kroll notes, "There are indeed universalities of feelings and issues evoked by any study of the Holocaust; such a conversation is crucial because it provides a forum for students to grapple with some of the essential issues that underlie the Holocaust and made it possible." Rona Milch Novick's companion essay (pp. 83–86) offers the theoretical underpinnings that ground and contextualize these classroom-friendly suggestions.

Daniel Kroll

Hans Peter Richter's *Friedrich*: Trying to Understand German Inaction During the Holocaust

The inaction by German civilians during the Holocaust cannot and should not be justified. However, from a psychological perspective that examines the underpinnings of human nature, the behavior of the bystander can be explained. The behavior of European non-Jews during the Holocaust is often painted in black and white: Either you were an antisemitic Jew-hater who agreed with and supported Hitler's tactics, or you opposed Hitler's actions, saw them as savage and inhumane, and tried to do something about it, even at the risk of your life. Such a simplistic explanation does not do justice to the complexities of the human psyche. Explaining things in black and white allows us to understand only the exceptional people: those who were heroes who risked their lives to save Jewish lives, and those who were slaughterers and murdered as many Jews as possible.

The common European folk were bystanders; they were not SS men or active members of the Nazi party but bankers, butchers, homemakers, teachers, and farmers. They knew what was going on, but they did not take steps to stop it. Some were sympathetic to the Nazi cause, some to the Jewish victims, but neither group acted in support of their feelings.

One such sympathizer for the Jews is the protagonist in *Friedrich*, a powerful little autobiographical novel by Hans Peter Richter (1987). *Friedrich*, based on Richter's childhood, tells the story of two young boys who are best friends, one a German and one a Jew. As the story unfolds, the German Hans sees things get progressively worse for his Jewish friend and upstairs neighbor, Friedrich Schneider. Hans and his family are certainly sympathetic to the plight of the Schneiders, but they do little to attempt to condemn the increasing measures against their friends, to offer them shelter,

or to support, hide, or otherwise act on their behalf. They are saddened and distressed by what they see happening, but they do nothing. What is the moral equivalence of this inaction with that of a German who believed in the goals of Nazism but who did not take any active role in its rise or implementation? Are both bystanders? Are both equally guilty? Is not hurting someone the same as not helping someone in need of help?

For teachers, this subject raises profound and essential questions. In this brief unit that I propose, using selected chapters from *Friedrich*, students will discuss, examine, ponder, analyze, and determine whether we can assign different levels of guilt to different parties who lived at the time of the Holocaust, and how we can use this understanding to look at our own experiences with bystander behavior today. How different from an SS man who murdered a Jew in the street is the bystander who looked the other way as it happened? If the bystander cringed and recoiled in horror, is he less guilty than one who applauded the action in his heart?

We will also look at the difference between Hans, Friedrich's best friend; and Hans's parents. Was Hans a bystander? Can we place blame on a child? Should he have appealed to his parents to take action? When does a child move from simply being helpless to being a bystander?

The methodology will include the presentation of a number of social scenarios, read together in class, acted out, and examined. The scenarios reflect various situations possible today in which a person has the ability to speak up when a threatening behavior is taking place. The purpose of such exercises is to explore the question of how someone can stand by idly as accepted rules of behavior and laws of decency

are being broken and people are being treated cruelly and unfairly. It will be emphasized that while such exercises might provide some understanding of bystander behavior, that understanding does not justify the behavior.

CONTEXT

This unit will be taught in a coeducational Jewish high school to 11th graders in a literature class in the days preceding Yom Hashoah. The unit seeks to address issues with which the students have most likely not grappled before and, as a result, will hopefully make their Yom Hashoah more meaningful.

STORIES

The chapter titled “Grandfather” (pp. 12–16) illustrates the potential obstacles in the way of non-Jewish bystanders that may have prevented them from reaching out to Jews with whom they sympathized. Although the Richters are cordial to the Schneiders and their children are best friends, Hans’ maternal grandfather, who is supporting the Richter family throughout the Depression that gripped Germany in the ’30s, is vehemently opposed to the relationship. After Frau Richter cautiously informs the grandfather that Hans is friends with Friedrich and that he and his family are “nice people,” the grandfather fumes:

I once had a superior who was a Jew. Cohn his name was. None of us liked him. ... One time—it was summer—I saw that he wore a square rag on his chest and back underneath his shirt, a prayer shawl with a fringe on it. He didn't even take his hat off in a room. No, I really don't like to remember Herr Cohn. ... We are Christians. Bear in mind that the Jews crucified our Lord. Here father interjected, “But not the Schneiders!” Grandfather got up from the chair. He leaned on the table with his knuckles. ... He ordered, “I do not wish the boy to associate with this Jew!” (Richter, 1970, p. 15)

At the conclusion of the chapter, Friedrich, who comes to visit, is told that he cannot play with Hans: “not possible. ... Grandfather's here” (p. 16). The students will learn that even though some people were sympathetic to the Jewish cause and to their Jewish neighbors, other variables factored into the equation. Just because the Schneiders were “nice people,” it did not mean that the German family would be able—or even try—to save them. For many sympathizers, to help a Jew would have meant being ostracized from their families. Of course, a few courageous people made that choice, but the majority did not.

The chapter titled “The Way to School” (pp. 26–31) is a story of public bystanders that students may be able to relate to their own lives. During the April 1, 1933, state-sponsored

boycott of Jewish shops and businesses, a Nazi is stationed in front of Abraham Rosenthal's store with a placard reading: “Don't Buy From Jews.” The townspeople stand around, waiting for drama to unfold. With the exception of an elderly woman, no one dares enter the stationery store, yet the crowd in front is so large that when the boys approach, Friedrich remarks, “An accident!” (p. 28). When the old woman politely but firmly pushes past the guard to enter the store, no one else follows suit; instead of following her and defying Nazi pressure not to patronize the store, “The bystanders grinned. In the back rows, some even laughed out loud” (p. 30).

“Why,” I would ask the class, “is a large mob of people afraid of a solitary Nazi when they see that a woman is defying him without penalty? Surely they could not be afraid that the Nazi would hurt them.” I would hope that some students will say that it is much easier to conform than to go against what was fast becoming that society's accepted norm. “But why is it easier to conform than rebel?” I would continue, asking if there have been times in their lives where they conformed to the group norms even if their hearts told them they should not. If they did, do they now regret it? Obviously, to elicit such personal and perhaps socially risky responses, a teacher must have provided a trusted and trusting classroom environment; such discussions will remain flat and inauthentic otherwise. Such questions and the responses they engender will enable the students to relate this short story to their lives.

In the discomfiting “Conversation on the Stairs” (pp. 42–44), we learn of the eviction of the Schneider family by their German landlord Herr Resch, who feels both angry and uneasy giving Herr Schneider the news that he is being summarily evicted. I would ask the class to note the mannerisms and other actions that suggest Herr Resch's discomfort, and then ask why he might have had those feelings even as he yells his rationale for his actions: “Because you are a Jew!” (p. 44). Might Herr Richter, who witnessed this eviction notice, have taken advantage of what seems to be the landlord's distress to side with Herr Schneider? Can we become sensitized to the proper time to confront a bully who, in the beginning of his actions, may be more easily stopped by someone who takes a stand against him?

In this instance, Herr Richter vehemently objects to Herr Resch's decision and defends Herr Schneider, but only by declaring that he will not be a witness to such an injustice; he returns to his apartment and listens to the rest of the incident from behind closed doors. Is “refusing to witness an injustice” another way to remain a bystander? Or is expressing one's contempt and dismay at such actions an action itself? The chapter ends with Herr Schneider in shock, Herr Resch stamping down the stairs, and the Richter father and son standing behind a closed door. What should we make of the ending? Should we applaud Herr Richter for initially

speaking up and challenging Herr Resch, or should we fault him for not doing more? This question raises another: How much can be expected of bystanders like Mr. Richter? Had he done more to defend the Schneiders, he may have put his own tenancy in jeopardy. Can one argue that bystanders are more at fault when they stand by idly even if they have nothing to lose by interfering than if they stand by because they are aware of their own precarious position? Is fear of loss of face, social status, work, or property each a valid reason for standing by? If so, then was any German guilty for his or her failure to act?

The final stories of the unit, “In the Shelter” (p. 133–136) and “The End” (p. 137–138), will be discussed together. “In the Shelter” describes, horrifyingly, the circumstances surrounding the neighborhood crowd’s refusal to allow Friedrich to remain in the bomb shelter during an air raid; “The End” tells of his subsequent death. After reading a litany of stories where person after person watches as Friedrich and his family are humiliated, abused, and abandoned, the reader cannot help but feel relief when the people in the shelter urge Herr Resch to let Friedrich remain, even though he is a Jew. However, Herr Resch’s threat, “Who do you think you are! How dare you mix in my affairs? Who is air-raid warden here, you or I? You follow my orders, is that understood? Otherwise I’ll report you” (p. 136) makes the people back down. At what point does one’s attempt to do the right thing give way to one’s recognition of his need to protect himself? The sergeant who had bravely stood up to Herr Resch now tells Friedrich, “Go, boy. Go voluntarily. ... Otherwise there’ll be nothing but annoyance” (p. 136). Is one who tries to help but fails in his attempt still considered a bystander?

“How do we understand the motivations of the people who backed down after being threatened by Herr Resch?” I would ask. I would expect some students to say that they understand it even though it was the wrong decision, while others might say that even though they would be at risk of being reported, the people should have let Friedrich remain. How do we as individuals make such decisions to put someone else’s welfare ahead of our own? Are our decisions different if we are with others? Do our decisions depend upon theirs?

After the Resch tirade, the sergeant who had defended Friedrich was “no longer sure of himself. ... Everyone was silent. The guns still sounded” (p. 136). The sergeant was no longer confident enough to stand up to Herr Resch, but he found the strength to tell a little boy that he should enter a war zone without protest. This part of the story again raises questions of conformity and how it can cause a person to do something in which he does not believe for fear of confronting the group leader and of being ostracized by the group they value.

“The End” graphically illustrates what happens when people look the other way when they see an injustice. The

Richters, exiting the bomb shelter after the all-clear signal, discover their little neighbor, Friedrich, sitting, dead on the stoop of their building. No one fought to protect him when they could have, and this is what happened. Herr Resch’s guilt cannot be denied, but it is not a goal of this unit to examine his behavior; this unit seeks to understand the behavior of the bystanders. Author Richter does not share his parents’ reaction to Friedrich’s death. Did they feel guilty or did they feel justified because rescuing him would have put their lives at risk? As silent bystanders, are they just as guilty as Herr Resch?

SOCIAL SCENARIOS

Upon the completion of each story or at the end of the book, to aid and spur further discussion, the students will either read or act out the following social scenarios, which echo the selected stories from *Friedrich*. Students may ask whether it is possible to compare modern-day social scenarios to what happened during the Holocaust, and the question is a good one with room for much debate. The students may well conclude that while comparisons cannot be made, there are indeed universalities of feelings and issues evoked by any study of the Holocaust; such a conversation is crucial because it provides a forum for students to grapple with some of the essential issues that underlie the Holocaust and made it possible.

Scenario #1: Racist Grandfather

Your grandfather comes to visit. You love when he comes because you don’t see him often, and he always brings you great presents; he doesn’t just bring you toys, he brings you the hottest new electronics. You had an iPod before all of your friends did, and you were the first to get a Wii. Everyone loves your grandfather, and he is the life of the dinner conversation. He tells the best jokes; they always make you laugh, but for a long time some of them have made you feel uncomfortable because they make fun of Latinos. He calls them all sorts of names, names too embarrassing to repeat. You’ve told your parents that it bothers you, but they respond with a laugh, “Just ignore it. It’s how he grew up.” You can’t anymore. You have a close friend who is Latino, a boy who lives on your block, is on your math team, and is goalie on your soccer team. The conflict is tormenting you. You don’t know if you should say something about your friend or about your grandfather’s racism; you don’t want to risk embarrassing your grandfather and damaging your relationship, but you feel you should be standing up for your friend and for what you know is right. Now your friend has asked to meet your grandfather!

This scenario, a companion to the story “Grandfather,” may be explored in small groups or as a whole class exercise. Some questions follow:

1. In what ways is this scenario similar to the one depicted in the story “Grandfather”? Are there differences between the racist grandfathers? Do the differences influence your thinking on what should be the correct outcome?
2. What do you think you might have done in the place of this grandson?
3. Do you think it is more difficult to go against the norms of parents and grandparents or those of your own crowd?

Scenario #2: “He Can’t Play!”

You are in the 6th grade. It is time for recess and yet another heated game of seven-on-seven football. There’s only one problem: Fifteen people want to play. The problem can easily be solved by having one person play quarterback for both teams so that everyone can play. Someone suggests this idea, but the biggest kid on the playground complains, “We never play that way. Someone just can’t play. And I say that it should be Noam. Noam’s from Westbury, and everyone else is from Northbury. Everyone from Westbury stinks at football.” Everyone else chimes in, “Yeah! Noam can’t play; he stinks!” You see Noam standing there embarrassed, waiting for someone to help him out and take his side, but no one does. You want to say something but don’t know if you should because everyone might try to exclude you, too. And you are not the best player....

This scenario can be used as a companion to “The Way to School.” Below are some discussion questions that be used with this scenario:

1. Have you ever been excluded in such a way, or have you witnessed such exclusion? What did you do? What might you do now?
2. Would you respond differently to an insult based upon religion or race rather than something without real meaning, such as the town a child is from or the school he attends? Is it the basis of the insult or the effect of the insult that would more likely make you act?
3. The person who objected to Noam playing was the biggest kid on the playground. In what ways might that account for the bystanders’ reaction?
4. Do you believe that the fear of exclusion is a good enough rationale for not speaking up? The fear of physical abuse? The fear of being humiliated by the group? The fear of the unknown?

Scenario #3: Controversial Rabbi

You attend a synagogue whose rabbi is an outspoken critic of the State of Israel. He blames all of Israel’s problems on its secular government and claims that no good Jew should associate themselves with what he calls a “rogue state.” He even goes so far as to encourage his congregants to divest

from the State of Israel. He says that visiting and supporting Israel is tantamount to supporting enemies of the Jewish people. Many people in the synagogue agree with the rabbi; many disagree but remain silent. You are disgusted by his remarks and decide to speak up about it at the next board meeting, where you are attacked by supporters of the rabbi. Out of frustration, you tell them, “Fine! I’m having no part of this. I’m leaving the shul.” You leave the synagogue and no longer have to hear the inflammatory words of the rabbi.

This scenario can be used as a companion to “Conversation on the Stairs.” Discussion questions:

1. Compare the person attending the synagogue and the father in “Conversation.” Did each do all that he could do?
2. When someone of stature speaks and sends messages with which you strongly disagree, what do you do? Do you feel that you have the right to challenge them? How do you go about doing that?
3. Is being a bystander to hurtful words the same as being a bystander to hurtful actions?

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT

As a summative assessment for this unit, I would ask the students to develop scenarios of their own and relate them to stories in *Friedrich* that were not part of this unit. The students will read aloud their scenarios and lead a discussion. This assessment will help the teacher evaluate the students’ ability to relate literature, particularly Holocaust literature, to their own lives, thereby giving it more meaning.

CONCLUSION

The stories in *Friedrich* deal with difficult choices. These are not the choices made by Jews, because during the Holocaust their ability to choose was taken away. The choices under discussion are those of bystanders. Do I speak up? Will I be risking my job, my standing in the community, my home, my family’s well-being, or my life if I do something? At what point is speaking up the right thing? At what point, if ever, is it the wrong choice? Is speaking out the same as acting? Are speaking and acting against injustice worth the price one might pay? If one fails to speak and act against injustice, what price does one pay for that silence?

As readers of these stories and other literature about the Holocaust, we may find it easy to blame all Europeans, Nazis and bystanders alike, but we must understand the complexities of the situation and the choices that people had to make. While the decisions of the bystanders cannot be justified, they are worthy of further examination as we seek to help our students understand the moral imperative not to stand idly by. ■

RABBI DANIEL KROLL received his ordination from the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary of Yeshiva University. He is the assistant rabbi at Congregation K.I.N.S. of West Rogers Park in Chicago, IL, and teaches Talmud and Bible at the Ida Crown Jewish Academy. Rabbi Kroll received his M.S. from the Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration at Yeshiva University. To contact the author, e-mail dmkroll@gmail.com

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Using classic and current research from the field of social psychology, Rona Milch Novick contextualizes Daniel Kroll's teaching guide (pp. 78–82) to the classic bystander stories in Hans Peter Richter's *Friedrich*. "In their struggle to understand the human response to the suffering of others," Novick writes, "the students will join the ranks of social psychology researchers who have explored the parameters of bystander behavior."

Rona Milch Novick

German Bystander Inaction During the Holocaust: Lessons Learned From Social Psychology and Teachable Moments for Today's Students

As long as the world shall last there will be wrongs, and if no man objected and no man rebelled, those wrongs would last forever.

—Clarence Darrow

The vicissitudes of history suggest powerful universal questions about human nature. How people can stand by when others are hurt; how governments, corporations, or other groups convince individuals to adopt ideas and products; and what categories of people are repeatedly victimized are relevant questions in both the large arena of world politics and the microcosm of the schoolyard. Daniel Kroll's (2010) suggested lessons (pp. 78–82) in this issue based on Hans Peter Richter's (1987) *Friedrich* effectively engage students in exploring these questions. In their struggle to understand the human response to the suffering of others, the students will join the ranks of social psychology researchers who have explored the parameters of bystander behavior.

While not directly addressing German response during the Holocaust, social psychological research into conformity, the bystander effect, and dehumanization of victims may offer some insight into the minds and actions of Europeans during a dark time in history. As Holocaust education is more than a simple retelling of events, exploring the complex facets of human behavior studied by social psychologists broadens students' perspectives and provides them with the tools necessary to develop social responsibility and leadership.

Kroll rightly asserts that the study of bystander responses in no way excuses the actions and inaction of Germans and others during the Holocaust. That we explore the reasons for horrific human behavior no more relieves us of the responsibility to eradicate it than discovering the cause of malaria

eliminates the need to control mosquitoes and manage swampland.

CONFORMITY

As early as 1950, researchers were exploring the power of the group to influence the thinking and behavior of the individual. Solomon Asch's (1956) classic experiments, now repeated in clinical settings and viewable on YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iRh5qy09nNw>), involved a subject being asked to complete a simple perceptual task (match two lines) in a group setting. Imagine the surprise and perhaps distress of the participant seated last in a row of other participants as each preceding person gives the same, obviously wrong, answer. Unaware that the others, supposedly random research participants, were actually confederates who had been instructed to unanimously present the incorrect answer, the target subjects became increasingly puzzled and uncomfortable. In numerous repetitions of the study paradigm, rates of conformity average 30 percent; that is, one out of three people will go against their better judgment just to be "one of the crowd."

It is relatively straightforward to apply this phenomenon to social and political situations. When you repeatedly hear from multiple sources that a particular group has contributed to your downfall, it is challenging, even if you know it is incorrect, to adopt and/or voice a dissenting, nonconformist opinion.

In Asch's paradigm, there are no apparent costs of either conformity or resistance, yet the choices individuals make in group contexts have consequences. Neurobiological researchers using MRI technology have documented the biological costs of going against the norm (Berns, et al, 2005). Brain scans of participants in a replication of the Asch study showed increased activity in the amygdala, a region associated with pain and emotional discomfort, in those who resisted the pressure to conform.

Reviewing the factors that increase or ameliorate conformity provides insight into German conformity during the Holocaust. When the issue at hand is more ambiguous than the simple judging of line length, conformity increases (Walker & Andrade, 1996). If German propaganda had focused on obvious, measurable Jewish characteristics, it might have met with more resistance. Stressing instead vague, ambiguous notions of racial purity, the propaganda capitalized on the pressure to conform.

It may also be possible to "prime" conformity. Priming occurs when, through incidental means (hearing or reading words, seeing visual stimuli), certain knowledge, attitudes, and stereotypes are activated (Garcia, Weaver, Moskowitz & Darley, 2002). Priming effects have been shown to extend to social behavior, with subtle cues or primes in the environment affecting subsequent behavior (Bargh, Chen, & Burrows, 1996). Given the ubiquitous presence of Nazi propaganda, powerful antisemitic messages would likely prime conformist social behavior among Germans.

Conformity is lessened when there is less of it. Any dissension makes it easier for others to break rank. If even one confederate in Asch's study deviated from the group, participants' conformity rate dropped significantly. Conversely, conformity is strengthened when the group exerting pressure consists of experts or individuals of high social status, and if the group and the individual being pressured are comparable in some way (Aronson, 2008). Kroll, discussing the chapter "The Way to School" (p. 79), questions why German bystanders watched as an elderly woman entered a boycotted Jewish store rather than join her. In this instance, the elderly woman may have had insufficient social status to enlist others to conform. The additional phenomenon of bystander apathy, another well-researched social issue discussed below, may also be at work.

BYSTANDER APATHY EFFECT

In 1964, while Kitty Genovese was being brutally stabbed to death, at least 38 of her neighbors, woken at 3:00 a.m. by her screams, watched at their windows, but they neither attempted to rescue her nor called police. This passive response to an attack that lasted for 30 minutes prompted research into what social scientists have termed the "bystander apathy effect." Initial discussions of bystander inaction postulated that each

bystander assumed someone else had the responsibility or inclination to take action, thereby excusing them from doing so. Researchers explain:

A person who faces a situation of another person in distress but does so with the knowledge that others are also present and available to respond is slower and less likely to respond to the person in distress than is a person who knows that he or she is the only one who is aware of the distress. (Garcia, Weaver, Moskowitz & Darley, 2002, p. 843)

From early investigations in the 1960s to more recent explorations, social psychologists have considered how bystander group size, gender, bystander-victim congruence, urban vs. rural setting, and other factors affect the likelihood of bystanders to assist others in emergency or danger situations (Levine & Crowther, 2008).

Being part of a crowd decreases the likelihood of any individual coming to the aid of another (Darley & Latane, 1968; Latane & Darley, 1968) [See Kleinberg, pp. 64–66—Eds.]. In an experiment where an actor portraying a lab assistant falls and pretends to be injured, the likelihood of helping drops from 70 percent for those witnessing the injury alone to 20 percent for those who witness the event with another stranger present (Latane & Rodin, 1969). Aronson (2008) suggests this collective nonintervention can be viewed as a form of conformity. In research exploring this hypothesis, individuals who perceive they are the only one able to help are considerably more likely to do so (Darley & Latane, 1968) [See Paldiel in this issue, pp. 105–109—Eds.].

A number of other factors have been shown to shape or restrain helping behavior, including ambiguity of the emergency (Bickman, 1971), the personal cost of providing assistance (Darley & Batson, 1973), and the belief that help will make a difference to the victim (Baron, 1970). Situations in which the emergency is unambiguous, where there is little or no personal cost for helping, and when assistance will be of obvious benefit to the victim are most likely to result in helpful action.

Many of the stories Kroll highlights in his lessons have direct parallels in bystander inaction research. In the "Grandfather" chapter (p. 79), the clear out-group status of Jews and the cost of family ostracism for helping them is verbalized by the protagonist. Crowd scenes such as the one described in "The Way to School" (p. 79) echo the research on diffusion of responsibility but raise the question of why groups of Germans, if not friends, then clearly members of at least the same social category, were not driven to intervene. The propaganda and political machine of the Reich created a unified Germany, a populace sharing history, agenda, and future. However, in its categorization of party vs. nonparty and its

deputizing each citizen to uncover sedition and traitors in their midst, the Reich created not a community of friends but a nation of strangers, paranoid and fearful of each other. Whether in crowds or as individuals, Germans were likely to feel, along with their powerful sense of being the in-group, the inevitable vulnerability that such dictatorial and racist regimes produce.

DEHUMANIZATION OF VICTIMS

German propaganda, in portraying Germans as victims of Jewish plots, may have fueled the willingness of Germans to victimize others. The phenomenon of victimization, as old as the Egyptian pyramids built by the oppressed and enslaved Jews, visited modern society in the harrowing pictures of the treatment of captives at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. Social psychology research on power, empathy, and retaliation is helpful in understanding what prompts such horrible treatment of humans by other humans. Aronson (2008) connects this phenomenon to dissonance theory. He explains:

Because I think I am such a nice person ... if I do something that causes you pain, I must convince myself you are a rat ... because nice guys like me don't go around hurting innocent people, you must have deserved every nasty thing I did to you. (p. 230)

Unfortunately, Aronson continues, once we have dehumanized individuals, it becomes easier to hurt or even kill them, as they have the status of subhumans.

An infamous experiment conducted by Zimbardo (1971) at Stamford University explored the power of power to contribute to victims' dehumanization. Undergraduates were randomly assigned to participate as either prisoners or guards in a two-week simulation of a prison in the psychology department basement. At the end of six days, Zimbardo terminated the experiment, describing "dramatic changes" in the participants, explaining, "We were horrified because we saw some boys (guards) treat other boys as if they were despicable animals, taking pleasure in cruelty, while other boys (prisoners) became servile, dehumanized robots" (p. 3). The Machiavellian caution that absolute power corrupts absolutely combined with the influence of the situational variables of role and expectations explains the potential for individuals to severely mistreat others. Kroll's discussion of the air-raid warden's refusal to allow Friedrich admittance to the bomb shelter and the dire consequences that result (p. 80) illustrates this dehumanizing influence of power and role.

Equally important are the factors of retaliation and empathy. In the former, pain received is perceived as more significant than pain delivered, fueling increased aggression in retaliation for perceived harm (Aronson, 2008). This can engender escalating aggression and persecution, contribut-

ing to the dehumanization of victims who are, because of cognitive dissonance, perceived to be the cause of our own pain. Feshbach's (1971) study of empathy suggests that it is generally difficult to inflict pain on another unless the victim is dehumanized in some way. The recent interest in teaching empathy to children to decrease aggression underscores the inverse relationship between being able to experience another's pain and being willing to cause it.

Germans had no shortage of opportunities to witness and participate in the dehumanization of Jews. As social psychologists have documented, each dehumanizing act made further acts of violence and degradation that much more acceptable, until Jewish victims were seen not only as responsible but also deserving of their disastrous fate.

CRITICAL LESSONS: THE POWER, VALUE, AND RESPONSIBILITY OF EVERY INDIVIDUAL

Confronted by the social psychological research, we are tempted to throw up our hands, declaring humanity's inhumanity and our inability to change inevitable laws of human nature. Kroll's focus on bystanders and his lessons encouraging students to consider their potential reactions and the challenges in the face of such powerful social forces are commendable. A critical lesson of the Holocaust, and one that is significant for all generations, is that of the enduring, remarkable, and ever-present power, value, and responsibility of each and every individual in each and every moment. As students and educators explore Kroll's scenarios (pp. 80–81) or today's headline stories and events, the potential for making a difference must be emphasized and celebrated. This uplifting message resonates particularly with adolescents, who want to make a difference in the world.

The global, technological, and complex world in which our adolescents find themselves combines semi-anonymous or filtered Internet-based communication with social networking that invites us to "friend" dozens if not hundreds of peers in a fast-changing and fast-paced culture. Afflicted by this pandemic of connectivity, modern adolescents are at risk for viewing themselves as minuscule members of gigantic communities and thus individually small and powerless. The goal of lessons on German bystanders, as well as explorations of social psychological phenomena that continue to exist in today's society, is clear. Every student must experience his and her personal power, value, and responsibility in creating new social realities. If, as a result of Kroll's class and others like it, students recognize that in every action and each choice they make they shape the world, we will have taught a lesson to benefit our students, ourselves, and our future. ■

RONA MILCH NOVICK, Ph.D., is director of the Fanya Gottesfeld Heller doctoral program at the Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish

Education and Administration at Yeshiva University and associate clinical professor of child psychology at Albert Einstein College of Medicine. Dr. Novick also serves as coeducational director of the Hidden Sparks program, providing consultation to day schools and yeshivas. She developed the BRAVE bully prevention program for schools, now offered to Jewish day schools and yeshivas through the Institute for University–School Partnership at Yeshiva University, while serving as director of the Alliance for School Mental Health at North-Shore Long Island Jewish Medical Center. To contact the author, e-mail rnovick1@yu.edu

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In this brief analysis of Josh Freedman's painting, Pnina Rosenberg captures "a startling dialogue with Francine Mayran's (2008) cover painting *L'Exode* (Exodus)."

Pnina Rosenberg

Everywhere and Everyman: An Introduction to Josh Freedman's *Watching the Passing Parade*

An unrecognizable person, whose only visible eye is situated in the middle of the forehead and who thus resembles the mythological Cyclops, fills most of the space in Josh Freedman's (2009) relatively small-dimensional monoprint (20.5 x 28.5 cm.) *Watching the Passing Parade*. The irony derived from the paradox created between the title "watching" and the insinuated disability/inability of the "watcher" produces tension and reflects the role of the bystanders, the everymen who saw cruelty, yet closed at least one eye to it.

The intriguing image makes one feel uncomfortable, a purpose explained by the artist:

I painted this seeking to represent the indifference that makes us what and who we are, the passivity underlying what we do—or don't do. No feet, no legs, no hands or arms: The figure cannot walk toward or away, cannot reach to help or to harm. His stuffed mouth is clamped shut; his eyes, downcast or closed; he has already seen too much, or he has not seen anything at all. (2009, personal correspondence)

This disfigured and crippled person is watching an invisible "passing parade," thus creating a startling dia-



"Watching the Passing Parade," a monoprint on Arche paper, 20.5 x 28.5 cm.

logue with Francine Mayran's (2008) cover painting *L'Exode* (Exodus). The latter depicts the endless parade of deportees with the unseen yet almost tangible presence of viewers/bystanders. Freedman, on the other hand, presents the anonymous watcher unseen in Mayran's painting, indifferent to the fate of the deportees. In Freedman's print, it is the parade that is absent, yet its existence and presence are suggested both through the title and the semi-blind "watcher."

Each artist, in his or her own individual language, condemns the bystander, who was everywhere and everyman. "There is nothing that he can say or do; he is the quintessence of someone who is nothing," Freedman concludes. "He wears—he is—the uniform you meet every day, even when you walk through the park. He is, all too often, the way we feel about ourselves now; he is the way too many felt then." ■

"Watching the Passing Parade," a monoprint on Arche paper, 20.5 x 28.5 cm., is an original work of art by Josh Freedman, a painter and printmaker from Kibbutz Machanayim in the Galilee. To contact the artist, e-mail jf@mahanayim.org

The poet William Heyen makes vivid the guilt of the bystanders. "You did not murder," he writes, "but looked on, you whose dust / could have been changed / into light."

William Heyen

To the Onlookers

After Nelly Sachs

When our backs are turned,
when someone stares at us,
we feel them.
You who watched the killing, and did nothing,
still feel the eyes of those dead
on your bodies.

How many see you
as you pick a violet?
How many of the old oaks' branches twist
into hands begging for help?
How many memories congeal
in the sun's evening blood?

O the unsung cradlesongs
in the dove's nightcries—
so many would have loved
their own stars in the night skies,
but now only the old well
can do it for them.

You did not murder,
but looked on, you whose dust
could have been changed
into light.

WILLIAM HEYEN was raised by immigrant German Christian parents on Long Island. A former senior Fulbright lecturer in Germany and a Guggenheim fellow in poetry, he is retired from the State University of New York (SUNY) Brockport where he was the poet-in-residence for many years. His collection, *The Swastika Poems* (1977), later expanded to *Erika: Poems of the Holocaust* (1984), was among the first volumes of Holocaust poetry by an American. Heyen's *Noise in the Trees* was an American Library Association "Notable Book of the Year"; his *Crazy Horse in Stillness* won the 1997 Small Press Book Award for Poetry; and *Shoah Train: Poems* was a finalist for the 2004 National Book Award. Etruscan Press published *A Poetics of Hiroshima* in 2008. To contact the poet, e-mail wheyen@rochester.rrr.com

The remarkable memorials of today's Berlin are examined in Pnina Rosenberg's essay on bystanders and their role as Germans remember and atone. Rosenberg writes, "This fusion of past and present not only reveals the layers of memory exposed by this juxtaposition but serves also as a reminder that the formal procedures that led to mass murder were the product of a cultured and civilized society, whose members chose to ignore the ostracizing of their neighbors, colleagues, and friends. Thus, even if these bystanders did not kill them literally, they were implicated in the mass murder by their silent acquiescence."

Pnina Rosenberg

The Memorials of Berlin: Bystanders and Remembrance—Together on Stage

Berliners and visitors walking today in the streets of the German capital cannot help but confront its dark and sinister past: Museums, monuments, and commemorative plaques are literally everywhere. They come in all shapes, dimensions, and techniques. One cannot miss Daniel Liebeskind's (2001) controversial Jewish Museum of Berlin (*Jüdisches Museum Berlin*) with its lightning-shaped zinc walls, or the 2,711 massive rectangular stones on a sloping stretch of land that make up the huge, highly debated Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe (*Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas*) by Peter Eisenman (2005). Both of these imposing structures are by Jewish-American artists. One also stumbles across myriad smaller memorials and installations, the lion's share of which are the fruit of contemporary German artists born after the war. They are scattered all over the city, part of its landscape.

Some are hardly recognizable as memorials: Either they are not accompanied by plaques or other information indicating that they are indeed objects of remembrance, or they are so well camouflaged and integrated into the urban scenery that it takes considerable effort to decipher their true meaning.

Most of them, however, are accompanied by text, which, in many cases, is itself an important element of the memorial. Yet, unlike the texts in the vast museums and monuments, the verbal information is given only in German. It is not for the eyes of non-Germans or, at least, not meant to be understood by those who have no command of this language. They are internal, local memorials, whose full meaning can be fully grasped only by the local population.

THE ABANDONED ROOM (OR SPACE) (*DER VERLASSENE RAUM*) 1996

Koppenplatz (Koppen Square), Berlin Mitte [Fig. 1].

"Memorial museums and memorial complexes try to



FIG 1: The Abandoned Room (or Space) (*Der Verlassene Raum*), 1996
Karl Bidermann & Eva Butzmann
Bronze
Koppenplatz (Koppen Square), Berlin, Mitte • Michael Adam

encapsulate the horror of genocide in a variety of ways, but sometimes it is the single symbolic structure or the individual work of art that resonates most" (Senie, 2005).

*Der Verlassene Raum*¹ was commissioned to commemorate the pogrom of Kristallnacht (*Kristallnacht*), when, during the night of November 9th, 1938, Nazi gangs looted and destroyed Jewish synagogues, cemeteries, homes, and businesses; killed close to 100 Jews, and arrested and sent scores of Jewish men to concentration camps.

This memorial, a co-production of the German sculptor Karl Bidermann (1996) and the landscape designer Eva Butzmann (1996), is "an apparently innocuous bronze sculpture, slightly larger than life-size" (Senie, 2005) comprising a wall-less room with a table and two chairs, one of which is tipped over, as if its occupant left in haste. The pieces of

furniture stand on a floor made of bronze, imitating parquet, bordered by lines from the poem “O the Chimneys” (in German with no translation) written by the Jewish-German poet Nelly Sachs (1947)²:

O the habitations of death / Invitingly appointed / For the host who used to be a guest— / O your fingers / Laying the threshold / Like a knife between life and death— / O you chimneys, / O you fingers/And Israel's body as smoke through the air! (p. 79)

The “abandoned room” is situated in a small park in *Koppenplatz* (Koppen Square), a residential area in the center of Berlin-Mitte (East), where Eastern European immigrants once lived and where Jewish institutions co-existed with their Christian counterparts. This “open-air” room is devoid of its most basic structure—the walls—thus providing no shelter to its inhabitants, as was the case when the persecuted Jewish population found no refuge in their homes.

This poetic sculpture/memorial comprises both metaphor and oxymoron. This is a private space (a room), yet it is in public space, devoid of intimacy. It is made of bronze, a noble metal, which, from the days of antiquity, has been used by sculptors to commemorate prominent leaders, military or civilian. Here, it is used as an imitation of everyday wooden flooring. Thus, the tension between the material and its subject enhances the tension created when viewing the wall-less room. It seems that this is a portrayal of an inverse world, in which the “real” is merely imitation; what is meant to provide a feeling of security and permanence turns out to be unstable and fragile.

The memorial changes with the weather. On rainy days, it appears clean and sparkling, while the after-effect of the rain—the accumulation of mud—leaves the impression of neglect and abandonment, a deserted room, a no-man's land.

It evokes a stage set with props; the audience waits for the actors, but they are phantoms; they have disappeared. It is both realistic and surrealistic. The (un)scene is open to the public, yet the drama, the action, is the outcome of the setting. The story is unfolded by absence, by those who were supposed to inhabit the stage but were forced to leave it forever. All that is left are blurred reminiscences.

The theatrical effect is enhanced by two pale pinkish-red wooden benches, similar to those in other Berlin parks, situated near the memorial. These contemporary benches confront and complement the “room.” There the passerby may sit and watch; by doing so, he is both a spectator and an actor in this play of memory. The populated benches also serve as an allusion to the bystanders, the thousands of citizens who witnessed the Kristallnacht pogrom and did not protest or assist their Jewish neighbors.

The design and the setting of the “abandoned room” is

intentionally confusing and even misleading: There are no signs indicating the borders between the sacrosanct memorial space and the public areas. No information specifies whether the viewer is allowed to cross the “border” marked by Sachs's poem. Is one allowed to penetrate this intimate habitat or only sit and watch? It seems to me that in light of the contradictory language of the memorial, the absence of signs is part of the concept of the “abandoned room.” Trespassing vs. privacy, passivity vs. activity, bystanding vs. resistance: These were the dilemmas confronting the German population during the dark period of Nazism. The same questions are repeatedly asked in contemporary Germany and are partly answered through such memorials.

PLACES OF REMEMBRANCE IN THE BAVARIAN QUARTER

(*Bayrisches Viertel*), 1993. “At Bayerischer Platz Jews may sit only on yellow park benches. Eyewitness report, 1939.” (*Juden dürfen am Bayerischen Platz nur die Gelb markierte Sitzbank benutzen, 1939.*)

This text is written on a rectangular street sign (80 x 50 cm.), installed on a lamp post (h. 3 m.) and pointing toward a red public bench [Fig. 2], reminiscent of those in “The Abandoned Room (or Space).” This one is situated in a park in the Bavarian Square (*Bayerischer Platz*) in the Schöneberg district, a peaceful, middle-class residential area. On the reverse side of the sign is an innocuous pictogram of a red bench on a green lawn, similar to the one in the park. This is one of 80 street signs scattered in the quarter's streets, which display, on the front, a harmless, stylized icon, and on the back, texts of Nazi decrees designed to dehumanize the Jewish population.³ The decrees, dating from 1933 to 1945, gradually stripped the Jews of their civic rights and paved



FIG 2: *Places of Remembrance, Bayerisches Viertel (Bavarian quarter), 1993*

Renthe Stih & Frieder Schnock
Jews may sit only on yellow park benches, metal street sign
 Bayerische Platz, (Bavarian Square), Schöneberg Viertel (Schöneberg district), Berlin • Daniel Rosenberg

the way for the “Final Solution.” Those “ordinary” signs are today part of the scenery of this quarter that before the war was called “Jewish Switzerland” due to its tranquility and elegance. It was home to some 60,000 upper-middle class German Jews, among them Albert Einstein and Hannah Arendt.

These street signs, titled *Places of Remembrance (Orte des Erinnerns)*, are by Renthe Stih and Frieder Schnock, who, in 1992, won the competition for a memorial to the murdered Jews of the district. Sponsored by the Berlin Senate, the competition was initiated by a group of the quarter’s citizens who wanted to know the history of their neighborhood before and during the Holocaust.⁴ The memorial aimed, according to Stih (1991), to “make visible the conditions which led in an insidiously logical way to the destruction of the Jewish inhabitants” (in Wiedmer, 2002, p. 9).

The range of the decrees on the signs is extensive, dealing with all aspects of daily life. Some prohibited Jews from pursuing their professional activities; others banned Jewish children from public schools and playgrounds; many dealt with real estate and property; others prohibited Jews from entering swimming pools, opera houses, theater and concert halls, and so on. Some decrees deal with communication; they prohibit the buying of newspapers, owning a telephone, or using a public phone. The list goes on: from “petty” decrees that made everyday life inconvenient to vicious obstacles that the authorities imposed on the Jews from 1933 on to the extremes of deportation and murder.

Ironically, as most of the signs reflect official laws and decrees, they reveal the vulnerability of the Jewish population, who had no protection and were at the mercy of individuals. James Young (1999), the Holocaust memorials researcher, wrote, “By posting these signs separately, forcing pedestrians to happen upon them one or two at time, the artists can show how the laws incrementally ‘removed Jews from the social realm’ and from the protection of law” (p. 12).

Exploring this memorial requires movement and participation. The visitor is not passive; he is moving from one street to the next, noticing the intriguing signs that make him curious to read the reverse side. One tries to put it in the context of the immediate surroundings as well as its past; one is involved in the process of the memory. This intense activity, which Stih and Schnock dictate by scattering the memorial signs in eight different sites—a very uncommon practice when creating a memorial—is, ironically or not, the opposite of the passivity of bystanders. The local population or occasional visitors participate, if unintentionally, in an archeological excavation, encountering layers of the past in the streets. The whole quarter is like a vast dig in which one finds remains of the Dark Age, whose laws, as traced by the artists, can be characterized as the “banality of evil.”

Stih and Schnock, whose work explores the intrusion of “memorial” art in public space, were intrigued by the

absence of any sign attesting to the deportation and murder of the quarter’s Jews. They installed the memorial plaques throughout the quarter in 1993 with no prior announcement. This immediately provoked the local population, who complained to the police that the Neo-Nazis had flooded the neighborhood with antisemitic signs. In reply to this hostile and critical public response, the artists pointed out that the decrees and bans were equally public during the Nazi era and were then met with silence. One can only reflect on the tragic irony and wonder: What would have happened if the neighborhood at that time had been as troubled, disturbed, and disquieted?

To clarify the nature of the signs, the artists were asked to attach to the bottom of each a small plaque with the following text (in German): “Memorials in the Bavarian Quarter: Marginalization and Deprivation of Rights, Expulsion, Deportation and Murder of Berlin Jews during the years 1933–1945” [Fig. 3].

(Denkmal: Orte des Erinnerns im Bayerischen Viertel-Ausgrenzung und Entrechtung, Vertreibung, Deportation und Ermordung von Berliner Juden in den Jahren von 1933 bis 1945) [Fig. 3].

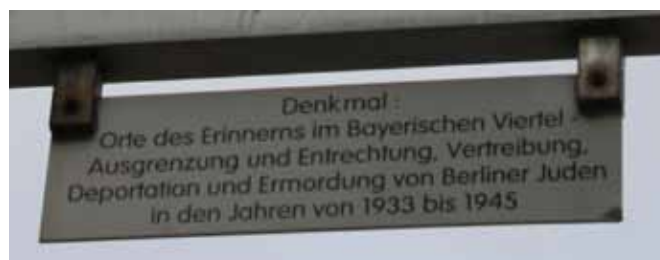


FIG 3: *Places of Remembrance, Bayerisches Viertel (Bavarian quarter), 1993*
Renthe Stih & Frieder Schnock
Places of remembrance in the Bavarian Quarter: Marginalization and Deprivation of Rights, Expulsion, Deportation and Murder of Berlin Jews in the years 1933–1945, additional plaque to the street signs.
Daniel Rosenberg

PAST OR PRESENT TENSE

As one walks on, one encounters more of these signs, some bearing striking resemblance to modern signs, such as one located near the underground station in *Bayersicher Platz*, a large white U on a blue background [Fig. 4]. On the verso are the following decrees: “Jews are permitted to use public transportation only to go to work.—September 13, 1941. Complete ban—April 26, 1942. Use of ticket-machines is forbidden for Jews—June 26, 1942.”

(Juden dürfen öffentliche Verkehrsmittel nur noch auf dem Weg zur Arbeit benutzen. 13/9/1941. Vollständiges Benutzungsverbot. 24/4/1942. Die Beunutzung von Fahrkartenautomaten ist für Juden verboten. 26/6/42.)

Another sign near *Heilbronner Strasse 29* [Fig. 5] bears the international icon of “no entry” on a brown background,



FIG 4: *Places of Remembrance, Bayerisches Viertel (Bavarian quarter), 1993*
 Renthe Stih & Frieder Schnock
Jews are permitted to use public transportation only to go to work, metal street sign
 Bayerische Platz, (Bavarian Square), Schöneberg Viertel (Schöneberg district), Berlin • Michael Adam

alluding to the color of the Nazi uniform. It reads: "Certain parts of Berlin are prohibited for Jews. December 3, 1938." (*Juden dürfen bestimmte Bereiche der Stadt Berlin nicht mehr betreten. 3/12/1938*).

In the *Heilbronner Strasse*, full of green trees and the feeling of the countryside, one encounters a sign showing the image of a post card of a type still used in Germany today [Fig. 6]. It is accompanied by the decree "Post office officials married to Jews must retire. June 8, 1937." (*Mit Jüdinnen verheiratete Postbeamte werden in den Ruhestand versetzt. 8/6/1938*.) A related sign depicts the reverse side of a common white envelope [Fig. 7], also still used in Germany, on a yellow background, pointing toward a local post office painted in the traditional yellow of all German post offices. This innocuous image reveals its devastating contents, a letter written by a deportee on the eve of his deportation: "The time has come. Tomorrow I must leave and, naturally, it is a



FIG 5: *Places of Remembrance, Bayerisches Viertel (Bavarian quarter), 1993*
 Renthe Stih & Frieder Schnock
Certain parts of Berlin are restricted for Jews, metal street sign
 Heilbronner Strasse 29, Schöneberg Viertel (Schöneberg district), Berlin
 Michael Adam

heavy burden. ... I will write to you.' Before being deported, January 16, 1942." (*Nun ist es soweit, morgen muss ich fort u. das trifft mich natürlich schwer. (...) Ich werde dir schreiben.*" *Vor der Deportation, 16/1/1942.*)

The use of the yellow background is not incidental. It refers to the yellow Star of David, which the Jews were forced to wear to identify them as outcasts. The reference to the Yellow Badge and the contents of the restrained yet tragic letter create tension between the neutral image and the farewell text. Thus, the harmless icon is charged with sinister meaning, disturbing both in the context of the past and today.

This fusion of past and present not only reveals the layers of memory exposed by this juxtaposition but serves also as a reminder that the formal procedures that led to mass murder were the product of a cultured and civilized society, whose



FIG 6: *Places of Remembrance, Bayerisches Viertel (Bavarian quarter), 1993*
 Renthe Stih & Frieder Schnock
Post office officials married to Jews must retire, metal street sign
 Bayerischer Platz corner of Heilbronner Strasse, Schöneberg Viertel (Schöneberg district), Berlin • Michael Adam

members chose to ignore the ostracizing of their neighbors, colleagues, and friends. Thus, even if these bystanders did not kill them literally, they were implicated in the mass murder by their silent acquiescence. As Caroline Wiedmer (2002) writes, the signs "blend into the iconography of today's urban text in the same way that antisemitic sentiments and decrees blended into public consciousness fifty years earlier" (p. 9).

ORDINARY LIFE

While some signs mimic contemporary local images (the post card) or international signs (no entry), others are stylized images, such as the loaf of bread located at *Bayerischer Platz* 12 [Fig. 8], pointing toward Café Vienna, a traditional coffee house. It states, "Jews in Berlin are only allowed to buy food between four and five o'clock in the afternoon. July 4, 1940." (*Lebensmittel dürfen Juden in Berlin nur nachmittag von 4-5 Uhr einkaufen. 4/7/1940.*)

On a sign in *Treuchtlinger Strasse 3* [Fig. 9], a pair of red woolen gloves and a red woolen scarf appear, very neat and carefully folded, as if they are ready to be given as a present or stored away. In fact, they represent the decrees of winter 1940 and 1942 (January) that prohibited Jews from protecting themselves against the cold weather: "Jews no longer receive clothing rations. January 1940"; "Any fur or wool items are to be turned in to the authorities. January 1942." (*Juden erhalten keine Kleiderkarten mehr. Januar 1940; Ablieferungszwang für Pelze und Wollsachen. Januar 1942.*) What neighborhood resident could claim not to have known?

While some signs create a dialogue with their immediate surroundings, such as the U-Bahn sign, the park benches, and the post office sign, others, ominous in their atrociously clean official language, seem to be randomly located near chic bourgeois houses and buildings, in which, it seems, life goes on as usual, just as it did then. Such is the case, for instance, with the sign at the crossroads of *Landshuter Strasse 24-31* and *Rosenheimer Strasse* [Fig. 10],

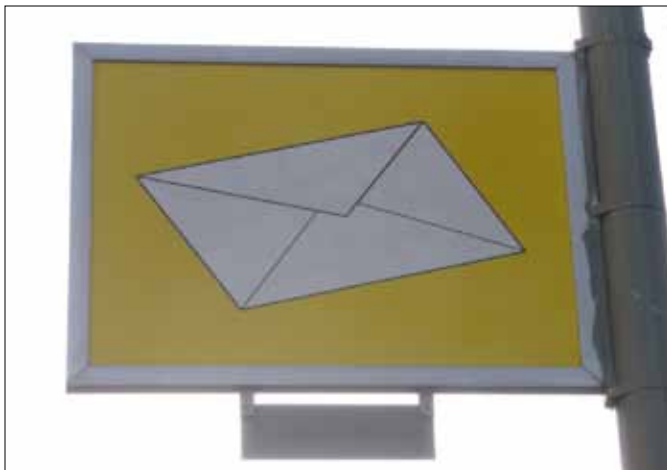


FIG 7: *Places of Remembrance, Bayerisches Viertel (Bavarian quarter), 1993*

Renthe Stih & Frieder Schnock

"The time has come. Tomorrow I must leave..." from a letter at the eve of deportation, metal street sign

Bayerischer Platz, Schöneberg Viertel (Schöneberg district), Berlin
Michael Adam

depicting a brown hat, worn by men of a certain age at that period. It announces: "Senior Jewish employees can be fired without notice or compensation. November 12, 1938." (*Leitende Jüdische Angestellte können ohne Abfindung und Versorgung gekündigt werden. 12/11/1938.*) In *Rosenheimer Strasse*, parallel to the sign and its harsh content, there is a huge mural by Christine Nestler (1979–1989) depicting the quarter at the beginning of the twentieth century in a romantic, pastoral atmosphere. This fairy-tale past stands in striking contrast to the harsh fate awaiting these elderly men who believed they were part of this harmonious, happy life.



FIG 8: *Places of Remembrance, Bayerisches Viertel (Bavarian quarter), 1993*

Renthe Stih & Frieder Schnock

Jews in Berlin are only allowed to buy food between four and five o'clock in the afternoon, metal street sign

Bayerischer Platz 12, Schöneberg Viertel (Schöneberg district), Berlin
Michael Adam

NO BUSINESS LIKE SHOW BUSINESS

Landshuter Strasse 11/12, a similarly elegant and peaceful area, serves as the backdrop of the sign banning Jews from taking part in the German film industry [Fig. 11]: "Only films which have been created in Germany solely by German citizens, who are of German descent, can be acknowledged as German films. June 28, 1933." (*Als deutscher Film wird ein Film anerkannt, welcher in Deutschland von deutschen Staatsbürgern deutscher Abstammung hergestellt wurde. 28.6.1933.*) The pictogram depicts a high-peaked blue mountain accompanied by the inscription "*Der Berg Ruft*" ("The mountain calls"). In the upper right corner is UFA, the logo of the main studio in the German film industry and a major force in world cinema from 1917 to 1945.



FIG 9: *Places of Remembrance, Bayerisches Viertel (Bavarian quarter), 1993*

Renthe Stih & Frieder Schnock

Any fur or wool items are to be turned in to the authorities, metal street sign
Treuchtlinger Strasse 3, Schöneberg Viertel (Schöneberg district), Berlin

Carson Phillips



FIG 10: *Places of Remembrance, Bayerisches Viertel (Bavarian quarter), 1993*

Renthe Stih & Frieder Schnock

Senior Jewish employees can be fired without notice or compensation, metal street sign

Landshuter Strasse 24–31, corner of Rosenheimer Strasse, Schöneberg Viertel (Schöneberg district), Berlin • Michael Adam

During the 1920s and 1930s, the UFA was renowned for its avant-garde and expressionist films, like those of the (half-Jewish) director Fritz Lang, renowned also for his *Bergfilm* (mountain films), a uniquely German genre that glorified and romanticized mountain climbing. Under pressure from the Nazi party, the Berlin studio fired Jewish employees, forcing directors, actors, and playwrights to leave Germany and find refuge abroad. This sign illustrates the banning of Jews from the film industry and also alludes to the virulent Nazi propaganda films that defined, clearly and brutally, the



FIG 11: *Places of Remembrance, Bayerisches Viertel (Bavarian quarter), 1993*

Renthe Stih & Frieder Schnock

“Der Berg Ruft” (The Mountain Calls); Only films which have been created in Germany solely by German citizens, who are of German descent, can be acknowledged as German films, metal street sign Landshuter Strasse 11/12, Schöneberg Viertel (Schöneberg district), Berlin Michael Adam

Aryans vs. the “degenerate” Jews.

A few steps away is *Landshuter Strasse 26* [Fig. 12], where an elegant building serves as the stage for a sign reading, “Employment ban for Jewish actors and actresses. March 5, 1934.” (*Berufsverbote für jüdische Schauspielerinnen und Schauspieler. 5.3.1934.*) The illustration, a red velvet curtain, creates a bond with “The Abandoned Room (or Space).” While the latter reflects a stage with props but no actors, Stih and Schnock portray the tragic end with a “final curtain,” both metaphorical and literal.

The curtain fell, yet the Bavarian quarter, along with its audience of bystanders, continued to serve, almost daily, as a stage for tragic performances. The various acts in the



FIG 12: *Places of Remembrance, Bayerisches Viertel (Bavarian quarter), 1993*

Renthe Stih & Frieder Schnock

Employment ban for Jewish actors and actresses, metal street sign

Landshuter Strasse 26, Schöneberg Viertel (Schöneberg district), Berlin Michael Adam

“play” included the gradual banning of the Jewish population from their professions, communal cultural and sporting activities, education, and civic rights; and, ultimately, in full view of the citizenry, their exploitation, segregation, deportation, and, off-stage, their murder. The play came to its unhappy end, the curtain fell, the audience returned to its routine.

The quarter is the theater; both past and present residents and pedestrians are the audience. The streets are the stage; the signs and their surroundings are the actors. They are silent—yet they scream. They reflect the active role of the perpetrators, the silent role of the bystanders, and the tragic fate, as ordained by the official degrees, of the victims. The naïve and formal street signs now seem hideous. “They become sinister,” writes Juliette Koss (2004), in her article analyzing this installation, “precisely at the moment they are seen. This is not simply because of the history they evoke

but also because they divide the audience, once again, into perpetrators [bystanders] and victims” (p. 124). ■

PNINA ROSENBERG, art historian, historian, and art editor of *PRISM*, is a lecturer in the Technion, Israel Institute of Technology; the Haifa University Department of Museology; and the Oranim Academic College, focusing on Jewish art and art and the memory and legacy of the Holocaust. She has presented papers in international conferences, published articles and exhibition catalogues on various aspects of Holocaust art, contributed to the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* and to *Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia*, and, with Ort World, has created a Web site, Learning about the Holocaust through Art. A member of the editorial board of *Journal of War and Culture Studies*, University of Westminster, London, and a board member of IC MEMO—International Committee of Memorial Museums (UNESCO), she is also a referee in the Righteous Among the Nations committee of Yad Vashem. To contact the author, e-mail pninarose@gmail.com

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To Michael Adam, University of Potsdam, for his invaluable assistance both by furnishing most of the images in this essay and by proofreading the German text; and to Carson Phillips and Daniel Rosenberg for their images of the Bavarian Quarter.

NOTES

1. On “The Abandoned Room,” its commission, competition, and history of installation see Neumann, K. (2000). *Shifting memories: The Nazi past in the new Germany*. Ann Arbor; University of Michigan, 1–4; and Jordan, A. J. (2006). *Structures of memory: Understanding urban change in Berlin and beyond*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, pp. 106–111.
2. In 1989 a memorial plaque was erected in *Maassenstrasse* 12, Schöneberg quarter, Berlin, the birthplace of the poet.
3. For their location see Ladd, B. (2004). *The companion guide to Berlin*. Rochester, NY: Companion Guides, pp. 399–402. For representative texts, see Phillips, pp. 101–103 in this volume.
4. For the competition, see Pickford, H. W. (2005). Conflict and commemoration: Two Berlin monuments, in *Modernism/modernity*, 12, 163.

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- Young, J. (2003). Memory and the end of the monument. In S. Hornstein & F. Jacobowitz (Eds.), *Image and remembrance: Representation of the Holocaust* (pp. 72–73). Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Young, J. (1999). Memory and counter-memory: The end of the monument in Germany. *Harvard Design Magazine*, 9, 12.

Carson Phillips offers detailed and specific suggestions for teaching about the Berlin memorial described in Pnina Rosenberg's essay (pp. 90–96), along with extended learning opportunities that feature contemporary encounters with, and the meaning of, that and two additional exhibits. "This educational unit," he writes, "is designed to develop the critical thinking skills of students, to elucidate the complexities of the Holocaust, and to examine the range of human responses to it." An invaluable aid for educators is the appendix with the text of decrees originally imposed between 1933 and 1945.

Carson Phillips

The Layering of Knowledge, Memory, and Understanding: Using Berlin's "Places of Remembrance" Memorial to Teach About the Holocaust

By portraying the Holocaust as a "vicarious past," these artists insist on maintaining a distinct boundary between their work and the testimony of their parents' generation. Yet by calling attention to their vicarious relationship to events, the next generation ensures that their "post-memory" of events remains an unfinished, ephemeral process, not a means toward definitive answers to impossible questions.

—James E. Young

What does it mean to live each day with a sense of a vicarious past—remembering events you never experienced—permeating your daily activities? Furthermore, what does it mean when that omnipresent past is synonymous with the Holocaust, an unprecedented event in the history of humanity? What might such encounters with a vicarious past mean for descendants of the victim group and for descendants of the bystander and perpetrator groups? These are three essential questions I ask students to consider when introducing a unit aimed at deconstructing the many layers of the "Places of Remembrance"¹ memorial in the *Bayerischen Viertel* of Berlin, Germany, detailed in Pnina Rosenberg's essay in this issue (pp. 90–96). This educational unit is designed to develop the critical thinking skills of students, to elucidate the complexities of the Holocaust, and to examine the range of human responses to it.

Developing critical thinking skills is an essential component of effective Holocaust education. Being able to think critically about historical events, the actions (and inactions) as well as the human behavior that gave rise to them, compels students to develop a deeper understanding of the history of the Holocaust. Similarly, critical thinking skills are

crucial for probing the moral decision-making often associated with an examination of the perpetrator/bystander/victim paradigm commonly used to create both the context and the awareness of the consequences of remaining silent, of being a bystander indifferent to the suffering of others. Fortifying the skills necessary to examine this event helps to ensure that the Holocaust is not static but rather resonates across time and continents with students of diverse backgrounds.

When we encourage students to think critically about human behavior, they develop the understanding that the Holocaust was not inevitable. They begin to see the Holocaust as a series of complex historical processes synergistically linked by individual and group decisions and choices. The recognition that the genocide of European Jewry did not have to be the natural culmination of historical events is an important outcome of Holocaust education.

Certainly there is no shortage of educational material and historical examples to illustrate this point and to develop these skills. However, Holocaust memorials can serve not only as unique teaching resources but also as contemporary and engaging entry points for students. The outdoor historical

art exhibit by German artists Renata Stih (1993) and Frieder Schnock (1993), the focus of this essay and Rosenberg's (pp. 90–96), is both a powerful and bold use of memorial space and a highly effective tool for developing critical thinking.

By mounting a series of 80 signs that give both voice and visual representation to the series of anti-Jewish decrees inflicted upon the Jewish community in Berlin during the National Socialist period, Stih and Schnock created a vicarious past experience in contemporary Berlin's *Bayrischen Viertel*. In an area devoid of any obvious presentation of contemporary Jewish life, this memorial implores residents and visitors to consider new answers to old questions and to ask new questions about an event that continues to haunt humanity. As such, it creates a vicarious history, compelling viewers to remember and reflect upon events that they themselves did not experience.

I use the decrees included in the exhibit in a tangible manner that provides both a tactile and interactive learning experience. This unit is designed for middle school, high school, and university students and can be covered in two or three 40- or 50-minute class periods. Interdisciplinary in its approach, it can be used as part of a broader unit on the Holocaust or human rights, narrative, social justice, and a variety of other issues.

EXAMINING THE DECREES

First, I create 4 x 6 cards, one side containing the English translation of the text of the original decree, the other of the associated artistic image. I use a bilingual German-English version for advanced students who want to examine the linguistic usage of the original language.

Wording from nearly 2,000 original decrees, special laws, and regulations that the Nazis used to target the Jewish community can be found in Josef Walk's (1996) publication *Das Sonderrecht für die Juden im NS-Staat*. This seminal work details the extent to which the National Socialist regime invoked the legal system to target the Jewish community. Extensive English translations of Nazi decrees can be found in Edith Kurzweil's (2004) poignant text *Nazi Laws and Jewish Lives*.

Once the decrees have been chosen, I add to the cards the corresponding images that thematically represent the law (see Rosenberg, pp. 90–96). Placing the cards text-side down, I ask students to consider what the images represent. Since the decrees pertain to aspects of everyday life, answers span the spectrum of activities such as shopping, eating, reading, going to a doctor, keeping warm, taking public transit, and keeping a pet. Turning the cards over, students discover for themselves how all aspects of daily life for Jews were systematically controlled and diminished by the Nazi regime. The activity evinces the stages of persecution, generally considered by scholars to include isolation, segregation, con-

centration, deportation, and annihilation, that characterize the Nazi treatment of Jews. Stih and Schnock also reference "Deprivation of Rights," which creates an important link to contemporary issues.

Survivor testimony provides an additional lens through which to see the effects of these decrees on individual Jews and their families. This particularization is incorporated into the exhibit in the form of excerpts of personal testimonies on specific signs (see Rosenberg, p. 94). I include these as well. One such text from the exhibit reads, "My powder-box is a personal reminder for you. Use it often and think of me. With deep sorrow, Yours, Else Stern.—Before being deported, January 16, 1942." The power of these few poignant words, a written testimony to a cherished friend, reveals the human toll these decrees exacted. Such excerpts encourage continued reflection and research about the experience: To where was Else Stern deported?² Who was the friend to whom she gave the treasured powder-box? How did this written sentiment survive to speak for Else Stern? Personalizing history encourages active and on-going learning.

I ask students to describe either verbally or in a journal their reaction to the decrees. Did this encounter with history leave them feeling surprised, angry, upset, frustrated? All these reactions and emotions are valid and natural responses that accompany the study of this dark period. I ask who among the general public they think may have known about these decrees and how those people may have responded; we address the wider issue that many people knew "something" was happening to the Jewish community of Berlin but looked away; they witnessed in silence the legal processes that saw their friends and neighbors deprived of essentials: livelihoods, food, clothing, and basic rights we take for granted.

"How does this knowledge affect *our* understanding of what it means to be a bystander?" I ask. Somehow, the perpetrators/bystanders/victims paradigm seems to me unsatisfactory in explaining the human dimension and moral choices certain individuals made during the Holocaust. The term *bystander* has an innate passivity to it and is generally applied to a wide range of individuals who witnessed what was happening but looked away. Their silence and refusal to become involved gave tacit approval to the actions and behavior of the National Socialist regime. Indeed, the decision not to act is imbued with the weight of responsibility that comes with a silent acquiescence. In an attempt to bring decipherability to the bystander category, German scholarship uses the term "*mitläufer*" to reference someone who "ran with the crowd" [See Wegner, pp. 42–46—Eds.] Inherently more complicit than a bystander yet less than an active perpetrator, the *mitläufer* were not decision-makers. They did, however, know what was happening and went along with the actions of those in positions of authority. Thus a goal of this activity is to encourage students to examine the range of human behavior and the complexity of the bystander category.

EXAMINING MEMOIRS

I expand upon the human experience by incorporating excerpts from memoirs of survivors. Fred (Manfred) Mann (2009) grew up in Leipzig and Berlin and lived with the restrictions these decrees imposed upon him. In his memoir, *A Drastic Turn of Destiny*, he recounts how the Nazi decrees forever changed his childhood. Choosing one or more passages from his book, an example of which is below, I ask students to read them to assist in contextualizing the period.

After 1936 we could no longer go away for the summer because the owners of the summer seashore residences weren't allowed to lease to Jews. ... [In 1937] we couldn't visit museums, go to movie theatres, or visit a swimming pool. Even the boat ride down the River Spree was not allowed. Uncle Josziu ... [discovered a way] for us to sneak into the movie theatre in his building and my brother and I went in and out through a side door. We didn't have any companions, though, because the "Aryan" children were not allowed to play with us. (Mann, p. 23)

Mann's memoir is particularly compelling as he notes not only what it was like to experience life with restrictions but also how he managed to occasionally circumvent them. It provides an essential opportunity for students to explore issues of resistance, defiance, opposition, and maintaining one's humanity through ingenuity and fortitude. Just as this examination of the Berlin exhibit is used to demonstrate the complexity of the bystander category, it can also be used to deepen an understanding of Jewish resistance and of the victim category.

Another excerpt from the exhibit I use for expanded discussion is the decree from February 15, 1942, that states, "Jews are no longer allowed to own household pets." A corresponding testimony reads:

We had a canary. When we received the notice that Jews are forbidden from owning pets, my husband found it impossible to part with the animal. Every sunny day, he put the birdcage out on the window sill. Perhaps someone reported him, because one day he was summoned to the Gestapo. ... After [I was] living in fear for many weeks, the police sent a postcard stating that I must pay a fee of 3 Reichmarks to pick up my husband's ashes.

The combination of decree and memoir excerpt is a powerful teaching tool for delving deeply into the categories of bystander, perpetrator, victim, rescuer, and resister. By encouraging students to broaden their thinking as well as their definitions of these categories, we allow them to probe the consequences of human behavior and decision-making. Questions I ask students to consider coalesce around ideas

concerning choices, consequences, and responsibility:

- How do we consider the actions of the person who reported the canary owner to the police?
- How do we understand the person who typed the letter demanding the three Reichmarks for the return of the ashes?
- What is the difference in the degree of complicity between one who reported and one who was physically responsible for the man's murder?

I use the man's refusal to turn in the canary as an example of an act of defiance to Nazi oppression. Even though the continued ownership of the canary led to the man's arrest, it provided him joy. His was a clear and unequivocal refusal to submit to decrees aimed at dehumanizing and oppressing the Jewish community.

I also use memoir to demonstrate how these decrees were enacted in countries occupied by the Nazis. Vera Schiff grew up in Prague where, after the Nazi conquest of Czechoslovakia in March 1939, the Jewish community was subjected to the Nuremberg Racial Laws and ensuing decrees. Schiff (1998) describes the introduction of the yellow star by the Nazis and its effect of identifying and marginalizing members of the Prague Jewish community. She writes:

In September 1941 the Germans issued another order. As of September 1 we would have to wear on all outer clothing a yellow, six-pointed Star of David, displaying the inscription Jude [Jew]. ... The Jewish community of Prague distributed the shameful pieces of yellow cloth. We stitched in the edges and then attached it to our meager wardrobe. The first time I went out on Prague's streets marked like that I felt self-conscious, treading like on eggshells, but a short time later I got used to it, reminding myself that it was shameful behavior by the Germans, not ours. Every now and then I noticed that some of the passersby inconspicuously averted their eyes so that they would not have to look and make me feel worse. I said to myself that there were still some decent people left in the country who felt uncomfortable watching their Jewish nationals being branded like cattle. (p. 43)

Unpacking this passage with students provides a potent opportunity to discuss the role of the yellow star in identifying, marginalizing, and demoralizing the Jewish citizens and demonstrates the transformation that took place within the author as she recognized that the shame of the yellow star was with those who imposed it upon her. The references to the reactions of the passersby provide an opportunity to discuss the bystander in a Nazi-occupied country. This important nuance further complicates an understanding of the bystander, encouraging students to think critically

about the role and obligation of the bystander and how the response possibilities differed in Germany and the other Nazi-occupied countries.

This lesson powerfully conveys the incremental steps that the National Socialists in Germany took to isolate, segregate, and deport Jews from German society. By reading a memoir excerpt by a survivor from Prague, students gain insight into how the Nazi decrees functioned to oppress Jews in occupied countries. The decree-cards reinforce that these actions did not take place overnight and that people responded in a variety of ways. Critically thinking about human behavior and decision-making necessitates complicating our understanding of the bystander category. Including terms such as *mitläufer* assists in describing the spectrum of human behavior. Even considering whether the word *bystander* is relevant in a contemporary understanding is also worthwhile. Psychologist Ervin Staub (1998) contends that most Germans were not passive bystanders but contributed to a system that persecuted Jews. He writes that even obediently greeting one another with the Nazi greeting “*Heil Hitler*” demonstrated a participation in the system and not the passive role of a bystander (p. 42). While Staub’s viewpoint may be interpreted as ideologically conservative, it offers a significant contribution to the ways in which teachers can engage students in understanding the complexities associated with the category of bystander.

EXAMINING THE EXHIBIT

The second part of this unit focuses on contemporary encounters with and the meaning of the exhibit. Here I revisit the broad questions I raised at the beginning of the unit. What does it mean to encounter such an exhibit, an example of vicarious history, on a daily basis? As an outdoor exhibition, it becomes part of the cityscape, puncturing daily life with a stark reminder of the past. During one visit to the memorial, as I was copying the text and photographing the signage, one man stopped to reassure me that this was a *denkmal*, a memorial, and in no way reflected contemporary laws. Later, a local resident shared with me that she encountered the signs each day as she bicycled to work. For her, the reminder of the restriction placed on owning pets and the story of the man owning the canary gave her pause each day as she looked up at the sign, forcing her to confront the past and compelling her to think.

I have no doubt that this exhibit evokes multiple and conflicting emotional responses in the various Berliners who experience it. The starkness of the decree-signs in the midst of the natural beauty of the open public space creates a jarring aesthetic. Paradoxically, it is now difficult to imagine the public space without them. During the Third Reich, Jews traversed daily life according to the restrictions these decrees placed upon them. Today, residents of the same dis-

trict maneuver daily life with the memory of the laws permeating their surroundings. As such, the exhibit acknowledges the past and the crimes committed against the Jewish community. A memorial with the ability to inspire, probe, and question provides a remarkable teaching resource.

Similarly, the study of the decrees memorialized here can contextualize the continued need to nurture democratic values and ideals. They demonstrate the ease with which laws, during the totalitarian regime of the Third Reich, could be changed. Under such circumstances, without flourishing democratic ideals and processes, basic human rights for all citizens could not be guaranteed. Thus, the marginalization and persecution of the Jewish community was able to succeed.

The memorial design and installation can be used as an entry point into a discussion on how the Holocaust is remembered by post-Holocaust generations. I ask students to consider what it is that we can learn from memorials that generate the experience of a vicarious past. How does this learning experience differ from large scale, monument-inspired memorials found in many communities? James Young (2000) reminds us that monuments are fraught with tension: Outside of those nations with totalitarian pasts, the public and governmental hunger for traditional, self-aggrandizing monuments is matched only by the contemporary artists’ skepticism of the monument (p. 119). Encouraging students to think critically about memorial spaces and monuments by deconstructing their layers is an essential component of this lesson.

This unit can also be used to scaffold other human rights topics by examining how the nations of the world have responded since the Holocaust. Students can make contemporary connection to national legislations such as Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and discover how essential components of a flourishing democracy such as immigration policy and regulations changed in the wake of the Holocaust.

I conclude this unit by offering extended learning opportunities; the complexity and breadth of Holocaust memorials and memorial projects offer insightful and engaging avenues of study and research. I encourage students to investigate memorials that have consciously been placed in the public space with the purpose of creating a vicarious past experience for viewers. Alternately, they might consider why monument-inspired memorials dominate their environment.

Students can be directed to discover for themselves the compelling memorial project known as the *Stolpersteine*, or stumbling stones. Created by German artist Gunter Demnig (1993), these brass memorial stones can be found in several German cities. Set in the brick sidewalks in front of homes from where Jews and other victims of National Socialism were deported, each stumbling stone is inscribed with the name, birth date, and deportation destination of each victim [Fig. 1]. Situated in open, public space, they, too, create



FIG 1: *Stolpersteine*-Berlin • Carson Phillips, 2009

a sense of a vicarious past in contemporary environments. Today, the sites where the *Stolpersteine* are installed may, and often do, house a completely different demographic. Often, these residents are unaware of the history of deportations that took place from their locale. Thus, the *Stolpersteine* act as catalysts to discover past history.

A second example I encourage students to discover is the *Gleis 17* (Platform 17) memorial at the Berlin-Grunewald train station.⁴ From this station more than 50,000 Jews were deported to concentration and death camps. The memorial consists of a series of inlaid metal plates each marking the date of a deportation and the number of Jews it held [Fig. 2]. While it does not recount personal testimonies or names, its power is in the clear, concise manner in which it documents the regularity with which the deportations were held. By researching testimonies or memoirs by Jews who may have been deported from Berlin, students can contextualize their understanding of the deportations by adding a human



FIG 2: *Gleis 17*-Berlin • Carson Phillips, 2009

dimension to the statistics. This memorial, too, engages the student with questions of the role of the bystander and their choices. For further research, students can link these memorials to a broader understanding of the fate of victims in the Holocaust, or research a Holocaust memorial in their own community—or one they have visited elsewhere—and deconstruct its layers.

Public space memorials can indeed create a vicarious past to engage the public. They offer learning opportunities because they are not static but challenge viewers to interpret them, each in his or her own way, to find personal meaning. Combined with survivor testimonies, they present a unique opportunity to guide students to a deeper understanding of the Holocaust. Deconstructing and interpreting the layers of knowledge, memory, and understanding that compose complex vicarious memorials are necessary requisites for Holocaust education in the twenty-first century.

APPENDIX: TEXT AND DECREES USED IN THE STIH AND SCHNOCK SIGNAGE

1933

- Jewish lawyers and notaries may no longer have legal responsibilities concerning the City of Berlin. March 18, 1933
- Jewish judges are suspended. March 31, 1933
- Costs for treatment by a Jewish doctor after April 1, 1933, will not be reimbursed by the City of Berlin's public health insurance company. March 31, 1933
- All local government offices in Berlin must immediately suspend Jewish teachers in public schools. April 1, 1933
- Jewish civil servants may no longer serve the State. April 7, 1933
- Jews are excluded from sports groups. April 25, 1933
- Only films that have been created in Germany solely by German citizens, who are of German descent, can be acknowledged as German films. June 28, 1933
- Jewish members of the Greater German Chess Association are expelled. July 9, 1933
- Jews are expelled from all choral groups. August 16, 1933
- Jews may not use the public beach at Wannsee. August 22, 1933
- The subjects Genetic Heredity and Race are examination fields at all schools. September 13, 1933
- Jews are not permitted to join the newly founded Collective German Automobile Club. October 1, 1933

1934

- Employment ban for Jewish actors and actresses. March 5, 1934

1935

- Jewish authors are forbidden from all literary activities in Germany. March 1935
- Jewish art and antique dealers are not allowed to practice their profession. Their businesses must be closed within four weeks. 1935
- Employment ban for Jewish musicians. March 31, 1935
- Excursions by Jewish youth groups of more than 20 people are forbidden. July 10, 1935
- Citizens of German descent and Jews who enter marriages or extra-marital affairs with members of the other group will be imprisoned. As of today, mixed marriages are not valid. September 15, 1935

1936

- Antisemitic signs in Berlin are being temporarily removed for the 1936 Olympic Games. To avoid giving foreign visitors a negative impression, signs with strong language will be removed. Signs such as "Jews are unwanted here" will suffice. January 29, 1936
- Jewish veterinarians may not open practices. April 3, 1936 (General employment ban, January 17, 1939)
- Journalists must prove their spouse's Aryan descent as far back as the year 1800. April 15, 1936
- Baptism and the conversion of Jews to Christianity have no bearing on the issue of race. October 4, 1936

1937

- Jews may not receive academic degrees. April 15, 1937
- Post office officials married to Jews must retire. June 8, 1937

1938

- Jews may not be members of the German Red Cross. January 1, 1938
- Only honorable comrades of German blood, or related descent, may become allotment-gardeners. March 22, 1938
- Jews must declare their incomes and property "to ensure that these assets are used in the best interest of the German economy." April 26, 1938
- Jewish doctors may no longer practice. July 25, 1938
- Streets named after Jews are to be renamed. *Haberlandstraße*—after the developer of the Quarter—will be renamed *Treuchtlinger* and *Nördlinger Straße*. July 27, 1938
- Jews may inherit only when the National Socialist morals are upheld. July 31, 1938
- All Jews must adopt the names of Israel for men and Sara for women as additional first names. August 17, 1938
- Passports belonging to Jews must be marked with the

letter J. Passports will be confiscated from Jews who are not allowed to emigrate. October 5, 1938

- Jews may not own or run retail shops or mail-order businesses. November 12, 1938
- Jews may no longer work as independent craftsmen. November 12, 1938
- Senior Jewish employees can be fired without notice or compensation. November 12, 1938
- Attendance at cinemas, theatres, opera houses, and concert halls is forbidden for Jews. November 12, 1938
- Jewish children are expelled from public schools. November 15, 1938 (Prohibition of all school attendance: June 20, 1942)
- Aryan and non-Aryan children are not allowed to play together. 1938
- Jewish publishing houses and bookstores are to be dissolved by the end of the year. December 1938
- Baths and swimming pools in Berlin are closed to Jews. December 3, 1938
- Certain parts of Berlin are restricted for Jews. December 3, 1938
- Driver's licenses and automobile registrations belonging to Jews are void and must be returned. December 3, 1938
- Jewish women cannot be certified as midwives. December 21, 1938

1939

- At *Bayerischer Platz*, Jews may sit only on yellow park benches. 1939
- Jewelry and other valuables may not be taken out of the country by emigrants. January 16, 1939
- Employment ban for Jewish dentists, dental technicians, pharmacists, homeopathic doctors, and nurses. January 17, 1939
- Jewelry, items made of gold, silver, or platinum, and pearls belonging to Jews are to be turned over to the State. February 21, 1939
- Jewish communities are responsible for clearing the rubble at synagogues which have been destroyed. Reconstruction is forbidden. March 24, 1939
- Rental agreements with Jews can be terminated without reason and without keeping within set legal deadlines. Jews can be sent to so-called "Jew Houses." April 30, 1939
- Jews are not permitted to leave their apartments after 8 p.m. (9 p.m. during the summer). September 1, 1939
- Radios are confiscated from Jews. September 23, 1939
- Jews no longer receive ration cards for clothing. December 1939 (Confiscation of furs and wool clothing: January 1942)

1940

- Jews in Berlin are only allowed to buy food between four and five o'clock in the afternoon. July 4, 1940
- Telephone lines to Jewish households will be cut off. July 29, 1940 (Use of public telephones is forbidden: December 21, 1941)

1941

- All Jews are obliged to do hard labor. March 4, 1941 (Organized arrests at the place of work for deportation: March 26, 1943)
- Jews may no longer purchase soap and shaving cream. June 26, 1941
- Jews may not use public libraries. August 2, 1941 (Jews may not purchase books: October 9, 1942)
- All Jews over the age of six must wear a yellow star with the word Jew on it. September 1, 1941
- Jews are permitted to use public transportation only to go to work. September 13, 1941 (Complete ban: April 24, 1942. Use of ticket-machines is forbidden for Jews: June 26, 1942)
- Jews require a police permit to leave their place of residence. September 18, 1941
- Jews may not use public transportation during peak travel hours. They may only sit when other travelers have been seated. September 18, 1941
- First mass deportations of Berlin Jews. October 18, 1941 (First deportations directly to the death camp at Auschwitz: July 1942)
- The emigration of Jews is forbidden. October 23, 1941

1942

- "The time has come. Tomorrow I must leave and naturally, it is a heavy burden ... I will write to you ..." Before being deported, January 16, 1942
- "... my powder-box is a personal reminder for you. Use it often and think of me. With deep sorrow, yours, Else Stern." Before being deported, January 16, 1942
- In bakeries and cafes, signs must be posted stating that Jews and Poles may not purchase cakes. February 14, 1942
- Jews are forbidden from buying newspapers and magazines. February 17, 1942
- Jews may only use public transportation if their place of work is more than seven kilometers from their home. March 24, 1942
- Jewish children may use public transportation to go to school only if the school is more than five kilometers from their home. March 24, 1942
- Apartments inhabited by Jewish families must display the Jew star. March 26, 1942

- Jews are no longer allowed to have household pets. February 14, 1942
- Cigarettes and cigars are no longer sold to Jews. June 11, 1942
- Jews must hand over all electrical and optical appliances, bicycles, typewriters, and records. June 19, 1942
- Eggs are no longer sold to Jews. June 22, 1942
- No fresh milk for Jews. August 7, 1942
- Poles and Jews may not be witnesses in court cases against Germans. August 7, 1942
- Jews may no longer purchase meat, meat products, or other rationed foods. September 18, 1942

1943

- "We had a canary. When we received the notice that Jews are forbidden from keeping pets, my husband found it impossible to part from the animal. Every sunny day, he put the birdcage out on the window sill. Perhaps someone reported him, because one day he was summoned to the Gestapo. (...) After living in fear for many weeks, the police sent a postcard stating that I must pay a fee of 3 Reichmarks to pick up my husband's ashes." Report, 1943
- "March 1, 1943. The police station was informed that the Jewish professor, Alex Israel C. of *Barbarossastraße* 52 in Berlin W30 (born Berlin, October 29, 1861) committed suicide in his apartment by taking an overdose of sleeping pills." Police Report

1945

- All files dealing with antisemitic activities are to be destroyed. February 16, 1945 ■

Carson Phillips is an educator with the Sarah and Chaim Neuberger Holocaust Education Centre in Toronto, Canada, and a Ph.D. candidate in Humanities at York University where he is affiliated with the Canadian Centre for German and European Studies and the Israel and Golda Koschitzky Centre for Jewish Studies. Carson, a member of the *PRISM* editorial board, has interned at the Auschwitz Jewish Center in Oswiecim, Poland, and has presented his research at academic conferences in Austria, Canada, Germany, and the United States. To contact the author, e-mail cphillips@yorku.ca

NOTES

1. The complete name of the memorial is "Places of Remembrance"—Isolation and Deprivation of Rights, Expulsion, Deportation and Murder of Berlin Jews in the Years 1933 to 1945 (*Orte des Erinnerns im Bayerischen Viertel-Ausgrenzung und Entrechtung, Vertreibung, Deportation und Ermordung von Berlin Juden in den Jahren 1933 bis 1945*).
2. The *Gleis 17* Memorial in Berlin can be used as a starting point for this research. The memorial notes that transports of 50 Jews each left Berlin for Theresienstadt on January 16, 18, 19, and 23. A search of the transport lists for these dates would reveal if Else Stern was deported to Theresienstadt. It should be noted that the name Else Stern was not an uncommon one and thus may appear numerous times in archival records.
3. For more information about the *Stolpersteine* project, I direct students to the Web site of the artist, Gunter Demnig, at www.stolpersteine.com
4. Students can begin research on this project at <http://www.gleis-17.de/index.htm>

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Mordecai Paldiel, the former director of the Righteous Among the Nations Department at Yad Vashem, presents accounts of those “who were jolted out of their bystander stance and became rescuers only as a direct result of a personal appeal by a desperate Jew.” Paldiel maintains, “It is this personal encounter that motivates the bystander, who begins the ethical action that turns him into a rescuer.” Pair this essay with Albert Halper’s short story “Prelude” (p. 10–14); Emily Amie Witty’s related teaching guide (p. 19–24); Mina Cohen’s art *What the Neighbors Knew* (pp. 62); Charles Adès Fishman’s poems “A German Witness” and “A Dutch Witness” (pp. 110–111); and the short film *Pigeon*, reviewed by Eric A. Goldman in this issue (pp. 112–113) for an in-depth, interdisciplinary examination of the continuum of benevolence described here.

Mordecai Paldiel

“Calling Myself Into Question”: How the Bystander Becomes a Rescuer

The point has repeatedly been made that with the exception of an infinitesimally small number of rescuers—some 22,000 rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust are honored at Yad Vashem—the other 99.9 percent of Europe’s non-Jewish population of some 300 million persons were either themselves implicated in the enormous crime or stood by in silence and, as bystanders, watched—although they could have helped. The negligible few rescuers from among the vast majority of Europe’s non-Jewish population are portrayed as superheroes who, revolted by the Nazi onslaught against the Jews, stepped out and, braving dangers to themselves, initiated rescue operations, while the bystanders, lacking such inclination and courage, stood by and watched or turned away. Let us examine this portrayal more closely.

The historical data of most rescue stories show that while we justifiably salute and honor those who helped Jews to survive, they, too, were bystanders, at least until they were approached by desperate fleeing and fugitive Jews who, at their 11th hour, pleaded with them for help to survive—to stay alive. This direct, intense, and emotional appeal triggered a positive response in many of those approached in this way, who suddenly—often on the spot—assumed the mantle of rescuer. What is important to remember, however, is that until that dramatic confrontation, most rescuers themselves may not have thought, initially, of getting involved; for previous months or years, they had done nothing to help, either from fear of retribution by the Nazis or for other reasons. In most cases, they did not initiate the rescue operation; they became rescuers only in response to the challenge presented to them, mostly by a personal encounter by one or several Jews desperately seeking, as a last recourse, the help of a non-Jew.

The unanswered question troubling our minds is what would have been the response of the millions of other bystanders had they, too, been approached by fleeing Jews and asked to lend a hand in their survival. We know that countless bystanders, perhaps frightened and cowed into submission, perhaps in fear of the Nazi terror, perhaps long-standing antisemites, refused to do anything when they were beseeched; worse, some turned in the fugitives. We do *not* know, however, how many neutral bystanders might have responded positively if they, too, had been approached with a personal plea for aid, an agonized request for help. Therefore, one cannot simply dismiss all these many millions as persons totally antagonistic or unsympathetic to the plight of Jews. Millions *were* hostile and indifferent, of course, but millions of others simply did not have an intimate confrontation with a Jew pleading for aid. So one cannot, in all fairness, draw a conclusion from the mere 22,000 identified by Yad Vashem as rescuers that incriminates all the rest of Europe’s vast non-Jewish population and categorizes those who were not outright perpetrators and collaborators as heartless bystanders.

As Jews began to understand what was happening, they tried desperately to save themselves, to seek shelter and succor among the non-Jewish population. This accounts for their high survival rate in France (over two-thirds of the pre-war Jewish population) and Belgium (more than half of the pre-war Jewish population) and for the numbers who hid among non-Jews even in countries with a strong antisemitic tradition, such as the estimated 40–50,000 Jews in hiding in Poland, and thousands of others in the equally hostile surrounding of Ukraine (at Yad Vashem, more than 6,000 Poles and 2,000 Ukrainians have been accredited as Righteous Among the Nations).

We know, of course, that countless Jews could not ask bystanders for help because they feared those around them would refuse or turn them in to the Nazi authorities. Tragically, those Jews not sufficiently integrated into the social life of the host nation, who dressed differently, spoke only Yiddish, and had a clearly visible Jewish demeanor, usually were inhibited from even attempting to seek out some non-Jewish acquaintance for fear of being recognized immediately and murdered on the spot or turned over to the authorities either by those in uniform or by professional blackmailers who roamed the streets, eager for a reward from the Germans for capturing a fleeing Jew. Others Jews, already penned into ghettos, had no access to non-Jews.

For most Jews, hunted by the efficient Nazi killing machine and local collaborators, and hindered by their inability to know until very late that they faced mass extermination, an event unprecedented in scope even in the history of Jewish tribulations, attempts to seek shelter came too late, as when they were already being rounded up for immediate execution by the *Einsatzkommandos* or were being boarded onto deportation trains.

Some Jews, however, were in a position to approach pre-war non-Jewish acquaintances for help. Estimates are hard to come by, but from testimonies culled after the war, we learn of the various, sometimes convoluted, efforts they put forth to seek haven. In Eastern European countries, where Jews lived mostly apart from the non-Jewish population, those who had struck warm relationships with non-Jews, were more integrated into the country's life, spoke the language well, and did not have a too-striking Jewish appearance tried to save themselves by making their way stealthily to the homes of their non-Jewish acquaintances. This entailed, of course, great life-risking dangers, from German security men and local collaborators on the lookout for escaping Jews and from those approached as well, since no Jew could be sure of getting help even from a former friend. (In Western Europe, in France, for instance, it was safer to seek out the help of a cleric; a person in religious garb may decline to help, but he would most likely not go so far as to tell the authorities of the presence of a Jew.)

From the material on hand and based on survivors' testimonies, we know that while some Jews were identified and apprehended, caught as they were on the road to a non-Jewish home, others reached their pre-planned destination, approached the non-Jewish person, and appealed for aid. At times they were refused outright or turned away by the non-Jew. Sometimes, though, they found a bystander who acted to help, who gave food or offered shelter for a night or two or a referral to someone else who might be more obliging and hospitable. Sometimes, faced with refusal, the desperate Jews turned to another gentile acquaintance (this could repeat itself several times), until they miraculously encoun-

tered the one who opened the door and invited them in. These were mostly persons who did not know the Jews asking for help or who met them only during the harsh wartime conditions of an area under Nazi rule, bystanders who were jolted out of their bystander stance and became rescuers only as a direct result of a personal appeal by a desperate Jew.

STORIES OF RESCUE

The story of Alexander Bronowski (Righteous Among the Nations Archives, RATNA, File 611) is illustrative. Bronowski had been arrested on the suspicion of being Jewish by two Gestapo agents on the non-Jewish side of Warsaw. It was late in the day, so he was placed temporarily in a Polish jail to be picked up the next day for a grueling interrogation at Gestapo headquarters. Bronowski feared that he would be unable to withstand the tortures there and would thus be forced to disclose the names of persons who aided him in passing as a non-Jew. He approached the Polish prison warden Waclaw Nowinski with an unusual request, as he put it: for an act of grace. Wishing to avoid a certain, brutal interrogation by the Gestapo before being executed, preferring a more graceful death, Bronowski asked Nowinski to shoot him in the back while he was being led to the outhouse in the courtyard. He suggested that Nowinski could use the excuse that the prisoner Bronowski had attempted to flee, and he pleaded with Nowinski for this "favor."

Nowinski stood up, saying he could not do such a thing. He had never killed, and he would not kill now. Instead, he said, "I must save you" (Paldiel, 1993, p. 212).

Nowinski decided to use his good underground connections to try to buy off the Gestapo. The bribery attempt succeeded and Bronowski was released without further investigation. This Polish warden who, up to this point, had shown no interest in that prisoner's fate, was catapulted into a saving action as a result of the Jewish prisoner's desperate plea.

Similar is the story of Sima Dafner (RATNA File 4023), who, with her sister Malka, escaped from an Auschwitz death march in January 1945 in sub-zero weather. When Sima and Malka came across a farm, they hid themselves in a barn. Sima recounts that when the farmer came to milk his cows, "We fell over him and begged him to let us stay. ... Without hesitation he embraced us with kindness, took us into the house, and introduced us to his wife and children" (Paldiel, 2000, p. 223). He had responded to the appeal of these two desperate women who unexpectedly confronted him. The farmer, Erwin Moldrzyk (RATNA, File 4023), knew what was in store for them if he turned down their request: immediate death at the hands of the SS, who were on a killing hunt for escaped Jews.

Leopold Socha (RATNA File 1379) worked for the sanitation department of the Lvov municipality and was responsible for keeping the city's elaborate underground sewer

system in operation. While on a routine inspection of one of the sewers, he ran into a group of Jews who had fled the final Nazi killing raid of the ghetto and had found refuge in this most unlikely of places. At first, he did not know how to respond to their urgent request for help, but he was finally touched by the innocent figure of a small child among the fleeing Jews, and thus he decided on the spot to help them survive in the dark, dank sewers, where they stayed alive with his constant help for a year and a half.

It is worthwhile to note that Socha had a long police record; he had been jailed several times for break-ins and robbery of people's homes. He probably would not have elected to place his life in jeopardy by volunteering help to the Jews in that city; it would have been much easier for him to have remained a bystander. In this instance, though, he had a face-to-face confrontation with a group of fleeing, terrified Jews during a Nazi killing raid. He knew that if he did not help them, they would be lost; they would surely die, either from starvation or from being hunted down by German and Ukrainian militiamen who occasionally raided the sewers.

Similar sudden encounters that turned bystanders into rescuers can be culled from the diplomats who were honored by Yad Vashem. Such as the case of Chiune-Sempo Sugihara (RATNA File 2861), the Japanese consul-general in Kaunas, Lithuania, in 1940. He had been dispatched there by his government in order to spy on troop movements on the German-Soviet border, in anticipation of a war between the two countries. One day, a delegation of Jews, headed by Zorach Warhaftig, approached him with a request for a Japanese transit visa for several thousand Jews to make possible transit through the Soviet Union in order to reach far and distant places of safety. Sugihara had never before been involved in specific humanitarian large-scale action. He was approached by this stranger Warhaftig, looked into his pleading eyes, and from his window saw the faces of many others crowding the entrance to the consulate office. Sugihara's superiors demurred, but Sugihara decided to issue the transit visas because it meant saving the lives of these Jews, many of whom were Orthodox, from either the Soviets or the Germans, whose invasion was anticipated. Touched by their desperation, he acted.

Another example is Aristides de Sousa Mendes (RATNA File 264), the Portuguese consul general in Bordeaux, France. He had been specifically instructed by his government *not* to hand out transit visas to Jews. But when Rabbi Haim Kruiger pleaded with him to afford the thousand of Jews fleeing the city to be able to cross into Spain, for which they needed Portuguese transit visas, he did not say no. He knew the Jews would fall under the domination of the Germans, whose armies were closing in on Bordeaux in June 1940, and after several sleepless nights, he decided to disobey his government and issue the visas. The sight of these thousands

of persons literally begging to be allowed to continue their flight, clogging the doors of his consulate, looking to him as their last hope, moved him to respond favorably. He did not seek out these persons needing help; they came to him, and he could not refer them to others. There was no one else.

Additional examples can be drawn from other countries. The Dutch educator Joop Westerweel (RATNA File 32), a staunch anti-nationalist, responded to the appeal of a Zionist youth group to help them flee the Netherlands. He secretly accompanied them through German-conquered Belgium and France all the way to the Franco-Spanish border and wished them well in their determination to establish a Jewish state in Palestine, a goal that was not in accord with his own deep anti-nationalistic beliefs. As a staunch anti-nationalist, he may not have volunteered to be of help to a Zionist organization, but when its desperate members appealed to him, he made the momentous decision to throw his lot with them. Without his help, they may have been caught in the Nazi web and deported.

In a village in Belgium, the Catholic priest Hubert Célis (RATNA File 1377) responded to the appeal of a fleeing Jewish couple who banged on his door. He hid them and their children and made sure that they continued to practice the Jewish faith while in hiding.

In Switzerland, police captain Paul Grüniger (RATNA File 680), in charge of the border post in St. Gallen, allowed several thousand Jewish refugees fleeing from Austria, recently annexed to Nazi Germany in 1938, to enter the country under false pretenses. They appealed to him to let them into the country, and he complied. He stated that he could not turn them back into the hands of the Gestapo.

There were also rescue stories that began with sudden encounters on the open road, as when Stefania Job (RATNA File 1828) ran into Henia Sturm and her father Berl, aimlessly wandering on a country road outside Debica, Poland, in a severe snowstorm in December 1942. Noticing that nine-year old Henia could no longer make it even with her father's help, Stefania, who might have remained a bystander but for this chance encounter, alerted her father Edward Job to hurry and carry Henia into their home and took in as well the father Berl. It took the host family some time to warm up the near-frozen bodies of father and daughter, but they succeeded.

In a similar context, Zofia Boczkowska (RATNA File 239) was on her way to town on an errand in her horse-drawn coach in the Busk region of the Ukraine when she beheld from a distance a mass execution of Jews in progress. There was nothing she could do, so she drove on. Suddenly, her attention was drawn to a small girl, standing alone. She ordered the coachman to draw closer. She learned that this girl, too, would soon join the other Jews and would be shot.

"I was stunned and frightened," she said, "and not knowing what to do, although I had to do something to save this

little creature. I realized I must save her, otherwise I would never know peace and tranquility again" (Paldiel, 1993, pp. 222–223). She contrived a story that the girl was mistakenly identified as Jewish and hurried to bring to the local commander a fabricated document to prove the child's Christian origin. She supplemented the document with a hefty bribe of choice food and whiskey, and the commander turned over to her the child, named Hanna Podoszyn, whom she saved.

Even in those fewer cases where rescuer and rescued knew each other from before the war, what prompted the bystander to rescue was the appearance of the fugitive Jew at his doorstep. For instance, 15-year-old Felix Zandman (RATNA File 3466) fled a German killing raid in the Grodno ghetto and ran to people who were caretakers of the Zandman family summer cottages in the Łososno forest. Fleeing for his life, Felix made it safely to that forest retreat and was warmly received by Anna Puchalski and her husband, Jan. They had not reached out to him, but they sheltered him when he appeared and asked for help. Three more Jews were subsequently admitted for hiding, where they remained sheltered for a year and a half.

There were, for sure, also stories where the rescuer made the first approach and initiated the rescue operation, although they belong to the minority of cases. Even in those instances, the action was the result of one or several meetings between both sides under the severe conditions of the Nazi occupation. These close encounters under desperate conditions are what triggered the prompting of the rescue offer. Furthermore, one must not overlook that such rescuers enjoyed some flexibility and latitude due to their profession that somehow facilitated the undertaking of a rescue operation—a privilege not enjoyed by most other bystanders, who may have had the urge to help but had neither the where-withal nor the opportunity to do so without causing their own immediate arrest.

Irena Sendler (RATNA File 153), for example, worked for the Warsaw Social Welfare Department. Exploiting to the full the German fear of disease contamination, she devised a plan to look up some of her pre-war Jewish friends isolated behind the walls of the Warsaw ghetto by obtaining a special permit to enter the ghetto to contain the spread of diseases with which the Germans claimed the ghetto inhabitants were infected. Once inside, she renewed and established new contacts and used her legal forays into the ghetto to first smuggle in food and medical equipment and then to smuggle out people, mostly children. Together with a group of trustworthy aides, she is credited with having saved hundreds of children. She played for high stakes, and even underwent arrest and torture, but her rescue work was made possible by her special position, first in the Warsaw municipality and then with the collegial assistance of fellow workers in the special Polish rescue network *Zegota*, whose members even effected

her release from Gestapo jail through the medium of a substantial bribe. The overwhelming majority of bystanders did not enjoy such special associations and links that made possible free entry and exit into the Warsaw ghetto, a forbidden zone to outsiders, and this may have determined their decision not to get involved in any life-threatening undertaking to help Jews. They may have had the same willingness as Sendler and the others, but they were not approached and did not feel secure enough to volunteer for such a dangerous undertaking.

THEORIES OF RESCUE

Altruism is a term coined to designate the antithesis of egoism, a behavior directed toward the benefit of others. It relates to dispositions, tendencies, and actions that have the good of others as their object rather than a gain of social or material rewards. In studying the behavior of those designated by Yad Vashem as Righteous among the Nations, several theories have been advanced to explain the rescue acts of these altruists. Nechama Tec (1986), Samuel Oliner & Pearl Oliner (1988), and Eva Fogelman (1995) emphasize the singular character of the rescuer and closely relate it to the person's background and early youth. They attribute the willingness and ability to rescue to conditions of upbringing and personal qualities such as loving parents, punishment but no abuse (Oliner & Oliner), a tolerant education, empathy, capabilities, imagination, an adventurous spirit, and adeptness at coping with fear. Tec portrays the rescuer as a person who is somewhat different and a bit socially marginal in a special positive way. The Oliners disagree and describe the rescuer as having fully integrated the social norms of kindness, helpfulness, and tolerance, causing that person to be preconditioned toward altruistic deeds. In Oliner & Oliner's words, "At crucial moments of choice most of the business of choosing is already over" (p. 222). These theories seem to imply that there is an archetypal altruistic personality, conditioned by one's childhood or early events but limited to only those blessed with the aforementioned uniquely positive family experiences and behavioral traits.

One need not question the relevance of these theories, and it is quite possible that many of the rescuers honored with the Righteous Among the Nations title were prompted to rescue due to some of these positive attributes. At the same time, one should not dismiss, as these studies seem to imply, the many others, the bystanders, on the claim that they lacked these unique mental and behavioral qualifications. Their failure to act may have been in part because they were not privy to such desperate requests; they therefore cannot be simply dismissed as non-caring and indifferent to the plight of the Jews.

Hence, one cannot dismiss the importance of the situational factor. All rescue actions for which the rescuers were

honored as Righteous Among the Nations took place under the simultaneous conditions where Jews felt desperate, trying by all means to save their lives, and the would-be rescuers knew that the Jews in visible proximity were in immediate need of help to survive the Nazi onslaught.

Of equal importance is the understanding felt by the rescuer that "It's either me, right now, or no one; it must be right here and now, not some time in the future." The fugitive Jew appeals to the bystander to save his life. Facing him or her, the still-bystander sees the other's vulnerability. It is this personal encounter that motivates the bystander, who begins the ethical action that turns him into a rescuer. It is an instantaneous, or almost so, decision.

Indeed, especially so in the East European situations, the bystander may have felt, "This person has thrust himself upon me. I did not choose this responsibility. I have not decided that I want to go out and rescue the other. He came to me and presented me with a terrible moral challenge. He simply wants to live and asks for my help in making this possible. Does this person have a right to live? Surely so, for life is sacred and should not be taken away, whether I like this person or not. The victim's life is in my hands. I am called to play God. I realize my own irreplaceability. There may be no alternatives to my acting. If I don't help, there is no one else to whom the person in front of me can, at this most dramatic moment, turn for help."

A primal level is reached when the bystander faces the totally defenseless person or persons facing him—that of the profound recognition of the value of life itself, the life that both the bystander and the Jew share. A brilliant thought by the French-Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas (1993) may help us to grasp what perhaps takes place in the would-be-rescuer's mind. The other person's face, in close proximity to me, is a reflection of an Otherness that is within me coupled with a realization of my own mortality. As phrased by Levinas, the Other "is my standing outside myself calling myself into question" (Mensch, p. 12), and this makes him into an insider, a part of my own worth and self-estimation, a part of my Being. This, then, necessitates a certain commitment toward the other who is facing me. But I must act immediately. There is no time for lengthy rationalizations about whether to get involved or even to consider the personal vulnerability and terrible risks involved. The bystander becomes a rescuer.

These conditions pertained only in the face-to-face encounters between the two sides, a condition that applied to most of the rescuers honored by Yad Vashem and researched in the various studies. Thus the rescuers, too, must be considered bystanders, non-committal up to the moment when a Jew on the run knocked on their door and stood facing them, looked straight into their eyes, and asked for help.

The harsh truth is that almost everyone was a bystander,

up to a certain critical point. A few, though, at that certain point, when they were approached and challenged to respond and help, said yes. They, the bystanders who became rescuers, deserve our utmost praise. ■

MORDECAI PALDIEL, Ph.D., is the former director of the Righteous Among the Nations Department at Yad Vashem, Jerusalem. He has written many books and articles on the subject, including *Churches and the Holocaust* (2006), *Diplomat Heroes of the Holocaust* (2007), and *The Righteous Among the Nations* (2007). Currently teaching at Yeshiva University's Stern College for Women and Touro College, both in New York City, he is a consultant for the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation. To contact the author, e-mail mpaldiel@gmail.com

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From the pen of our poetry editor, Charles Adès Fishman, come two poems crafted from survivor testimonies. Each gives wings to the facts documented in Mordecai Paldiel's essay (pp. 105–109). Use also with the short film *Pigeon*, reviewed in this issue by Eric A. Goldman (pp. 112–113), to show your students a glimmer of light; they will need it as they descend into the blackness of the Holocaust.

Charles Adès Fishman

From “Five Holocaust Memories”

I. A German Witness

She was living with her parents outside of Munich.
One day, her mother had sent her to obtain some cheese,
and she was heading back along the country road
that was filled to the brim with fleeing civilians and soldiers.
She had been thinking about her father, the industrialist,
and about how their cheese was paid for.

Then she rounded a curve in the road and saw the prisoners:
they were guarded by SS men and leaned against a wall.
She could see that these were, in fact, skeletons, wrapped
in a skin of black-and-white-striped cloth: the cloth was threadbare
and the bones showed through. She knew they were prisoners
but didn't understand what their crime was ...

and she thought of the cheese, white and creamy, growing riper
in her rucksack. She thought of giving the cheese to these shadows,
for their eyes held her, and she opened her sack and reached in.
The cheese emerged in her hand with the power of sunlight.

II. A Dutch Witness

Her father was a judge and had taught her
the Dutch tradition of offering refuge. One day,
on her way to school, the sky, which was clear
and blue in Amsterdam, darkened.

She saw a truck parked near a home for Jewish children,
and there were German men, in uniform, laughing
and joking. What pleasure it was to be conquerors!

She saw that these soldiers were lifting the children
by their legs, by their skinny arms, and by their hair,
and throwing them into the truck. It was a sunny day,
nine o'clock in the morning, a fine hour to walk to school.

And she saw, for these men, who harbored no child
in their hearts, murder would be easy but she
would honor her father's words. She would rescue children.

CHARLES ADÈS FISHMAN is poetry editor of *PRISM* and author of several internationally acclaimed books, including *The Death Mazurka*, a 1989 American Library Association Outstanding Book of the Year that was nominated for the 1990 Pulitzer Prize in Poetry, and *Chopin's Piano* (2006), which received the 2007 Paterson Award for Literary Excellence. The revised, second edition of his anthology, *Blood to Remember: American Poets on the Holocaust*, was published by Time Being Books in October 2007. His blog is <http://writingtheholocaust.blogspot.com>, and his most recent collection of poems is *Water under Water*, released by Casa De Snapdragon in December 2009. To contact the poet, e-mail carolus@optimum.net

Eric A. Goldman's review of Anthony Green's short film *Pigeon* notes the parallel in the motivation of the film's heroine to that of the bystanders who became rescuers in the historical accounts documented in Mordecai Paldiel's essay (pp. 105–109). Viewed before or after the essay is studied, the film will raise questions about the complicity of those who took no action and the heroism of those who did; it will encourage study of the desperate circumstances of the Jews of the time and the few who acted to help them.

Eric A. Goldman

Pigeon: A Film to Trigger Discussion on the Bystander

Educators have long seen the value of using short films to enhance related readings, communicate content, stimulate thinking, and trigger discussion on particular topics. Anthony Green's (2004) 11-minute film *Pigeon* vividly illustrates the ability of cinema to evoke focused and profound dialogue about particular aspects of the Holocaust and the singular moments of decision-making that often meant the difference between life and death for individual Jews.

Set in the winter of 1941 at the railway station in Remies, France, the film opens with a middle-aged Jewish man (played by veteran actor Michael Lerner) purchasing a ticket for a trip from the German-occupied region across the border to Grenoble, which was controlled by the Vichy government. At this time and place, Jews were forbidden to travel between the two territories, a fact reinforced by the headline of the newspaper carried by the man; it reads, "Jews No Longer Allowed to Leave Paris or Change Address." Ticket in hand, the traveler sits on a bench and nervously checks his poorly prepared, visibly forged identity card. He unwraps a sandwich and, as he eats, offers crumbs to the pigeons pecking on the platform. In front of him, two boys playing with a slingshot take aim at a pigeon. Although clearly worried about his upcoming illegal journey, he does not hesitate to intercede. He struggles briefly with the two boys on the icy platform, confiscates their slingshot, and throws it in a wastebasket. During the fracas, one of the boys, for spite, reaches into the man's overcoat, snatches his ID card, and runs off. The train arrives and the man, unaware that he now has no identification, boards the train.

Anthony Green's narrative, based on the true story of survivor Susi Penzias¹, sets up one historical moment in the overwhelming landscape of the Holocaust. War, German occupation, identity cards, Vichy government, restrictions against and flight by Jews were but a few of the possibilities for the film's focus, but by limiting the lens to the plight of one person and the spontaneous response of another, the

filmmaker humanizes the subject and makes it more easily identifiable for the student. Green sets the stage and allows the action to unfold; he raises, rather than answers, questions. Who is this man? What are the circumstances under which he lives? Is he Jewish? Why does he choose to flee? Where is his family? Why does he risk discovery by publicly confronting children about to kill a pigeon?

The man boards the train and finds a seat, and upon hearing the guards' call for identification papers, he begins to search his pockets for his documents. As he gropes more frantically, he realizes they are gone, recognizes his desperate circumstances, and begins to recite the *Sh'ma* (the prayer said by Jews who believe they are facing death), fearing the worst. A woman (played by Wendy Crewson), a complete stranger sitting across the aisle, seeing his terror and hearing the Hebrew, grasps his plight.

"Shut up!" she hisses. She meets his anguished eyes, and at this very moment she moves from bystander to helper. As the two guards approach, she stands and begins an inspired performance of improvisational theater, loudly and contemptuously berating the man for forgetting his papers. "You stupid, stupid man!" she yells at him, as only a beleaguered wife would do. She stops her tirade at him only to engage the officers, listing for them examples of his ongoing, infuriating forgetfulness at home, adding, "And now my husband has forgotten his papers!" Confidently, she produces her own papers, clearly convinced that these officers understand her anger and displeasure at such a fool of a husband. Her papers are legitimate; she holds their gaze; the ruse works. The guards dismiss the man as an incompetent, joking that she is the one "wearing the pants" in the family; they move on, snickering their contempt. "I feel sorry for you," one soldier says as he walks away. The woman returns to her seat. Aware of how close they have both come to disaster, each speechless for separate reasons, they stare at each other intently, silently. The train picks up speed. The camera follows the

guards leaving the train, pulls back, and pans across the station platform, where a pigeon lies dead, quite a metaphor for consideration.

Why does she act at this moment? What might have been her motivation? Why did she put herself at risk? What if tens of thousands of such bystanders had acted? The film evokes these questions and also offers a vivid illustration of Mordecai Paldiel's (2010) thesis in this journal (pp. 105–109). The former director of Yad Vashem's Righteous Among the Nations department, Paldiel notes that it was the face-to-face encounters that caused a bystander to become a helper rather than some predetermined decision to do so.

"There is no time for lengthy rationalizations about whether to get involved or even to consider the personal vulnerability and terrible risks involved," Paldiel explains. "These conditions pertained only in the face-to-face encounters between the two sides, a condition that applied to most of the rescuers honored by Yad Vashem and researched in the various studies" (p. 109). Showing the film before or after reading his essay can lead to thoughtful discussion, writing, and fruitful research.

Over the last half-century, a number of other short films have dealt with subjects relevant to teaching about the *Shoah*. The 12-minute animated *The Hangman* (Julian & Goldman, 1964), based on the poem by Maurice Ogden, and the 13-minute narrative *Joseph Schultz* (Golubovic, 1973)² trigger discussion about complicity and bystanders and how one might respond to social evils. Viewing such films along with, or for certain students, as an alternative to, reading assignments enriches the classroom experience. Analyzing films helps build visual literacy and assists students in developing skills for critical analysis of images. A student who learns to notice, describe, react, deduce, predict, and make connections in film can transfer these skills to the written text and all other elements of study. A screening of *Pigeon* may pique interest in the historical context and setting of the film as well as in the essential questions the films raises. Is one complicit in not taking action? Is one obligated to risk one's own life to save another?

Film provides an excellent vehicle for communicating content, eliciting reaction, and involving students in historical study; it has unlimited capacity to reach and engage diverse learners. Used properly, the visual medium can enhance and enrich the learning experience, as *Pigeon* surely will. ■

ERIC A. GOLDMAN is a film educator, DVD publisher, and critic who teaches cinema at Yeshiva University. To contact the author, e-mail eric@ergomedia.com

NOTES

1. Casting considerations influenced Green to reverse the genders in his retelling; actor Michael Lerner, Green felt, was more credibly Jewish than was actress Wendy Crewson.
2. Although the film received a great deal of attention, including gaining a Silver Bear award at the Berlin film Festival, there is inconclusive evidence that the supposed event on which the film was based ever took place.

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"In the beginning," Myra Sklarew writes, "it was through memory that I came to know Lithuania. And later it was through the 'archives of the feet,' as Simon Schama has written: through the words of witnesses and survivors, through rescuers and collaborators, through walking in the places where the killing was done, in forests and woods, at Ponar and Krakes and Keidan where *hope was plucked up like a tree*." This vividly graphic poem helps the mature reader to consider the culpability of those bystanders who stood and watched these most heinous of acts against the Jews.

Myra Sklarew

from "Lithuania"

2

There is no way
to make the journey to this place. We circle
it, we read it like a map of a district, we name
its alleyways and its houses. We draw in closer
like the camera's eye but we describe
shadows, we describe air fence
lattice petrol cudgel wooden club
water hose gully blood we describe
a man, hardly more than a boy.

He leans on a wooden club, resting—
his murdered lie at his feet his dying
at his feet, his club thick as an arm
high as his chest, he is wearing
a fine suit of clothing his hair
is combed. A group of Jewish men guarded
by armed civilians wait their turn. Within forty-five
minutes the young man has beaten

them to death. And when he is done,
he puts his club to one side
and climbs on the corpses and plays
the Lithuanian national anthem
on his accordion to the clapping
and singing of the nearby civilians—
women hold up their small children to see.
At Keidan in order to cover the cries

of the Jews forced to strip at the mouth
of a mass grave, the Lithuanians started up their tractor
motors. Those not killed by machine guns were buried
alive. All this was watched by the principal
of the high school, the mayor, and a young
priest. Afterwards, the Lithuanians told that when
the pit was covered with a bit of earth, the surface
heaved up and down as if a live pulse

emanated from that mass grave. In order to stop
the heaving of the blood earth, the Lithuanians
used rollers to press the earth down ...

MYRA SKLAREW, former president of the artist community Yaddo and professor emerita of literature at American University, is the author of poetry, fiction, and nonfiction. She has three books forthcoming from three different presses: *Harmless*, a collection of poetry, will be published by MayApple Press in spring 2010; *The Journey of Child Development: Selected Papers of Dr. Joseph Noshpitz*, co-edited with Dr. Bruce Sklarew, will be released by Routledge: Taylor & Francis in fall 2010; and *Holocaust and the Construction of Memory*, a study of Holocaust trauma and memory, is scheduled for publication by SUNY Press. To contact the poet, e-mail msklarew@verizon.net

If a Holocaust perpetrator had the opportunity to turn in another perpetrator in return for a sizable financial reward, would he do so? This is the fascinating question raised by Nazi-hunter Efraim Zuroff as he documents “*Operation: Last Chance*, a project designed to maximize the efforts to find and help bring to justice Nazi war criminals.”

Efraim Zuroff

Can a Holocaust Perpetrator Become a Bystander?: A Practical Experiment

The world of the Holocaust is traditionally divided into the four classic categories of perpetrator, bystander, victim, and rescuer. The fact that every person who lived as an adult during those terrible times is categorized by one of these four labels depending on their role during the years 1933–1945 is an indication of the unique significance of those events, which undoubtedly were an extreme test of human behavior. The question that this essay poses is whether, under certain circumstances, a perpetrator can, postfacto, assume an additional label of bystander.

On the surface, such a question appears absurd, since no perpetrators can retract or undo their Holocaust crimes. Obviously, no matter what they subsequently do, they always remain perpetrators. The question of whether they can also become bystanders arose as a result of the unique circumstances, described below, created in post-communist Eastern Europe following the breakup of the Soviet Union and the transition to democracy.

In 2002, the Israel office (www.operationlastchance.org) of the Simon Wiesenthal Center (www.wiesenthal.com) and the Targum Shlishi Foundation of Miami (www.targumshlishi.org), founded and headed by Aryeh Rubin, launched a project designed to maximize the efforts to find and help bring to justice Nazi war criminals. Named for understandable reasons “Operation: Last Chance,” it offered financial rewards, initially of \$10,000 and later raised to \$25,000, for information that would facilitate the prosecution and punishment of Holocaust perpetrators. The rewards were offered for each Nazi war criminal to be brought to trial, convicted, and punished. No limit was placed on the number of perpetrators who could be turned in by any single individual.

One of the most interesting aspects of the project was our supposition regarding the potential informants, who could be divided into two broad categories: those people with information from the scene of the crimes, and those who subsequently encountered or got to know the perpetrators and learned of their crimes only years after the events. Those in

the former category were preferable, of course, as their information was first-hand. These potential informants could be further divided into three of the categories of those who lived through the *Shoah*: (erstwhile) victims, bystanders, and perpetrators. The preferred choice for witnesses in these categories were the victims, who could testify from first-hand experience regarding the identity of the perpetrators and the extent of their cruelty. In many instances, however, there were no such victims to be found, which is not surprising, as many Jews, especially in Eastern Europe, were murdered either by the *Einsatzgruppen* (mobile killing units) or by roving murder squads of Nazis and local collaborators. The Jews had never before encountered the members of these units, and thus their identities were unknown to those who survived. While those Jews who spent lengthy periods in camps or ghettos often became aware of the names of their tormentors, for a large percentage of the Jews murdered in Eastern Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Ukraine, and Belarus, that was not the case.

The same was true of potential bystander witnesses. Because most of the mass murders were carried out in areas particularly chosen for their seclusion—in forests or other inaccessible or remote locations or in totally isolated concentration camps and death camps—there were few instances in which bystanders could provide the necessary testimony to help prosecute Holocaust perpetrators.

Thus, there are many cases in which the only persons capable of providing incriminating eyewitness evidence are fellow perpetrators. The problematics of testimony from persons of dubious morality are clear, which is why erstwhile victims and bystanders were traditionally preferred by courts. Yet the reality remains that in numerous instances, the sole available witnesses and/or the best potential witnesses were perpetrators, who were present when the crimes were committed, had unfettered access to the site and the events, and, for the most part, had the best vantage point to view them. The willingness of perpetrators to expose

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ei-paštas: swcjerus@netvision.net.il

Lietuvos žydų bendruomenė,
Pylimo g. 4,
Vilnius, Lietuva
Tel. (8-5) 261 30 03,
Faksas: (8-5) 2127915

Dr. Efraim Zuroff Aryeh Rubin

Generalinė prokuratūra
R. Smėtonos g. 4
Vilnius, Lietuva
Telefonas (8-5) 266 23 50
Faksas (8-5) 2662317

TARGUM SHLISHI

FIG 1: Operation: Last Chance ad in Lithuania, 2002

themselves to almost certain prosecution by revealing their own participation in the crimes has always been a serious obstacle, of course, to obtaining their testimony, but in the summer of 2002, Operation: Last Chance helped to create the circumstance in the Baltic countries of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia that ostensibly had potential to convince certain perpetrators to provide information that could facilitate the prosecution and punishment of Nazi war criminals.

The organizers of Operation: Last Chance had four reasons to hope that they might be able to draw on the heretofore unavailable or unforthcoming testimony of perpetrators in the Baltics. The first was the extensive scope of collaboration with the Nazis in those countries and the fact that the Nazis' local helpers in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia had been fully integrated into, and played a critical role in, the process of mass annihilation, both in their home counties and elsewhere in Europe during World War II.

The second was the large number of such perpetrators who had been prosecuted and punished by the Soviets after World War II and, after serving all or part of their sentences, had returned to their countries of origin. This fact was of particular importance since, at least theoretically, it shielded these perpetrators from prosecution under the legal provision of double jeopardy.

The third factor was the offered reward, which, by local standards, was quite substantial and might well prove to be a significant incentive to provide pertinent information.

The fourth reason was an ostensibly logical but totally

unproven hypothesis: that the passage of time and the increased knowledge about, and sensitivity to, the Holocaust might engender feelings of regret and contrition among certain perpetrators, who, as a result, might be willing to provide incriminating evidence against their yet unprosecuted former comrades-in-arms.

Our experiment began when Operation: Last Chance was officially launched in the Lithuanian capital of Vilna (Vilnius) on July 8, 2002, with a very well-attended press conference at which the project was officially unveiled.¹ Two days later, a similar event was held in Tallinn, Estonia, and the following day, the project was initiated Riga, Latvia. In each country, large ads were published several weeks later in the major national and regional newspapers. Each of the ads utilized a historical photo that starkly portrayed the tragedy of the annihilation of the Jewish community in that country. [Fig. 1]

In Lithuania and Latvia, some of the photos clearly showed the active participation of local Nazi collaborators in the mass murders, and the ad captions in all three countries stressed the importance of bringing those responsible for Holocaust crimes to justice. As we hoped and expected, the launch of the project was extensively covered by the local media, as was the appearance of the ads several weeks later, both of which provoked substantial debate in each country as to the validity and legitimacy of Operation: Last Chance.

Nazi-Mörder sind noch unter uns

Nutzen Sie die letzte Chance!

Gesucht werden NS-Verbrecher, die bis heute nicht zur Rechenschaft gezogen worden sind. Mörder laufen frei herum und genießen ihren Lebensabend.

Wenn Sie damit nicht einverstanden sind, dann helfen Sie bitte, die Täter zu finden und vor Gericht zu stellen.

Unterstützen Sie die „Operation Last Chance“, denn es ist wirklich die letzte Chance. Noch ist es möglich.

Das Simon Wiesenthal Center und die Targum Shlishi Foundation setzen für Hinweise, die zur Verurteilung und Bestrafung eines Nazi-Mörders führen, eine Belohnung von 10.000 € aus.

SIMON WIESENTHAL CENTER
Dr. Efraim Zuroff

TARGUM SHLISHI
Aryeh Rubin

Informationen bitte an:
Simon Wiesenthal Center,
Telefon: 0 30 / 695 695 54
Post: Mendele Street 1, 92147 Jerusalem, Israel
E-Mail: swcjerus@netvision.net.il
www.operationlastchance.com

Danke für Ihre Unterstützung.

Kooperationspartner in Deutschland: honestly-concerned e.V., www.honestly-concerned.org

FIG 2: Operation: Last Chance ad in Germany, 2005



FIG 3: *Operation: Last Chance* ad in Croatia, 2004

The focus on the important role played by local collaborators angered many people in these countries, and the method used, which was reminiscent for some of the Soviet methods of paying for information, aroused considerable controversy.

Now the stage was effectively set for our experiment. What would be the reaction? Would people in the Baltics cooperate and submit pertinent information to facilitate the prosecution and punishment of their relatives, friends and neighbors, and/or acquaintances? Would the response be the same in all three countries? We naturally expected the most information in Lithuania, which was the largest of the three Jewish communities (220,000 Jews lived under Nazi occupation) and which had by far the largest numbers of victims (212,000) and of local perpetrators. In Latvia, 70,000 Jews were trapped following the German invasion, of whom 67,000 were murdered, whereas only 1,000 Jews were still in Estonia when Germany completed its occupation in late July 1941.

The flow of information to our toll-free lines was initially quite impressive. Dozens and dozens of phone calls were received during the initial months after the project was launched, and more than 200 names were received. In fact, by February 2004, we had already registered the names of the following number of bona fide suspects in each country: 196 in Lithuania, 41 in Latvia, and six in Estonia, which pro-

portionally corresponds to some extent with the size of the respective communities. Each of the names of the suspects, almost all of which were previously unknown to us, had to be carefully checked to determine that the allegations were credible, that the suspect was alive and healthy enough to stand trial, and that he or she (we received the names of several female suspects in the framework of the project, although not in the Baltics) had never previously been prosecuted for the said crime. Thus, of the initial 243 names of suspects received in the Baltics, only 57 were passed on to local prosecutors; in Lithuania, only 44; and in Latvia, 13. The others were either deceased or had previously been prosecuted, or there was insufficient proof to corroborate the allegation we received.

Of particular interest was the fact that up to that point, and indeed to the date of the writing of this essay, there has not been a single case of a Holocaust perpetrator who contacted us to submit information regarding his unprosecuted former comrades-in-arms. There is a theoretical possibility that such a person might have submitted information anonymously, but based on an analysis of all the leads received, none fit the description of the kind of details that a perpetrator could provide.

This result was disappointing. Despite a veritable plethora of names and information received from informants in the Baltics, about a quarter of which were serious enough to warrant their submission to local prosecutors, none evolved into an indictment, let alone a trial and a conviction. While this negative result may in fact be attributed to the lack of political will in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia to hold local Nazi war criminals accountable, I am certain that allegations based on fellow perpetrator testimony would have had a much better chance of resulting in conviction than the information we received. (In this context, it must be noted that in Lithuania we were not given any updates whatsoever on the conduct of the investigations, so we are unable to assess



FIG 4: *Operation: Last Chance* ad in Austria, 2003

whether they were carried out according to reasonable professional standards. In Latvia, we received some updates and information.)

At the same time, the fact that no perpetrator earned our reward was, I must admit, an enormous relief as well. Before we launched Operation: Last Chance, this was a subject of much thoughtful deliberation. The thought of paying any sum to a Holocaust perpetrator was repugnant, to put it mildly, but the abhorrence we felt about offering it was outweighed by our determination to try to facilitate the prosecution, conviction, and punishment of at least one local Nazi war criminal in each of the Baltic countries, which, since independence, had not punished a single one of their countrymen for Holocaust crimes.

When we launched the project in 2002, Lithuania had already tried two local Nazi war criminals but only after they were declared medically unfit. Consequently, neither of them was punished. Lithuanian officials asked for the extradition of a third, who died before he could be transported from Scotland. Latvia and Estonia had not prosecuted any of their own Nazi war criminals, although the former had requested the extradition of a killer squad officer from Australia, who died before he could be transported. Since then, Lithuania has convicted a local Nazi war criminal who was sentenced to five years' imprisonment but whose sentence the judges refused to implement. (By comparison, dozens of communist criminals were prosecuted in the Baltics.)

Under these circumstances, we believed that the benefits from such a trial in countries that, to a large extent, have until now failed to confront their bloody Holocaust past, were more important than our understandable reluctance to pay a financial reward to a Nazi war criminal.

In that context, it is illuminating to recall the case of economics professor Adalbert Lallier, a Romanian *Volksdeutsche* living in Canada, who several years ago came forward to incriminate his former superior at the Theresienstadt ghetto/concentration camp, German SS officer Julius Viel, in the murder of seven Jewish camp inmates, whom the latter murdered in cold blood. Lallier himself, however, claimed innocence, and there is no evidence of his participation in Holocaust crimes, a fact that clearly made it easier for him to come forward without fear of self-incrimination. Perhaps it was his advanced educational background or his long residence in Canada that influenced his decision, a decision that unfortunately has not been replicated in the Baltics or in any of the countries in which Operation: Last Chance was subsequently initiated.

It is interesting to note that I am often asked why it so important to prosecute and punish elderly Holocaust perpetrators who, many people assume, have at this point in their lives probably realized that what they did was wrong. If anything, however, the results of Operation: Last Chance in the

Baltics and the fact that not a single perpetrator was willing to provide information against any unprosecuted Nazi war criminals very clearly indicate that there is no regret or contrition and expose the true mindset of many of those who committed the crimes of the Shoah. One could suppose that, given the wealth of information currently available on the Holocaust and the steadily increasing importance attributed to its crimes, there might be at least several individuals who would be persuaded now—if not by morality, justice, and truth then at least by greed—to come forward and share the valuable truth in their possession, but even that inducement proved insufficient. In other words, no perpetrator was motivated to reject the additional negative dimension of becoming a bystander, which should be food for thought for all of us. ■

EFFRAIM ZUROFF has been a "Nazi hunter" for the past 30 years, initially as a researcher in Israel for the U.S. Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations and currently as the coordinator of the Nazi war crimes research worldwide for the Simon Wiesenthal Center. He has launched *Operation: Last Chance* (www.operationlastchance.org), now in 13 countries in Europe and South America. In 2008 he was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize by Serbian president Boris Tadic. His work has been the subject of four documentary films on German, French, and British television; a fifth film, by CNN, focusing on his efforts to preserve the accuracy of the Holocaust narrative in Eastern Europe, was released in 2010. His articles have been published in 16 languages; his latest book is *Operation Last Chance: One Man's Quest to Bring Nazi Criminals to Justice* (2009, New York: MacMillan). To contact the author, e-mail swcjerus@netvision.net.il

NOTE

As of spring 2010, *Operation: Last Chance* has been launched in the following countries: 2002: Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia; 2003: Poland, Romania, and Austria; 2004: Croatia and Hungary; 2005: Germany; 2007: Argentina, Chile, Brazil, and Uruguay.

We end with the late poet Liliane Richman's soliloquy that echoes the thought we have all considered: At Auschwitz, Nature itself was a bystander.

Liliane Richman

After Claude Lanzmann's Shoah

It was always peaceful
in those deep fir woods
where the sun playfully shot arrows
into slowly shifting shadows,
quiet day and night in the woods not far from my village,
still peaceful after they burned two thousand daily,
after the screams, the barking of dogs,
the hissing of hundreds of bullets
rising to vaulting branches above,
caught there, hanging, trapped in the trees' green canopy.

I thought, then, and now,
Don't they deserve axing, these trees,
not stretching their powerful limbs in protest,
not squelching the light twitter of birds?

When all was over
no one watched the mindless river
ferrying downstream kilos of powdered bones.

LILIANE RICHMAN, ז"ל, was born in Paris, the child of a survivor. She moved to the United States in 1959, where her poetry and prose appeared in *Response*, the *Smith, Sackbut Review*, and elsewhere. She taught language arts at the Arts Magnet High School in Dallas, Texas.

Text books for high school and college students often emphasize the process of the persecution and eventual murder of the Jews while ignoring the perspective of the Jews' understanding of, and response to, what was transpiring. A number of articles in the fall 2009 premiere issue of *PRISM* dealt with the critical need to present a balanced approach that focuses on the Jews as active historical agents during the Holocaust as well as on the process of their destruction. David Engel's review focuses on this critical theme and highlights the issues relating to the necessity of integrating survivor testimony into the classroom. While the textbook under review is targeted primarily for readers in the American Midwest, a future edition, maintaining the book's engaging and balanced core narrative, will be relevant to wider audiences.

David Engel

Memory and Legacy: The Shoah Narrative of the Illinois Holocaust Museum: A Review

The presence of a significant, well-organized community of Holocaust survivors in the greater Chicago area has lent the newly opened Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center its particular flavor among public efforts to represent visually the encounter between the Third Reich and the Jews. As noted in the volume in review, Michael Berenbaum's and Yitzchak Mais's (2009) *Memory and Legacy: The Shoah Narrative of the Illinois Holocaust Museum*, Lincolnwood, IL: Publications International, Ltd. (ISBN 9780981633404, 239 pp., ill.), which recounts the genesis of the Museum and recapitulates the narrative underlying its permanent exhibition, the origins of the Museum lie in the activation of Chicago-area survivors following the notorious 1976–1978 attempts by the National Socialist Party of America to stage a march and demonstration in Skokie.

“Honor[ing] the memory of the millions who were murdered during the Holocaust” and “salut[ing] the courage and resilience of the survivors, who rebuilt their lives and awoke the conscience of humanity never to forget” (Berenbaum & Mais, p. 6) are, in the words of the Museum's chairman and director, at the core of its mission. The Museum houses a collection of more than 2,000 digitized and indexed video testimonies of Holocaust survivors who took up residence in the American Midwest, obtained from the USC Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education. The permanent exhibition of the Museum has been built largely around the recollections of local survivors on the premise that “perhaps because the survivors have been neighbors, friends, and teachers, they can best transport us back more than 70

years in time, moving us a continent away” (Berenbaum & Mais, 2009, p. 9).

Still, survivors and their testimonies alone may not offer students the full measure of understanding they seek. As James Young (1997), arguably the preeminent scholar of Holocaust representations, has pointed out, the task of witnesses is to testify not so much to “what happened” as to “what [they] saw” (p. 54). No individual witness personally observed more than the smallest part of the totality of events commonly subsumed under the rubric “the Holocaust.” In particular, survivors, whose experience as Jewish victims of Nazism was by definition atypical (the typical experience for Jews in most areas under Nazi rule being death), generally were not privy to the discussions and decisions among perpetrators and bystanders that turned them into victims in the first place. Thus, their testimonies alone cannot explain some of the most vexing questions the Holocaust invariably raises. How did the government of a major European state decide that, as a matter of policy, all Jews within reach needed to be put to death? How was that government able to execute that policy with the precise degree of success it obtained (killing approximately two thirds of its targets, not more, not less)? Should the systematic murder of that proportion of European Jewry be understood more as a failure of modern civilization or as its logical product? Survivors can testify to the immediate human consequences of ideas, policy decisions, and socio-cultural systems, but they cannot say much about how those ideas, decisions, and systems came into being and took effect on the sole basis of what they

personally witnessed and experienced under Nazi rule.

Moreover, the immediate human consequences to which Holocaust survivors can and do testify often highlight aspects of their tragedy shared by victims of other traumatic episodes. The stories of 18 survivors summarized in the volume reflect powerful human emotions—fear, hunger, exhaustion, physical pain, torn loyalties, moral doubt, loss of faith, revulsion from horror, pangs of separation, desire for revenge, joy upon deliverance—in terms not so terribly different from the all-too-many millions of humans who have suffered oppression and brutality in all-too-many places and times. Why their own horrific personal stories merit the attention of strangers any more than those of, say, African-American slaves, Gulag inmates, or prisoners of the Japanese army during the Bataan death march—what *special* quality is significant in the suffering of *Holocaust* victims in particular—is often not readily apparent from the words of Holocaust survivors themselves.

In short, survivor testimonies are not necessarily the most effective vehicle for conveying the “big picture” view of what really happened and how it developed. That end is usually better served by the disciplined, painstaking efforts of historians to uncover the extant documentary traces of the thoughts and actions that gave the Nazi Holocaust its particular character and dimensions and to fashion those traces into an overarching narrative that places the survivors’ experiences into a broad context. Yet the “big picture” that those efforts produce is hardly a sufficient representation, any more than the view of Chicago from the top of the Sears Tower provides full awareness of the city. All who teach about the Holocaust face the challenge of integrating both perspectives.

The great merit of the volume by Michael Berenbaum and Yitzchak Mais, curators of the Museum’s permanent exhibition, lies in its skillful and sensitive combination of the historians’ “big picture” with the ground-level, intimate view of people who felt the big picture in their own flesh. The authors, thoroughly versed in the historical scholarship on the Holocaust, including its most recent findings, guide readers toward a fairly sophisticated understanding of why the Holocaust occurred when, where, and how it did and why it assumed its specific dimensions, in a language that is accessible to teenagers without oversimplifying weighty problems. Far from offering the usual facile explanations that ascribe the horrors of the Nazi era to generalized prejudice or hate, they encourage readers to enter the minds of perpetrators, victims, and bystanders alike, allowing them to see the world as the actors must have seen it in their own time and helping them to grasp the Holocaust not as a sudden mysterious incursion of evil into the world but as the product of man-made historical conditions whose possible future occurrence can be averted through human effort. The survivors’ voices

that regularly punctuate the narrative are used to underscore the reality of those conditions and their awful effect, while by comparing the situation of Jewish victims to that of others who experienced Nazi persecution, the authors illuminate what is most noteworthy about the Jews’ encounter with the Third Reich. The volume also succeeds in presenting the victims not as passive sufferers but as active agents struggling to make the most of their lives in an increasingly desperate situation. That perspective is underscored by the book’s extensive chronology, which uniquely details how the Holocaust unfolded through the victims’ eyes.

One can, to be sure, take issue with certain features of the text. Most notably, the reasons so many Germans focused upon Jews as the primary cause of their country’s post-World War I frustrations and tribulations and not upon some other possible agent are not spelled out with nearly the clarity with which the other central problems in the history of the Holocaust are explicated. All told, however, the book introduces a general audience to that history with accuracy, intelligence, and lucidity. ■

DAVID ENGEL is Greenberg Professor of Holocaust Studies at New York University. He is the author of seven books, including *In the Shadow of Auschwitz* (1987), *Facing a Holocaust* (1993), *The Holocaust: The Third Reich and the Jews* (2000), and *Historians of the Jews and the Holocaust* (2010). To contact the author, e-mail de2@nyu.edu

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